



Family Getaways

One Family's Fun • By Deborah Abrams Kaplan

5 Great Indoor Escapes in the Bay Area

On rainy spring days when the backyard is too soggy and our local playground has worn out its appeal, I take my five-year-old daughter, Dori, and two-year-old son, Zachary, to one of our

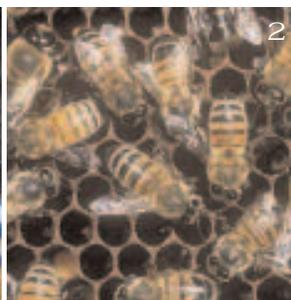
area's hands-on children's museums. We've explored them all, from the famed Exploratorium to these five lesser-known but equally fun destinations.

1 Bay Area Discovery Museum

There isn't a more picturesque location than this spot right on Sausalito's waterfront below the Golden Gate Bridge—but that's not what matters to the kids! Dori pretends she's an angler reeling in plastic fish from atop a rocking boat in the replica Fisherman's Wharf. Zachary never gets tired of the Lookout Cove play area—the best little kid playground around, by far—with a sandbox inside a partially sunken shipwreck and tide pools with scores of rubber sea stars (badm.org; \$8.50 for adults, \$7.50 for kids ages 1 to 17).

2 Coyote Point Museum If the jests that zoom low past this San Mateo bayside nature museum don't grab my kids' attention, the museum's exhibits always do the trick. Dori is perpetually fascinated with the museum's collection of enormous whale jaws, while Zachary could spend hours watching the hundreds of busy honeybees in the encased hive. The indoor and outdoor paths take us through butterfly gardens and by owl, river otter, and snake habitats (coyoteptmuseum.org; \$6 for adults, \$2 for kids ages 3 to 12, and free for ages 2 and under).

3 The Tech Museum of Innovation In the heart of Silicon Valley, The Tech gives a kid-friendly take on science and technology: young visitors can program their own roller coaster rides, command a robotic arm to spell their names with blocks,



and perform simulated heart surgery on a mannequin. While some of these exhibits are a little too high-concept for Dori, she enjoys hopping into the museum's mini submarine and "navigating" it around the ocean floor (thetech.org; \$10 for adults, \$7 for kids ages 3 to 12).

4 Zeum Like The Tech, this San Francisco art and technology center attracts everyone from preschoolers to high-schoolers. We make a beeline to the clay animation studio to film a stop-motion movie using our own clay creatures. Little hams can get costumed and perform skits on the soundstage, adding special effects and music with the easy-to-use computers. Fun souvenir: copies of your movie or performances are available on DVD for \$5 each (zeum.org; \$8 for adults, \$6 for kids ages 3 to 18, and free for ages 2 and under).

5 Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose This museum's real ambulance and fire engine make Zachary a happy camper as he "drives" the other passengers. At the WaterWays exhibit, Dori gets in on the action, loading plastic balls into the exhibit's tubes, where they're sucked up and spit across the room into a flume of water. We can't leave the museum without making corn husk dolls and assembling, baking, and serving fake pizzas in the replica Italian pizzeria (www.cdm.org; \$7 for visitors ages 1 and up, free for under age 1).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BAY AREA DISCOVERY MUSEUM; DONALD SPECKER/ANIMALS; EARTH SCENES; LINDSTROM PHOTOGRAPHY; WILLIAM FAULKNER/ZEUM; JOHN ELK III/LONELEY PLANET IMAGES

