

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 Chris Chagaris

BEYOND THE PAGE

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Top 20 Things to Do in the SUMMER



1. 'Picky' Eaters

Pick your own berries at Jones Family Farms in Shelton, or head to [another nearby berry farm](#).

2. Merry-Go-Riding

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](#).

3. Georgetown Goodies

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, check out [our roundup](#).

4. Tons of Trucks

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. Sandy Spots

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 nearby in our [where-to guide](#).



Courtesy Stepping Stones Museum



Kindra Clineff



Courtney Weittenhiller



Elena Elisseeva



Anthony Wellman

6. Museum Mayhem

Get free admission to dozens of museums and cultural centers, including Stepping Stones Museum in Norwalk, during **Connecticut Open House Day** in early to mid-June. See our full list of [kid-friendly museums in the area](#).

7. Beachside Birdies

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 in [our roundup](#).

8. Giddy Up!

Take a horseback riding lesson or trail ride at **Blue Spruce Farm** in Monroe, or look for [another horse farm in the Fairfield area](#).

9. High in the Sky

Tackle 5 acres of aerial trails at **The Adventure Park at the Discovery Museum** in Bridgeport, where kids as young as 5 can strap on a harness and maneuver among elevated bridges, ropes, and zip lines. Also new is Monkey Grove, which involves rock wall-style climbing but on trees!

10. Souper Fun

At the **Soupsstock** 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.

11. The Rockets' Red Glare

Grab a seat in the sand at **Calf Pasture Beach** in Norwalk for the annual **Fireworks & Entertainment for All Ages**, held the day before the big holiday.

12. Four Score...

Head to nearby **Mystic Seaport** around July 4 for an **Independence Day** celebration that includes an 1876-style ceremony, a picnic on the village green, live music, face painting, refreshments and a children's parade.

13. Tour de Fairfield

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 (decorated ones are encouraged!) and celebrate in style.

14. A Fine Idea

Head to the annual **Westport Fine Arts Festival** at Parker Harding Plaza and Gorham Island in mid-July to view beautiful artworks and enjoy live music, special performances, and children's activities.

15. Happy Hiking!

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 in [our roundup](#).

16. Shakespeare Made Modern

CT Free Shakespeare is a professional, nonprofit theater company that brings free performances of the Bard's work to several venues in the county in July and August each year.

17. Weeknight Wonder

Catch an **outdoor concert** or other kid-friendly performance at the Levitt Pavilion in Westport, which hosts shows on weeknights throughout



Courtesy Mystic Seaport



Courtesy Maritime Aquarium



Christophe Festi

the summer. Check [our calendar](#) for details on upcoming events.

18. Discovering the Sound

Hop aboard the new research vessel *R/V Spirit of the Sound™* at the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk for **Marine Life Study Cruises**, which depart daily in July and August. Aquarium educators put participants to work in collecting and examining everything from tiny plankton to a variety of fish, crabs, squid, and surprises brought up in the trawl net.

19. Plays in the Park

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.

20. The Big Screen at 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. And some theaters in our area offer [sensory-friendly movie screenings](#) for those with autism or other sensory issues.

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Top 20 Things to Do in the FALL



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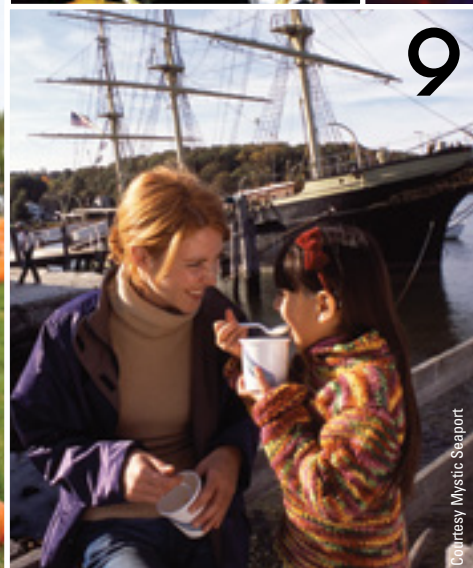
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1. Oyster Overload

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. Car Crazy

See a dazzling display of authentic pre-1930 cars, trucks, and motorcycles at Mystic Seaport's annual [Antique Vehicle Show](#) in mid- to late September. Take a closer look at the various types of vehicles that helped transport commerce from the land to the sea at the turn of the century. Cap off the day with the event's annual finale, the Grand Parade of Vehicles.

