

Vacationing kids won't need a MetroCard to check out the Holiday Train Show at Grand Central.



Photo by Elian Paz; Talents: Mia M. & Gabriel O'Williamina Kids; Hair/Make up: T.Cooper

# A Holiday FOR THE AGES

**There's plenty to do in the city while school's out for Christmas. Our guide lets you in on the fun, no matter how old your kids are**

By LISA ARCELLA

**T**HE last gift has been opened and you've kissed all of the relatives goodbye — and if you have kids, now what? A day or two after opening all those expensive toys, an angelic little face will inevitably turn to you and say, "I'm bored!"

With NYC schools closed for the holidays between Christmas Eve and Jan. 2, there's a lot of downtime to fill. So just think of the city as one giant (and fun!) classroom. Here's what's happening.

**For ages 7 through 10**



**Astro Kids Mining Co. (\$26 includes a geode to crack, but touching fossils is free)**

FAO Schwarz; 417 Fifth Ave.; [astrogallery.com](http://astrogallery.com)

No need to go 10 miles underground to find a gem mine. All you have to do is head over to Manhattan's most famous toy store. Inside the Astro Kids Mining Co., kids can go crazy finding their own crystals and crack open geodes to discover the beautiful quartz inside. "They let us play with everything, even the stuff behind the glass, and Mommy can't get mad! say Joaquin, 7, and Catalina Sanchez, 9, of Queens. Open daily, except Christmas Day.

**Holiday Train Show at Grand Central Station (Free)**

15 Vanderbilt Ave.; [nycgo.com](http://nycgo.com)  
The 13th annual Holiday Train Show is back with lots of vintage trains and a 34-foot-long miniature New York City and countryside scene complete with a diorama of the North Pole. It's all inside the most famous train station in the world! Open daily, except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**MORE KIDS' HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES INSIDE**

# SCHOOL'S OUT! SO

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For toddlers through 7-year-olds



**The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (\$35)**

St. Luke's Theatre; 308 W. 46th St.; narniaoffbroadway.com

Go along with Peter, Lucy, Susan and Edmund to the magi-

cal kingdom of Narnia in this off-Broadway telling of C.S. Lewis' classic story, where the animals talk and the White Witch has cast a spell that makes it always winter, but never Christmas. "This is my favorite book in the whole world," says Jennifer Morano, 9, of Park Slope. "I've also seen the movie a lot of times, too, but it was really fun to see it and sit so close to the actors." Dec. 27 and 31 and Jan. 1 at 11 a.m.

**The Amazing Max (\$29.50 to 64.50)**

Manhattan Movement & Arts Center; 248 W. 60th St.; theamazingmaxlive.com

The thing that makes a magic show with Max Darwin so much fun for young kids is that he is all about participation. Little kids are always invited to come up onstage and to become instant assistants as they watch things appear out of thin air.

New Yorker Sophie Forbes, 7, raved at a recent show, "It was hysterical!" Performances from Thursday through Dec. 31.

**Catskill Puppet Theater: Sister Rain and Brother Sun (\$14 for kids)**

Symphony Space; 2537 Broadway at 95th Street; symphonyspace.org

Very cool-looking giant rod puppets of the sun, Mother Nature and a little bear among others, tell the musical story of a winter solstice celebration. "My favorite character was Brother Sun because he is so huge!" says Jack S., (AGE TK) from Manhattan. "I loved when I saw how the puppets worked. When I grow up I want to be [their] insistent." Dec. 27, and 28, 11 a.m.

**Kwanzaa 2014: Our Brightest Lights (free with admission to museum)**

American Museum of Natural History; Central Park West at 79th Street; amnh.org

Of course there are endless things to keep kids entertained and engaged at the Natural History Museum, but the one element that makes this celebration stand out from all the others is Savion Glover! The Tap Dance Kid heads up a program to celebrate the holiday; Dec. 27, noon and 3 p.m.



**New York City Fire Museum (\$5 for kids)**

278 Spring St.; nycfire-museum.org

Is there a kid alive (or an adult for that matter) who doesn't love the thought of climbing up on a firetruck? We think not! And at the New York City Fire Museum kids and grown-ups can try on turnouts (firefighter jackets) and an air-pack to see how they feel. "I got my picture taken with a real-life firefighter," Derek Kim, 5, of White Plains says. The Museum is closed on Christmas and closes at 1 p.m. on Christmas Eve, but is open the rest of the holiday week.



