

# A Year's Worth of Fun

The best of the best things to do locally with your kids! Choose from among our top 20 recommendations for each season, and you'll never go wrong. >> By Emma Steven

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# Top 20 Things to Do in the SUMMER



Donna F. Aceto



Alex Tate



Courtesy Red Hook Jazz Festival



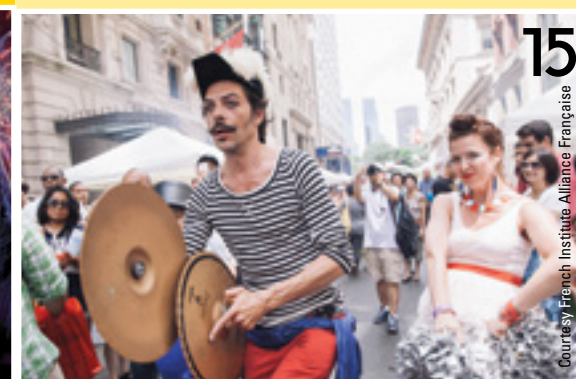
Courtesy Weittenhiller



Dustin Braneiser



Courtesy Macy's



Courtesy French Institute Alliance Française



Courtesy Hip to Hip Theatre



Courtesy USTA

## 1. A Thrill a Minute

**Luna Park** in Coney Island ([nymetroparents.com/coney-island](http://nymetroparents.com/coney-island)), Brooklyn, opens for summer in late May. Serious thrill-seekers won't want to miss the park's newest and fastest roller coaster, The Thunderbolt. And check out our [full list of theme parks](#) in the area for more thrill-seeking options.

## 2. Sounds of Summer

Enjoy open-air concerts and dance performances throughout all five boroughs when the City Parks Foundation presents **SummerStage**, with kid-centric performances taking place from June through August. This year's highlights include Laurie Berkner, Magmanus, and Shine and the Moonbeams.

## 3. Where the Pickin's Good

The Hamptons aren't the only fun thing about Long Island. Gather your brood for a day trip to **pick your own berries** at Patty's Berries and Bunches in Mattituck, which offers a different berry each month starting in June. See the [full list of berry farms](#) in the NYC area (including Westchester County and New Jersey) for more information.

## 4. All About the Bard

Bring a blanket and sit under the stars as you introduce the kids to timeless works during the **Inwood Shakespeare Festival** at Inwood Hill Park throughout June.

## 5. Fantasy Island

Take the ferry (from Brooklyn Bridge Park or Lower Manhattan) to **Governors Island** for **Figment**, which transforms the island into a large-scale collaborative artwork. Held over a weekend in early June, this free celebration of art and culture is an explosion of creative energy, with activities for the whole family.

## 6. A Mile of Fun

Enjoy free access to some of the world's finest art collections as you stroll down Fifth Avenue during the **Museum Mile Festival** on the Upper East Side, in early June. Is your little artist feeling inspired? Check out our [guide to art classes](#).

## 7. June Jazz Jam

Get down to sweet syncopation on two Sundays in mid-June when the **Red Hook Jazz Festival** brings together amazing local jazz groups to perform at Urban Meadow in Brooklyn's Columbia Waterfront District.

## 8. The Old Ball Game

Treat Dad to one of the many Father's Day events happening throughout the city around mid-June, such as **Take Me Out to the Ball Game 1864**, an annual exhibition baseball match played with historic equipment and historic rules at **Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum** in the Bronx. Find more vintage and modern baseball games in the city (read: Brooklyn Cyclones in the minor league, and those two MLB rivals we all know and love—or love to hate!) in [our sporting events roundup](#).

## 9. Round and Round We Go

Take a spin on the historic **Flushing Meadows Carousel**, which was created from two carousels from Coney Island, Brooklyn, for the 1964 World's Fair, and is right next to the Queens Zoo. Find another merry-go-round near you in [our where-to guide](#).

