Miami: top 10 must-visits for kids under 10

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From creating art masterpieces to meeting a ‘liger’ (read on to discover more), Miami blogger MommyMafia picks out 10 of the coolest things for kids to do in the Magic City.

1. Pérez Art Museum (PAMM)
While it’s certainly not a children’s museum, PAMM is doing its best to introduce kids to the world of modern art. Pick up a Family Guide on your way in, which is filled with excellent tips — such as asking children questions about certain art pieces as they explore the museum (‘What do you see? What does it make you wonder?’). Every fourth Saturday, three-to-five year-olds can register for PAMM Art Storytime, an in-gallery story reading followed by children creating their own personal art ‘masterpiece’ relating to the story.
Open: Tuesday–Sunday, 10am–6pm; Thursday, 10am–9pm. Admission: adults $16; youth (ages 7–18) $12; children (under six) free.

2. Miami Children’s Museum
A must-visit for any family visiting the city is the Miami Children’s Museum. It’s a treasure trove of interactive exhibits and engaging play-filled activities for your little ones. Watch them be amazed by the Sketch Aquarium, where they can draw their own digital fish to the sea wall or giggle in excitement while they dress up in fire-fighter outfits and ring the fire siren.
Open: daily 10am–6pm. Admission: general admission $18; children under one, free.

3. Jungle Island
Just across from the Miami Children’s Museum, Jungle Island has fun and educational animal shows, and rare and exotic animals including a ‘liger’ — yes, that would be a hybrid of a lion and a tiger — that call Jungle Island home. The petting zoo and playground area are popular stops, but don’t miss Jungle Island’s Parrot Cove beach — Miami’s only private beach.
Open: Monday–Sunday 10am–5pm. Admission: adults $34.95; children $26.95.

4. Wynwood Walls
Encourage the young artist within with a trip to the Wynwood Walls. The former warehouse district is now famous for its street art and larger-than-life murals. Make sure to pack a camera because there will be lots of Instagram-worthy moments to capture. Local’s tip: while most families will want to plan their visit to this artistic neighbourhood during daylight hours, save the well-known Second Saturday Art Walk for a mum-and-dad date night (if you can get a babysitter). It can get a little too crowded for strollers and overwhelming for the littlest visitors.
5. Zoo Miami
Family favourite Zoo Miami has over 3,000 animals in its care. Your first action after entering should be to rent a bike, which will help you conquer the massive zoo. A Children’s Zoo area complete with camel rides, petting zoo and a carousel is popular for little ones, but don’t leave the park without taking time to feed the giraffes. Be sure to pack swimsuits and an extra set of clothes for kids that will want to play in the large splash pad and water play areas.
Open: weekdays 10am– 5pm; weekends and holidays 9:30am– 5:30pm. Admission: adults (ages 13+) $19.95; children (ages three-12) $15.95; children (two and under) free

6. American Airlines Arena
If you’re planning a trip to Miami with mini basketball players in tow, you may want to take a look at the Miami Heat’s schedule before you come to try and fit a home game into your schedule. Not a big sports fan? You would be wise to check out the Arena’s schedule anyway, as there are always lots of family-friendly bookings, including Disney On Ice shows, plus the Harlem Globetrotters make annual stops in Miami. If you have some time before or after a show, take a short walk over to outdoor Bayside Marketplace. The waterfront plaza offers lots of restaurant choices, a carousel and even a Pirates Adventure boat tour.
Open hours and admission depends on events

7. Grapeland Water Park
Only open during summer months, this water park is perfect for cooling off from the Miami heat. There’s a special shallow area for toddlers, the faster Pirate’s Plunge slides for older kids and a lazy river for those who would rather let the river do the hard work for them. Local’s tip: get there early — Miamians are notorious for getting a late start to their days, so if you get there when the park opens, you will be ready to leave as the crowds start coming in.
Opening hours vary based on season, check website for schedule. Admission: adults (ages 14+) $15; children (ages two-13) $7

8. Miami Beach
No trip to Miami is complete without at least one day set aside to visit beautiful Miami Beach. Pack your beach bag (and lots of sunscreen) and head over to the stretch of sand anywhere around 1st and 8th Street in South Beach, where the area will be a little less crowded and less touristy then across from famous Ocean Drive (7th-14th Streets). If you don’t want to bring your own, you can rent umbrellas and sun beds from the local vendors. Prepare to build sandcastles and swim and splash in the aqua waters. Finish your beach day with a fantastic cool treat at Dylan’s Candy Bar on Lincoln Road. Be prepared for wide eyes and giant smiles when they step into this neon-coloured paradise. If you think your family is up to the challenge, order up the ‘1 Bet You Can’t Sundae’: ten scoops of ice cream, ten toppings and, of course, the mandatory whipped cream, sprinkles and cherry.

9. Marlins Park
Marlins Park, the home of the Major League Baseball Miami Marlins, has many on-going promotions that are great for families, such as Kids Eat Free Wednesdays, Firework Fridays, and Sunday Funday. On the latter, kids aged 12 and under can run the bases after the game. And with a brand-new retractable roof, Miami rain and heat won’t be an issue. For those that like to prepare for these things in advance: Marlins Park will host the 2017 MLB All-Star Game.
Open hours and admission depends on events

10. Miami Seaquarium
You’re going to want to put a little pre-planning into a Miami Seaquarium visit because some experiences, like the popular Dolphin Encounter and the Seal Swim require advance reservations. Dolphin Encounter guests (suitable for ages five and up) have the opportunity to do thing like ‘shake hands’ or kiss a dolphin; while those on the Seal Swim (ages five and up and who can swim) get to swim freely alongside their new seal friends.
Open daily, 8.30am-6pm. Admission: adults $40.99; children (ages three-9) $31.99