

A Year's Worth of Fun

Your Indispensable
FAIRFIELD COUNTY
Fun Guide!

Our top 20 family must-do's for every season—consider it your annual bucket list, and refer to it often! **By Chris Chagaris**



Beyond the Page

Explore our catalog of outings—venues within approximately an hour's drive or train ride—at: nymetroparents.com/outings

Find great family day trip options at: nymetroparents.com/daytrips

Scroll through our most popular where-to guides—including everything from carousels to nature centers, berry picking to mini-golf—at: nymetroparents.com/where-to

Browse or search our calendar of events, updated daily, for something to do any day of the year at: nymetroparents.com/calendar

Subscribe to our popular weekend activities newsletter at: nymetroparents.com/register

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Top 20 Things to Do in Summer



- 1. Sweet Summer**
Pick your own berries at Jones Family Farms in Shelton, or head to another nearby berry farm—find the full list at nymetroparents.com/berries.
- 2. 'Round and 'Round We Go**
Go for a spin on the **Beardsley Zoo Carousel** in Bridgeport, which features colorful versions of the live animals you can visit in the zoo, or find another merry-go-round near you at nymetroparents.com/ct-carousels.
- 3. Georgetown Celebration**
Visit Georgetown, which borders Redding, Weston, Wilton, and Ridgefield, for its annual **Georgetown Day Festival** in early June. The day includes music, food, and lots of children's activities. For more annual fests in the area, visit nymetroparents.com/festivals.
- 4. Got wheels?**
The Junior League of Greenwich presents a **Touch a Truck** fundraising event in early June each year at Greenwich Town Hall, where kids can jump into all sorts of things with wheels, from monster trucks to fire trucks. There's also music, food, and more family activities throughout the day.
- 5. Beach Bums**
Enjoy the sun and sand at **Jennings Beach** in Fairfield, which also has a playground and a picnic area with public grills. Search for more beaches in Connecticut at nymetroparents.com/ct-beaches.
- 6. A Day of Freebies**
Get free admission to dozens of museums and cultural centers, including the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, during **Connecticut Open House Day** in early to mid-June. Find a full list of kid-friendly museums in the area at nymetroparents.com/museums.

- 7. Fore!**
Play 18 holes at **Norwalk Cove Marina Mini Golf**, a waterfront course with views of Calf Pasture Beach and the Long Island Sound. More local mini golf courses can be found at nymetroparents.com/ct-minigolf.
- 8. Expert Equestrians**
Take a horseback riding lesson or trail ride at **Blue Spruce Farm** in Monroe, or look for another horse farm in the Fairfield area at nymetroparents.com/horseback.
- 9. Swinging Through the Trees**
Tackle 5 acres of aerial trails at **The Adventure Park at the Discovery Museum** in Bridgeport (nymetroparents.com/trees), where kids as young as 5 can strap on a harness and maneuver among elevated bridges, ropes, and ziplines.
- 10. A Four-Legged Festival**
Canine friends accompanied by their owners are welcome at **BooZoo's Canine Carnival** at the **Stepping Stones Museum** in Norwalk, typically held in early June.
- 11. Food, Music, and Fun**
At the **Soupstock** music and arts festival in Veterans' Memorial Park in Shelton, held in mid- to late June, soup is the star but the entertainment is no afterthought. Attendees can taste and judge a variety of soups entered in the cook-off, listen to live music, get their faces painted, and view art created by local students and craftsmen.
- 12. Old-Fashioned Fourth**
Head to nearby Mystic Seaport (nymetroparents.com/mystic) around July 4 for an **Independence Day** celebration that includes an 1876-style ceremony, a picnic on the village green, live music, and a children's parade.

