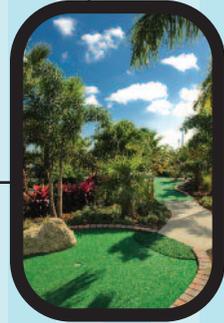


# Vacation in Your Backyard

By  
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When you think of summer, images of family vacations come to mind. A road trip in the family sedan to new and

undiscovered places was decided. Weeks were spent planning the itinerary which included stops at historical spots, fun attractions and visits with family members out of state. Finally, the car was packed and you were on your way. However, times have changed. With rising gas prices and a

looming recession, it is hard to imagine a vacation is possible in these hard economic times. But, maybe this is the time to be creative and explore the places and attractions right in your backyard.

Many times we take for granted the entertainment opportunities that exist in our communities. We say we will visit them one day. Here is a chance for you to discover the undiscovered with help from Miami-Dade Parks. With more than 250 parks and hundreds of events and programs in which you can participate, you can take a one-week vacation and spend less than \$500 for a family of four, excluding meals and gas. Since your vacation is local, it may cost you no more than half a tank of gas and you get to sleep in

your own bed each night. You might want to consider packing a picnic lunch giving you another way to save money.

## Day 1

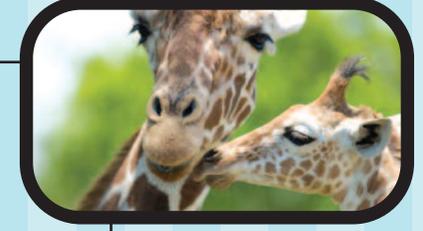
With its tropical climate, South Florida offers visitors and residents year-round opportunities to explore natural, cultural and recreational activities. To get your week started, visit the Deering Estate at Cutler. Located along the edge of Biscayne Bay, the 444-acre estate is an environmental, archeological and historical preserve. From canoe rides to butterfly hikes, and naturalist-guided tours, the Deering Estate



has diverse activities for the whole family to enjoy. The estate offers daily tours at 10:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. of its historic houses – the Stone House and Richmond Cottage – as well as tours of the lush natural areas where fossil bones have been found that date back to 50,000 years ago. On the weekends, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., you can rent kayaks and paddle the beautiful bay where you may catch a glimpse of manatees in the boat basin. Kayak rental for adults is \$10 per hour plus regular park admission, and for children, ages 9-15, it is \$8 per hour plus regular park admission. Price includes kayak, life vest, paddles and a small dry bag. You must be 21 years old to rent a kayak. Individuals ages 9-20 must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian in the same kayak. Two people per kayak are required.

## Day 2

Lauded as “Miami’s top-rated attraction” by Zagat Survey, Miami Metrozoo is ranked among the top zoos in the country. As the only subtropical zoo in the continental United States, Miami Metrozoo is Day 2 on your vacation. You can meander through the trails and encounter a wide range of animal life from Asia, Africa, Australia, and Latin America. The lush tropical setting easily replicates animals’ natural habitats. Koalas, Komodo



dragons, okapi and dozens of other animals you may have never seen await you around every turn. Or you can glide above this wildlife wonderland inside a guided, air-conditioned monorail. Or take a behind the scenes tram tour. Or pedal through, with the entire family, on one of the four-wheeled Safari Cycles. Take the opportunity to feed the giraffes and pelicans while you are there. To end your day, located just down the street is Palmetto Mini-Golf, a beautifully landscaped 18-hole course and new addition to Miami-Dade Parks. For as little as \$5 each, a family of four can have fun while testing their skills.

## Day 3

After two days of walking and exercising, take a leisurely break and enjoy a day at the beach. Rated as one of the top 10

beaches in the United States for the past 10 years, the beach at Crandon Park is a great way to unwind. Unique to the beach are the cabanas available for daily, monthly or yearly rental. Built in the 1950s, the cabanas are reminiscent of youthful times spent on family vacations. The 10' x 10' cabanas include a private shower in each. There are 70 cabanas on site with eight designated as accessible to persons with disabilities. Bring your beach chairs, towels, grill to picnic and spend the day relaxing. However, no glass is allowed in the area.

## Day 4

The only tropical botanical garden of its kind in the United States, Fruit & Spice Park is a unique

37-acre public facility owned and operated by Miami-Dade Parks. The tropical climate, found nowhere else in the continental U.S., allows the park to grow more than 500 varieties of fruits, vegetables, spices, herbs, nuts, and other commercially important plant specimens from around the world. You can find 150 varieties of mango, 75 varieties of bananas, 70 varieties of bamboo, and numerous exotic edibles, and visitors are invited to munch at the tasting counter inside the park store. Open seven days a week except Christmas, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., guided tours are conducted every day. Park admission is \$6.00 per adult, \$1.50 per child age 6-12, and children under six are free. Picnic facilities are available.



