



## Local Destinations for Children to Interact with Animals

### Kansas City Zoo

[www.kansascityzoo.org](http://www.kansascityzoo.org)

- Where?** 6800 Zoo Drive (inside Kansas City, Missouri's Swope Park)
- When?** Open year round 9:30 AM to 4PM (Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day)
- What?** Recognized as one of "America's Best Zoos," the Kansas City Zoo is a 202-acre nature sanctuary providing families with opportunities to experience animals and diverse habitats from around the world.
- Why?** From keeper chats and elephant painting to great programs and special events, there is always something fun happening at the zoo! An increasing focus on interactions between guests, staff and animals also provides opportunities for children to learn about the animals they visit at the zoo.

### Lakeside Nature Center

[www.lakesidenaturecenter.org](http://www.lakesidenaturecenter.org)

- Where?** 4701 E. Gregory Blvd (inside Kansas City, Missouri's Swope Park)
- When?** Open Tuesday through Saturday 9 AM TO 4 PM  
And Sundays 11 AM to 3 pm (Closed Mondays)
- What?** Lakeside features a kid-friendly nature center with natural exhibits, aquariums, and nature hiking trails.
- Why?** Attend "Mother Nature Reads" every Saturday at 10 AM. Monthly hikes with a naturalist are also offered. Special events, like Magic Woods, Breakfast with Beasts, Earth Day, and BUGS! Celebrating Urban Birds, Kids, Water, Fish, Bugs and What's Out At Night, provide a great learning experience for everyone. \*\*Between mid-June and early October, head Across the street to the Beanstalk Children's Garden (6917 Kensington), where children can see their favorite fruits and

veggies being grown. They may even get to sample those that are ripe!\*\*

### Ernie Miller Nature Center

[www.erniemiller.com](http://www.erniemiller.com)

- Where?** 909 N. Highway 7 Olathe, Kansas
- When?** Monday through Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM, Sunday 1 PM to 5 PM (March 1 through October 31) Monday through Saturday 9 AM to 4:30 PM, Sunday 12:30 PM to 4:30 PM (November 1 through February 28); Closed daily for lunch from 12-1 PM; closed on Sundays June, July and August.
- What?** The Center provides an opportunity for learning, understanding, and admiring nature's ever-changing ways. The Center contains displays and live animals, along with a friendly, knowledgeable staff eager to share their knowledge of nature.
- Why?** Family-centered educational programs are offered every Sunday at 2 PM. A variety of programs geared to preschool children and offered most Wednesdays.

### Burr Oak Woods

<http://mdc.mo.gov/regions/kansas-city/burr-oak-woods-nature-center>

- Where?** 1401 NW Park Road, Blue Springs, Missouri
- When?** Tuesday through Friday 7 AM to 6 PM, Saturday 8 AM to 5 PM, closed on Sunday and Monday
- What?** The Burr Oak Nature Center features a collection of hands-on conversation exhibits, aquariums, and a new children's area added in 2012.
- Why?** Six nature trails allow families to explore woodlands, glades, fields and ponds, and Burr Oak Creek. Special kid-centered events occur almost weekly, ranging from hikes to story time to animal encounters.

### Prairie Oak Nature Center of Leawood

[www.leawood.org/parks/naturecenter.aspx](http://www.leawood.org/parks/naturecenter.aspx)

- Where?** 14701 Mission Road, Leawood, Kansas (inside Ironwoods Park)
- When?** Wednesday, through Saturday 10 AM to 5 PM, Sundays 1 PM to 4 PM (Closed Mondays and Tuesdays)

- What?** The Nature Center is home to many live, native reptiles, amphibians and fish. The surrounding area also features a bird feeding area, garden pool and butterfly garden.



- Why?** Classes are offered most Saturdays (although most are aimed at children 5 and older), and the park features a stroller-friendly walking trail and takes visitors through meadows, past a variety of wildflowers, and along the creek where children can easily spot native animals.

### Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center

<http://mdc.mo.gov/regions/kansas-city/discovery-center>

- Where?** 4750 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri
- When?** Monday through Friday 8 AM to 5 PM, open ONLY first and third Saturdays of each month 9 AM to 4 PM (Closed Sundays)
- What?** Explore 8 acres of gardens, including a pond, stroller-friendly trails, and watchable wildlife.
- Why?** Six workshops let children experience the creative fun of wild foods, native plant gardening, stream life, outdoor skills, artistic expression and construction of wildlife habitats. Families can learn to identify birds and mammal tracks, grow native trees, shrubs and wildflowers, plus much more. Child-focused events are offered on the first and third Saturdays of each month.

### George Owens Nature Center

[www.ci.independence.mo.us/ParksAndRec/Owens](http://www.ci.independence.mo.us/ParksAndRec/Owens)

- Where?** 1601 Speck Road, Independence, Missouri
- When?** Tuesday through Friday 8:30 AM to 5 PM, Saturday 8:30 AM to 5 PM (Closed Sundays and Mondays)
- What?** With five hiking trails, two fishing lakes, 86 acres of forest, and a nature center, the possibilities for adventure are endless!
- Why?** Explore the rustic nature center and find new seasonal exhibits. Get up close to a snake, touch antlers, or count the rings on a tree. Experience the beauty of a 150 gallon freshwater aquarium with Missouri fish or peer into 75 gallon

turtle enclosure. Kid-friendly events typically occur one Saturday a month.

### Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary

[www.naturesanctuary.com](http://www.naturesanctuary.com)

- Where?** 407 N. La Frenz Road, Liberty, Missouri
- When?** Tuesday through Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM
- What?** Four miles of trails lead through open meadow and wooded areas, including stroller-friendly trails for families. A nature center features exhibits, including live animals.
- Why?** A birder's paradise, the sanctuary allows families to witness birds up-close and personal! Child-centered classes offered through the nature center several times a month.

### Prairie Park Nature Center

[www.lawrenceks.org/lprd/ppnc](http://www.lawrenceks.org/lprd/ppnc)

- Where?** 2730 Harper Street, Lawrence, Kansas
- When?** Tuesday through Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM, Sundays 1 PM to 4 PM (Closed Mondays)
- What?** The preserve incorporates wetlands, woodlands, and prairie habitats, as well as a five-acre lake. The Nature Center includes live animals and features many birds of prey, including eagles, hawks and owls.
- Why?** Visitors to Prairie Park may see a wide variety of native Kansas wildlife on the property including beavers, deer, bobcats and birds of prey. Classes and events are scheduled every Saturday at 10 AM.

### Kemper Outdoor Education Center

[www.jacksongov.org/content/7894/7922/7956/default.aspx](http://www.jacksongov.org/content/7894/7922/7956/default.aspx)

- Where?** 8201 Jasper Bell, Blue Springs, Missouri (inside Fleming Park)
- When?** Monday through Friday 8 AM to 4 PM (April 1 through August 31), 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month 12 PM to 4 PM
- What?** Inside the Nature Center you will find rock and fossil exhibits and mounted examples of native wildlife. The grounds feature nature trails, butterfly and water gardens.
- Why?** Hikers can explore a variety of ecologies: wetland, prairie, woodland and cactus glade, and special events occur throughout the summer.

### Deanna Rose Children's Farmstead

[www.opkansas.org/things-to-see-and-do/deanna-rose-children-farmstead](http://www.opkansas.org/things-to-see-and-do/deanna-rose-children-farmstead)

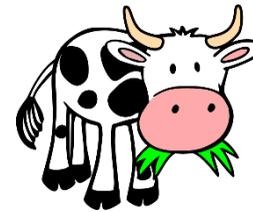
- Where?** 13800 Switzer Road, Overland Park, Kansas
- When?** Open daily 9 AM to 5 PM (open April 1 through October 31)
- What?** Designed to depict a turn-of-the-century family farm. Deanna Rose farmstead has nearly 200 animals and birds of prey, a fishing pond, pony rides and more.
- Why?** The farmstead provides children with the opportunity to ride a pony, feed a baby goat, or rub the belly of a dairy cow. The farmstead also hosts many special events, most of which occur on weekends throughout the summer.



### Shatto Dairy

[www.shatomilk.com/tours.html](http://www.shatomilk.com/tours.html)

- Where?** 9406 N. Highway 33, Osborn, Missouri
- When?** Daily tours available by appointment (call 816-930-3862 or e-mail: [office@shatomilk.com](mailto:office@shatomilk.com))
- What?** See adorable calves, try your hand at milking a cow, and watch the entire process of getting milk from a dairy farm to your cereal bowl!
- Why?** FREE SAMPLES. (Also, it's a lot of fun for kids and adults alike!)



### Overland Park Arboretum

[www.opkansas.org/things-to-see-and-do/arboretum-and-botanical-gardens/](http://www.opkansas.org/things-to-see-and-do/arboretum-and-botanical-gardens/)

- Where?** 8909 W. 179<sup>th</sup> Street, Overland Park, Kansas
- When?** Open daily 8 AM to 7:30 PM (April 10 through September 30), 8 AM to 5 PM (October 1 through April 9)
- What?** Home to eight natural ecosystems and nearly five miles of hiking trails (many of which are stroller-friendly), there's always something new to see at the arboretum!
- Why?** Children get the chance to experience nature by hiking trails, exploring the grass maze in the children's park, and interacting with all of the bugs, birds and butterflies that are attracted to the



many flowers! Classes and kid-friendly events are offered monthly at the arboretum.

### Tips for Exploring Nature with Children

1. **Be Quiet.** Talking in whispers and quiet voices can sometimes be okay, but other occasions need absolute quiet. Why? Animals, birds, and even insects are naturally afraid of humans. We need to respect them and show them that we will not hurt them. Remaining quiet will help ease the fear.
2. **Be Still.** Any quick or sudden movements will frighten wildlife. Why? This is the same reason why we remain quiet. We do not want to frighten the animal. Slow, quiet motions are best. Find a spot to sit; it is much easier to stay still while sitting.
3. **Stay a safe distance away.** As the adult, it is up to you to use your common sense. For the safety of your kids and the wildlife, you need to stay a safe distance away. If you want a closer look, use binoculars. Many easy-to-find animals, such as geese and turtles, typically will not harm people if they are observed from a safe distance. Other animals are best observed at zoos or other controlled environments.
4. **Use all your senses.** Teach kids to not just use their eyes. Your ears and nose are also important tools to observe. What kind of sounds does the animal make? What do you smell? Observations are more than just seeing!
5. **Wash your hands.** Hand washing is the single most important step to remember. After handling animals, it is crucial that hand washing in young children is supervised, especially after touching or petting animals or their surroundings on a visit to a farm. Visitors should also be made aware that using sanitizing gels is **NOT** a substitute for washing hands. Please use soap and hot water and drying them, as gels may fail to remove contamination in the way that soap and running water can.

