

Places 2 Go, Things 2 Do!

Family Friendly Outings & Attractions in & around NY's Capital-Saratoga Region

PLACES 2 GO, THINGS 2 DO! is prepared in conjunction with the Maimonides School in Albany NY and SaratogaChabad.com. This list is for informational purposes only, with no responsibility for the quality, availability or any other issue with activities and venues listed here. Please call ahead for details & verification. All phone numbers listed are in the Northeastern NY 518 area code, unless otherwise noted. For inclusion in future listing please email: mendel@saratogachabad.com

DOWNTOWN ALBANY NY

NYS Museum on Madison Avenue (no charge, put a donation in their glass box) has beautiful permanent exhibits on its first floor, and a few rotating ones in its northwestern & southeastern corners. The Carousel on the 4th floor is a kids favorite (no charge, suggested \$1) and there's a café up there with a nice view where you can eat (your own) lunch or buy a drink. In recent years they've increased Family-Days & theme programs on weekends, all at no charge. The **Empire State Plaza Concourse** is a giant underground marble walkway which begins across the street from the State Museum on Madison and ends at the NYS Capitol. Colorful and unique modern art and sculptures line the broad walkway (great for indoor walks on rainy days) with cafeterias, kiosks, and info booths, plus occasional markets and festivals. The **NYS Capitol** is a majestic grand building, tours are available, or just take a walk around yourself. If the weather is nice, there's the **Wooden Park** on the southeastern corner of the Plaza above with unique giant wooden block structures (some are climbable). Also the **Corning Tower** has a free, 42-story great view on a sunny day. **Corning Preserve** is downtown at Albany's Hudson Riverfront with bike trails (stroller-friendly) up and down the Hudson, a playground, landscaped amphitheater, and the beautiful pedestrian bridge spanning over the 787, connecting to Broadway. Kids enjoy watching boats go by, and the train bridge turn open to allow larger boats to pass, if it happens while you're down there. And if the kids haven't seen it yet, drive down Broadway and up Loudonville Road towards North Pearl for a good view of **Nipper the RCA dog** atop the Arnoff building.

SARATOGA SPRINGS

Broadway in downtown Saratoga is a great old-fashioned walking street, with unique shops and boutiques and Victorian architecture. The main **Post Office** has a grand mural inside. **Children's Museum** 584-5540 on Caroline Street is a great make believe place for little kids, the **NYS Military Museum** 583-0184 in the Armory on Lake Avenue is free and displays historic uniforms & weapons, the **Racing Museum** 584-0400 on Union showcases the best of Saratoga Horse-Racing, the **Bottle-Museum** 885-7589 (looks small, but has interesting stuff and great tour guides) is in nearby Ballston Spa on Route 50, no admission charge. **Saratoga Auto Museum** 587-1935 inside the Spa State Park on Avenue of the Pines. Plus Congress Park and Spa State Park (see Area Parks box) are not to be missed. The **Bead-Store** on Henry Street isn't a museum, but a great activity/craft center kids enjoy.

GLENS FALLS NY

The **Chapman House Historic Museum** (793-2826) on Glen Street has no admission charge and is one of the finest historic house museums in the area. The **Hyde Collection** (792-1761) is a museum of fine art housed in a restored Spanish-style villa and extension. On selected days there are kids programs downstairs. Many paintings date back 400-500 years (or more) along the staircase in the house is a painting of Rivka by the Well with a strange camel depiction. **Explore!** also on Warren Street is a kids activity place of bounces, climbing, and activities (793-7803).

LAKE GEORGE NY

Lake George Village, especially Canada Street, is the summertime, is home to shops, boutiques, arcades and fun places. **Lake George Steamboat's** (668-5777) Minne-Ha-Ha has a one-hour scenic paddle-wheel steamboat cruise. Make a picnic on the sandy beach on the southern shore, or in the overlooking wooded State Park. Drive up **Prospect Mountain** for a trolley ride to the peak and a scenic view. And there's so much more!

