

Zip Lines, Ninja Workouts and Other Fun Things To Do This Summer



Author and her daughter,
harnessed and ready

A Rhode Islander by choice rather than birthright, I live in the Ocean State with my husband and daughter largely because we love the wide variety of fun and interesting things to do here. We'll try just about anything, and the best part of all is that the list is seemingly endless. Here are some of our recommendations for summer 2018:

1) An hour away in Sandwich, Mass, the ***Adventure Park at Heritage Museum and Gardens*** offers five magnificent outdoor obstacle courses complete with zip lines. Participants need to be at least 7 years old and are required to complete a 40-minute training session designed to teach you how to operate your harness, but the experience is well worth the time and effort required for safety training. Once harnessed and armed with an understanding of how to operate the twizzles (locking mechanisms), you are free to ascend. The forest contains a variety of obstacles suspended among the trees: numerous bridges, tunnels, climbing and balancing apparatus, and, best of all, zip lines. You'll spend the day among the trees, secured by your harness onto various cables so that you don't fall down, in some cases, around 30 feet. You'll get a great workout of both body and mind, and you'll spend a day in nature — literally. The obstacles are sturdy, but many are made of wood and rope that blend in with the foliage. It's quiet up in the trees. Although you do hear the instructors and the other participants talking, there is no noise pollution from traffic or industry. It is divinely peaceful. The courses are coded by level of difficulty, and there are rules about how many people can be on the platforms (which are built around tree trunks) between obstacles at a time. We found that there was very little waiting around; occasionally we had to pause behind someone ahead of us, but the pace on each course was comfortable for us. We did witness one rescue; if you find yourself stuck, either unable or unwilling to get off a course because a fear of heights has set in, a trained professional will help you if you call down

from whatever obstacle you're on. 67 Grove St, Sandwich, Mass;
508-866-0199; heritageadventurepark.org

2) Located right at home in Warwick, **Laidback Fitness** offers an excellent indoor ninja workout experience for adults and children. If you've ever watched "American Ninja Warrior" and yearned to be one if only for a couple hours, the Jungle at Laidback Fitness is the place to live out your dream. LF's website describes services and experiences that "specialize in natural movement and emphasize physical competence and play; increased fitness is a side benefit of this practice." Their approach "builds versatility and adaptability, empowers [our] clients to become more adventurous, and equips them with the mental strength and resilience required to overcome life's obstacles!" The facility is essentially an urban workout space / semi-industrial indoor playground made from mostly recycled materials. A huge ladder suspended from the ceiling, the rungs of which are wrapped in colorful duct tape, makes a great set of monkey bars. There's a warp wall, a climbing wall, various ropes and nets, tons of balance equipment and a huge set of rings. During open gym, you are free to use whatever you want, at your own pace. The instructors are awesome — really positive and encouraging, but equally willing to just give you some space to enjoy the equipment. Laidback Fitness offers personal training, group classes, birthday parties and body composition testing year-round. If you haven't been yet, check it out this summer. 2800 Post Rd, Warwick, 401-871-8436, laidbackfitness.com



3) Rhode Island is famous for its coastline, but there's a lesser-known freshwater experience that's well worth the drive north to Burrillville. Tucked into the woods, **Spring Lake Beach** offers plenty of sand, a snack bar and a delightful old-fashioned arcade where you can still play games for a quarter. You can rent a paddle board or a paddle boat to use in a buoyed-off portion of the lake, which is an excellent experience, especially for beginners. A floating dock a ways off shore provides a great swim challenge for adults and kids alike. There are also swimming lessons and lifeguard certification courses available. You can easily spend an entire day at Spring Lake, and you won't have to deal with any of the traffic that comes part and parcel with all of the ocean beaches. 50 Old Hillside Dr, Glendale; 401-568-9474; burrillville.org/parks-recreation/pages/spring-lake-beach

If you're looking for kids' camps this summer, a quick Google search will confirm that RI offers hundreds from which to choose. There are camps for every interest, age group and financial bracket, some full-day, some half-day, some one-week and some two-week. This summer, I share with you a couple of options at my alma mater, Rhode Island College, located at 600 Mount Pleasant Avenue in PVD:

1) **The Rhode Island Writing Project Summer Writing Camp** runs from July 9 to July 20 this year

and offers students in grades K to 12 a supportive and interactive community in which to enjoy writing. The camp is staffed largely by local educators and focuses on a variety of writing models and genres (ric.edu/riwp/Pages/Summer-Writing-Camp.aspx).

2) **The 2018 RIC Summer Sports Camps** offer baseball, softball, tennis, lacrosse, basketball, volleyball and gymnastics to children ages 7 to 15 throughout the summer, and there are both half-day and full-day options (goanchormen.com/camps.html).

On a quieter note, don't forget your local **library** this summer. Many of RI's libraries offer summer reading programs and other activities for kids. My local branch in Lincoln (lincolnlibrary.com) offers blogging opportunities, a babysitting course and numerous crafts and other activities, as well as a variety of events and programs for adults. **The Providence Public Library** (provlib.org), located downtown at 150 Empire St, offers a variety of reading and other learning experiences for both children and adults in a beautiful historic building (which you can tour, preferably on a day that yields scorching temperatures outside). Many libraries offer classes in technology as well. Providence Public has a coding series for teens and everything from Microsoft Office to internet basics for adults. Lincoln regularly runs classes in G-Suite and Microsoft Excel, as well as others. Whatever your town, see what's available for your family this summer at the local library. And don't forget, you can have books from any branch delivered to your local branch for easy pick-up.