

Evan Levy | Rachel Mazor

111 Places for
Kids in New York
That You Must
Not Miss

Photographs by Joost Heijmenberg



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FOREWORD

To E & T, and Mom and Dad, who would have loved this idea. – Evan Levy

To J, E, and N, the best research assistants ever, and to my mother, who always knew the places we just couldn't miss. – Rachel Mazor



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New York is a fantastic place to be a kid – and to explore with kids! There are truly endless possibilities here for kids of all ages, whether they're growing up here or visiting for a few days.

Young New Yorkers have access to exciting experiences right outside their front door. We are so lucky to have had the chance to bring up our own children here. We've shown our kids the world without leaving the city – the joys of Sri Lankan fritters and Polish dumplings, art in train tunnels and playgrounds on roofs, libraries in storefronts, and pools in rivers. Our kids have grown up on a steady diet of day hikes in urban wetlands and hunts for the best noodle dishes from across the globe.

We've aimed to capture the wonderful diversity of all five boroughs. Catching a wave in Queens, riding a pony in Brooklyn, exploring a wigwam in the Bronx, churning butter in Staten Island, wandering through a rainforest in a Manhattan lobby – these are just some of the wonders that await you and your kids.

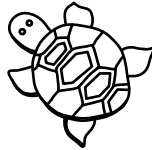
Some of the places we've included here are old favorites, reminding us that they're not just for tourists. Seen through a new lens, a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge becomes a chance to imagine elephants marching alongside us. A visit to The Met turns into a scavenger hunt through an art storage center. Many more of the places were wonderful surprises even to us, like the interactive museum dedicated to the innovations of Lewis Latimer, and a canoe trip down the Bronx River. Some discoveries, like the meditative weaving studio, were soul-soothing. Others, like an attempt to impress our kids by trying a high ropes course before chickening out, were humbling.

All of these expeditions made writing this book so much fun for us, and we know your family will enjoy going on new adventures with our book in hand! Each adventure is a story, and together, these stories make up the story of New York City.

14 BRONX RIVER CANOEING

Peaceful paddles in the bucolic Bronx

When you tell people of a certain generation that you plan to canoe down the Bronx River, expect to hear a “Bronx cheer” as they recall the days when the river was so polluted that sections of it could be set on fire. Thanks to the work of the Bronx River Alliance, however, the river today looks a lot better than it did even 20 years ago. In fact, during one of the Alliance’s public paddles, you’ll see what the Bronx looked like before Jonas Bronck settled here in the 1600s.



Every weekend, boaters from all over the city come to one of the Alliance’s public paddles, where they learn about the history of the Bronx River and pick up canoeing skills along the way. While there are options for more experienced kayakers, involving some portage, or carrying a canoe across land, families flock to the great-for-beginners lake paddle. This guided experience starts and ends in the calm waters at the Bronx Zoo. Each boat requires two confident paddlers, and younger kids can sit in the middle of the canoe and “help” with the paddling too.

Your excursion starts with a chance to practice your paddle skills in the “lake” section of the river. Once everyone gets the hang of it, a well-informed guide leads you along the river, pointing out plants along the riverbank and sharing the indigenous and colonial history of the area. You might even spot a snapping turtle or an owl! For a few blissful hours, the city melts away, as you paddle along the beautiful Bronx River. It’s all good cheer on this excursion.



Address Multiple locations, www.bronxriver.org/visit-the-river/paddle-the-river // **Getting there** Varies by location // **Hours** See website for schedule // **Ages** 3+



TIP: The Urban Park Rangers offer free, lottery-based kayaking trips throughout the city.

18 THE BROOKLYN STRATEGIST

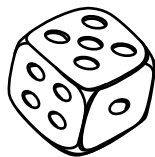
Play games on the tabletop, not on the laptop

Face-to-face interaction is the goal at this beloved neighborhood gaming café, where dungeon masters, Catan settlers, and Pokémon trainers spend hours in friendly competition, with nary a screen in sight. Select from over 500 board games for a walk-in play session, or register for **tournaments** to win Magic the Gathering card packs and bragging rights. Casual players and intense gamers alike of all ages and genders feel welcome in after-school classes for beginners and draft sessions for under-18s. Older kids can compete against adults, but don't expect the grown-ups to take it easy on the youngsters – the parent-age clientele of the “B-Strat” skews kind but competitive.

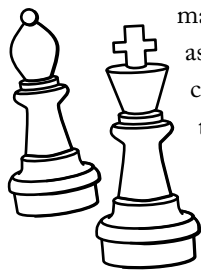
Options range widely, from **role-playing** favorites like *Dungeon and Dragons* to deck-builders like *Magic the Gathering* and *Pokémon*. Kids can learn modern board game hits, like *Ticket to Ride* and *Exploding Kittens*, or brush up their chess skills in private lessons. After-school classes and summer camps allow kids to

make like-minded friends as they learn **strategies** and create their own games. The proprietors know their customers, allowing parents to leave a snack credit for kids to spend on bagels and pizza (so they can't blow their lunch budgets on more card packs).

The storefront is packed with every tabletop game you can imagine, from *Apples to Apples* to *Zombieopoly*, along with deck boxes, *Warhammer* miniatures, and multi-sided dice. The helpful employees can suggest games for all interest levels – and none of it is digital.



TIP: Kids can choose new board games, puzzles, and decks at Gamestoria in Queens.



Address 333 Court Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231, www.thebrooklynstrategist.com // **Getting there** Subway to Carroll Street (Lines F, G) // **Hours** Sun 11am–6pm, Mon–Fri 8am–9pm, Sat 11am–9pm // **Ages** 5+

26__COOKIE HEADSTONE

Sweet memories at a historic cemetery

Brooklyn's historic Green-Wood Cemetery has memorials dating back to the 1800s. There is one humble grave site that appeals to a kid's sense of history. Lot 44807 is the final resting place of Naomi Miller-Dawson, whose relatives honored



her memory with a headstone shaped like an open cookbook and inscribed with a **recipe** for her spritz cookies.



This simple recipe for traditional Scandinavian Christmas treats looks curious when you come across Mrs. Miller-Dawson's grave, but it's actually a touching tribute to a beloved matriarch. Take a photo of the recipe and try making some spritz **cookies** yourself (see ch. 70)!

There's plenty of other notable sites to explore in this sprawling cemetery, an ideal place for a calm walk any time of year. Maps at the entrances help visitors locate graves of famous "residents," including Jean-Michel **Basquiat**, Leonard Bernstein, and the founder of the ASPCA. Look for a headstone that looks curiously like a Golden Snitch, and leave a stick for Rex, one of the dogs buried at Green-Wood. Don't miss the monk **parrots** who have taken up residence in the trees near the main entrance. Nobody is quite sure how they got there, but they are as much a part of the cemetery's landscape as the rolling hills and winding paths.

Trolley tours offer little legs a chance to cover most of the terrain, and self-guided discovery kits focusing on nature, art, and history are available to visitors with advance notice. As this is a working cemetery, visitors are asked to respect conduct rules.

Address 500 25th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11232, www.green-wood.com //
Getting there Subway to 25th Street (Line R) // **Hours** Daily 8am–5pm //
Ages 0+



TIP: Pick up a pan de muerto or a sugar skull for Día de los Muertos at Don Paco Lopez bakery in Sunset Park.

