



Don't know where to go? Our guide has all the answers for mums on any budget

# Great fun days out



Spend £65+ and visit...

## LEGOLAND Total £94

**WHERE?** Windsor, Berkshire  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £34, child £26. Under threes are free  
Legoland offers families of all ages the chance to let their imaginations run free, with child-powered rides, interactive attractions, rollercoasters for bigger kids, astonishingly accurate Lego brick models, live shows and more. Even three year olds can take a turn at L School, Legoland's driving

- All prices correct at time of going to press.
- We have based prices on a family of four (two adults and two children) where one child is five or over and the other child is two or under.

school, and smaller tots will love Fairy Tale Brook boat ride and the Duplo play areas.  
**MORE INFO** [legoland.co.uk](http://legoland.co.uk)  
**TEL** 08705 040404

## FLAMINGOLAND Total £65 approx

**WHERE?** Malton, North Yorks  
**HOW MUCH?** Prices 2007: Over threes £20, family (2&2) £74, under threes are free. Prices 2008 unavailable at time of going to press

This theme park, zoo and holiday village in 375 acres of parkland offers an exciting day out for all the family. As well as a huge flock of flamingos plus other wild animals, including rare and endangered species, there are rides for all ages, such as The Lost River Ride through African plains.  
**MORE INFO** [flamingoland.co.uk](http://flamingoland.co.uk)  
**TEL** 0870 752 8000

## ALTON TOWERS Total £67

**WHERE?** Staffordshire  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult from £25, child from £17 (age 4-12), family ticket £80 (2&2 under

- Toddlers gain free admission in most cases.
- Family tickets offered by individual attractions are usually based on two adults and two children, which means both children are over toddler age.

12s). Children under one metre are free

The UK's leading theme park has something for everyone. While it's famous for having some of Europe's top rides for thrill-seekers, such as Nemesis and Oblivion, there's plenty for smaller members of the family. Old Macdonald's Farm has lots to do, including the Dung Heap adventure playground, and everyone'll love the fab Charlie and the Chocolate Factory ride.  
**MORE INFO** [altontowers.com](http://altontowers.com)  
**TEL** 08705 204060

Spend £40+ and visit...

## CHESSINGTON WORLD OF ADVENTURES Total from £63

**WHERE?** Chessington, Surrey  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult from £23, child £16 (under 12), family ticket for three from £63 (prices include new Sea Life Centre). Children under one metre go free

Home to a unique blend of exciting rides, amazing animal encounters and live shows. From Bubbleworks to tiger cubs, Dragon's Fury to Squirrel Monkey Walk, Chessington World of Adventures and Zoo promises a hassle-free,



## How to do a theme park

A visit to a theme park is likely to take up a decent chunk of your summer trips budget, so here's our no-hassle guide to theme parks...

- **VISIT THE WEBSITE BEFORE YOU GO.** Pick the attractions that you definitely want to visit. If they have an online map, plan your route.
- **SOME THEME PARKS HAVE PREFERENTIAL PARKING.** Parking as close to the entrance as possible is worth splashing out on (usually

about £5) as it'll get your tired kids back to the car quicker.

- **GET THERE WHEN THE DOORS OPEN.** Beat the crowds on the entrance gate and be ahead of the queues for the top rides.
- **HEAD TO THE FURTHEST AWAY RIDE FIRST.** Then work your way back. Most people just go on to the first ride they see - meaning big queues at the start of the park. You'll beat the queues and see more of the park.

## WE WENT TO... LEGOLAND

**Ellie Hughes, 36, from southeast London, visited Legoland with sister Poppy, daughter Maddie, three, and son Rafferty, 21 months**

'We went during autumn half-term just before Legoland shut for the winter - so it was busy and a bit chilly as there isn't really much indoors (and lots of the rides involve getting wet, which we didn't fancy given the weather!). But we had a fab day and there was enough that Maddie and Raff could do together (though he got cross when Maddie went on rides for kids over 90cm!).

