

Take the family on a May escape

Activities abound a short distance from Calgary

JODY ROBBINS
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

The upcoming long weekend might herald the unofficial start of the summer, but that doesn't mean you're destined for spring cleaning and trips to Home Depot.

There's plenty of affordable action allowing families to ditch DIY for a weekend without blowing the entire summer budget. So go ahead and get away from it all — just don't try to do it all in one weekend.

Canmore

The world knows Banff, but locals know Canmore. Barrel down the Bow Valley Parkway and enjoy the views, but hold off submitting those peaks until the snow pack melts.

Instead, take the tots to the annual Children's Festival at the Canmore Collegiate High School on May 21. Organizers are ready for sun or rain (and who are we kidding, even in May that could mean snow).

Crafts, performances and outdoor activities are laid out for kids ages three to 10.

If swarms of excitable children have left you hankering for some peace and quiet, head to Cougar Creek for an easy family walk along the river bed.

Even easier is taking a seat at the Iron Goat for gastro-pub style food, including a robust children's menu and a panoramic vista of Three Sisters, Ha Ling and the Rundle Mountain range.

Cochrane

Closer to home, the town of Cochrane encourages families to swap the circus of the city for their circus-themed annual Children's Festival.

It's also on May 21 at the Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre. Expect crowd pleasers such as Flyin' Bob Palmer, jugglers and magicians to entertain the troops.

There are pony rides and, weather permitting, hot air balloon rides.

That's something special anywhere, any time of year.



Courtesy, Kootenayrockies.com

The pool at Fairmont Hot Springs has long been a picturesque weekend retreat for Alberta families.

If You Go

- Canmore Children's Festival: www.canmorechildrensfestival.com/node/7
- Cochrane: www.cochrane.ca
- Sunshine Village: www.skibanff.com
- Little Britches: www.hrchamber.ca
- Big Horn Rodeo: <http://carolinechamber.ca/big-horn-rodeo-parade-2/>
- Fairmont: www.fairmonthotsprings.com

Sunshine Village

Dust off the golf clubs if you must, but don't pack away skis and snowboards just yet. Boasting the best snow in 40 years, Sunshine Village defies the international definition of "ski season" by staying open until May 23.

The season ends with a bang or, more accurately for the brave, a splat into the frigid slush tank. But you don't have to be a daredevil to appreciate the 83rd annual Slush Cup.

Anyone can rock it in the Rockies with live music, BBQ and beers on Trapper's patio. If your kids are too young to chase you down the mountain, the Tiny Tigers Day Care and Ski School accepts children aged 19 months to six-years, which makes the day fun for them and carefree for you.

High River

For a small town preview of a big



Calgary Herald Archive

Sunshine Village's 83rd annual Slush Cup is sure to make a big splash with participants and spectators alike.

city party, High River on Victoria Day is where you'll want to be for the Little Britches Parade and Rodeo.

The parade starts at 10 a.m. and is the real deal — you know, where kids are actually allowed on the street to catch the candy tossed off the floats and the marching bands never end.

Warning: if city kids aren't used to horses and their consequences, they might bring home some souvenirs on their cowboy boots.

Afterwards, follow the locals to the Hitchin' Post Drive-In for post-parade HP burgers, seasoned fries and ridiculously thick milkshakes

(real ones). In the afternoon, little cowpokes aged 6 to 14 years can strut their stuff at the Rodeo Grounds in events such as barrel racing and mutton busting.

Caroline

If you're looking for less parade and more rodeo, mosey on over to Caroline for the Foothills Cowboys Association's first rodeo of the season.

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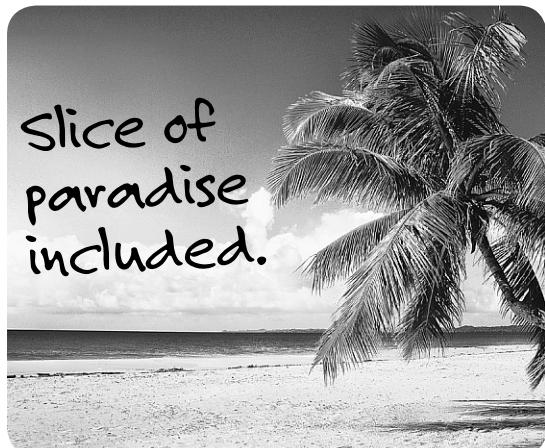
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