HUDSON NY

Take Route 9 south for the rural route through Rensselaer and Columbia counties to reach the Hudson NY on the east side of the Hudson River. Stop by **Lindenwald** (758-6986) on Route 9H the home of mid 19th century US President Martin Van Buren in Kinderhook. The **FASNY Museum of Firefighting** (822-1875) in Hudson NY has free admission to view, touch and even get into dozens of fire-trucks, old-fashioned to modern, plus a kids area with arts 'n crafts. **Warren Street** in Hudson was tastefully restored, full of antique shops and boutiques. Stop by the **Hudson Rail-Station** for a visit to an old-fashioned "one-room" train-station. Nearby is the riverfront for a good view the **Hudson-Athens Lighthouse** of one of the classiest in the nation, literally a house in middle of the water. **Olana** (828-0135) the historic home of Hudson Valley artist Fredric Church is off Route 9G, a few miles below Hudson NY. Go across the river from Hudson NY to visit Catskill and Athens NY.

BENNINGTON VT

Take Troy's NY-7 East to the VT-9 in Bennington for a very inexpensive scenic outing. The **Bennington Monument** costs only a dollar or two for a ride up, and has a gorgeous scenic view of 3 states on a clear day. Great photo-spot. The **Hemmings Auto Museum** (on VT-9 which was the NY-7) has 25 vintage cars on display in great

condition, with bright color and old-fashioned detail. See license plates from every state in the Union. The auto museum is free! **Bennington Museum** (802) 447-1571 showcases artwork including works by Grandma Moses. **Bennington Potters** has a store with thousands of ceramic pieces on display - not such a great idea with small kids. But out back you can go in and watch the potters at work. On the grounds of the senior/veterans home there's **Deer Park** where you can eat a picnic and look through the fence to see deer. Probably depends on the time of day on whether you can see them.

BERKSHIRES MA

Young & old appreciate Norman Rockwell's artwork, true to life and humorous. Kids will enjoy the paintings - especially if parents explain the background. The **Norman Rockwell Museum** is in Stockbridge MA (413-298-4100). **Hancock Shaker Village** in Pittsfield MA (413-443-0188) is a hands-on museum with livestock and old-fashioned living. **Magic Wings Butterfly Conservatory** is in South Deerfield MA (413-665-2805). BTW - West Stockbridge is a quaint place to stop, little village shtetl-like.

COOPERSTOWN NY

The **Baseball Hall of Fame** (607-547-7200) is Cooperstown's claim to fame, but there's more to see in this great little village. The **Farmer's Museum** (607-547-1450) is a kids' favorite, especially the outdoor old-fashioned village with a real blacksmith, pharmacist and housewife who churns butter. This time of year it's not fully operational and has a reduced admission, call ahead to see what's open. The **Fenimore Art Museum** is just across from the Farmers. Down at the southern **shore of Lake Otsego** is a great spot for a picnic on the grass (if it isn't too windy/muddy this time of year). The town itself is picturesque, a virtual heaven for baseball fans.

BLENHEIM-GILOBA NY

The unique storage-water power-plant at Blenheim-Gilboa has a hands-on **energy visitors center** nestled in the beautifully scenic mountainous country-side of Schoharie County. **Lansing Manor** is a historic well-kept house museum on the same property, also open for visitors. Both are free. (800-724-0309).

ANOTHER LOOK...

The **Albany Intl Airport** has a great viewing deck open to visitors on the 3rd level and there's also

an Art Gallery which hosts small traveling exhibits. Or get a high-up view of Albany and east from the top of the **Corning Tower**. (If you park your car on the roof of the East Garage downtown you can try to find it from way up) Both views are fun and free. Two local planetariums give a nice view of the stars in the sky. **Henry Hudson Planetarium** (434-1217) in Quackenbush Square downtown Albany or the **Suits-Beuche at the Schenectady Museum** (382-7890) which has nice exhibits of its own. If the model-trains are still running, kids love them. Albany has **Aqua-Ducks** with a dry/wet view (462-DUCK) plus Trolley Tours. Or on a late summer day, roll down the windows and ride out into the countryside, 10 minutes out of any Capital Region city is scenic and rural.

