



# OFF THE BEATEN PATH

## Summer Activities for the Whole Family

By Beck Bridger

Summertime is clearly one of the busiest seasons for many families, and a personal favourite. Kids and teens are out of school, the weather is usually sunny, and everyone is eager to get outside and play. Of course swimming at one of the many beaches is always a fun day, but Stand up Paddle boarding (SUP) takes a day on the water to a whole new level. SUP is a combination of a surfboard and a paddle. Beginners will find it difficult to stand, but you can still gain strength and stability, learning from your knees. This whole body sport is a great way to explore the banks of the St. Lawrence. Check with your local canoe/kayak outfitter for a rental to try out this excellent family friendly sport.

Geocaching is like a mini-treasure hunt that is sure to create fun for the whole family. Essentially you navigate your way to a hidden geocache (or container) through coordinates and clues left for you. Once you find the cache you can take something from the box, but if you do, you must leave something of equal or greater value for the next person. You can then sign the log book, and also check in on the website. The only necessities for a day of Geocaching is a GPS device (or a GPS-enabled mobile phone) and a membership (free). Visit [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) to access your local caches and for more information.

Though I am not very coordinated, Beach Volleyball is one of my favourite activities during the summer months. There is nothing better than hitting a ball over a net in your bare feet (and the added knowledge, that when you dive for a ball in the sand it won't be as hard as a court). The rules of volleyball are simple, and can be easily searched online before heading out. In Brockville, a Beach Volleyball court can be found at Hardy Park (St. Lawrence Park will have one as well at some point this summer).

Little ones may have trouble hitting a volleyball over a large net (such as the one at Hardy Park), so it may be best to set up a badminton court to start off with. This will serve double duty, as Badminton is also a great outdoor activity for the whole family to enjoy. A simple set can be purchased at your local sports store for about twenty dollars, and can be used in any of our local parks.

For the family that enjoys racquet sports, another great activity is Tennis. Both Schofield Park and Butler's Creek (Church Street near Beecher Street) have public use courts for everyone to enjoy. All you need to bring are some tennis balls, a racquet, and your enthusiasm. I tend to bring the brightest balls that I can find, as I often hit mine way out of the playing area, thus making it easier to retrieve.

Another fun outdoor sport/activity is the good "ole" Frisbee, which can virtually be played anywhere. It can be played by just 2 people or a whole group. There are even variations of games that can be played with a Frisbee (Frisbee football, Frisbee baseball, Frisbee golf for example) leave it to your imagination and check out the internet for rules and find a playing field (park) of size and the family can have a great time with a simple toy and lots of laughs and exercise.

Finally, two of my favourite lawn games that are easy to transport to any outdoor location, are Bocce Ball and Croquet. Bocce Ball can be played with teams of any number, and Croquet can include as many people as you have balls. Both games are great for both young and old, are very easy to set up and learn.

Once you have tried some of these 'off the beaten path' summer activities, I am sure that you and your family will find your new favourite pastime to enjoy for years to come.

LH