

# The 5 Coolest Playgrounds in the U.S.

By Mike Smith | [Unplugged](#) – Fri, Mar 16, 2012 5:34 PM EDT

Back in the day, making a good playground was a simple task.

A slide. A few swings. Maybe a merry-go-round, or a teeter-totter. Job done.

But times have changed, and so have our expectations. These days, municipalities strive to provide a little more variety in their outdoor play spaces, and the country's full of innovative, unique playgrounds that'll delight kids -- not to mention adults -- of any age. Here are five standouts.

## Clemyjontri Park

Location: Fairfax County, VA

Almost as much fun to pronounce as it is to visit, the unique design of Clemyjontri Park in McLean, VA allows children with and without disabilities to play alongside each other. It's bursting with color, packed with variety, and overflowing with equipment that'll teach reading, time-telling, and balance skills. A spectacular facility.



Photo credit: Don Sweeney

## The Geometry Playground

Location: Traveling

Under normal circumstances, playgrounds are fixed pretty firmly to the ground. But here's one that's anything but normal. The Geometry Playground, a project of San Francisco's Exploratorium museum, is a traveling exhibit that'll challenge your spatial reasoning skills just as much as it'll stretch your limbs. It's on show at the Don Harrington Discovery Center in Amarillo, Texas through May, and after that it'll head to San Diego's Reuben H. Fleet Science Center on June 11-12. If you're in the area, drop in -- who knows when it'll be passing through again?



## Franklin Square

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Conveniently located in Philadelphia's Historic District, Franklin Square is one of the five original squares planned for the city by William Penn, and it maintains a retro, blast-from-the-past approach to playgrounding that's all too rare nowadays. Featuring

a beautiful carousel, a mini-golf course, and a shaded play area that's ranked as one of Philly's best spots for kids, Franklin Square's the perfect downtown spot for the kids to kick back and relax.

Photo credit: Amy Snider, (c) Exploratorium



Photo credit: C. Bender for Franklin Square

## Adventure Playground

Location: Berkeley, CA

Playgrounds full of expensive, painstakingly designed equipment are all well and good, but there's nothing quite like a fort, zip-line, or rope swing you build yourself. And indeed, there's nothing quite like Berkeley's Adventure Playground, a one-of-a-kind, anything-goes installation where kids are unleashed with hammers, nails, and saws, and pretty much told to get on with it. Think of it as the Burning Man of playgrounds. The kid-friendly version, that is.

## Powell Barnett Park

Location: Seattle, WA

Named for a local community hero, the impressive climbing equipment at Seattle's Powell Barnett Park makes it a must-visit for acrobatic youngsters, while the wading pool, Frisbee field, and mini-castles will please those who prefer to keep their feet on the ground. But the highlight has to be the tricycle maze. Where was that when we were kids?



Photo credit: Erik Bigglestone (<http://www.panoramio.com/user/710064>)

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