

ROAD TRIP

| Juvenile Fun — For Adults Too

WHERE: Annapolis.

WHY: Riding a pony, racing a go-kart, playing on a choo-choo and just being a kid.

HOW FAR: About 65 miles and 90 minutes without stops from Potomac.

These days, being a parent is in many ways being a chauffeur . . . driving kids to soccer and swimming, piano lessons and parties. Why not ditch the routine and take a drive just for the fun of it?

First, let the kids indulge their sweet tooth with a shaved ice coated with cherry, watermelon, blueberry or more than a dozen other flavors (tiger's blood?!) at Jed's Shaved Ice in Potomac. Make the Nerf basketball shot, and your syrup-laden slushy is on the house.

Down the road in Bethesda, Imagination Stage offers classes in acting, dance and other theater arts for youths. "The Borrowers" — based on Mary Norton's

books about the tiny people hiding in your home who supposedly have all those things you can't find (nail clippers, a left sock or two, pennies) — has mostly morning shows and is generally geared to the 4 and older set.

In the District, Rock Creek Park is a must. At the Horse Center, adults and children can take a trail ride (12 and older; reservations required). Younger ones can go on pony rides, take lessons or even attend equestrian camps. Don't forget to bring some carrots to feed the horses. Next door at the Nature Center, check out a hive of bees at work (safely behind a window) or attend a free class in the planetarium on the night sky Saturdays and Sundays at 4 p.m. (7 and older) or Sundays at 1 p.m. (4 and older).

Another wondrous place is Watkins Regional Park. This 850-plus-acre recreational area includes a nature center with owls, hawks, reptiles and amphibians. Miles and miles of hiking and biking trails can be found, plus 34 campsites, tennis courts, mini golf and fields for soccer, football, baseball and softball. Hop aboard the miniature train, or stroll through the park's Old Maryland Farm to take a hay ride and pet the livestock.

As you drive toward Annapolis on Route 214, resist the temptation of Six Flags America and continue on to a much, much smaller venue: the Chesapeake Children's Museum. The quaint facility features a seven-foot replica of the human body with not-so-quaint details (prepare for a gut check — literally). Wanna be an astronaut? The NASA exhibit will show you the tools needed to get on the road to outer space. Afraid of the dentist? Don't be. Take a seat in an actual dentist's chair and play the patient or the dentist. The museum holds a drum circle on the third Sunday of each month at 5 p.m.; bring your drum or any other percussive instrument and play along. And everyone loves climbing aboard the 10-foot boat at the dock inside the museum: Put on a life jacket, pretend you're catching crabs and, of course, rock the boat. (C'mon — even the grown-ups do it!)

— Matthew Graham

Road Trip maps are available online at www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip, as are addresses and hours of operation (be sure to check before you go). Have an idea for a trip? E-mail roadtrip@washpost.com.



Jed Jaffe and his sons, Dylan and Logan, serve up a classic summer treat at **Jed's Shaved Ice**.