- 13. Bikes on Parade**
Nothing says summer like the **Pequot Library's** annual (rain or shine!) **Fourth of July Bike Parade**. It starts in Five Corners, Southport Village and ends at the Great Lawn of the library. Refreshments and games are available for all, so bring those bikes, wagons, or scooters (decorations are encouraged!) and celebrate in style.
- 14. The Finer Side**
Head to the annual **Westport Fine Arts Festival** at Parker Harding Plaza and Gorham Island in mid-July to view beautiful artwork and enjoy live music, special performances, and children's activities.
- 15. Blazing a Trail**
Bartlett Arboretum and Gardens in Stamford offers many trails for **nature hikes**. Put on those walking shoes and take in the beauty of nature! And find more nature trails in the area at nymetroparents.com/hike-ct.
- 16. Best of the Bard**
CT Free Shakespeare presents outdoor performances of some of The Bard's best work each summer (usually late July or early August) at the American Shakespeare Festival Theater Grounds in Stratford and more recently at Downtown Bridgeport's McLevy Green. Learn more at ctfreshakespeare.org.
- 17. Music in the Great Outdoors**
Catch an **outdoor concert** or other kid-friendly performance at the Levitt Pavilion in Westport, which hosts shows on weeknights throughout the summer. Check nymetroparents.com/calendar for details on upcoming events.



- 18. Cruising the Sound**
Join the crew of the Maritime Aquarium's research vessel "Oceanic" for a **Marine Life Study Cruise** on the Long Island Sound. Aquarium educators put participants to work in collecting and examining animals from all levels of the water column, from plankton to lobsters. The cruises are offered daily in July and August. Find more details on the aquarium at nymetroparents.com/ct-aquarium.
- 19. Summer Stage**
The **Summer Theatre Festival at Waveny Park** in New Canaan is presented in a state-of-the-art open-air tent theater. Reserve your seat under the tent or choose field seating and bring a picnic. The festival presents high-quality musical theater, including children's shows and special events, throughout the summer. For more information, visit stonc.org.
- 20. Flicks on the Beach**
Trade the air-conditioned theater for some fresh night air when Shady Beach in Norwalk presents its **Outdoor Movies** series in July and August. Screenings are typically on Saturday nights. To find theaters in our area that offer sensory-friendly movie screenings for those with autism or other sensory issues, go to nymetroparents.com/movies.

Shannon Calvert

Courtesy Maritime Aquarium

Anthony Wellman

Top 20 Things to Do in Fall

Search Fairfield family activities at: nymetroparents.com/calendar



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1. Shuck into September

The **Norwalk Seaport Association** hosts its annual **Oyster Festival** in early September. Held in Veteran's Park in East Norwalk, the festival includes rides, live music and entertainment, arts and crafts, food and refreshments, oyster shucking contests, and a Kids' Cove full of pirate-themed activities and entertainment.

2. Huzzah!

Make the trip to Norwich in New London County for the annual **Connecticut Renaissance Faire**, held over several weekends in September and October. Shop in an old-world market, watch jousting knights and acrobats, and taste medieval delicacies. Costumes are encouraged! Check ctfaire.com for details on themed weekends.

3. A Colonial Celebration

Travel back to a bygone era at Woodbury's historic **Glebe House** (thelebehouse.org), which dates back to the Revolutionary War. It hosts its annual **Colonial Fair and Muster Day** in mid-September, which boasts quilting and woodworking demonstrations as well as colonial storytelling, food, and music.

4. All About Apples

Take a tractor ride and **pick your own apples** at Silverman's Farm in Easton

throughout September and into early October. The farm also has an animal petting park, farm market, florist, and greenhouse. Find more apple orchards and farms in the region at nymetroparents.com/apples.

5. A Colorful Celebration

In mid-September, the Redhawk Native American Arts Council presents a **Native American Pow Wow** at FDR State Park in Yorktown Heights (Westchester County). The weekend-long event brings together Native American artists, educators, singers, dancers, storytellers, and performing groups from across the Americas. Find more cultural festivals in the area at nymetroparents.com/festivals.

6. Sign of the Season

Head to the annual **Cider Saturday & Harvest Celebration** at New Canaan Nature Center in mid- to late September to enjoy cider-pressing demos, an apple slingshot, seasonal crafts, tastings, and much more. Find more fall fairs and festivals in Fairfield County at nymetroparents.com/fall-ct.