## 10. Films Al Fresco

Starting in July you can enjoy [free outdoor movies](#) all summer long with Riverflicks Family Fridays at Hudson River Park in Greenwich Village; SummerScreen at McCarren Park in Williamsburg, Brooklyn; Outdoor Cinema at Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City, Queens; and more.

## 11. Something Fishy

Teach the kids the perfect cast (while

sneaking in some bonding time) when you go **fishing** for bluegill and giant carp at Kissena Lake in Queens. Find other fishing spots in [our roundup](#).

## 12. Dog Daze

Watch competitive eaters scarf down iconic New York franks at **Nathan's Famous Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest** in Coney Island, Brooklyn. (Don't forget to try one of your own!)

## 13. The Rockets' Red Glare

Don't miss the city's biggest Independence Day celebration when the **Macy's 4th of July Fireworks** show lights up the city skyline. The show travels back and forth between the East and Hudson rivers so check [macys.com/fireworks](http://macys.com/fireworks) for details on where to view.

## 14. Toes in the Sand

Spend a day at Rockaway Beach in Queens, where you can swim in the ocean, lounge on the beach, and stroll the newly restored boardwalk. Although construction is still ongoing after Hurricane Sandy, it's still worth the subway trip. Check our where-to guide for a [full list of area beaches](#).

## 15. Vive la France

Indulge in the diversity of the Big Apple with crepes, crafts, face painting, and more on the French National Day in mid-July. Each year on **Bastille Day**, the French Institute Alliance Française hosts a French-themed street fair on the Upper East Side. And check out [other cultural festivals nearby](#).

## 16. BK Party

Head to the Prospect Park Bandshell June through August to **Celebrate Brooklyn!** City residents have been flocking to this free, outdoor performing arts festival since 1979 to see majorly popular performers alongside emerging artists. Check [our calendar](#) for kid-friendly performances.



## 17. Shakespeare 101

The Hip to Hip Theatre Company presents **Shakespeare in the Park** at various parks throughout Queens and the Bronx in July and August. The performances are free, are specially designed for children and families, and include a special introduction to Shakespeare for children prior to each performance.

## 18. Fore!

From June through September, kids ages 7-17 can learn to play golf like the pros at the **Junior Golf Center** in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, which boasts a driving range and a six-hole practice course. Short game need some work? Play a round of putt-putt right here in the city—see [our where-to guide](#) for locations.

## 19. Hong Kong in New York

Take part in Chinese tradition through cultural performances, arts and crafts, and an amazing boat race at the **Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival**, held in early August at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens.

## 20. Queens Serving Love

Help kick off the U.S. Open tennis tournament at **Arthur Ashe Kids' Day**, held in late August at USTA Billie Jean King Tennis Center in Flushing, Queens. Got a budding Andy Murray or Serena Williams on your hands? Find tennis classes for kids in [our guide](#).

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# Top 20 Things to Do in the FALL



Amy Dreher



Dave Blidsoe



Joshua Bright



Dawn Roode



Courtesy New York Hall of Science



Julie Larsen Maher

## 1. Apples Abound

Take a day trip up to Wilkens Fruit & Fir Farm in Yorktown Heights (Westchester County) where you can **pick your own apples** and enjoy a hayride throughout September. Find other nearby apple orchards and farms in [our full guide](#).

## 2. Reflect & Respect

The events of Sept. 11, 2001 forever changed our city, our country, and our world. Take a moment to reflect with a visit to the [9/11 Memorial and Museum](#) at The World Trade Center Site in the Financial District.

## 3. Up to the Highest Height

In early to mid-September, join hundreds of kite pilots and send your kite soaring amid views of the Manhattan skyline at [Brooklyn Bridge Park's Kite Festival](#) in Brooklyn Heights/Dumbo.

## 4. It's A-maize-ing

Indulge in traditional blue-ribbon competitions, pie-eating and corn-husking contests, pig-racing, carnival rides, live music, and the season opening of the Amazing Maize Maze at the [Annual Queens County Fair](#) at the [Queens County Farm Museum](#) in Floral Park, Queens, held in mid-September.

