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Summer fun on the cheap

These family activities will take the heat off your wallet

By Donna Isbell Walker • Staff writer • June 17, 2010

School has been out for a couple of weeks, and parents are probably already hearing the endless summer refrain of "I'm boooooored!"

All that free time can make kids – and their parents – a little stir crazy. But for many of us, expensive vacations and trips to the amusement park just aren't in the budget this summer.

Never fear. You can find lots to do right around the Upstate for little or no cost.

Here's a look at some entertainment options that are easy on the wallet:

- Free movies. There's nothing like going to the movies, where you can spend a couple of hours in a cool theater and be entertained at the same time. There are several options for free movies around town this summer, both at movie theaters and the public library.

Regal Hollywood 20 and Cherrydale Stadium 16 offer free films Tuesdays through Thursdays, while Great Escape in Simpsonville has free screenings on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Admission to all movies is first come, first served.

This week at Hollywood 20 and Cherrydale 16, "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs" and "Wallace and Gromit" at 10 a.m. And at Great Escape, "Monsters vs. Aliens" at 9:30 a.m.

For more info about the free movies at Hollywood 20 and Cherrydale, go to www.regmovies.com. For details on Great Escape shows, check www.greatescapetheatres.com.

The Greenville County Library System is having a Summer Weekly Movie Series, featuring films with a water theme. The movies begin at 6:30 p.m. each Thursday at various branches, and admission is free. Call 527-9293.

The schedule is: June 17, "Splash," Hughes Main Library; June 24, "Bird of Paradise," Fountain Inn branch; July 1, "The Affairs of Cappy Ricks," Pelham Road branch; July 8, "Beneath the 12 Mile Reef," Taylors branch; July 15, "Utopia," Simpsonville branch; July 22, "Captain Calamity," Augusta Road branch; July 29, "Titanic," Greer branch.

- Water parks. The Upstate is practically overflowing with water parks this season, with two new ones, as well as the popular Discovery Island, now in its sixth year. For info on any of the water parks, call 288-6470.

Otter Creek, located at 101 W. Darby Road, Greenville, has several slides, including a body slide and a speed slide, plus a leisure pool. Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 1 to 6 p.m. Sunday through mid-August. Admission: \$10 for visitors 42 inches tall and up, \$8 for 41 inches tall and under, and for senior citizens, and \$3 for Land Lovers.

The new 7th Inning Splash, 1500 Piedmont Highway, Piedmont, has a baseball theme in conjunction with nearby Lakeside Park. The water park has a 5,000-square-foot splash pad with water fixtures shaped like baseball paraphernalia. There's also a traditional swimming pool and a bowl slide. Hours: noon to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, and 1 to 6 p.m. Sunday through mid-August. Admission: is \$7 for visitors 48 inches tall and up, \$6 for 47 inches tall and under, as well as senior citizens, and \$3 for Land Lovers.

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Discovery Island, 417 Baldwin Road, Greenville, is the longest-running of Greenville's water parks. It has a tube slide, a lazy river, leisure pool and Flow Rider surfing simulator. Hours: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, through mid-August. Admission: \$10 for visitors 48 inches tall and up, \$8 for 47 inches tall and under, and for senior citizens, and \$3 for Land Lovers.

- Zoobilee at Greenville Zoo. The zoo is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a summer full of special programming. Each Thursday, a different aspect of the zoo is spotlighted, starting with a birthday party for Joy and Ladybird, the elephants, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 24. Money raised at Zoobilee events will help fund a medical clinic for the Greenville Zoo's animals. Admission: \$6 for adults, \$3 for ages 3 to 15. Call 467-4300.

- Upstate Shakespeare Festival's "Merry Wives of Windsor." The festival's second and final production of the season explores one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies. It opens at 7 p.m. July 8 at Falls Park. It will be presented Thursdays through Sundays, through Aug. 1, and admission is free. Call 787-4016.

- Friday Campfires in Spartanburg. Walnut Grove Plantation and Price House play host to campfires at 8:30 p.m. the second Friday of each month through September. Each month, a speaker focuses on an aspect of area history. July 9 at Walnut Grove: Re-enactor Gary Pender plays an 18th-century militia member and discusses battles between local settlers and Cherokee Indians. Aug. 13 at Price House: A discussion of frontier religion, led by Mike Justiss of Tryon. Admission: \$5 for adults, \$3 for ages 6 to 17. Kids 5 and under get in free. Call 864-576-6546.

- Friday hikes at Paris Mountain State Park. During the summer months, hikers can explore the Mountain Creek area with a park ranger who'll help kids identify the plants and animals they see. The hikes begin at 10 a.m. June 18, July 2, July 16, July 30, and Aug. 13. On the fourth Friday of the month, the focus switches to the Turtle Trail, where hikers learn to practice the skills that naturalists use. Fee: \$5 per person. Registration is required. Call 244-5565.

- Children's programs at Bob Jones University

Museum and Gallery. The university's two art galleries, one on the main campus and the other on Heritage Green in downtown Greenville, offer several family programs this summer. The following programs are free for children. Call 770-1331.

Exploring Rome With Art, at the main campus, is targeted to kids ages 6 to 12. They can dress up in Roman clothing and explore the world of ancient Rome.

Changing Faces is a program at the Heritage Green gallery, and it gives kids a chance to learn about portraiture through board games, puppetry and interactive games.

Take Your Pick: M&G Scavenger Hunt for Kids, at both galleries, is designed to help children learn by delving into different cultures and time periods, as they discover how ancient objects and people are connected to modern life.

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Make a day of it at the new 7th Inning Splash water park for the price of admission: \$7 and under per person. (STAFF/File)



See "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" for free at the Hollywood 20. (GNS)

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