7. Pumpkins Galore

Don't miss **The Great Jack O' Lantern Blaze**, an outdoor walkthrough experience featuring thousands

of hand-carved pumpkins, at nearby Van Cortlandt Manor in Croton-on-Hudson (Westchester County). The Blaze opens in early October and runs through mid-November. Find more details at nymetroparents.com/blaze.

8. Outdoor Arts

The Bruce Museum in Greenwich has been hosting its **Outdoor Arts Festival** over Columbus Day Weekend for more than 30 years. The show features close to 100 artists from all over the country exhibiting their paintings, sculptures, photography, and more. The museum also hosts an annual Outdoor Crafts Festival in mid-May. Learn more at brucemuseum.org.

9. Soup, Cider, Steamboats, and Stars

What's better than a hot bowl of chowder on a cool autumn day? Head to **Chowder Days** at Mystic Seaport (nymetroparents.com/mystic) over Columbus Day weekend for hearty chowders, mulled cider, and other seasonal treats, plus horse-drawn hay rides and a final ride of the season aboard steamboat "Sabino." You can also explore exhibits, climb aboard tall ships, and see the stars of the autumn sky inside the Treworgy Planetarium.

10. A Festive Autumn Fair

The **Stamford Museum & Nature Center** celebrates autumn with a **Harvest Festival Weekend** in mid- to late October, when attendees can take a hayride, watch cidering demonstrations, enter scarecrow-making and pumpkin-carving contests, march in a costume parade, visit the farm animals, and enjoy storytelling and more children's activities.

11. Fall's Favorite Fruit

Pick your own pumpkins in October at Castle Hill Farm in Newtown, where you can also wind through the corn maze, take a pony ride or hayride, and enjoy face painting and refreshments. There are many other farms that offer pumpkin picking in the fall—see the full list at nymetroparents.com/pumpkins.

12. A Storybook Setting

Burr Homestead in Fairfield transforms into an **Enchanted Castle** in mid- to late October, with storybook-themed rooms and friendly costumed characters. Kids are encouraged to wear their own costumes to this walk-through event, which benefits the Ahlbin Centers for Rehabilitation. Find details at enchantedcastle.org.

13. Boo at the Zoo

Spend **Howl-O-Ween** at the Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport in late October, when you can take a hayride, visit the "haunted" farmyard and "gruesome" greenhouse, enjoy a show, and take home some candy. Visit beardsleyzoo.org for details.

14. Dancing with Dracula

The popular **Monster Mash** party at Stepping Stones Museum in Norwalk is a kid-friendly costume party that's always jam-packed with family fun. Find many more Halloween activities in the area at nymetroparents.com/halloween.

15. Strolling and Rolling Along

The **Housatonic Valley Rail-Trail** in Monroe is one of three nature trails in Fairfield that has been deemed wheelchair accessible by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit working to create a nationwide network of trails



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from former railroad lines. The Monroe trail is a 4.3-mile stretch paved in crushed stone and is a convenient route to William E. Wolfe Park where a paved path circles the park's 16-acre lake. For details, visit nymetroparents.com/accessible-trails.

16. Reds, Yellows, Oranges, and Greens

Take in the colorful foliage during a **fall nature hike** at the Bartlett Arboretum in Stamford, which includes 71 acres of forest habitat. And for more places to visit during leaf-peeping season, check nymetroparents.com/leaf.

17. Family Bon(d)fire

Earthplace, a 62-acre wildlife sanctuary in Westport, regularly hosts **Friday Family Campfires** in the summer and fall. Visitors can enjoy sitting by the fire and toasting marshmallows for s'mores and exploring some of the grounds.

18. Farm Politics

You vote on Election Day to set a good example for your kids (right?), but you can also give them a chance to cast their own

19. Turkey, Pomp, and Circumstance

Celebrate Thanksgiving a few days early at the **UBS Parade Spectacular** in Downtown Stamford, one of the largest helium balloon parades in the country. And don't miss the Giant Balloon Inflation Party the night before. Check nymetroparents.com/calendar for details on these events.