## 5. Thy Passport to Merriment Awaits

Don thine armor, summon thy bannermen, and make haste for Fort Tryon Park in Washington Heights. Each year in late September or early October, the [Medieval Festival](#) boasts renaissance revelry for the young, old, and middle-aged!

## 6. What Will You Make?

In late September, attend the [World Maker Faire](#) at the [New York Hall of Science](#) in Corona, Queens, where up-and-coming creatives can get inspired to make, invent, recycle, build, think, and play while celebrating innovation, science, and technology.

## 7. Foodie Fair

Kids and parents alike will love the spread at the annual [Food Network New York City Wine & Food Festival](#). Held between late September and mid-October, the event spans several days and features family-friendly tastings, demos, and meet-and-greets with popular culinary personalities.

## 8. BK's Big Deal

Every New Yorker should experience [Atlantic Antic](#) at least once in his or her life. Featuring more than 500 artists, craftspeople, musicians, and food merchants, this late-September festival takes place in Brooklyn and is one of the city's largest and longest-running street fairs.

## 9. Another One Rides the Bus

Typically held the same day as the Atlantic Antic is the long-running [Annual Bus Festival](#) at Brooklyn Heights' [New York Transit Museum](#), where kids can fill up on vintage vehicles.

## 10. Talon-ted Creatures

Get up close with our feathered friends during annual [fall birding events](#) at [Wave Hill](#) in the Bronx.

## 11. Divine Dogs & Cats

In early October, bring your pet(s) to the [Cathedral of St. John the Divine](#) in Morningside Heights for the [Blessing of the Pets](#), a celebration in remembrance of St. Francis of Assisi's love for all creatures.

## 12. Things Are Heating Up

Enjoy sizzling shows, dynamite dishes, and fiery fun at the [Chile Pepper Festival](#), held in late September or early October at the [Brooklyn Botanic Garden](#) in Crown Heights.

## 13. Creepy Celebrations

Boils and ghouls will go batty for the Bronx Zoo's annual Halloween celebration, [Boo at the Zoo](#), typically held early October through early November. Enjoy crafts and a spooky walk-through, navigate a hay maze, and view themed animal exhibits. Costumes welcome! For more Halloween fun, visit our [Halloween website](#).

## 14. Where Superheroes Assemble

If you're a fan of pop-culture, you won't want to miss [New York Comic-Con](#) held at the Javits Center in Hell's Kitchen in mid-October. This four-day gathering includes daily kid-centric programming and connects fans, creators, and stars of popular TV shows, movies, and of course, comic books.

## 15. Circus in the City

[Big Apple Circus](#), NYC's hometown circus, comes home to Lincoln Center's Damrosch

Park in Lincoln Square with the premiere of an all-new season and an all-new show in late October.

## 16. Gourds Galore

Get a feel for old-fashioned county livin' with a trip to Historic Richmond Town's Decker Farm on Staten Island where you can enjoy self-guided tours, hayrides, and **pick-your-own pumpkins** on weekends in October (see the [full guide to pumpkin farms in the area](#)).

## 17. 26.2 Miles of Cheers

Join your fellow New Yorkers and cheer on family, friends, and neighbors in early November as they run through the greatest city on Earth during the [New York City Marathon](#). The race starts on Staten Island, spans streets in all five boroughs, and ends in Central Park, providing competitors with the sights, sounds, and sheer excitement only NYC can offer—the spectator signs alone are worth getting out there for!

## 18. Fiesta Mexicana

Learn more about [Día de los Muertos](#) and Mexican culture in mid-October at [El Museo Del Barrio](#) in East Harlem, which hosts educational activities, music, food, and other traditional activities celebrating the holiday.

## 19. We Salute You

Celebrate the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces during the [Veterans Day Parade](#), which features floats, military and vintage vehicles, and more than 20,000 marchers from all branches of military. Over the last few years, the opening ceremony has been held at Madison Square Park and the route follows Fifth Avenue North to 56th Street.

