



## Overland Park shows families it knows how to play.

BY LISA WATERMAN GRAY



**Left: The engaging Museum at Prairiefire.**

**Above: Hot pizza from Grimaldi's.** Visit Overland Park photos

mire the International Sculpture Garden. Children can play in the Train Garden and Children's Discovery Garden.

Connect with more early history at Deanna Rose Children's Farmstead, named in honor of a local police officer who died in 1985 in the line of duty. Children can see more than 200 animals and birds of prey, explore vegetable and flower gardens, catch a fish, or ride a pony. Don't miss the operating blacksmith shop, a vintage bank, and a fishing dock. The farmstead reopens for the season April 1. Admission (3 years and older) is \$3.

# All in the Family

Overland Park, Kan., is a great city for families. In 2017 and 2018, WalletHub, a personal finance website, named Overland Park as the best city for families in the country. And what makes this largest city in Johnson County a great spot to raise a family can translate into a fun weekend for you and your brood.

## GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY

The national survey pointed to the quality parks and playgrounds in Overland Park, which was incorporated in 1960. Hiking and biking enthusiasts love the 17-mile asphalt Indian Creek Bike and Hike Trail system. It links Kansas and Missouri, four communities, and numerous parks along Indian Creek. Visit a playground or have a picnic near the trail, which passes through the city.

Nearly 6 miles of trails wind through the 300-acre Overland Park Arboretum & Botanical Gardens. With eight natural ecosystems, visitors can enter a gorgeous live painting in the Monet Garden or ad-

## PLAYING INDOORS

Overland Park's largest indoor center, Oak Park Mall, boasts 175 stores and restaurants, but the younger set will be more interested in an old-school attraction — the Double Decker Venetian Carousel. More modern pursuits here include Build-A-Bear Workshop® and the American Girl store.

Part history lesson and part play space, Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center's historical exhibits include a kitschy but authentic 1950s All-Electric House. Downstairs, children love exploring KidScape's miniature city market, theater, and hospital room.

Parents seeking cultural attractions for their budding artists will want to check out youth art classes on Saturdays at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art on Johnson County Community College campus. The cost is \$15 per session, and instruction is offered during the academic year.

For more active pursuits, visit Apex Climbing Gym and scale a wall or tackle the indoor obstacle course. A daily pass is \$12 plus the cost to rent climbing shoes. Try skydiving inside a wind tunnel at iFly Kansas City for ages 3 and older. Prices start at \$69.95.

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## VISITING PRAIRIEFIRE

A variety of pursuits can be found at Prairiefire, a mixed-use development south of downtown Overland Park. Bowl or play bocce ball indoors at Pinstripes while enjoying fresh food with an Italian flare.

Inside the Museum at Prairiefire, major exhibits change frequently, while children learn more about science in Discovery Room. Your brave boy or girl can hold a hissing cockroach in the Invertebrate Zoology section. Other areas showcase geology, anthropology, and field biology.

Shops are plentiful here, but Fat Brain Toys with its colorful play stations is a family favorite. When it's time for lunch, give Grimaldi's Coal Brick-oven Pizzeria a try. Their mozzarella cheese is handmade.

Located just west of Prairiefire, SCHEELS — the mega outdoor chain store — calls to kids with a 16,000-gallon aquarium and massive indoor Ferris wheel.

In addition, animated figures of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln recite historical speeches, while lifelike wild animals pepper a two-story mountain.



## DOWNTOWN OVERLAND PARK

Downtown Overland Park is a historical neighborhood with plentiful shopping and diverse family-owned restaurants.

Young chefs ages 9 to 14 can take cooking classes at the Culinary Center of Kansas City.

Overland Park Farmers Market features dozens of vendor stalls stocking farm-fresh produce and local products. The market opens April 20 for the season and

has hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays through September.

## WHERE TO EAT AND SLEEP

The greater Kansas City area is gaining a national reputation as a gastronomic destination. Barbecue and fried chicken will forever be linked to this region. Overland Park's Q39 South is a crowd favorite for barbecue. Classically trained chef Rob Magee's menu features award-winning brisket and ribs. The children's menu features barbecue sandwiches, a burger, chicken tenders, and mac-and-cheese.

Because of beef and pork rations during World War II, Stroud's switched its focus from Kansas City barbecue to pan-fried chicken. Today, Stroud's in Overland Park creates classic chicken dinners using family recipes. A children's menu is available.

Most kids like grilled cheese sandwiches, and Best Regards Bakery has daily specials of this favorite. Venny's Gooey Butter Cake provides a sweet ending.

Stay at Homewood Suites by Hilton Kansas City/Overland Park, a AAA Three Diamond property. Located on Marty Avenue near Interstate 435, this comfortable hotel offers one- and two-bedroom units with small, well-equipped kitchens. Cribs and high chairs are available. Enjoy free WiFi, complimentary breakfasts, and evening social events, as well as the outdoor pool.

Whether you're a history buff, a foodie, a shopaholic, or an exercise fan, Overland Park offers plenty of great options for family entertainment. •

*Lisa Waterman Gray is a contributor from Overland Park, Kan.*

**BEFORE YOU GO**

For more details, contact Visit Overland Park, (913) 491-0123, [visitoverlandpark.com](http://visitoverlandpark.com).

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**The All-Electric House** Visit Overland Park

