

## Staycations

by Sandy Kreps

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*"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."* -Leonardo da Vinci

With the tight economy, many families are feeling the pinch. Those extravagant vacations to faraway places are a distant memory. The perfect alternative is the popular "staycation." Fortunately the Dallas/Ft. Worth area has a lot of great places nearby for a fun weekend that's light on the budget and much greener than flying or driving to distant lands.

### How to Plan a Great Staycation

- Since a staycation is a vacation without the hassle, try to get OUT of your house if possible and enjoy a local hotel or camping area. If you do stay at home, promise yourself you won't worry about what "needs" to be done around the house, just for this weekend. You're on vacation!
- Check out the city's tourism department or request brochures from the Texas travel center. Peruse the Internet for even more ideas. Drop into a book store or the library and look for books about the area, including history, travel and even cookbooks.
- Take your camera and treat yourself to a tour of the city. Use fresh eyes and act like a tourist. Try a restaurant you haven't eaten at before. Visit some museums or other local attractions you've never been to before.
- Enjoy the outdoors by spending time by the pool or camping.
- Eat local. The green option is to choose local food. Plus it brings an element of excitement if you're avoiding the chain restaurant in favor of the mom-and-pop cafe you've never tried.
- Treat your staycation like a learning experience -- since you're close to home, you can experiment with new places to check out, expanding your stomping ground.

### A Few Places in DFW

Here are some great places to consider when planning your DFW staycation.

- **Lake Texoma:** Less than two hours away, Texoma has waterfront restaurants, state parks, golfing, boating, swimming and a hiking trail. You can rent jet skis and other equipment easily. With camping, cabins and resort hotels, you've got options for how much roughing it you want to do.
- **Grapevine:** Great Wolf Lodge, with a huge indoor water park and a central location in Grapevine, is a great place to staycation with kids. <http://www.greatwolf.com/grapevine>. Another fabulous option is the Gaylord Texan, a luxurious resort offering wine tastings, decadent

restaurants and lush indoor gardens with a San Antonio Riverwalk-style area. <http://www.gaylordtexas.com>

- **Fossil Rim/Dinosaur Valley:** In Glen Rose, about 75 miles southwest of Dallas, check out the Dinosaur Valley State Park and the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. With dino footprints, a 45-foot model of a T-Rex and ancient rock formations, Dinosaur Valley is an outdoor adventure suitable for the whole family. Fossil Rim Wildlife Center has an outdoor wildlife park with zebras, giraffes, rhinos and more, so this area is great for getting back to nature. Do some hiking, or go swimming or fishing in the river. Try the Foothills Safari Camp for an unforgettable night's rest. <http://www.fossilrim.org>; [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/dinosaur\\_valley/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/dinosaur_valley/)
- **Arlington:** With theme parks, planetariums, museums and both the Texas Rangers Ballpark and the Dallas Cowboys' stadium, there are a million things to do. Six Flags and Hurricane Harbor are always favorites.

Get everyone involved in planning and exploring the local options for a memorable vacation.