20. Big City Christmas

Kick off the holiday season with a trip into Manhattan to see the **Radio City Christmas Spectacular**, starring those kickline-loving Rockettes in their holiday best. The show typically opens in early November and runs through the end of December. Get details on this and other holiday shows in the city at nymetroparents.com/nyc-holiday-shows.



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Courtesy Stamford Museum and Nature Center



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Cliff Matias



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Dawn Roode



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Courtesy MSG Entertainment
Courtesy happyaha.com

Top 20 Things to Do in Winter

1. In the Holiday Spirit

A tradition for more than 30 years, the **Fairfield Christmas Tree Festival** at Burr Homestead in Fairfield is held in late November or early December. Attendees can shop for Christmas trees and wreaths, take a photo with Santa, and tour the designer-decorated rooms, all while contributing to a good cause—the festival donates proceeds to a worthy local organization each year.

2. On Dasher, on Dancer...

Meet those amazing animals who pull Santa's sleigh at the **Greenwich Reindeer Festival & Santa's Workshop** at **McArdle's Florist & Garden Center**, open late November through late December. You can also get a photo with jolly Old St. Nick himself.

3. Nothin' Like the Real Thing

Cut your own Christmas tree at Jones Family Farm in Shelton or another tree farm in the area (search nymetroparents.com/xmastrees).

4. Light Bright

November ushers in the **Fantasy of Lights** at Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven, which runs through January. Bask in the glow of the mile-long route of holiday lights in many incarnations, including a gingerbread house and a holiday dragon. Some exhibits are animated, too!

5. Visions of Sugar Plums

Westport's Academy of Dance presents its annual production of **The Nutcracker**, a more than 30-year tradition, at Staples High School in Westport in early December. Find more area performances of the classic ballet at nymetroparents.com/ct-nutcracker.

6. Finding Feathered Friends

Be part of a more than 100-year-old tradition in mid-December when the **Greenwich Audubon Society** hosts its annual **Christmas Bird Count**. Join dozens of Audubon volunteers in search of feathered friends throughout the day, then attend the annual compilation meeting and dinner at night. You'll contribute to critical research led by 'citizen scientists' across the nation.

7. Mountains of Fun

Grab your gear and pack up the kids for a day of **skiing or snowboarding** at one of the area's family-friendly resorts, such as Mohawk Mountain Ski Area in Cornwall (Litchfield County). For details, visit nymetroparents.com/ski.

8. North Pole Bound!

From late November through early January, you can catch **The Polar Express** in IMAX at the **Maritime Aquarium** in Norwalk. This perennial holiday film tells the tale of a young boy who doubts the existence of Santa Claus and gets taken on a magical Christmas Eve trip to the North Pole.

9. All Aboard!

Let your little ones delight in the magic of model trains at the annual **Holiday Express Train Show** at Fairfield Museum and History Center in Fairfield. From early December through early January, you can watch the trains wind around a winter wonderland of spectacular trees and beautiful holiday scenery. Find details and more train exhibits in the area at nymetroparents.com/trains.



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Courtesy Maritime Aquarium

Courtesy Feld Entertainment

10. Howling New Year

Hang out with wolves at the Wolf Conservation Center in South Salem (nymetroparents.com/wcc), just over the Westchester border. Each year on New Year's Day, visitors can help **Howl in the New Year** while they enjoy hot beverages and learn all about these beautiful and endangered species.

11. Skating Sensation

See Mickey, Minnie, and a host of your other favorite characters when the **Disney on Ice** tour stops at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport for a few days in early January. Check disneyonice.com for the full schedule.

12. Seal Spotting

Hop aboard the research vessel "Oceanic" at the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk (nymetroparents.com/ct-aquarium) for a **Winter Creature Cruise**, offered on select weekends in January, February, and March. Educators

on board will point out the harbor seals, gray seals, and even harp seals that are wintering in the Long Island Sound.

13. All Downhill from Here

Pull out your Flexible Flyer and get set for some downhill snow day fun. Once there's enough of the white stuff on the ground, Fairfield's parks open for **sledding**. Find the best hills in the area at nymetroparents.com/ct-sled.