## 20. Turkey Day Parade

Arguably the world's most famous parade, [Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade](#) boasts behemoth balloons, beautiful floats, and the biggest names in entertainment—and it all takes place in the heart of Manhattan!

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## BONUS

### Lighting Up the Night

Don't miss [The Great Jack O' Lantern Blaze](#), an outdoor walk-through experience featuring thousands of hand-carved pumpkins, at [Van Cortlandt Manor](#) in Croton-on-Hudson. The Blaze opens in early October and runs through mid-November, and is certainly worth the trip to Westchester.



# Top 20 Things to Do in the **WINTER**

## 1. Skating Season

Hit the ice for some classic winter fun at the **LeFrak Center at Lakeside** in Prospect Park, Brooklyn's state-of-the-art skating facility featuring two ice rinks. Find more indoor and outdoor ice rinks in the area in our [where-to guide](#).

## 2. Jingle Bell Rock(ettes)

It wouldn't be Christmas in New York without the **Radio City Christmas Spectacular** at Radio City Music Hall in Midtown. From early November through December, the Rockettes perform classic numbers such as "New York at Christmas" and "The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers."

## 3. Holiday Express

Hitch a ride to tons of fun at the New York Botanical Garden's **Holiday Train Show**, which boasts replicas of area landmarks made entirely from plants. The show typically runs mid-November through early January. Find a [full list of nearby train shows and exhibits](#) that you can visit throughout the year in our roundup.

## 4. Dance of the Sugar Plums

Visit the Land of Sweets when New York City Ballet presents **George Balanchine's The Nutcracker** at Lincoln Center. Performances are usually held late November through early January. Get details on all *Nutcracker* performances in our area in our [roundup](#).

## 5. Pining for Pines

Make this Christmas special with a day trip to **cut your own Christmas tree** at Stuart's Farm in Granite Springs in nearby Westchester County or one of the [area's other farms](#), most of which are open from late November through late December.

## 6. A Christmas Story

Usually held in early December, the **Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum's** annual **Holiday Family Day** in the Bronx includes storytelling, shopping, crafts, and of course, pictures with Santa.

## 7. Let There Be Light

Watch little eyes light up with holiday joy during a **tree or menorah lighting**. If you're looking for a big event, brave the Rockefeller Center in Midtown to see its illustrious tree throughout December, or celebrate Hanukkah at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn where the World's Largest Menorah stands



Courtesy MSG Entertainment



Talisman Brain



Paul Kolnik



Dmitry Shironosov



Ajate Eile



Courtesy Better Chinatown U.S.A.



Courtesy Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum

throughout the festival of lights. Check our [calendar](#) for details closer to the holidays.

## 8. He's Making a List and Checking It Twice...

From Santaland at Macy's Herald Square to Historic Richmond Town on Staten Island, Kris Kringle makes appearances all over the city from late November to late December. For something unique, climb aboard **Circle Line Downtown's** Zephyr yacht for a **Breakfast with Santa Cruise** in New York Harbor in mid-December.

## 9. 'Tis the Season

With all of the gift-giving and receiving, the holiday season is a great time to teach kids about being charitable. Give a little back to your community and do some volunteering. Find a list of where to volunteer in our [where-to guide](#).

## 10. A World Record-Setter

Marvel at homemade gingerbread houses that are designed, baked, built, and decorated by chef Jon Lovitch over the course of an entire year. **Gingerbread Lane** at **New York Hall of Science** in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens, was recognized as the largest gingerbread village in the world by the 2014 Guinness World Records. This marvel is typically on view mid-November through mid-January.

## 11. Cherished Traditions

In mid-December, step into the 18th century with **Candlelight Tours** at **Historic Richmond Town** on Staten Island. During the special holiday tour, visitors will learn about the history of some of today's most cherished holiday traditions.

