

# Daily Herald

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## Destination DuPage

### Vacation getaways are as close as our own backyard

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Dennis Kmiec could hardly contain himself.

Going up and down on the water slide with his own tube, the 34-year-old was having the time of his life with friend Veronica Assmar and her 7-year-old son.

"This is great," Kmiec said, dripping wet from head to toe.

It may sound like the Wisconsin Dells. But Kmiec's excellent adventure was at the Mayan Adventure water park inside the Elmhurst Holiday Inn, just a few miles from his home in Addison.

Everyone knows the clock is ticking on the lazy hazy days of summer.

And, sad to say, there's just not enough time to pack up the car and head out to far-off destinations before school starts.

But you can squeeze in a vacation close to your own backyard without having to pay for gas a long trip would gobble up or the expense of a last-minute flight.

DuPage County may not seem like a premier vacation destination.

But there's plenty for families to do here — it's just a matter of knowing where to go.

A few short miles can take residents to far off places while staying close to home, said Skip Strittmatter, president of the DuPage Convention and Visitors Bureau.

One example is the Mayan Adventure. The 26,000-square-foot indoor water park with a tropical theme at the Holiday Inn is part of a \$30 million renovation project at the Elmhurst hotel.

The park features a children's water activity island, lazy river, birthday party rooms and a 300-gallon dumping bucket.

It is touted as the first indoor water park at a hotel in the Chicago area, said Marc Gordon, president of the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association.

If Central America isn't your dream destination how about Japan?

Families can "Jump to Japan" courtesy of a package deal offered by the Fairfield Inn and the DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville.

Activities at the Fairfield, such as Japanese fish painting, sushi classes for children and a traditional tea, complement the special exhibit at the museum.

But getting away in DuPage should also include the great outdoors.

Families can go camping, fishing, boating, biking, tubing or practice archery at the Blackwell Forest Preserve.

With roughly 62 campsites at the Warrenville park, DuPage County residents only need shell out \$10 a night for non-electrical and \$15 for electrical shelters.

Given the short distance and array of activities, Blackwell suits people like Jerry Moran of Wheaton just fine.

Moran came to the preserve along with his wife and father, plus his niece and nephew, who were visiting from South Korea.

"If for some reason they don't enjoy it, we're five minutes away (from home)," he said, "so we can just bail out."

On any given weekend, families will shell out about \$100 for the camping experience, said Beth Schirott, senior public affairs specialist at the DuPage County Forest Preserve District.

The trend of families spending more time close to home hasn't gone unnoticed at Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale.

This year, the resort attracts roughly 50 families each weekend with its redesigned Kids Vacation Station, which offers arts and crafts, games and dive-in movies at the indoor pool. Professional storytellers and animal shows make appearances on select weekends.

Meanwhile, parents can relax on the 18-hole golf course or at the resort spa. At night, there's live entertainment, such as jazz.

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