

[SEND TO PRINTER](#) | [CLOSE WINDOW](#)

Cures for Cabin Fever

Getting out with the Kids

BY MELISSA GEBHART



Stuck in the house? Are the kids climbing the walls, furniture and anything else they can use for traction? Here are some tried-and-true remedies to combat the cold-weather blues.

Bay Model Visitor Center

Built by the Army Corps of Engineers to determine the effects of proposed projects, the Bay Model in Sausalito is a 1.5-acre indoor hydraulic model of the entire San Francisco Bay Region and Delta, complete with simulated tides, water flow and currents from a bird's-eye view. It has plenty of interactive hands-on exhibits that not only keep kids busy, but also teach them about water conservation. Also on site are the Marinship exhibit, chronicling the history of the World War II ships built and launched right at the Bay Model site from 1942 and 1945, as well as fresh- and saltwater-aquariums.

Location: 2100 Bridgeway, Sausalito. Hours: Tues–Sat 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Cost: free, donations welcome. 415.332.3871, spn.usace.army.mil/bmvc

Conservatory of Flowers

The best prescription for weathering a long winter is a steamy tropical vacation, and what could be better than one with none of the hassle? Open the doors of this white-domed glass building resembling a fairy-tale palace, and you're greeted by a rush of balmy air and towering palms. Immerse yourself in a lush world of over 1,700 exotic plants from 50 tropical countries, including bananas, orchids, giant Amazonian lily pads and the fascinating carnivorous pitcher plants. Kids also get to see plants that produce many of their favorite treats such

as chocolate, vanilla and cinnamon.

Location: JFK Dr., Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Hours: Tues–Sun 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Cost: Adults \$5, youth (12–17) \$3, children (5–11) \$1.50, 4 and under free. Free first Tues of the month. 415.666.7001, conservatoryofflowers.org

De Young Museum

Get cultured at the edgy de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park. Closed for a complete remodel and reopened in October 2005, the textured-copper-faced de Young is a great place to take kids when it's raining buckets, as the convenient underground parking in the Concourse Garage keeps everyone dry. Frequent visitor Heather Pedersen of San Anselmo and her two girls say the must-see is the tower observation deck. Step off the elevator to find floor-to-ceiling windows and panoramic San Francisco views. Of course, there is also the extensive collection of art from the United States and the Americas, Africa and the Pacific. Pop into the de Young Cafe for healthy seasonal selections of local foods and dine with a view of the sculpture garden featuring a giant safety pin. Take advantage of free art classes on Saturdays for 3-to-12-year olds, taught by professional artists at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Location: 50 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr., Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Hours: Tues–Sun 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Cost: Adults \$10, youth (13–17) \$6, under 12 free. 415.863.3330, thinker.org/deyoung

Mill Valley Community Center Pool

Water may be everywhere outside, but this is water you actually want to be in. The indoor pool is open year-round for splashing fun and features a two-story corkscrew slide for thrills and a hot tub for a therapeutic dip after. There is something for everyone—open swim for the family, lap swim for the exerciser and family swim in the shallow area for those with little ones.

Location: 180 Camino Alto, Mill Valley. Hours: Call or check website for schedule, as times vary. Cost: \$5–\$6 kids (2–18), \$7–\$8 adults. 415.383.1370, millvalleycenter.org

Muir Woods National Monument

When a breath of fresh air is just what everyone needs, Mill Valley resident Flavia Kirz gets her two young boys out to Muir Woods. Miles of paths under the old-growth redwoods provide endless adventures for energetic kids. “There are fewer people, the trees provide protection from the rain and the stream is full,” Flavia says. Steelhead trout may be spotted spawning in Redwood Creek and you might also encounter the elusive banana slug. Look for a “bit o’ the green” around Saint Patty’s Day when the redwood sorrel, our own native version of the four-leaf clover, emerges. Wrap up with soup or hot chocolate in the snack shop and peruse the extensive selection of books by local authors in the visitor center.

Location: Hwy. 1, Mill Valley. Hours: 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Cost: \$3 adults, youth under 16 free. 415.388.2595, nps.gov/muwo

Paint Pottery

Let your kids explore their creative side at their local pottery studio. Nine-year-old Annabel Vernon of San Anselmo says Doodlebug is her favorite place to paint, while her younger brother Isaac prefers the games. For those farther south, Mill Valley's Mimi Pottery Place is a favorite. Both these spots welcome drop-ins, but call ahead to make sure there's space.

Locations: Doodlebug, 641 San Anselmo Ave., San Anselmo, 415.456.5989,
doodlebugmarin.com.

Mimi Pottery Place—Handmade Ceramics Studio, 237 Shoreline Hwy., Mill Valley, 415.388.8668

Plant Summer Bulbs

March is a great time to get some physical therapy by putting in summer-blooming bulbs like begonia, calla, crocosmia, dahlia, lilies and gladiolus. Garden centers and nurseries will have them available, or go mail-order through such sources as Brent and Becky's or Van Bourgondien Bulbs. Put on the rain boots, grab a trowel and take the kids outside for some Mom-approved playing in the mud. As a general rule, dig a hole three times the size of the bulb, add sand for good drainage, place the bulb and cover firmly. Your work will reward you with blooms all summer long, when the rain is but a faded memory.

804.693.3966, brentandbeckysbulbs.com; 800.622.9997, dutchbulbs.com

Redwood Empire Ice Arena

(a.k.a. "Snoopy's Home Ice")

Chill out at this Swiss-style arena, opened in 1969 by Peanuts creator Charles M. Schulz and called one of the most beautiful ice rinks in the world. "Puppy Practice" on Sunday mornings offers a group lesson for \$7 adults, \$5.50 kids, including skate rental. Chairs are provided on the ice for unsteady skaters and to ferry tiny ones. Get fortified by the fire in the Warm Puppy Cafe with a snack of hot chocolate and French fries. To make the drive even more worthwhile, visit the Charles Schulz Museum right next door for a healthy dose of Snoopy humor.

Rink Location: 1667 West Steele Lane, Santa Rosa. Hours: Generally 12:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m. with additional evening skate times; call ahead to verify, as schedule may change. Puppy Practice, Sun 10:30 a.m.–noon. Cost: Weekends \$9 adults and over 11, \$7 kids 11 and under, skate rental \$2. 707.546.7146, snoopyshomeice.com

Museum Location: 2301 Hardies Lane, Santa Rosa. Hours: 11 a.m.–5 p.m. weekdays (closed Tues), 10 a.m.–5 p.m. weekends. Cost: \$8 adults, \$5 kids. 707.579.4452, schulzmuseum.org

Young Performers Theater

Get a dose of drama at this children's theater at Fort Mason. Young actors and adult professionals perform seven different plays over the year that are great hits for the whole family. March features James and the Giant Peach, the familiar story of a boy, his insect friends and their adventures inside a magical peach. Be sure to call ahead for reservations, as it fills up. They even throw birthday parties that include play attendance, food and party space.

Location: Fort Mason Center, Building C, San Francisco. Hours: Sat 1 p.m., Sun 1 and 3:30 p.m. Cost: \$9 adults, \$6 kids under 13. 415.346.5550, ypt.org