14. Give a Little, Get a Lot

Give back to the community on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in mid-January. Learn more about **volunteer opportunities** in the Fairfield area at nymetroparents.com/volunteer.

15. Slip 'n Glide

Go **ice-skating** at the Dorothy Hamill Skating Rink in Greenwich, or find another rink in our skating guide at nymetroparents.com/ice-skating.



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Courtesy Wolf Conservation Center

16. Star Sighting

During early to mid-February, head to the Bruce Museum in Greenwich for its annual **Astronomy Family Day**, where activities and crafts focus on the stars and planets. Watch some shows in the STARLAB planetarium, take a peek at some telescopes, and meet members of the Astronomical Society. Visit brucemuseum.org for more information.

17. Dancin' in a Winter Wonderland

For the very popular **Winter Wonderland Children's Ball**, held at Stepping Stones Museum in Norwalk in late February, kids are invited to dress in their party best for an evening of wintry celebration featuring dancing, a life-sized igloo and snow globe, winter crafts, and full access to all the exhibits in the museum. Learn more at nymetroparents.com/steppingstones.

18. Bounce!

When the temps drop outside, keep your kiddos active indoors at Pump It Up Norwalk (nymetroparents.com/pump-ct),

where they can bounce around to their hearts' content on the center's giant inflatables. Check nymetroparents.com/calendar for details on the center's upcoming drop-in sessions and special events like Parents' Night Out and Sensory-Friendly Jump sessions.

19. Family Flicks

If you have a family member with sensory issues, opt for a **sensory-friendly movie matinee** where the lights stay up, the sound is turned down, and audience members are encouraged to get up and make as much noise as they please—find more info at nymetroparents.com/movies.

20. If You Build It...

Escape from the cold and head to **Legoland Discovery Center Westchester** in nearby Yonkers. Among its attractions, Legoland boasts several themed building stations, rides, and Miniland, a miniature recreation of the New York metro landscape. Learn more about it at nymetroparents.com/legoland.



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Courtesy Stepping Stones Museum

Top 20 Things to Do in Spring

1. Sweet Spots

Learn how sap is harvested and made into that sweet stuff we all love to put on our pancakes during the **Maple Sugar Festival** weekend at Stamford Museum & Nature Center in early March. The weekend includes crafts, music, scavenger hunts, and, of course, a pancake brunch. Find similar events in the area at nymetroparents.com/maple-sugaring.



Courtesy Stamford Museum and Nature Center

2. Erin Go Bragh!

Approaching its 40th year, the **St. Patrick's Day Parade** in Greenwich is sponsored by the Greenwich Hibernian Association and held on a Sunday near the Irish holiday. The parade features bands, scouting groups, cultural groups, and more that march from Town Hall down Greenwich Avenue. Check nymetroparents.com/holiday-activities for more St. Paddy's Day events.

3. April Staple

The **Meriden Daffodil Festival** at Hubbard Park (in nearby New Haven County) is a must in the spring. Highlights include children's activities, entertainment, and a parade.



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4. Sunny Days, Sweepin' the Clouds Away

The **Sesame Street Live** tour typically stops at the Palace Theatre in Stamford in mid-April. Get your tickets early to see Big Bird, Elmo, and the whole beloved gang. Find the full schedule at sesamestreetlive.com.

5. Sweet Treasure Hunt

Hop to the **Spring Celebration and Egg Hunt** at **Woodcock Nature Center** in Wilton, where kids go on an egg-hunting hike and then color their eggs and create spring-themed



Courtesy Feld Entertainment

crafts. The timing of this event depends when Easter falls. Search for more Easter egg hunts at nymetroparents.com/calendar.

6. Meeska, Mooska, Mickey Mouse

Experience the magic of **Disney Live!** at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport, where you can catch some of your favorite characters performing in mid- to late April. For more information, visit disneylive.com.

7. Celebrating Mother Earth

Party for the Planet at Bridgeport's Beardsley Zoo in mid- to late April, in celebration of Earth Day. Hang out with the animals, enjoy live music and entertainment, and learn about local, organic, earth-friendly lifestyle choices from a variety of environmentally friendly vendors. You can also bring your Earth Day spirit to community cleanup events—check nymetroparents.com/volunteer for details.