## 12. Snow Day Solution

Pull out your Flexible Flyer and get set for

some downhill snow-day fun. Once there's enough snow on the ground (4 to 6 inches), hills in New York City parks are fair game for **sledding**. For more information, check out our [guide](#).

## 13. On the Slopes

Grab your gear and pack up the kids for a day (or a few days) of **skiing or snowboarding** at [one of the area's family-friendly resorts](#).

## 14. Lights, Camera, Action!

Escape from the cold at **Museum of the Moving Image** in Astoria, Queens. The only museum in the U.S. dedicated to the art, history, and technology of moving pictures, this museum boasts behind-the-scenes exhibits, hands-on workshops, and daily film screenings.

## 15. A Colorful Celebration

Over two weekends in late January and early February, city folks can get a taste of Native American culture during the **Thunderbird American Indian Dancers Annual Dance Concert and Pow Wow** at Theater for the New City in the East Village. The event brings together Native American artists, educators, singers, dancers, storytellers, and performing groups from across the Americas. Find more [cultural festivals in the area](#) in our roundup.

## 16. Kung Hei Fat Choy!

Ring in the Chinese New Year in late January or early February with dragon dancers, steel drummers, fireworks, and more at the famous **Flushing Lunar New Year Parade**.

## 17. The Garden Is Aglow

Brighten up those dark winter days with **Illuminated**, a pop-up festival at **Brooklyn**

**Botanic Garden** in Crown Heights. Over two weekends in late January and early February, visitors will enjoy food, performances, crafts, and more, all inspired by Swedish seasonal traditions.

## 18. Critics' Club

In February, the **BAMKids Film Festival** at Brooklyn Academy of Music in Fort Greene features the best kids' shorts and features from dozens of countries around the world. Plus, pre-film entertainment includes magic shows, stop-motion animation activities, and face painting.

## 19. Intrepid Explorers

During school winter break in mid-February, join the **Intrepid Museum** in Hell's Kitchen for hands-on activities and shows about aviation and space exploration during Kids Week. Special guests and planetarium visits are included, all free with general admission. Before you go, check out the [best-kept secrets of visiting the Intrepid](#).

## 20. For Growing Gourmands

In late February and early March, the **Kids Food Festival** in Midtown's Bryant Park educates little foodies and their families about making balanced food choices with lots of fun hands-on activities—and food, of course!

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## BONUS Lions, and Tigers, and Elephants—Oh My!

The **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus** typically rolls its newest show into Brooklyn's Barclays Center in February or March.



# Top 20 Things to Do in the **SPRING**

## 1. Featured Flicks

In late February or early March, fledgling film fanatics can get their fill of silver screen goodness at the [New York International Children's Film Festival](#). Held in Manhattan, the month-long Oscar-qualifying event spans several theaters and features screenings of films and shorts made just for younger audiences.

## 2. More Math at MoMath

Celebrate Pi Day and all things mathematical at the [Museum of Mathematics](#) in Murray Hill. On March 14, you can enjoy a slew of pi-themed activities as well as the museum's regular exhibits.

## 3. Budding Ballerinas

The School of American Ballet introduces little ones to the art of dancing on toes during [The Beauty of Ballet](#), a free performance and workshop held at [Queens Theatre](#) in Flushing, Queens. The performance is typically in February or March.

## 4. Where Irish Eyes Are Smiling

Don't miss the [NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade](#), which starts in Midtown, passes St. Patrick's Cathedral, and ends on the Upper West Side at the Irish Historical Society. This more than 250-year-old traditional marching parade—which takes place on March 17 each year—features Irish step dancers, bagpipe bands, and more.



Edward Reed



Daniel Avila



Liz Ligon



Michael Flesherman



Richard Warren



Julie Larsen Maher

## 5. In Full Bloom

Welcome spring and learn about traditional Japanese culture during the [Sakura Matsuri Cherry Blossom Festival](#), a celebration of the blooming cherry trees held in mid-April at the [Brooklyn Botanical Garden](#) in Crown Heights.

