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## Central Indiana Things to Do

# ENJOY THE TRANSFORMATIVE BENEFITS OF TRAVEL IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

By Crystal Hammon

Every next level of life calls for a new version of you, and travel has always been one of the ways to meet that challenge. In our everchanging world, there are so many different ways to keep growing, learning, achieving new goals, and connecting with others. An impressive variety of Central Indiana organizations have expanded their reach with free and low-cost enrichment programs available to anyone with an internet connection. Here are just a few:

### Learn More About Classical Music

Classical music is for everyone, and it should be shared in a down-to-earth way. At least that's how the folks at Classical Music Indy (CMI) see things. This organization promotes Indy's robust classical music scene with opportunities to hear local classical artists make music. Attend their Virtual Random Acts of Music, or listen to one of CMI's classical music podcasts.

Melanated Moments, hosted by local pianist Joshua Thompson and mega-watt opera star Angela Brown, spotlights classical music made by, for and/or about people of color. Aspiring gastronomes, give a listen to Classical Pairings. Podcast host and musicologist Nick Johnson invites a local chef or mixologist (and sometimes a classical musician) to choose the perfect classical music companion for each epicurean delight. [www.classicalmusicindy.org](http://www.classicalmusicindy.org)

### Attend a Virtual Story Hour

Public libraries have always been the great equalizer in a democratic society, and they now shine brighter than ever with online resources for people of all ages and needs. Librarians at the Greenwood Public Library offer virtual story time. Hear lively read-alouds drawn from children's classics such as *Alice in Wonderland*. Most public libraries have an exhaustive collection of digital books you can download at no cost, and many offer free Wi-Fi from their parking lots. [www.greenwoodlibrary.us](http://www.greenwoodlibrary.us)



Take advantage of the season by embracing the classic front porch hangout, with a social-distancing twist. Getty Images

### Reconnect with Your Community

Salute the Harrison Center for the Arts for reigniting the old-fashioned art of front-porch neighboring, updated with a social distancing twist. Here's how it works: set a time each week (or month) and ask neighbors to get outside on their front porches and balconies. Connect with each other from a safe distance between porches.

Give yourself an uplifting treat when you walk, bike or drive past the Harrison Center to explore window art installations day or night. You'll see art the Harrison Center commissioned from local artists who've been sequestered at home. Ride the Monon Trail and view artworks made by hundreds of neighbors who collaborated on group art projects. These works are installed on a fence along the trail. [www.harrisoncenter.org](http://www.harrisoncenter.org)

### Write that book

Whether you're a seasoned pro or a novice just beginning to hone your writing skills, the Indiana Writers Center (IWC) has virtual programs and classes that can transport you to the next level. The IWC helps writers connect with each other, refine writing and editing skills, and learn the essentials of publishing. If you're serious about writing, these are your people. Most programs have a modest registration fee. [www.indianawriters.org](http://www.indianawriters.org)

### Exercise your mind and body

You don't have to be Jewish to take advantage of the Jewish Community Center. The JCC serves the whole community—children and adults—with online programming in the arts, fitness, early childhood and school-age education, and virtual visits with authors. Some resources are free. Others are available for a modest fee. [jccindy.org](http://jccindy.org)





# Fun Times in Fort Wayne

*Fort Wayne, Indiana beckons travelers with a yen for unique outdoor experiences*

**By Crystal Hammon**

Indiana's second largest city recently upgraded its riverfront with Promenade Park, an urban beauty that opened last August. That makes 2020 the first summer you can add the park to your list of vacation destinations. If you're watching your budget, load the car and drive to Fort Wayne for a few days of affordable outdoor fun. It costs almost nothing to explore the many natural charms of this river city. And you can do it on foot, on a bike, and in some locales, in a wheelchair.

## **Handicap accessible Promenade Park**

Just a block from Fort Wayne's lively downtown, Promenade Park is designed for universal access. Guests of all ages and abilities engage with the city's three converging rivers—the Maumee, the St. Marys, and the St. Joseph.