'We all loved Fairy Tale Brook - you go round on a boat looking at Lego fairy-tale characters - and there were some outdoor play areas for a run-around to break up the queuing.'

### PROS

- 'The toilets and baby change we used were clean and child-friendly.'
- 'The Lego link meant that as soon as we arrived in the car park - where they have lots of Lego characters dotted about - Maddie was very excited about what was in store.'
- 'The food was surprisingly good - OK, we had burgers and chips for a treat, but they were tasty, upmarket burgers and chips!'

### CONS

- 'The queues.'
- 'The Jack and the Beanstalk puppet show was too crowded to see.'
- 'The Duplo playground isn't behind barriers - we had a worrying few minutes when Maddie excitedly explored and got lost.'



action-packed family day out.  
**MORE INFO**  
[chessington.co.uk](http://chessington.co.uk)  
 TEL 0870 444 7777



**CHESTER ZOO** Total £40.85

**WHERE?** Upton by Chester, Chester  
**HOW MUCH?** Donation prices: adults £14.95; children (3-15) £10.95; family (2&2) £49.50  
 Chester Zoo is recognised for its work protecting animals and plants under threat. It has unique animal attractions, like the Twilight Zone Bat Cave. There's a tropical rainforest, Central American jungle and jaguar house.  
**MORE INFO** [chesterzoo.org](http://chesterzoo.org)  
 TEL 01244 380 280

**SEA LIFE** Total from £40.85

**WHERE?** Various locations  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £14.95, child £10.95, under threes free, family £49 (prices vary at each

centre, those given are for Birmingham)

Sea Life offers the chance to come eyeball-to-eyeball with everything from shrimps to sharks. Go on the website to check out which particular creatures on are display at the various centres.

Spend £35+ and visit...

**CADBURY WORLD** Total £35.95

**WHERE?** Birmingham  
**HOW MUCH?** 2007 internet

prices: adult £13, child £9.95 (4-16), under fours free  
 Indulge your toddler's (and your!) greatest passion with a visit to the chocolate paradise of Cadbury World. Ride through a chocolate wonderland, check out the playground, browse the world's biggest Cadbury shop and drink liquid chocolate.  
**MORE INFO** [cadburyworld.co.uk](http://cadburyworld.co.uk)  
 TEL 0845 450 3599

**LEEDS CASTLE** Total £39.50

**WHERE?** Near Maidstone, Kent  
**HOW MUCH?** Adults £15, child (4-15) £9.50, under fours free  
 Set on two islands on the River Len in the heart of Kent, Leeds is your picture-perfect idea of a castle. Cross the moat to visit the 1000-year-old castle or take in other attractions in the grounds such as the Knights Realm adventure playground or the toddlers play area. There are regular falconry displays with audience participation.  
**MORE INFO** [leeds-castle.com](http://leeds-castle.com)  
 TEL 01622 765400

**LONDON EYE** Total £37.50

**WHERE?** London's South Bank, nearest station Waterloo  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £15, child (5-15) £7.50  
 Perfectly placed to see many of London's most recognisable landmarks, including Big Ben



**WE WENT TO... Leeds Castle, Kent**

*Kevin McCreeth visited Leeds Castle with Lily, three, Alex, one, and friends with similar-aged children*  
 'Leeds Castle is impressive and has a proper moat, which the older boys in the group loved. Touring the castle itself was tricky. Alex is exactly the wrong age; he was a nightmare, running under the red ropes towards the priceless antiques and slamming doors.  
 'Outside the castle, the picturesque grounds have loads of child-friendly attractions, including a play area and turf maze which they all loved.'  
**PROS**  
 ● 'Jean-Louis, Lily's friend, was chosen to help in the

falconry display - which meant they paid attention.'  
 ● 'The ticket price seems expensive, but it gives you unlimited entry for a year.'  
 ● 'The outdoor café area was child-friendly.'  
**CONS**  
 ● 'The distances are pretty long for small legs. There is a land train, but there wasn't room for all of us.'  
 ● 'You can't take buggies in the castle. Fair enough, but they're meant to loan out slings for babies and we didn't see any sign of them.'  
 ● 'There are lots of signs around the moat, warning of deep water. It's not behind any kind of barrier, though, so it was nerve-wracking being near it with small kids.'



and the Houses of Parliament. The slow-moving glass pods have seating and you'll have plenty of time to take in the views.  
**MORE INFO** [londoneye.com](http://londoneye.com)  
 TEL 0870 990 8883

Spend £30+ and visit...