Led by knowledgeable naturalist-guides, Crandon Park tours on Key Biscayne include an introduction to the natural history and ecology of the warm tropical

waters of Biscayne Bay and offshore ocean sites. Tours are conducted in the beautiful surrounding waters of Crandon Park's Bear Cut Marine Preserve. Explore and discover colorful tropical fish, spotted eagle rays, cushion stars, upside down jellyfish, coastal birds, and mammals that share this fragile and unique marine environment we call "Miami's backyard." Two-person "sit on top" ocean kayaks are provided and all trips are beginner friendly for the whole family. Participants should bring a snack, water (one quart minimum), sunscreen, sunglasses, insect repellent, shoes you don't mind getting wet, wide brimmed hat, dress for the weather, and a sealable plastic bag or container to secure important belongings.

### Day 6

If you do not have one, spend a day in a Miami-Dade pool. Located throughout the County, the 12 pools managed by Miami-Dade Parks are supervised by certified lifeguards and fees range from 50¢ to \$1.50

per person. With fees that low, you can tell the kids to bring along their friends. Parents can relax in the sun as the kids enjoy splashing and swimming in the pool.

### Day 7

End your vacation with a leisurely canoe trip along the Oleta River catching a glimpse of the many wading birds and mammals that inhabit the river eco-system, and visit an undisturbed Indian midden. Or, if you choose, take a guided tour on the Gables waterway rich in history and wildlife, and nestled in



one of Miami-Dade County's most popular and beautiful communities. Tours are rated moderate (Oleta River) and easy (Gables waterway) and take approximately 3-to-4 hours. Led by experienced and knowledgeable naturalist-guides, these trips include the best gear and lots of creative touches to enhance the enjoyment of your experience. These are just a couple of examples of the unique, outdoor adventure excursions provided by



Miami-Dade Parks' Eco-Adventures, which also offers kayak fishing, backpack

wilderness treks and star gazing outings.

Now you have everything you need to get "traveling." Get out and explore your own backyard. It could end up being your most

relaxing vacation yet. For specific questions regarding your adventure, contact the facility directly. Phone numbers have been included on the chart.



## Seven Day Itinerary for Your Vacation

The costs below are based on a family of four (2 adults and 2 children) and does not include meals.

<b>Day 1</b> (Sunday)	Deering Estate at Cutler 16701 SW 72 Ave 305-235-1668	\$7/adult \$5/child (ages 4-14)	<b>\$24</b>
	Kayak Rental 16701 SW 72 Ave 305-235-1668	\$10/hr for adults \$8/hr for children (ages 9-15) Admission extra	<b>\$72 for 2 hr rental</b>
<b>Day 2</b> (Monday)	Miami Metrozoo 12400 SW 152nd St (305) 251-0400	\$13.95/adult \$9.95/child <b>Additional fees (optional)</b> Safari Cycle: \$22/2 hrs Monorail: \$3/person Tram tours: \$3.95/person Feeding Stations: Giraffe \$2 each, pelican \$1 each	<b>\$109.60</b> (includes additional fees)
	Palmetto Mini-Golf 9300 SW 152 St 305-238-2922	Mon - Fri: 7a.m. - 6p.m.: \$5 Mon - Fri: 6p.m. - close: \$6 Sat, Sun, and holidays: \$6	<b>\$20 or \$24</b> depending on arrival time
<b>Day 3</b> (Tuesday)	A Day at the Beach Crandon Park, Key Biscayne 6767 Crandon Blvd. 305-365-3018	\$37.50/day includes tax + 1.50/car toll fee for Key Biscayne	<b>\$39</b>
<b>Day 4</b> (Wednesday)	Fruit and Spice Park 24801 SW 187th Ave 305-247-5727	\$5/adult \$1.50/child	<b>\$13</b>
<b>Day 5</b> (Thursday)	EcoAdventures Kayaking and snorkeling Crandon Park (see Day 3)	\$42/adult \$22/child + \$1.50 toll fee for Key Biscayne	<b>\$129.50</b>
<b>Day 6</b> (Friday)	A Day at the Pool (Various sites)	\$.50 to \$1.50 per person	<b>\$9</b> (includes 2 friends)
<b>Day 7</b> (Saturday)	EcoAdventures Canoe Trip: Oleta River or Gables Waterway Call 305-365-3018	\$25/adult \$15/child (ages 7-15)	<b>\$80</b>



### Day 5

Eco-Adventures kayak and snorkeling tours are exciting ways to explore the wildlife and varied marine life of Miami-Dade Parks' coastal parks and preserves.