AMUSEMENTS

Hoffman's Playland (785-3842) in Latham is a local favorite (no admission, pay per ride). **Fun-Plex Fun-Park** (477-2651) in East Greenbush has go-karts, bumper-boats, batting-cages and mini-golf. **Oasis Family Fun Park** (283-3646) in Troy has laser-tag, bumper-boats and mini-golf. **Magic Forest** (668-2448) has many rides nestled in the woods on Route 9 in Lake George, as well as a few Christian holiday exhibits. It also hosts Chabad's Lake George Tourist Minyan behind its property. Of course there's **Great Escape** in Lake George, a six-flags amusement park and a pricier outing. **Bounce 'n Party** has jumpy locations in Latham Circle Mall and Route 9 in Mechanicville. **Albany Indoor Rock Gym** on Vatrano Road (459-7625), **Zero Gravity Laser-Tag** on Central Ave (437-9334) and **OuterZone Laser-Tag** (583-1707) on Congress Street in Saratoga are more places for action fun. There's mini-golf all over, from Latham to Lake George.

PICK-UR-OWN

Apple-Picking is an annual fall tradition in upstate NY and (hot/chilled) apple-cider is a favorite beverage. Strawberries start in June, blueberries in late July. In addition to fruits and veggies, many farms offer farm-themed kid-friendly playgrounds, with animals to pet/feed, and other agri-entertainment. **Indian Ladder Farms** in Altamont has a whole animal section. There's a secluded picnic table on a hill facing a mountain, accessible from behind the chickens or through the steep woods behind the goats. **Bowman Orchards** in Clifton Park has a farm-themed playground with a hay-ride, animals to feed, tires to climb and an old firetruck stuck in the sand. **Saratoga Apple** has many varieties growing in the shadow of the historic Saratoga Battlefield monument in Schuylerville. **Samascott Orchards** in

Kinderhook has a huge blueberry patch. Blueberries are the easiest for kids to pick, they grow at their height, have no thorns, and are ready to nibble. **Winney's Blueberries** near Saratoga are supposed to have a great blueberry crop, too. **Goold Orchards** in Castleton has cider products certified Kosher by the Capital District Vaad HaKashruth. **Liberty Ridge Farm** (664-1515) in Schaghticoke has the region's largest corn maze in late summer and Fall, and a farm-themed playground. **Ellms Family Farm** (884-8168) in Ballston Spa has a cow train, trolley ride through the woods, and a corn-maze. If you're heading down Route 209 towards the Catskills, **Kelder's Farm** has great pick-u-own, children's activities and a feeding/petting area. They even sell Chalav-Yisrael Kosher ice-cream.

ARTS 'N CRAFTS

Art Room (427-3910) on Madison Avenue (between Lark & Albany's Washington Park) charges \$5 per hour, per person, all materials included. For beading your own jewelry, **Saratoga Beads** (584-7733) on Henry Street (just before Saratoga's library) is the long-time favorite, and now there's also **Bumble-Beads** (690-7896) in Latham. If you want to do crafts at home shop at **Michael's** or **AC Moore** stores for arts 'n craft ideas and materials. **Pottery Place** in Albany's Stuyvesant Plaza or **Creative Sparks** (583-2030) on Phila Street in Saratoga are places to paint your piece of useable pottery art.

