

# Oh No – It's Half Term! What can you do this week?

School holidays can be very costly, even if you're staying at home when everyone else appears to be jetting off to Florida. Fear not though – there are plenty of free or almost-free things to do in Edinburgh; here's a selection:

## GORGIE CITY FARM



If your children enjoy seeing animals, the City Farm is a great place to visit. It has **goats, pigs, cows, chickens, ducks and sheep, plus a Pets' Lodge with rabbits, rats, tortoises, guinea pigs, hamsters – and even a snake called Dougal.** The site isn't large, so even the little ones can manage it quite easily, and once you've admired – and maybe had the chance to handle – the animals, the farm has a lovely **cafe** with home-made food; it's very child-friendly, has free wi-fi and newspapers to browse, and is open every day 9.30-4pm.- Or if the weather's good, you can have a picnic outside.



This week is **Bird Box Week** at the Farm – at 2pm or 2.45pm each day until Friday you can learn about the housing needs of local birds, and make a box to take home or donate to the Farm. It costs £5 to make a box and the Farm recommends that you **book in advance by emailing [education@gorgiecityfarm.org.uk](mailto:education@gorgiecityfarm.org.uk).**



While you're there, you might want to ask about the Farm's **incubator loaning scheme**, whereby schools, colleges – even

workplaces! – can hire out an egg incubator (better ask your school first thought...)



Entry to the Farm is **free**, it's open every day 9.30am-4pm, and lots of buses stop at or very near the gate (**NB** there is no parking on the Farm unless you are a Blue Badge holder – public transport is recommended, and probably much more fun for your children!) The Farm is at **51 Gorgie Road** – full details on the website [here](#).

## **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND – I'M GAME!**



Whilst you do have to pay to go into the NMS's latest **Game Masters** exhibition, this week the Museum is running lots of **free game-related activities**, from fun movement workshops with the **Shuffle Dance Company** (10.30 or 11.30am for ages 4 and under, 1.30 or 2.30pm for ages 5-8; sign up on the day in the Grand Gallery) to a **Power Up Challenge** (drop-in between 10am and 4pm) and **Get Your Game On** (drop-in between 12 noon and 4pm). All activities are free and offered every day until Sunday 22nd February – see the [NMS website](#) for details.

The Museum has lots of fascinating permanent exhibits too – you can visit the **Natural Science, World Cultures and Scottish History** galleries and see everything from a **stegasorous** to the mysterious **Arthur's Seat coffins**. And did you know the NMS houses this? –



Find it in the **Changing Nation** exhibition at the top of the Museum.

The National Museum of Scotland is open every day 10am to 5pm: admission is free. It's in **Chambers Street** – lots of buses

stop nearby, or you can walk from Waverley Station. The Museum has two cafes, plus picnic areas if you wish to bring your own food – or there are plenty of cafes in the area. There are baby-changing facilities on most floors, and everything is accessible by lift or ramp. More information on the [NMS website](#).

## **LIFE ISN'T HARD WHEN YOU'VE GOT A LIBRARY CARD...**

Or so said **Lisa Simpson** – and of course it's true! This week many libraries are offering activities for half-term – at 2pm on Tuesday at the **Central Children's Library** you can meet the **Dogs Trust** and take part in some fun activities:



At **Piershill** you can join in craft sessions (3pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday), also on Tuesday **Drumrae** has a special **Paddington-themed storytime** at 2pm,



whilst at 1.45pm **Portobello** will be hosting **ZooLab** and their collection of mini-beasts!



Meanwhile at 1.30pm on Wednesday, **Corstorphine library** invites you to celebrate the **Year of the (toilet roll) Goat**, and on Thursday at 11.30am you can try **Potato Printing** (both activities are for ages 5-12). If your local library isn't mentioned here, it doesn't mean it's not doing anything – call in and find out. And if your children don't normally go to the library, this week is a great opportunity to get them signed up – many libraries hold weekly craft or story times, plus **Bookbug** sessions for the very young. Almost everything at the library is FREE, so do make use of this wonderful resource (one way that cash-strapped local authorities measure the value of a library is in the number of books borrowed – just

saying...)

## VISIT THE NATIONAL GALLERIES



Image: copyright Alicia Bruce

When my children were little I used to drag them off to our local art gallery (*not* in Edinburgh...) and the most they could find to do was copy the paintings. Not surprisingly, we soon ended up in the tea shop, and even that was clearly intended for those aged 60+ rather than 6. These days the **National Galleries of Scotland** make a huge effort to engage young visitors, with free gallery trails and activities every weekend. For half term, they've laid on some extras. On Friday and Saturday at the **National Gallery** on the Mound you can drop in any time between 2 and 4pm for ***What if the paintings came to life?*** Make puppets inspired by **James Mayhew's** books about **Katie** and her gallery adventures – what happens to your characters next? You decide...



