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10 ways to find adventure and activity in your own backyard

 [Kari Svenneby](https://activeforlife.com/author/karisvenneby/) (<https://activeforlife.com/author/karisvenneby/>)  June 1, 2016  2 Comments » (<https://activeforlife.com/10-ways-to-backyard-adventure/#comments>)

Anyone who knows me understands that being outdoors with my family is one of my top priorities. When I take my kids to Europe for summer vacation, it's a busy month spent visiting with family and friends in Norway, in addition to enjoying outdoor adventures, as I always try to explore a new destination.

This year we're preparing for our great Northern Norway backpacking adventure by train, boat, and foot, with a stop to trek across a glacier in a Norwegian national park. Providing my kids with unique outdoor adventures from all over the world is one of my core values and I hope it creates a unique worldview for them and establishes an outdoor adventure lifestyle later in life.

However, being outdoor kids is not just about hardcore outdoor adventures. It is also about enjoying simple outdoor fun in your community and being able to create your own fun without parental input. I value unstructured outdoor play as highly as our family's hardcore adventures. Since my kids were babies, I have encouraged free outdoor play beginning in our tiny starter apartment, to now, in our small urban backyard, with these simple strategies.

Here are my 10 ways to encourage independent backyard play for all ages:

1. Add water

The beach and pools are great places to go to on hot days, but never underestimate the old fashioned fun you can have in your backyard with friends in your neighbourhood, and even on a balcony in a high-rise. Fill different sized buckets and containers with water and let the kids play with them for fun.

Water tag: Get the kids and yourself in swimsuits and let the play begin. Soak a sponge in water and decide who is going to be "it". They can even chase and throw the soggy sponge at other players to make them "it".

Kiddie pool: If you have a kiddie pool, it can be a great way to have some water fun in the backyard; splashing and having boats and toys floating in the pool.

Have a rain shower: Put on swimsuits on a warm rainy day and enjoy a rain shower.

2. Add dirt

Make a fairy garden with fairy houses. If you have fairy-lovers in your family, planting a garden complete with flowers and a fairy house (<http://www.activekidsclub.com/spring/art-crafts/fairy-house-inspiration.html>) is always a welcome addition to the backyard.

Start a family garden (<http://www.activekidsclub.com/fresh-air-living/feature/digging-in-the-dirt.html>) **together.** Let the kids be in charge of maintaining it.

Make a mud pie kitchen. One of our most popular “attractions” in our garden is our mud pie kitchen (<http://www.activekidsclub.com/summer/arts-and-craft/mud-pie-kitchen.html>). It can be done very simply with old kitchen utensils and bowls set up in a designated area in your garden.

3. Add sand

Have a spot for sand play in your backyard. Even on a balcony you can add sand in a big container and have a mini balcony sandbox. Simple, easy, and a must-have for outdoor play with toddlers.

4. Add loose parts

Rocks, shells, PVC pipes, pool noodles, and even bringing indoors toys outside add interest and create opportunities for creativity and movement. Rocks and shells are great for imaginary play and to use for fairy houses, mud pies, and sand castles. PVC pipes are excellent for pretend play but also for active play. Trust me, the kids will know how to use them.

5. Add a hiding spot

You don't have to have a playhouse for a hiding spot. Put up a tent or make a fort out of chairs or a cardboard box. Another cool idea is to make a tent out of sunflowers (<http://letslassothemoon.com/2011/08/28/sunflower-house/>).

6. Add active elements

Is there room for a swing or a climbing wall? Tie two ropes between trees or sturdy poles and try to balance on the bottom rope while holding onto the upper rope. A store bought slack line may also be used for better support.

7. Add active transportation

Make sure bikes, roller skates, skateboards, and scooters are easily accessible for riding on areas safe from traffic. Let the older kids stretch their wings and get a group of them to ride together around the neighbourhood.

8. Add craft items

Put sidewalk chalk, paint brushes, watercolours, and soap bubbles in an easy to access place so your kids can get them whenever outdoor art inspiration visits.

9. Add backyard toys

Make sure you have on hand a variety of balls, frisbees, a parachute, and hula hoops, and that they are easily accessible for spontaneous play.

10. Add tech

Bring the technology outside if your kids are having trouble embracing the outdoors. Have an outdoor photo hunt, geocache, or encourage them to make an outdoor movie. Host an outdoor movie night in your backyard for your kids' friends.

Adventures don't have to be big to count as memorable for kids, as it starts in your own backyard and neighbourhood parks. Have a simply wonderful magic summer wherever you are.

2 responses to “10 ways to find adventure and activity in your own backyard”

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(<http://www.borntobeadventurous.com/2017/05/22/ways-encourage-unstructured-outdoor-play/>)



Sabrina (<http://www.mamawildandfree.com>) says:

March 28, 2017 at 5:43 am (<https://activeforlife.com/10-ways-to-backyard-adventure/#comment-499323>)

Great reminder! I frequently forget that we have a really nice yard and that time in the sandbox is just as important to my son as time in the mountains.

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Active for Life is the place where parents go to learn about activities for kids. Physical education leads to physical literacy, which is critical for child development. Physical literacy also gives active kids the best chance to someday compete in high-performance sport. Kids activities are organized here by age and gender, so parents can find fun and engaging ways of making sure their children get the recommended daily amount of physical activity. Activities for toddlers are aimed at the development of fundamental movement skills, while activities for children build on the fundamentals to establish more complex sport skills that can be used to play any number of sports and activities. Exercises for kids enhance their physical development. In the early stages of child growth, early childhood development is dependent on appropriate exercises for children. Because kids play is good for kids health.

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