**THE EDEN PROJECT** Total £35

**WHERE?** Cornwall  
**HOW MUCH?** Adults £15, children £5 (aged under 18

in full-time education), under fives go free. Family tickets (two adults and three children) £36. Register your ticket to make it into an annual pass  
 The Eden project is immediately recognisable with its distinctive biomes - the humid tropics biome, warm temperate biome and outside biome - that impressively replicate the different climates around the world. But there are loads of other different activities for your children to enjoy, too, with hideyholes, shortcuts, a willow sandpit

*Booking tips*

- Always check out the attraction's website as they may have special offers and discounts for online booking.
- Sometimes an annual pass can work out more cost effective than a one-off ticket. They generally cost slightly less than the price of two visits.
- Groups can get discounts and you won't be long getting a group together if you count your siblings and their kiddies, too!
- If you book online, always take a print-out of the confirmation with you on the day.
- Don't be overambitious on a one-day visit - you may not get to see everything properly, so take your time. Remember that you can always go back another day.



and a fantastic storytelling area.

**MORE INFO** edenproject.com  
TEL 01726 811911

**DIGGERLAND**  
Total £33.75

**WHERE?** There are Diggerlands in Devon, Durham, Kent and West Yorkshire  
**HOW MUCH?** From £11.25 for everyone over the age of three  
Diggerland guarantees a fun-filled, action-packed day out for kids and adults of all ages. Children (and adults!) can ride in and drive different types of conservation machinery, including dumper trucks, mini diggers and giant diggers – your kids will be amazed by the experience! And there are heaps of opportunities to learn about the workings of the different machines from the enthusiastic fully-trained instructors



constantly on hand to answer all your tot's questions.  
**MORE INFO** diggerland.com  
TEL 08700 344437

**BLUE PLANET AQUARIUM**  
Total £35

**WHERE?** Cheshire Oaks, Cheshire  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £13, children £9 (3-15), under threes free  
Watch sharks swim over your head in the 70m Aquatunnel – one of the longest in the world. Have a hands-on experience

with underwater creatures and don't forget to visit the state-of-the-art Octopus Island playpark with its ship wreck and bouncy whales.  
**MORE INFO** blueplanetaquarium.com  
TEL 0151 357 8804

Spend £20+ and visit...

**AT-BRISTOL**  
Total £26.95

**WHERE?** Harbourside, Bristol  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £9.90, child £7.15 (donation price)  
Find out what it's like to be pregnant, move water uphill and lots more at this hands-on science museum, which aims to engage every inquisitive tot. Toddlers will love dressing up as dinosaurs in the Fossils and Funny Bones exhibit.  
**MORE INFO** at-bristol.org.uk  
TEL 0845 345 1235 (bookings)

**THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS AT KEW**  
Total from £24.50

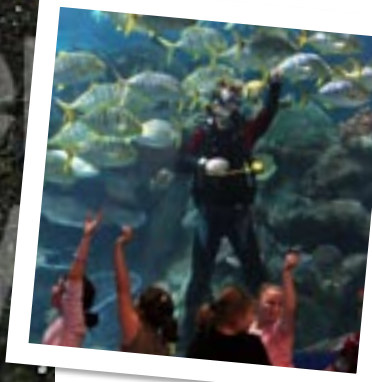
**WHERE?** Kew, west London  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £12.25, under 17s free

Kew Gardens has extended massively in recent years



<NEWSFLASH>

Thomas Land is opening at Drayton Manor, near Tamworth, in time for Easter. Thomas fans will love the themed rides featuring beloved Thomas characters.