On Sunday it's the turn of the **Portrait Gallery** in Queen Street, with ***From Ballads to Lullabies*** – storyteller **Fergus McNicol** presents music and stories connected to gallery portraits for children aged 7+. There are sessions at 2pm and 3pm; there's no need to book, just come along.



## TAKE A WALK ALONG THE WATER OF LEITH



The Water of Leith offers great walks in both directions – you can start in **Stockbridge** and end up at the shore in **Leith**, or head the opposite way and find the **Water of Leith Visitor Centre at Slateford**, which has interactive exhibitions, plus a

small shop and cafe (outside tables available), toilets, etc, then carry on to the lovely **Colinton Dell**.



At the Visitor Centre you can also record any wildlife you've seen – the lists of other people's sightings are impressive, from **kingfishers to otters and herons to bats and even badgers**. You can buy a map at the Centre for £1, and there's lots more information on the [Water of Leith Conservation Trust](#) website. There are plenty of places to join and leave the walkway – and you can always take a bus back if your children are tired (and there's another entertainment opportunity – you can buy cheap all-day family tickets on Lothian Buses, and for children who usually go everywhere in the car, a ride on the top deck is a treat).

### **#ARTCORE – YOUNG ANIMATORS**



If your child is aged 12-18 and wants to get involved in animation, send them along to the **Central Library** (George IV Bridge) on Thursday. There they can meet the team who will be running Friday afternoon workshops from 27th February, when animator **Bona Bones** will be showing them how to create **storylines, dialogue and story boards, and how to get to grips with animating, editing and adding music**. If you're interested email [fiona@redkite-animation.com](mailto:fiona@redkite-animation.com) or call 0131 555 4604. The workshops will be facilitated by **Red Kite Animation: #artcore** is a two year project led by local arts charity **Out of the Blue**.



### **ZOO ARTS EXTRA – THE SURVEILLANCE GALLERY**



There's more art at **Muirhouse Library**, where you can take part in a **grafitti art and design workshop**. The **Surveillance Gallery** is the outside wall of **North Edinburgh Arts**, and it's already been the site of three exhibitions since it was established by local artist Bob Winton last year.



At this workshop you can share skills and fun whilst creating artwork on paper – then Zoo Arts and the library staff will help you paste it up on the wall. The workshop will take place from 10.30am to 12.30pm on Thursday; contact [North Edinburgh Arts](#) if you'd like to book (booking is optional).



## **FREE CINEMA!**



Going to the cinema with children can be horribly expensive – but there is a place in Edinburgh where you can see films for nothing. **St Bride's Centre** in Dalry offers a different film for children most Saturdays – this week it's ***Lady and The Tramp***. Films start at 10.30am, admission is free, and you can buy choc ices and drinks in the interval for just 50p. An adult must stay with children under 16 years – but who wouldn't want to stay and see this one? Full details on the [St Bride's website](#).



## **GO SWIMMING**



It may seem like a bit of an effort, but swimming is a great way to burn off your children's energy, especially if the weather's not great – and this half term primary school

children can **swim free at Edinburgh Leisure's pools**. There's full information on the [EL website](#) – children under 9 years must be accompanied, and there are rules about the adult: child ratio (all explained on the site) but children aged 9+ can go on their own or with their friends. There's a whole range of pools in the city – try some of the lovely Victorian ones at Glenogle, Warrender, Dalry and Portobello – Portobello Swim Centre is right opposite the beach, so you could combine your outing with a walk along the prom.



## MEET THE AUTHORS



The Danish Cultural Centre is sadly leaving Edinburgh, but before it closes it's hosting several events. On Saturday you can meet some Scandinavian writers of Young Adult Fiction – one the fastest growing genres.

Danish author Merete Pryds Helle and Norwegian writers Maria Parr and Harald Rosenlow Eeg will talk about their work and answer your questions about the creative process, and there will be light refreshments too. Please contact the [Danish Cultural Institute](#) (3 Doune Terrace) at [dci@dancult.co.uk](mailto:dci@dancult.co.uk) if you would like to come – the event begins at 11am and it's free.



Merete Pryds Helle  
– image:  
[Litteratursiden.dk](http://Litteratursiden.dk)

## TAKE A TRAM



Most of us still haven't been on one – so why not take a ride?

You can go as far as the airport or just take a shorter trip. Trams were commonplace to our (well, my) parents, but now they're a novelty – not a totally free one of course, but much cheaper than flying to Florida. A **Family Day Ticket** costs £7.50 and gives two adults and three children unlimited travel on trams in the city zone (ie *not* to the airport) **and** Lothian Buses day services – as well as the novelty of it all, think of the parking costs you'll save!

So this should be enough to fill a few hours of the week. If not, I'm afraid you'll just have to resort to making pancakes....



image: [www.glutenfreestudentcookbook.co.uk](http://www.glutenfreestudentcookbook.co.uk)