3. Back in Time

Travel back to a bygone era at Woodbury's historic [Glebe House](#), 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. Apples Abound

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. See our [where-to guide](#) to find more apple orchards and farms in the region.

5. Down at the Pow Wow

In mid-September, the Redhawk Native American Arts Council presents a [Native American Pow Wow](#) at FDR State Park in Yorktown Heights, NY (Westchester County). The weekend-long event brings together Native American artists, educators, singers, dancers, storytellers, and performing groups from across the Americas. And expose your kids to more cultures at [other festivals in the area](#).

6. Cider Celebration

Head to the annual [Cider Saturday](#) 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 in our [roundup](#).

7. Lighting Up the Night

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.

8. An Artsy Weekend

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.

9. Soup & Steamboats

What's better than a hot bowl of chowder on a cool autumn day? Head to [Chowder Days](#) at [Mystic Seaport](#) 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. Fall Fest

The [Stamford Museum & Nature Center](#) celebrates autumn with a [Harvest Festival Weekend](#) in mid- to late October, when attendees can take a hayride, watch cidery 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. Gourds Galore

[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. See our [where-to guide](#) for the many other farms that offer pumpkin picking in the fall.

12. A Fairytale in Fairfield

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.

13. Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Make the trip to North Haven in New London County for the annual [Connecticut Renaissance Faire](#), held over several weekends in October. Shop in an old-world market, watch jousting knights and acrobats, and taste medieval delicacies. Costumes are encouraged!

14. Halloween Hoopla

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 on [our site](#).

15. A Hike for All Abilities

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 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.

16. A Colorful Excursion

Take in the colorful foliage during a [fall nature hike](#) at the Bartlett Arboretum in Stamford, which includes 71 acres of forest habitat. And check [our roundup](#) for more places to visit during leaf-peeping season.

17. Zoo Boo

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.

18. Animal Farm Elections

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 ballot during [Stamford Museum and Nature Center's Fall Break Out Day](#) in early November. Visitors can vote for their favorite animals on Heckscher Farm, say hello to the candidates, and enjoy a variety of other outdoor activities.

19. Big Balloons

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.

20. Christmastime in the City

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 other holiday shows in the city in [our roundup](#).

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Courtesy TMK Sports & Entertainment, LLC



Courtesy Stamford-Downtown



Courtesy Fairfield Museum and History Center



Joshua Rainey



Courtesy Warner Bros.



Dmitry Shironosov

Top 20 Things to Do in the WINTER

1. 'Tis the Season

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. Won't You Guide My Sleigh Tonight

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. Oh, Christmas Tree

Cut your own Christmas tree at Jones Family Farm in Shelton or [another tree farm in the area](#).

4. Let There Be Light

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. 3-D glasses are for sale. Some exhibits are animated, too!

5. A Traditional Treat

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.

6. Santa Skips the Elevator

Santa is used to climbing down the chimney, not down skyscrapers! But at [Heights & Lights Rappelling Santa and Holiday Tree Lighting](#) in early December, you can watch Santa descend 22 stories by rope from one

of Stamford's tallest buildings, Landmark Square. Once he reaches the ground, follow him up Bedford Street to Latham Park for an evening of holiday fun with live music and the annual lighting of Stamford's holiday tree.

7. On the Slopes

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).

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 in our [roundup](#).

10. 3...2...1...

Hang out with wolves at the [Wolf Conservation Center](#) in South Salem, NY, 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. Mickey, Minnie, and Many More

See a host of your favorite characters when the [Disney on Ice](#) tour stops at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport for a few days in early January.

