

Places 2 Go, Things 2 Do!

Family (& wallet)-friendly Day-Trips, Outings & Attractions in & around greater Albany 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 prices, details & verification. All phone numbers 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, donation in 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 (think 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 view on a clear 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. Taste a variety of free mineral water springs and ride the 50cent carousel in historic **Congress Park** between Broadway and Circular Street. The **Spa State Park** and its majestic Avenue of the Pines is home to the Gideon Putnam Hotel, **Saratoga Auto Museum** (587-

1935) at the old bottling plant inside the park, and **SPAC - Saratoga Performing Art Center**. Park inside the State Park for great picnic and relaxing spots, with creeks and springs for the kids to get wet. Nearby are the **Yaddo Gardens** (off Union Street) which were recently refurbished. Saratoga Springs is visitor-friendly, look around... **Bottle-Museum** (885-7589) on Route 50 in nearby Ballston Spa looks small, but has interesting stuff and great tour guides, no admission charge.

GLENS FALLS NY

Chapman House Historic Museum (793-2826) on Glen Street, no admission charge, one of the finest historic house museums in the area. The **Hyde Collection** (792-1761) is a museum of fine art in a restored Spanish-style villa. 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, in 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. Lake George is filled with many attractions in town, on water & in scenic nature...

HUDSON NY

Take Route 9 (Rt. 9) is especially scenic) south for the rural route through Rennselaer and Columbia counties to reach Hudson NY on 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 has free admission to view, touch and even get into dozens of old-fashioned to modern fire-trucks, plus a kids area with crafts. **Warren Street** 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 of 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

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 an inexpensive scenic outing. **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. **Hemmings Auto Museum** on VT-9 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, no charge. **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, out back watch 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. Depends on the time of day 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. 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. The town itself is vintage Americana, 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 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 free. (800-724-0309). **Vrooman's Nose** is a popular scenic mountain hike in the area.

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 energy and historic exhibits of its own. If the model-trains are still running, kids love them. Talking of children's museums, check out **CMOST** (235-2120) in Troy, for hands-on science and technology. For a dry/wet view, Albany has **Aqua-Ducks** (462-DUCK) plus Trolley Tours. Another view on the water and into the past is on the **USS Slater** (431-1943) the sole remaining destroyer escort boat from WWII afloat in America, moored on the Hudson River in Albany and open for tours from April thru November. On a late summer day, roll down the windows and **ride out into the countryside**, 10 minutes drive on a rural road out of any area city is scenic and different.

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. Some courses do a great job with decorating, take a few posed photos while the kids play.

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 turkeys or through the steep woods behind the goats. **Bowman Orchards** in Clifton Park has animals to feed, a hay-ride, tires to climb and an old firetruck stuck in the sand playground. **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. Just across the MA border, there's **Uncle Don's Barnyard** at the Ioka Valley Farm (413-738-5915) Hancock MA, with baby farm animals, farm toys, pedal tractors, hay inside and out. If you're heading down off Exit 19 on 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

Albany Art Room (427-3910) on Madison Ave (between Lark & Albany's Washington Park) charges \$5 per hour, per person, all materials included. Besides for fine art, **Albany Institute of History & Art** (463-4478) has art programs for kids. 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 own piece of useable pottery art.

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. **VOORHEESVILLE 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. **PINE BUSH DISCOVERY CENTER** on Route 155 in Colonie, hands-on museum and walking trails. **CROSSINGS** in Colonie off Albany-Shaker Rd is a modern park designed for walking, roller-blading, with a playground, facilities & fountain. **CONGRESS PARK** in Saratoga, 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** home to majestic pine trees, mineral springs, and running creeks to get your feet wet, plus the Gideon Putnam & 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 & bridges, elegant Hudson River-Walk pedestrian bridge linking to downtown Albany. Schenectady's **CENTRAL PARK** has a magnificent rose garden, paddle-boats & playgrounds. **PEEBLES ISLAND STATE PARK** Delaware Ave off Ontario Street in Cohoes, where Mohawk & Hudson Rivers meet, has a walking bridge to Waterford with the boat-docks and locks. In season, boats are moored there. **EMPIRE PLAZA WOODEN PARK** south-east 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 on Game Farm Road off Delaware Ave in Delmar 350 acres of trails, meadows, ponds & environmental education center. **HOLLYHOCK HOLLOW** (767-9051) on 46 Rarick Rd in Selkirk has 140 acres with 6 hiking trails, headquarters of the Audubon Society. **LANDIS ARBORETUM** (875-6935) on 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 beautiful paths thru wooded areas & pond. **GRAFTON LAKES STATE PARK** (279-1155) between Taconic & Hudson Valleys has 5 ponds & 2,300 acres including a 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. Nature Conservancy's **LISHA KILL** on Rosendale Rd past River Rd in Schenectady Cty. **TAWASENTHA PARK** on Route 146 in Guilderland toward Altamont, playground & picnic areas, walking bridge connects trails on both sides of the Normanskill. **Note: Some parks charge a per-car entry/parking fee.**

INDOOR IDEAS

FOR A RAINY DAY OR WINTERTIME

INTERESTING STORES Some stores can be fun places to visit, even without shopping.

Pet Shop: Hold a puppy, watch the exotic fish.

Barnes & Nobles: Now new at Colonie Center.

10,000 Villages: Small shop in Stuyvesant Plaza has exotic crafts from developing countries all over the world. Not a great idea for small kids.

Antique Shops: Have each kid (mentally) choose three different old items to include in a short imaginative story when they get home.

