

OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO,

AND THE THINGS YOU'LL SEE:

There are plenty of family-friendly places to go in Harrisonburg. The Explore More Discovery Museum, located downtown, has been voted the Best Kid-Friendly Venue in the Valley, and features interactive exhibits that include a science lab, an art studio, an auto service center, and a TV station. Go to ExploreMore.com for current hours, admission fees and events. Bets are that the adults in the group will be just as intrigued by what this museum has to offer as the kids!

Another place for the whole family is the Larry Shifflett Fire Museum, open Monday through Friday, 9-4. This museum displays uniforms, equipment, medals, photographs, and the city's first fire alarm.

Grab lunch at one of Harrisonburg's variety of family-friendly eateries, like Jess' Lunch a local family favorite – featuring hot dogs, chili dogs and hamburgers or try Ruby's Arcade for some pizza and games.

The John C Wells Planetarium, JMU's state-of-the-art facility, has different events throughout the year, all free; notably, the first Sunday of every month is designated as "Science Sunday...For Girls!" Check their website for programs the whole family will enjoy. Watch a realistic projection of the night sky onto a full dome, and learn about space missions, extrasolar worlds, and constellations. Rocktown also boasts The James Madison University Mineral Museum; this small "gem" of a museum has over 600 crystal and gemstone specimens from all over the world. Watch ordinary minerals glow in the dark when placed under an ultra-violet light, creating a spectacular display. Call 540-568-6421 for hours.

Weather permitting, explore the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum, and look for the whimsical wooden toadstools, kid-sized furniture carved from tree trunks, and other surprises along one of the main trails. Or head over to one of the city's 10 parks, which offer a variety of walking trails, playgrounds, sports fields, and picnic-friendly rest areas. Make sure to consider A Dream Come True Playground in your afternoon plans; the completely accessible play area is a haven for kids, with rainbow arches, shade structures, a hammock swing, a draw wall, a pavilion, and family comfort stations.

And remember, the Shenandoah Valley's underground caverns are open year-round, no matter what the temperatures or weather events are above ground!