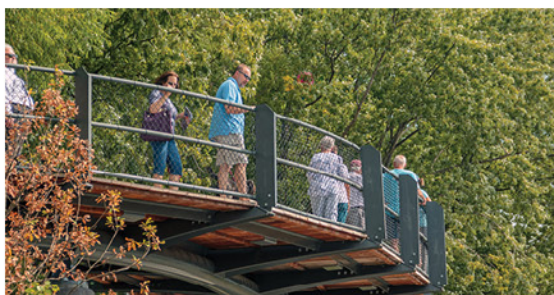
People with upper body mobility can easily load in and out of canoes and kayaks from the park's floating docks. Thoughtful features such as wheelchair-friendly grassy areas and pathways with five-foot turn radiuses make this site doable for guests in wheelchairs. [visitfortwayne.com/promenade-park](http://visitfortwayne.com/promenade-park)

## **Play in the water**

Kids who can't pass a water puddle without taking a plunge adore Promenade Park's fresh water Doerner Kids' Canal, a great place to go when temperatures soar. Swimming in the river is discouraged, but there are other ways to play on the water. Rent bikes, kayaks, canoes and standing paddles at Fort Wayne Outfitters (1004 Cass Street). Or cruise aboard the Sweet Breeze Canal Boat, an authentic replica of the flat-bottom boats that navigated the rivers in the 1840s. [forfw.org/tour-info](http://forfw.org/tour-info)



Kids Play in Doerner Kids' Canal Visit Fort Wayne



Tree Canopy Trail Visit Fort Wayne

## **Sample a rotating menu of locally-brewed beer**

Pause for adult libations at Trubble Riverside Café and Tap, where you can quench your thirst on local ales, IPAs, stouts, and lagers. The tap room, patio and adjacent bier garden are the only places in the park where alcohol is permitted. [trubblebrewing.com/riverside-cafe-tap](http://trubblebrewing.com/riverside-cafe-tap)

## **If you only have an hour**

Practice the fine art of lounging in the adult swings scattered throughout Promenade Park. They're perfect spots to meditate, to woo a suitor, or simply to ogle panoramic views of the river and park.

Another short excursion: stroll along the Parkview Tree Canopy Trail, a meandering, elevated path between the historic Well Street Bridge and the Harrison Bridge. Go in the evening for treetop views of Fort Wayne's downtown skyline reflected on the river below.



## Bone up on Indiana history

Fort Wayne's Old Fort is connected by trail to the riverfront, so you can bike or walk from Promenade Park or Headwaters Park to this historic site—one of five forts built between 1722 and 1815 to stake a claim on this strategically-important spot.

The current site reconstructs the Old Fort as it was in 1815. On reenactment days, you can observe a blacksmith making nails, a tinsmith making bowls, and a bakery with an authentic brick oven. The buildings are only open during scheduled events, but you can stroll the grounds most any day. Admission is free. [oldfortwayne.org](http://oldfortwayne.org)

## Tour Fort Wayne's public art

Fort Wayne is a darling to cycling enthusiasts who also love art. Bring your bike or rent one, and pedal your way through a self-guided tour of outdoor murals and sculpture. In this bike-friendly city, even the bike racks are masterpieces, built for form and function.

Make sure to hit Freimann Square, the green space that adjoins the Fort Wayne Museum of Art. There sits the stunning, red Helmholtz sculpture, a statement piece if ever there was one. The massive steel structure weighs eight tons.

Designed by Mark di Suvero, one of America's most esteemed sculptors, it was gifted to the museum in 1985 and decommissioned in 2013 after a driver crashed into it. The beloved sculpture had to be removed for repairs, but it was reinstalled in 2014, reigniting local pride. Download a map to complete your self-guided tour at [visitfortwayne.com/publicart](http://visitfortwayne.com/publicart).

## Make your trip entirely outdoors

The pièce de résistance in your wholly-outdoor adventure? Camp at Johnny Appleseed Park, named for the legendary icon who planted 15,000 trees on a plot of nearby riverfront land. With scenic views of the St. Joseph River, this pet-friendly park offers tent and RV/camper spaces and a boat ramp. You can also bike or walk a 20-mile path to Fort Wayne's Tillman Park. [fortwayneparks.org/facilities/johnny-appleseed-campground](http://fortwayneparks.org/facilities/johnny-appleseed-campground)

*Crystal Hammon is a writer living in Indianapolis, Indiana*



CAPTION Visit Fort Wayne



Bikers at the Old Fort Visit Fort Wayne



Kayaking down VFW Canal Visit Fort Wayne



Mural by artists Jerrod and Kara Tobias at Fourth and Wells Visit Fort Wayne



Bike rack Back in time by IPFW 2 Visit Fort Wayne