

... Or enjoy a “stay-cation” close to home

By Joan Tupponce
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With the economy still gloomy, many families are opting to stay close to home instead of planning a large vacation. Just because you aren't heading out on the highway or jetting off to some distant destination doesn't mean you can't have fun. Greater Richmond has lots to see and do.

Matt Perry, president of Riverside Outfitters (www.riversideoutfitters.net, 560-0068), has activities going on all summer long, everything from camps to guided whitewater rafting trips on the James River through Class II-V rapids.

“Our two most popular activities are the whitewater rafting and our youth adventure camp,” Perry said.

Riverside also offers rentals of canoes, inner tubes, kayaks, paddle boards and mountain bikes, all great for exploring the James River Park System. Bikers will find Richmond has a world-class mountain biking circuit that includes the Buttermilk Trail in the park system.

Adventurers might want to give Riverside's recreational tree climbing a try. You can climb up 40-60 feet to the tree's canopy and walk out on the limbs. The company offers free shuttle service every hour on the hour to and from three spots in the James River Park System for its activities.

Bryan Smith and his wife, Camille, offer more water adventures at Black Dog Paddle (www.blackdogpaddle.com, 57-STAND) where you can participate in stand-up paddling, a sport that started as a lifeguarding technique and is popular on the West Coast as well as resort destinations such as Hawaii and the Caribbean. Smith and his wife teach a variety of classes, including stand-up paddle fishing, paddle racing and paddle fitness, which incorporates yoga moves.

Smith will teach basic classes every Saturday and offer a trip every Sunday.

“This summer we will also be doing trips and tours on the James River near Robious Landing, Dutch Gap and in Matthews County, as well as classes with



Photo courtesy of Black Dog Paddle

Bryan Smith and his wife, Camille, paddle the waterways standing up.



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Kids can feed the giraffes at the Metro Richmond Zoo.

Chesterfield Parks and Recreation,” he said.

And, that's just the beginning. Listed below are some additional activities for your “stay-cation”:

American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar – Learn about the Civil War – this year marks the 150th anniversary – through Union, Confederate and African-American perspectives. 780-1865, www.tredegar.org

Edgar Allan Poe Museum – Take a closer look at artifacts from Poe. 648-5523, www.poemuseum.org

Flying Squirrels – Take in a home game and cheer on the Class AA team alongside Nutsy the squirrel. 359-FUNN (3866)

Henricus Historical Park – Learn more about America's history by visiting the recreated site of the second successful English settlement in the New World. 706-1340, www.henricus.org

Kings Dominion – Check out the Giga-coaster Intimidator 305 that reaches 305 feet, making it the tallest and fastest roller coaster of its type on the East Coast, as well as Water Works, a 20-acre water playground. Starting June 18, you can walk through “Snoopy's Starlight Spectacular,” a million dollar nighttime light and sound experience featuring Snoopy and the Peanuts™ gang. The spectacular will be located along the park's center walkway, from the Eiffel Tower to The Grove area, featuring 1.2 million LED lights. www.kingsdominion.com

Maymont – Pack a picnic lunch and head to Maymont where you'll find Italian and Japanese gardens, the Maymont

House, wildlife exhibits and the Children's Farm and Nature Center. 358-7166, www.maymont.org

Metro Richmond Zoo – Get up close and personal with lions, tigers and giraffes. 739-5666, www.metrorichmond-zoo.com

Peak Experiences Climbing Gym – Try your hand at rock climbing. 897-6800, www.peakexperiences.com



File photo

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden includes a special play area for children.

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden – Enjoy hundreds of blooms and more than 40 acres of plants. 262-9887, www.lewisginter.org

Segway of Richmond – Sign up for a segway tour at the Richmond Region Visitor Center. 343-1850, www.segwayofrichmond.biz

Three Lakes Nature Center – Learn about animals that make their home in the region, and check out the 50,000-gallon aquarium. 262-5055, www.co.henrico.va.us/departments/rec

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts – Meander through one of the top 10 comprehensive art museums in the country with more than 22,000 works of art, including the largest public collection of Fabergé imperial eggs outside Russia and an impressive collection of American art. The museum is open 365 days a year, and admission is free (there is a charge for some special exhibits). 340-1400, www.vmf.state.va.us

Virginia Capitol and Governor's Mansion – Take a guided tour of the extensive renovations at the Capitol and browse through the Governor's Mansion. 371-2642, www.virginiacapitol.gov

Richmond Revolution – You don't have to wait for fall to enjoy football. The Richmond Revolution, an Indoor Football League team, is actually playing outdoors this season at SportsQuest through June. 595-TheQ, www.richmondrevolution.com



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The Richmond Revolution is playing outdoors this year at SportsQuest on Genito Road.