12. Sleeping with Starfish

Kids can enjoy [group sleepovers](#) at the [Maritime Aquarium](#) in Norwalk. Enjoy a light dinner an aquatic guided tour, aquatic games, snacks and crafts. Wake up to breakfast, a private seal show, and an IMAX movie to cap off the morning.

13. Snow Day Solution

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](#).

14. Skate Date

Go [ice-skating](#) at the Dorothy Hamill Skating Rink in Greenwich, or find another rink in our [skating guide](#).

15. Helping Hands

Give back to the community on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in mid-January. Learn more about [volunteer opportunities](#) in the Fairfield area in our [where-to guide](#).

16. Remembrance & Education

The [Bruce Museum](#) in Greenwich invites families to participate in its annual [Martin Luther King Family Day](#). The event

commemorates the legacy and work of Dr. King, and involves educational activities, music, and other performances. Activities are free with museum admission.

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.

18. Bouncing Off the Walls

When the temps drop outside, keep your kiddos active indoors at [Pump It Up Norwalk](#), where they can bounce around to their hearts' content on the center's giant inflatables. Check [our calendar](#) for details on the center's upcoming drop-in sessions and special events such as Parents' Night Out and Sensory-Friendly Jump sessions.

19. Sensible Screenings

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.

20. A Dino-mite Break

Kids can explore the prehistoric era during their Presidents Week school break in mid-February when the [Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History](#) in New Haven hosts [Dinosaur Days](#).

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Rebecca Bose



Miguel Cruz

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

1. The Sweet Stuff

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 in our [maple-sugaring roundup](#).

2. Shamrock Sunday

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.

3. A Day of Daffodils

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.

4. Talon-ted Creatures

Learn all about living raptors at a **Birds of Prey Experience** at the **Wolf Conservation Center** in South Salem, NY, in late April. Under the supervision of a professional falconer, kids can meet and even hold one of these magnificent birds.

5. An Egg-Cellent Idea

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 crafts. The timing of this event depends when Easter falls.

6. Nearby in New Haven

Family Day at the Peabody Museum and **A Night at the Peabody Museum**, both in late April, feature fun-filled games, crafts, and various other activities. A Night at the Peabody Museum includes a scavenger hunt and the chance to meet live animals in the museum after hours.

7. Every Day Is Earth Day

Learn about everything from animals to ecosystems at Westport's **Earthplace**. Take in the wonders of Animal Hall and outdoor bird enclosures, plus take a stroll on one of the facility's many trails, including the wheelchair-accessible Wheels-in-the-Woods IV, a universal design nature trail. Fun trail activities include letter boxes, tree ID, and word hunting.

8. Bluefish Baseball

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. Find more ballparks in the area in our [Minor League Baseball where-to guide](#).

9. Maker Mania

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

10. Kids' Day

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.

11. Roller-coaster Rides and Water Slides

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 CT and beyond in [our guide](#).

12. Light Art

If your family is fond of the annual Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze, they'll love **Lightscares**, an incredible nighttime display of sculpture, light, sound, and special effects created by the Blaze artists and on display in May at **Van Cortlandt Manor** in Croton-on-Hudson, NY.

13. Sandcastles for Shelter

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**, which include local shelters for women with children.

14. Train Game

Celebrate National Train Day (typically the second weekend in May) with a ride on the **Essex Steam Train & Riverboat** in nearby Essex, NJ (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 in [our roundup](#).

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 include a barbecue, kids' crafts, and games.

16. Spring Celebration

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 in our [where-to guide](#).

17. Crafts Under the Clouds

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

18. Parade & Picnic

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 Memorial Day Community Picnic.

19. Mini Farmhands

Take a day trip to nearby Putnam County in late May for **Little Folk Farm Days** at **Green Chimneys** in Brewster, NY. Kids can ride the ponies, watch live shows, do crafts, and play games.

20. Thy Passport to Merriment Awaits

Visit the old English village of Nottingham and Sherwood Forest right 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.



Edward Reed



Courtesy Bridgeport Bluefish



Courtesy Earthplace



Melanie Brinckas



Bryan Haefele



Courtesy Homes with Hope



Jody Dole



Courtesy Stamford Museum and Nature Center