At Wits End: Its giant toy soldiers are visible from the Northway in Clifton Park, with several rooms of little tschatskes, unusual gifts and seasonal stuff. Lots of fragile items.

Huck Finn's: Mega furniture store in downtown Albany (visible from the 787) with plenty of room to walk around. Try the elevator, school-bus and even the porch swings. Oh, check out Nipper the Dog atop Arnoff Moving & Storage on Broadway while in the neighborhood.

TEMP TOYS

Any **Dollar Store** has an assortment of cheap toys which won't last long but can keep kids busy for an afternoon, first by picking and choosing something and then by playing with it. **Party Warehouse** on Fuller Road has a wall of Party Favors (look behind the clown with the black hat and coat). BTW—buy a colored plastic tablecloth and coordinated balloons to jazz up a dinner meal. An make-believe hat is fun, too.

BEADING CRAFT SHOPS

Saratoga Beads on Henry Street is a favorite spot to creatively bead and now there's also Bumble-Beads in Latham, near Hoffman's Playland.

MUSEUM VACATION EVENTS

Many museums have special programs (check price and RSVP info) during school breaks and on weekends - at NY State Museum, CMOST in Troy, Albany Institute of History & Art, Schenectady Museum and more...

ICE-SKATING DURING THE WINTER

Albany's **Swinbourne Park** rents skates for \$2 each and it's 50 cents to get out on the well-maintained semi-outdoor ice skating rink.

LONG INDOOR WALK

Any mall is good for an walk/exercise out of the cold. **Empire State Plaza Concourse**, which runs underground between the State Museum and the Capitol, has huge abstract art lining its huge marble walls, and cafeterias to stop for a drink. There's an indoor winter farmers market at the underground bus-turn on Wednesdays 10am-2pm. **Colonie Center** is now newly renovated with comfortable lounge areas. **Latham Circle** is a quieter spot, no crowds, shorter stretches.

ZOOS

Aside for animals at local farms there are several zoos and game farms within an hour and a half drive. **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 summer-time. 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 to see 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.

COUNTY FAIRS

Summertime brings county fairs with farm animal exhibits and shows, crafts and vendors, petting zoos, circus and magic shows, rural flavor and much more - quite a few are in close driving distance. Most used to be free admission for kids, some still have free or reduced rates. Each fair has a website for more info. **Altamont Fair** (usually mid-August) is a 3-county fair, down Route 146 in Albany County with several permanent historic museum buildings as well as barns for ponies, horses, goats and sheep and cows. All shows are included in admission, Midway rides cost extra. The **Saratoga County Fair** in Ballston Spa (usually in mid-July) is one of the oldest county fairs in the state, over 100,000 attend each year, rides, activities, shows and vendors. **Washington County Fair** in Greenwich (usually late August) has a major dairy operation on-site, kids under 14 are free, old and new tractor exhibits, shows etc. The **Schaghticoke Fair** also one of the oldest NY fairs is held at the junction of Routes 67 & 40 in upper Rensselaer County. Plus there's the **Sunshine Fair** (early August) in Cobleskill in Schoharie County, free under 13. Going west past Amsterdam on the 90 is the **Fonda Fair** (end of August) and (also at the end of August) there's the **Columbia County Fair** in Chatham.

LIBRARIES

A public library is always a good spot to get out of the house and out of the heat, cold or rain, and find something good to read. Try a different library for a change. All libraries in the UHLS system (Albany and Rensselaer counties) accept each other's library cards and books can be borrowed at one and returned at another. Not all

libraries look the same, and they often specialize in different book collections. Troy's Main Library has old-style architecture and a century-old glass floor, East-Greenbush has a great collection of Babysitter Club and Berenstain Bears. Bethlehem, Colonie and Guilderland all have excellent children's libraries. Albany's Main Branch on Washington is multi-story, the Western Ave Pine Hills branch has great kids books. The Altamont Library is small, but will have great character once it moves into the old rail-station across the street. The SALS/MVLS covers from Fulton and Schenectady counties all the way up to Warren and Hamilton Counties, including the major libraries in Clifton Park and Saratoga. Saratoga Springs has one of the most active libraries, just off Broadway on Henry Street. The Clifton-Park Halfmoon Library on Moe Road off Rt 146 was built in 2006 as a LEED certified Green Building.

LOOK INSIDE...

The **Watervliet Arsenal** visible from the 787 has a free museum (266-5805) with the history of canons & guns built at the arsenal over the years. The **Empire State Aerosciences Museum** (377-1959) is on the grounds of Schenectady County Airport. The **Arts Center** (273-0552) on River Street in Troy hosts workshops & exhibits in a old industrial building. The **Desmond Hotel** near Albany Airport has a unique design, step inside for a short stroll in Colonial America. The Albany **Wal-Mart** on Washington Ave Ext is the largest in the nation, with carts riding up/down escalators. The already classic **Proctor's Theater** in downtown Schenectady had a magnificent facelift and expansion. **Albany City Hall** built in 1881 has interesting architecture and murals inside, get a peek upstairs at the Carillon bells. And on the third floor of Schenectady's Federal-style City Hall check out the **Efner History Center**. Inside Congress Park's **Canfield Casino** building is a Saratoga local historical museum. Area colleges art museums: Skidmore's **Tang**, the **Art Museum** at UAlbany, **Opalka Gallery** at Albany Sage, **iEAR** (digital arts) at RPI, and the **Mandeville Gallery** on the 2nd floor of the Nott Memorial (a national historic landmark).

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Jewish Travel/Tourist Info

Kosher, Minyan & Jewish Communal Info from Albany to Lake George and points between

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