

# Grand Rapids is Grand

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Our family getaway to [Grand Rapids, Michigan](#) this past weekend was absolutely the best. We got up early Saturday morning and headed on up. It's under a three hour drive from Northwest Indiana/Chicagoland -- just the perfect amount of time with four kids in our little car.



Because the weather was nice enough for outdoor play, we headed straight for [Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture](#)

Park. When we visited [last month](#), we hadn't allowed ourselves enough time to explore the [Children's Garden](#). This time we went there *first*. And we roamed every square inch! We could easily spend the day there, with the play structures and hideouts and little forts, and the maze!



The Varnum Family log cabin in the Children's Garden was one of the highlights. We had a hard time getting the kids out of there! The vintage folk toys were a big hit. I highly recommend carving out some moments to spend in the cabin playing all the games- especially Skittles. And it's the perfect spot to warm up by a real fire.





Skittles is awesome. Carter was diligent at capturing photos all weekend with his iPod:



After Meijer Gardens, we did a little shopping at [Rebel Reclaimed](#) and Eastown Antiques on Lake Drive. Then we headed to [The Green Well](#) for a late lunch.



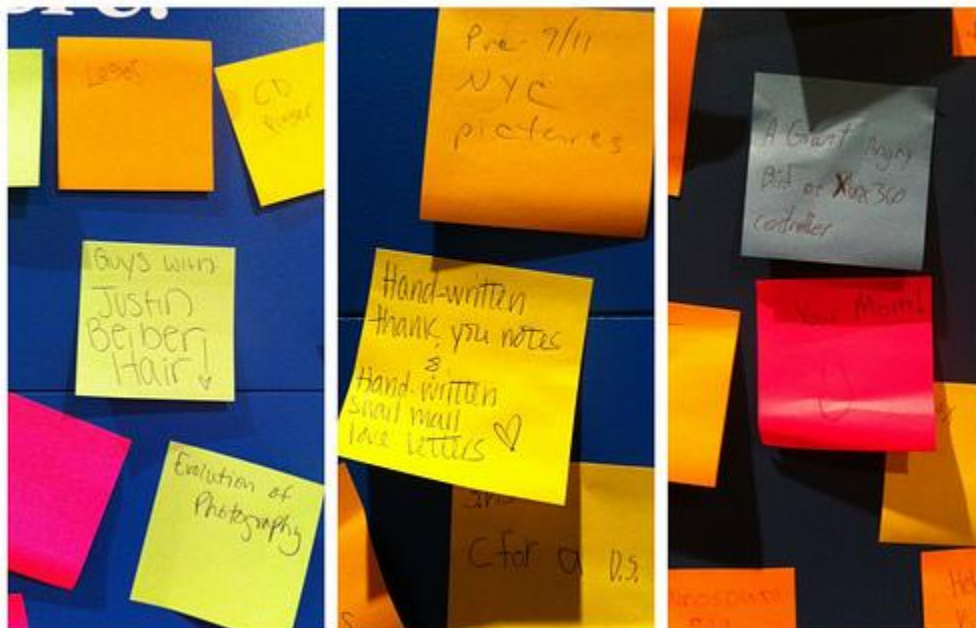
We practically had the restaurant to ourselves and every bite was fabulous. Gray loved the baked goat cheese and the kid's meal portions were quite generous. Ivy and Gray actually shared a meal and they split it on two different



plates for us!

We walked across the street to an awesome eco-conscious kids shop ([Hopscotch](#).) I continued with my small business Saturday support and bought a couple things there (and actually ended up ordering a couple things the kids wanted for Christmas when we got home.) The kids were SUPER excited to finally check-in to the hotel. It has a pool.

And a hot tub. I might have tweeted from it and almost dropped my iPhone but no harm done. And it was worth it. We stayed at the [Holiday Inn on Pearl Street](#) in downtown Grand Rapids again and it's quickly become our very favorite. The customer service is outstanding and while this visit was taken care of by [Experience Grand Rapids](#), we are definitely making plans to go up again for a weekend or two, and for sure hope to get our rooms at the Holiday Inn. We're regulars now, you know. (In case you're wondering, when we travel we are all about the adjoining rooms. Two double beds for the kids and a king suite for Ma & Pa is the way to go.) Sunday after breakfast at the Pearl Street Grill (in the hotel PS kids eat free!) we walked next door (literally) to the [Grand Rapids Public Museum](#). I just have to say, especially for kids, this has to be one of my favorite museums ever. The [Streets of Old Grand Rapids](#) is perfection, and the volunteers are just as charming and entertaining. The kids -- we all -- learned so much! Also, I happened to buy a ton of Christmas gifts in the gift shop! In the BIG STUFF exhibit (showing through the end of the year) they had a wall at the exit where guests could write on post-it notes and leave suggestions for what they'd like to see curated at the museum for people to see 150 years from now. Some of the notes cracked me up:





1. guys with Justin Bieber hair 2. hand written thank you notes & hand written snail mail love letters (I knew my friends at Hallmark would love that one.) 3. Your Mom(I wrote down iPhone and Ivy drew a smiley face.)



Gray was inconsolable for a good hour after we checked out - as you can see. His favorite part of Grand Rapids is the hotel!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Say it with a wail for full effect.) And, you know, this was just Part One of our mini-vacay. (See [Part Two here.](#)) I'll fill you in on all the wonderful holiday activities we got ourselves into for December's post. There is SO much to do year-round in Grand Rapids with big or little kiddos - or no kids at all. The museums! The shopping! The art! The beauty! It's grand.

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