ZOOS

Aside for animals at local farms there are several zoos and game farms within an hour or hour and half hour drive from the Albany-Saratoga area. **Ashville Game Farm** (695-4337) in Greenwich is a small zoo run by a family and friends, with big cats, monkeys & bears and more in a small well-kept area, open in the summertime. Peacocks roam the place, and the staff is close with the animals. **Utica Zoo** (315-738-0472) is a city zoo open all year about 90 miles west on the 90, with long stroller-friendly walkways. Camels, monkeys, sea-lions, snakes and more. **Adirondack Animal Land** (883-5748) is open mid-May thru Labor Day near the Great Sacandaga Lake in Fulton County. It has a safari-like train-ride through large herds of deer, goats and antelopes. They also have buffalo, bears, giraffes and camels. Catskill Game Farm, a long-time area attraction closed in 2006, but part of it remains open in a new form as the **Bailiwick Ranch and Discovery Zoo** (678-5665) with horseback riding, paintball park, a chimpanzee show and several animal exhibits.

AREA PARKS & NATURE PRESERVES

THATCHER PARK in Helderbergs south of Albany is a great place to hike, especially in the spring when melting snow creates stronger waterfalls. **VOORHEES-VILLE SCHOOL** on the 85A (near 156) on the way to Thatcher Park still has the elaborate old-fashioned wooden park which kids love. **SIX MILE-PINE BUSH** on Fuller Rd has picnic areas near the lake, and a paved walking trail (great for bikes and strollers) that begins to the south-west of the lake and weaves its way under and around the 87-90 exchange. **THE CROSSINGS** in Colonie off Albany-Shaker Rd is a modern park designed for walking, roller-blading, with a playground, facilities and fountain pond **CONGRESS PARK** in Saratoga is always buzzing with people, has the 50 cent carousel, and a variety of old-fashioned historic mineral springs to taste for free. **SARATOGA SPA STATE PARK** is home to majestic pine trees, mineral springs, and running creeks to get your feet wet, plus it is home to the Gideon Putnam and SPAC. **WASHINGTON PARK** in Albany is most beautiful when the tulips come out in May, but is an expansive park all year 'round with playgrounds, rolling hills and picnic areas surrounding the lake. **CORNING PRESERVE** long riverside paved walking/bike trails at Hudson Riverfront, playground, views of boats and bridges, and elegant Hudson RiverWalk pedestrian bridge linking to downtown Albany. **PEEBLES ISLAND STATE PARK** is where the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers meet, a great place to walk and play, a walking bridge connects to Waterford with the boat-docks and locks. In season, many boats are moored there. On Delaware Ave, off Ontario Street in Cohoes. **EMPIRE PLAZA WOODEN PARK** southeast corner of the Plaza, interesting wooden structures. Then hop up to NYS Museum 4th Floor for Carousel. **FIVE RIVERS** (475-0291) operated by NYS DEC is close by on Game Farm Road off Delaware Ave in Delmar with 350 acres of trails, meadows, ponds and an environmental education center. **HOLLYHOCK HOLLOW** (767-9051) on 46 Rarick Rd in Selkirk has 140 acres with 6 hiking trails and is headquarters of the Audubon Society. **LANDIS ARBORETUM** (875-6935) atop a mountain in Esperance has cultivated gardens, trails in meadow, woods & an old giant tree. **WOODS HOLLOW** nature preserve in Ballston Spa off Route 50 has beautiful paths through wooded areas and a pond. **GRAFTON LAKES STATE PARK** (279-1155) between Taconic and Hudson Valleys has 5 ponds and 2,300 acres including sandy beach at Long Pond. **INDIAN KILL** 100-acre preserve at Maple Ave and Hetcheltown Rd in Glenville **PLOTTER KILL** on Route 159 in Rotterdam has rugged terrain and some steep slopes among its 639 acres, but magnificent falls especially in the Spring, that drop down to the Mohawk River. **GREAT FLATS** 3-mile circular trail in a wetland habitat bet Schenectady and Rotterdam on West Campbell Rd - Rt 337 just off Exit 2a of 890. **LISHA KILL** owned by the Nature Conservancy is on Rosendale Rd past River Rd in Schenectady County. **TAWASENTHA PARK** on Route 146 in Guilderland toward Altamont, now has a scenic walking bridge connecting trails on both sides of the Normanskill. Parking fee for non-residents.