## 6. Hopping Down the Bunny Trail

Search for sweet treasures hidden by a furry friend at the annual weekend [Easter Egg Hunt](#) at the [Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum](#) in the Bronx. Kids can participate in crafts, have their photos taken with the Easter Bunny, and enjoy light refreshments.

## 7. Bonnet Boulevard

Throw on your Sunday best and an over-the-top hat and join the [Easter Bonnet Festival](#) on Easter Sunday, which marches along Fifth Avenue in Midtown East.

## 8. For a Good Cause

Join the March of Dimes' [March for Babies](#) on a trek through Manhattan in mid- to late April, and support research to understand and prevent health problems in infants. For details on this and other charity walks, check out our [where-to guide](#).

## 9. Manhattan Meets Hollywood

Part of the famed Tribeca Film Festival, the [Tribeca Family Street Fair](#) is an annual spring favorite in late April. Brave the crowds for live Broadway performances, chef demos, arts and crafts, and lots of movie-themed fun.

## 10. All About Animals

Make the planet better for our animal friends by participating in the [Run for the Wild 5K](#)

and [Family Fun Run](#) at the nearby [Bronx Zoo](#) in late April. Then pay those animal friends a visit—same-day admission to the zoo is free with your run!

## 11. Stickball, Anyone?

Grab the kids on your block and join NYC Parks at Thomas Jefferson Park in East Harlem for some classic [Street Games](#) in late April. For even more fun, brush up on the rules for some [classic lawn games](#).

## 12. Farm Fest

Celebrate spring at the [Queens County Farm Museum](#) in Floral Park with a [Children's Carnival](#) full of rides, midway games, hayrides, and children's entertainment. Takes place over two weekends in mid-April.

## 13. Painting the City Green

On April 22, help make our planet (and our city) a little better while enjoying two full days of environmental education, performances, and workshops during [Earth Day New York](#) at Union Square, Times Square, and Grand Central Terminal.

## 14. Just a Trim

Get a feel for life on a farm and watch the sheep get their annual haircuts during the [Fleece Festival](#) at Prospect Park Zoo in Brooklyn, held in early May. Meet more animals at [zoos and nature centers in and near the city](#).

## 15. Tiny Thespians

The city's only nonprofit festival dedicated to theater for young people, the [New York Children's Theater Festival](#) takes place in late April or early May at The Players Theater in Greenwich Village. In addition

to the shows, the festival typically features a kick-off party, free after-show workshops, crafts, and more family entertainment.

## 16. All Aboard!

Celebrate [National Train Day](#) in early May with a train ride (including one on Thomas the Tank Engine, nearby in Westchester County!) or by visiting the New York Transit Museum in Brooklyn Heights.

## 17. A Fair for Kings

Expect super-sized Ferris wheels, kiddie rides, a roller coaster, old-fashioned carnival games, and a ton of fair food such as cotton candy and funnel cakes, plus clowns and live music at [The Kings County Fair](#), held for the past few years from mid- to late May at Floyd Bennett Field in Marine Park, Queens.

## 18. Mom's the Word

Celebrate that special lady in a big way at the [Mother's Day Weekend Garden Party](#) at the [New York Botanical Garden](#) in the Bronx. There's live music, lawn games, crafts for kids, picnicking, and more, and you'll be surrounded by the most spectacular spring landscape NYC has to offer.

## 19. Horsing Around

Join Brooklyn-based Kensington Stables for a trail ride in Prospect Park. For details and other [horseback riding](#) lessons and trail rides in NYC, see our [where-to guide](#).

## 20. The Boys Are Back in Town

See what life is like for sailors, marines, and coast guardsman when hundreds of service men and women dock their ships in New York Harbor in Midtown for a visit during [Fleet Week NYC](#) in late May.



Courtesy New York Transit Museum



Elena Elisseeva



Courtesy The Kings County Fair