8. Root, Root, Root for the Home Team

Catch the **Bridgeport Bluefish** in a minor league baseball game at The Ballpark at Harbor Yard. The season usually kicks off in late April and runs through the end of the summer. For more ballparks in the area, head to nymetroparents.com/bball.

9. Calling All Makers

The **Westport Mini Maker Faire** at Westport Library in late April (westportmakerfaire.org) showcases invention, creativity, and resourcefulness, celebrating the maker mindset in a hands-on environment.

10. All About Kids

At the **Danbury Kids Expo** in late April or early May, parents can explore a vast array of local child- and family-oriented products and services. There are also shows and entertainment for kids in attendance. Check danburykidsexpo.com for info on the next expo.

11. Thrills and Chills

Quassy Amusement Park in Middlebury opens for the season in late April or early May. Get your thrills on The Wooden Warrior roller coaster and Free Fall 'N' Drop tower, or check out Splash Away Bay Water Park and Quassy Beach for some water fun. Find more amusement parks in Connecticut and beyond at nymetroparents.com/amusementparks.

12. Under the Big Top

See amazing acrobats, awesome animals, clever clowns, and much more when the **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus** stops by the XL Center in nearby Hartford in early May. Find the full schedule at ringling.com.

13. Castles for a Cause

Who doesn't love to build sand castles? At the annual **Castles in the Sand** event at Compo Beach in Westport, adults and children are invited to bring shovels, buckets, and whatever else they need to create castles, frogs, cars, and anything else they can imagine. Proceeds from the event—typically held in mid-May—benefit the programs of Homes with Hope (hwhct.org), which include local shelters for women with children.

14. Choo Choo!

Celebrate National Train Day (typically the second weekend in May) with a ride on the **Essex Steam Train & Riverboat** in nearby Essex (Middlesex County). If you're lucky, Thomas the Tank Engine might stop by for a special visit! Find more places to take a train ride in our area at nymetroparents.com/trains.

15. Beauties in Bloom

May's **Fairfield Dogwood Festival** at Greenfield Hill Congregational Church showcases the beautiful dogwood trees in bloom. The festival features concerts and activities including a barbecue, kids' crafts, and games.

16. Fun on the Farm

Stamford Museum & Nature Center has hosted its annual **Spring on the Farm Festival Weekend** for more than 50 years. This popular event is typically scheduled for mid-May and includes sheep-shearing demonstrations, storytelling, face painting, crafts, a plant and herb sale, hayrides, and a chance to meet the new baby animals on Heckscher Farm. Find more nature centers, zoos, and gardens in our area at nymetroparents.com/zoos.

17. DIY Days

The Bruce Museum's annual, **Outdoor Crafts Festival** weekend in mid-May features fine contemporary crafts for sale as well as family craft activities, live music, and delicious food (brucemuseum.org).

18. March and Munch

Watch the **Memorial Day Parade** as it marches through Fairfield, honoring our national and local veterans. After the parade, bring your picnic baskets and blankets to the **Fairfield Museum and History Center** for its annual Memorial Day Community Picnic.

19. Taste of Summer

Take a crack at your first lobster of the season at Mystic Seaport's annual **Lobster Days** over Memorial Day weekend. Visitors eat picnic-style under the museum's open-air boat shed and watch the boats cruising down the Mystic River. Proceeds from the event support the Mystic Rotary Club's community organizations and projects. Find more fun in Mystic at nymetroparents.com/mystic.

20. Robin Hood and His Merry Men

Visit the old English village of Nottingham and Sherwood Forest right here in Guilford, along the Long Island Sound shoreline, when the **Robin Hood Springtime Festival** returns to the Guilford Fairgrounds (nearby in New Haven County). Held over several weekends in May and June, this family-friendly Renaissance fair features continuous shows, games of skill, jousting, a knighting ceremony, and a marketplace filled with handcrafted goods. Visit robinhoodsfair.com.



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Courtesy HIT Entertainment