Take a good photo

It's very difficult to take good photos of toddlers and babies, they're either shutting their eyes, turning away or running off altogether – and that's when they're not crying. But that won't stop you taking loads of snaps on your day out. **HERE'S HOW TO GET THEM AS GOOD AS POSSIBLE**

- Some cameras have baby settings for the common problem of baby red eye.
- Make the background as simple as possible. You don't want to develop your photos only to find there's a statue poking out of someone's head.
- Get in as close as you possibly can, so that your family fills the frame. Try standing on a chair and taking the photo looking down.

WE WENT TO... The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew

Vicky Ribbens, husband Mark, and daughters Rosie, four, and Florence, 18 months, from Hampton, Middlesex, are annual passholders at Kew  
'We love Kew Gardens and go there all the time.

Sometimes we just visit Climbers and Creepers soft play, where the girls can take part in craft activities or run around for a few hours.

'If we're feeling more adventurous there's plenty for them to explore in the Gardens – Rosie loves the Minka House and Bamboo Garden and the peacocks that stroll around.

'The Badger Sett is also great fun. Kew is one of the few places that the whole family enjoys – the girls have fun while I feel relaxed and revitalised by the beautiful location.'

**PROS**

- 'Plenty of different cafes and picnic areas, we like the one above Climbers and Creepers.'
- 'Heaps to do but easy to break down into three-hour chunks for a do-able visit.'
- 'Different activities and events over the year, such as a mini farm and old-fashioned carousel.'

**CONS**

- 'Street parking is limited and the car park is very expensive.'
- 'You can get stranded on the far side of the Gardens (away from cafes, toilets) if you don't plan properly.'
- 'Climbers and Creepers has an automatic door: children can 'escape' very easily so you have to keep your eyes peeled.'

WE WENT TO... Diggerland, Kent

Annette and Neil Riley, from London, went to Diggerland with Leo, three, Sophia, one, and Neil's dad and stepmum  
'Diggerland was marvellous fun for parents and kids. The entry fee covers loads of rides and activities (driving tractors, operating diggers, JCB rides – I could go on). There was also a tummy-turning fairground-style digger ride. I'd read a few web reviews by mums who said how much the dads got out of it, but I enjoyed it, too, and the boys had a great time.'

**PROS**

- 'A theme park that doesn't feel glossy and

commercial (just serious about diggers!). Over five we get to drive by ourselves, with plenty of adventure for the younger ones, too.'

- 'A compact site with plenty to do in a day.'
- 'Discounts for parties (and an indoor area for tea with digger lunchboxes).'

**CONS**

- 'Making you exit through the gift shop (and it's a really good gift shop just to make things worse).'
- 'There's a big outdoor picnic area, but they need one indoors, too, in winter.'
- 'There was a selection of coin-operated diggers and cars right by the exit which cost us at least an extra £10 for two small boys.'

for you and your tot to explore.

**MORE INFO** kew.org  
**TEL** 020 8332 5655

**WIMPOLE HOME FARM & GARDEN**  
**Total £29.05**

**WHERE?** Cambridgeshire  
**HOW MUCH?** Hall and farm: adult £11.45, child (under 15) £6.15 (standard price; gift donation is slightly more). Farm only: adult £6.30, child £4.25. Garden only: adult £3.15, child £1.65

Wimpole Home Farm is a 200-year-old working farm with thatched farm buildings and 18th century rare breeds amongst the more modern farming equipment. Children can groom donkeys, collect eggs and attend the daily milking sessions. There's also a fun adventure playground and a great play



area with mini pedal tractors for your tiny tots.  
**MORE INFO** wimpole.org  
**TEL** 01223 206 000

Spend up to £20 and visit...

