

# Free and Cheap 2018 Summer Fun for Kids



Compiled from [CharlotteOnTheCheap.com](http://CharlotteOnTheCheap.com).

**Free Bowling:** Kids can bowl for free—up to 3 games a day. They need to rent shoes, and you need to sign them up online.

Spare Time, 16317 Statesville Road, Huntersville, 704-892-7177

Ten Park Lanes, 1700 Montford Drive, 704-523-7633

George Pappas' Liberty Lanes, 2501 S York Rd, Gastonia, 704-868-2695

Fox's Alley Bowling Center, 1901 Skyway Drive, Monroe, 704-776-9518

AMF Bowling Centers also have a great deal on summer bowling for kids.

More info on both programs: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/free-bowling-for-kids-summer/>

**Terrific Tuesdays:** On six Tuesdays from June 19th to August 7<sup>th</sup>, there are free shows for kids at ImaginOn. Terrific Tuesdays is a shared program of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and Children's Theatre of Charlotte. These shows are hugely popular. Reservations open 12 or 13 days before the show and you'd be wise to grab yours as soon as they open.

ImaginOn, 300 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 704-416-4600

Children's Theatre, 300 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 704-973-2828

More info: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/terrificuesday/>

**ImaginOn:** Also visit ImaginOn for free fun for kids of all ages, including Storyland: A Trip Through Childhood Favorites,” the summer exhibit.

**Energy Explorium:** Always free to visit, Energy Explorium at McGuire Nuclear Station in Huntersville gives kids a chance to learn about energy, weather, the environment and nature through interactive activities at the visitor’s center. There’s a mile-long walking trail along the shore of Lake Norman and a picnic area.

13339 McGuire Nuclear Station Road, Huntersville, 980-875-5600

More info: <http://www.duke-energy.com/visitor-centers/ee-about-the-energyexplorium.asp>

**Charlotte Mecklenburg Nature Centers:** Charlotte Mecklenburg Parks and Recreation operates three nature centers, each within a nature preserve. They’re free to visit. They also host many free activities for kids every month, everything from hikes to crafts to animal encounters.

Reedy Creek Nature Center, 2900 Rocky River Rd., 980-314-1119

Latta Plantation Nature Center, 6211 Sample Rd., Huntersville, 704-875-1391

McDowell Nature Center, 15222 South York Rd, 980-314-1128

More info: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/free-events-mecklenburg-county-nature-centers/>

**UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens:** Includes two outdoor gardens to explore, and a greenhouse. Kids love the butterfly terrace, Asian Garden, bridges and ponds with waterfalls. It’s free to visit. You might have to pay for parking. 9090 Craver Road

More info: <https://gardens.uncc.edu/gardens-and-greenhouse/>

**Free Outdoor Movies:** Many locations throughout the Charlotte area show free movies in the summer, often accompanied by free popcorn or pre-show entertainment.

See the whole list of outdoor movies here: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/outdoor-summer-movies-2/>

**Cheap Weekday Movies:** Many Charlotte area movie theaters are offering weekday movies for \$4 or less for kids. Most are \$1 or less.

See the whole list of kids’ movie programs here:

<https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/summer-movies-for-kids-1-or-less/>

**Outdoor Concert Series:** There are almost 30 free outdoor concert series around the Charlotte area, and many are family-friendly.

See the whole list of outdoor music series: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/charlotte-summer-concert-series/>

**Free roller skating:** Skate for Free is a nationwide program offering free skating for kids in the summer. Here are the area rinks that are participating:

Kate's Skating Rinks – Indian Trail

14500 E Independence Blvd, Indian Trail, NC 28079, 704-821-7465

Kate's Skating Rink Lowell

4114 E Franklin Blvd, Gastonia, NC 28056, (704) 824-2552

Kate's Skating Rink Hudson

1151 Skating Rink Dr., Gastonia, NC 28054, (704) 864-7007

More info on the program, including how to sign up:

<https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/kids-skate-free-this-summer/>

### **Swimming:**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Park and Recreation operates two outdoor pools (\$1 a day), 8 free spraygrounds, one public beach (Ramsey Creek Beach) and offers free swimming lessons.

Ramsey Creek Beach, 18441 Nantz Road, Cornelius, 980-314-1001

Admission free if you park at Cornelius Park and Ride lot, 20300 Sefton Park Road, Cornelius, and take the free shuttle on weekends and holidays. Otherwise the entrance fee is \$5 per car Mon-Thu and \$10 Fri-Sun and holidays for county residents.

Learn about the pools, spraygrounds and swimming lessons:

<https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/free-swim-lessons-cheap-public-swimming/>

**Mint Museum:** Get a summer family membership for just \$50. It gets your whole family free admission to both Mint Museums from May 25<sup>th</sup> to September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mint Museum Uptown, 500 South Tryon Street, 704-337-2000

Mint Museum Randolph, 2730 Randolph Road, 704-337-2000

Also, if a member of your family is an active duty military member, your whole family gets free admission to many museums in the area and across the country from Memorial Day through Labor Day through the Blue Star Museum program.

More information Mint Museum: <https://www.mintmuseum.org>

Big list of free days at Charlotte museums: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/free-days-at-charlotte-museums/>

Information on Blue Star Museums: <https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/free-museum-admission-all-summer-to-active-military-and-families/>

**Discovery Place's Welcome Program:** If your family receives EBT or WIC benefits, you can visit any Discovery Place museum for \$1 a person, as many times as you want. This includes Discovery Place Kids in Huntersville. Just show your EBT card or a WIC voucher at admission and a valid North Carolina or South Carolina ID.

<https://www.discoveryplace.org/blog/have-you-heard-about-discovery-places-welcome-program>

**Charlotte Mecklenburg Libraries:** There are 21 branches of the library system, and all offer free activities for families every day. The library offers a Summer Break program that rewards kids with prizes for time well spent.

Call for the schedule, or visit online: <https://www.cmlibrary.org/>

**Summer Meal Program:** Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, with funding from the Department of Agriculture, offers free breakfast and lunch in more than 30 schools for kids of all ages. In past years, families have not needed to fill out any application or show proof of need to participate.

<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/cns/Pages/SummerFoodServiceProgram.aspx>

**Charlotte on the Cheap's** motto is: Have Fun. Be Cheap. The website features a full calendar of events for all ages, including a big list of free events every week (often over 100!) You can sign up for a daily email that will keep you in the know. Email [jody@charlotteonthecheap.com](mailto:jody@charlotteonthecheap.com) with questions.

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