



How to make the most of summer

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Remember when summer meant lazy days roaming the neighbourhood in a bathing suit, sucking on a popsicle? Well, it's time to get the kids to put down the Game Boy, step away from the laptop and get back to summer basics.

Here are some new ways to find summer fun:

Beach babes: Summer just isn't summer without a trip to the beach. Toronto's Cherry Beach is a great spot for paddling and people-watching, but sandy beaches abound in the GTA. Milton's [Kelso Conservation Area](#) features a family-friendly sandy beach, cool water and plenty of green space. On the Niagara Escarpment, [Christie Lake](#)'s natural swim area has a sandy beach and tall pines. Hamilton's [Fifty Point Park](#) claims to have one of the warmest and cleanest beaches at this end of Lake Ontario.

Star gazing: Summer stargazing is out of this world. Backyard sky-watchers can easily spot constellations such as the Summer Triangle, or bright streaks from the August Perseid meteor shower. But for the best view, head to the [David Dunlop Observatory](#) 123 Hillsvie Dr. in Richmond Hill, where the first black hole was discovered.

Peek through telescopes set up on the lawn on weekly observation nights, or attend all-ages star talks, hosted by space experts. Take a look through Canada's largest optic telescope and spot a nebula, galaxy, or even the rings of Saturn. If you have a dark backyard, you can catch the Perseid meteor shower streaking through the night sky beginning in the first week of August. The show peaks on Aug. 12 and 13, and is best after midnight and before dawn. Check the Weather Network's [sta-gazing page](#) for tips on constellations <http://www.theweathernetwork.com/stargazing/caon0696>

Hit the trail: There are endless trails in and around the city. Make a family project of hiking portions of the 800-km. [Bruce Trail](#) that runs along the Niagara Escarpment from Niagara to Tobermory. There are plenty of [family-friendly route maps](#) for the main and side trails. Or strap on a bike helmet and explore sections of the 900-km. [Waterfront Trail](#), which links waterside communities between Niagara-on-the-Lake all the way to the Quebec border. For hot and sticky downtown days, take the ferry over to the breezy [Toronto Islands](#), but skip the carnival atmosphere of Centre Island in favour of biking or walking the trails on Wards Island or Hanlan's Point.

Gone fishing: Pack a tub of worms and drop a line for a lazy afternoon. Land a bass or rainbow trout at [Heart Lake Conservation Area](#), largemouth bass in High Park's Grenadier Pond, rainbow trout at [Glen Haffy Conservation Area](#), or northern pike and panfish at [Valens](#)

Conservation Area. For info on what fish are in season, what's good to eat, and how to get a fishing license, check out the [Ministry of Natural resources Urban Fishing website](#).

Sweet relief: Kids, candy and summer are the perfect combo. The convenience store is fine, but for a best-parent-ever award, lead an excursion to one of the GTA's fab candy stores. Unionville's Old Fire Hall Confectionary, 170 Main St., features treats for the kids, and gorgeous handmade truffles for parents. North York's [Johnvince Foods](#) carries your sweet hearts desire in bulk. Downtown, Bulk Mine, 655 Yonge St., stocks British imports, nuts and all flavours of jelly beans. Sweet!

Comics: What kid hasn't whiled away lazy summer days with Betty and Veronica, Superman or the Green Lantern? A trip to the comic book shop is definitely in order. If superheroes aren't a fave, Japanese manga is a great way to entice reluctant readers. Just make sure you find the kid-orientated stories. And don't forget the [Toronto Public Library](#), which has a huge collection of graphic novels free for the borrowing — *Toon Books*, *Benny and Penny*, and *Zita the Spacegirl!* are great picks for the three-to-seven-year-old set. [The Beguiling](#), 601 Markham Street, Toronto, and [One Million Comix](#), 531 Yonge Street, Toronto, are good bets.

Rainy Day: The fun doesn't end when the rain rolls in. Sure, indoor playgrounds are choc-a-bloc in the burbs. But a rainy day offers the perfect chance for a field trip. Hamilton's super [Children's Museum 1072 Main St. East, offers exhibits that enable kids to make their own TV shows, or serve food in a kid-sized diner. Racers with a need for speed can rev. their engines on the figure-eight track at Vaughan's NASCAR Speedpark](#). Richmond Hill's [indoor wave pool](#) is a great spot to ride out the storm. And no summer is complete without a round of mini-golf: [Putting Edge](#) has indoor greens that glow-in-the-dark.