**WONDERLAND**  
**Total £16.50**

**WHERE?** Telford  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £5.50, children over two £5.50  
Wonderland is where nursery rhymes and fairy tales come to



**WE WENT TO... Battersea Park Zoo**

*Pam and Paul Whiting, from Ickenham, Middlesex, took grandchildren Violet, four, and Zach, two, to Battersea Park Children's Zoo*

'This is a lovely little zoo that's not crowded - the crowds at larger zoos can be intimidating for small children. Both Violet and Zach got to pet plenty of animals, who were generally very patient about having a two year old grab at them.

'We were there for feeding time which they loved. There is a nice playground, too, although we overheard one parent complaining that he'd paid to get in and his kids

wanted to spend all day in the play area!'

**PROS**

- 'Violet loved the underground tunnels you climb down to view the meerkats at their level.'
- 'Zachary interacting with the parrots was hilarious.'
- 'A small zoo that was a good size for us. And if you have the energy afterwards, Battersea Park is just there!'

**CONS**

- 'The park itself is quite a long walk from the nearest tube (1km), then there's all the walking when you arrive. You have to pay for parking.'
- 'Not a great selection of food. We took sandwiches and just got drinks there.'
- 'You have to exit through the gift shop - nightmare!'

life - children will discover their favourite characters and houses around every corner. Great attractions include Dinosaur Valley, Wonderland Maze and the Mad Hatter's Tea Cups.  
**MORE INFO** wonderland telford.com  
**TEL** 01952 591 633

**ODDS FARM**  
**Total £19.85**

**WHERE?** High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £6.95, child (2-16) £5.95. Prices vary depending on the time of year and attractions available

Odds Farm offers a cool mix of fun, play and education, with animal activities, sand pits and diggers, under-fives area, ride-on tractors, soft play

and more. Activities vary with the seasons.  
**MORE INFO** oddsfarm.co.uk  
**TEL** 01628 520188

**BATTERSEA PARK CHILDREN'S ZOO**  
**Total £18.50**

**WHERE?** Battersea Park Children's Zoo, south London  
**HOW MUCH?** Adult £5.95, children (2-16) £4.50. A family ticket (2&2) is £18.50

Battersea Children's Zoo offers an exciting animal experience that combines a zoo, animal encounters and play area. From giant rabbits to miniature Shetland ponies, this zoo gets kids up close to the animals.

**MORE INFO** batterseapark zoo.co.uk  
**TEL** 01298 814099

*Make a scrapbook*

How best to remember your great fun day out? Make a scrapbook, of course. Children as young as two love collecting bits, such as tickets, receipts, postcards and anything else they think is important (even something as dull as a sweet wrapper will feature largely in their memory of the day if sweets are an unusual treat!). Take a bag and just pop things in it. At home, another day can be filled by putting together the scrapbook - which can be any notebook you like. Help your tot glue in bits, draw pictures and write captions. You'll both love looking back over it in the years to come.

You could also try...

**OUTDOOR POOLS**

If you live too far from the beach to make it a regular trip, why not find your nearest outdoor pool? Sun plus water are all you and your tot need for the perfect summer's day. Stonehaven Open Air Pool (stonehavenopenairpool.co.uk) has filtered salt water and slides; Ilkley Lido (bradford.gov.uk) has views over the Yorkshire Dales; Saltdean Lido in Brighton (01273 888308) has a bouncy castle, sandpit and baby pool; Hampton Open Air pool, Middlesex (hamptonpool.co.uk) has a children's pool and shady grassy areas.

**RAILWAYS**

Most toddlers will get a real kick out of seeing a real steam locomotive, its coaches, signalling systems and stations. Find out which ones are nearest you, or your holiday destination, by visiting ukrail.uel.ac.uk. Thomas the Tank Engine visits some lines such as the Bluebell Railway - time your visit to coincide with his.

**TOY SHOPS**

A cheap morning out (or even a completely free one, if you've got the willpower to say no to all the 'Mummy can I have...?') toy shops are great if it's raining. Head to the nearest big one to you (Early Learning Centres are a good bet) or go to the biggest one of all, Hamley's on London's Regent Street. Just looking around and watching the demonstrations is fun.