This youngster had permission to pose for the photo, but kids shouldn't climb on the vintage trucks at NYC Fire Museum.

**Robot Swarm (\$9 for kids)**

Museum of Mathematics; 11 E. 26th St.; momath.org/home/robot-swarm/

Yes, there is a museum dedicated to math in NYC. But lest your kids think you'll be taking them to do homework on their holiday break, Robot Swarm has crazy-looking robots, like the ones that look like giant horseshoe crabs seen under the glass floor in the entryway. Kids are able to control how they interact with each other and the electronics. The museum is open the entire week between Christmas and New Year.



Justina Wong

**Three Bears Holiday Bash (\$7 for kids)**

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre; 81st Street and Central Park West; cityparksfoundation.org/arts/swedish-cottage-marionette-theatre/

Little kids will adore this puppet show, especially since it takes place in the Swedish Cottage — a place that looks like it popped right out of a fairy tale. "My favorite part was when the mouse came out and said 'chika boom chika boom' when the cat's head was flying off!" says 7-year-old Los Angeles visitor Cordelia Scoville. Various show times; closed Dec. 24 and 25.

**Macy's Sunday Story Time (free with admission to museum)**

New-York Historical Society; 170 Central Park West; nyhistory.org

On Sundays, the Historical Society presents story time, introducing a book to preschoolers. On Dec. 28 at 11:30 a.m., "My Little Train," about a toy train's wild adventures through its owner's house, is on tap. "I don't know how to read," says Mae King, 4, of Ridgewood, NJ. "I like it when someone reads to me here."

**Somebody Come and Play: 45 Years of Sesame Street Helping Kids Grow Smarter, Stronger and Kinder (Free)**

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; 40 Lincoln Center Plaza; nypl.org/sesamestreet

This exhibit is a hit with preschoolers who love getting close to their favorite Sesame Street characters like Grover and Oscar, but adults will also be interested in learning how an episode is created. "I liked Elmo," 3-year-old Edison Wedewer of Red Bank, NJ, explains. "I liked the library and coloring. I liked Oscar, and I liked Snuffy, too, and Bert and Ernie and rubber duckie." The Performing Arts library is closed on Sundays, Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.



Jonathan Blanc

Julia O'Brien

Photo by Helayne Seidman; Talent: Lucas B.

Julia Kanner

# GET READY FOR FUN

## Great for tweens



### Crave.It cooking class (\$35)

545 Sixth Ave.; [craveitnyc.com](http://craveitnyc.com)  
Just because calories don't really count when they occur over the holidays, indulging in Crave.It's insane collection of Italian desserts and gelato would be a good idea, anyway. But the bakery also hosts weekly classes for kids taught by Chef Alejandro Quinones. Little ones can learn how to decorate their own cakes and desserts and see how a professional pastry kitchen operates. Dec. 27, 10 a.m.

### Astronomy Live: Earth, as Seen From Space (\$15)

American Museum of Natural History; Central Park West at 79th Street; [amnh.org](http://amnh.org)

With his long hair and open smile, Carter Emmart looks more rock-star than rocket scientist. And as the Museum of Natural History's director of Astrovisualization, he somehow turns learning about science into something really cool. Emmart plans on using satellite data and live ambient sound during this program to take a look at our solar system from way out in the universe. Dec. 30, 6:30 p.m.



Natalie Nunez

### Sony Wonder Technology Lab (Free)

550 Madison Ave. at 56th Street; [sony-wondertechlab.com](http://sony-wondertechlab.com)

Instead of letting kids veg out in front of their iPads during the break, you can take them to the Wonder Lab and let them discover how that technology they love so much actually works. "It was very high-tech and interesting for someone my age," says Emily Prins, 13, from North Carolina. On Dec. 27 at noon, there is a New Year's family workshop (\$6), where you can create hand-made party hats, calendars, and festival blowouts to take home. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

When the kids are done shopping at Bryant Park's Holiday Market, they can take a spin on the park's ice.



Robert Miller

### Skating in Bryant Park (free)

Between 40th and 42nd Streets, Fifth and Sixth Avenues; [bryantpark.org](http://bryantpark.org)

If you haven't visited Bryant Park in the winter, you are missing out on one of those things that makes New York the best place in the world to be during the holiday season. The carousel and the Christmas market booths surround the perimeter of the park, which has been transformed into a scene straight out of "Frozen." "I've been coming here with friends for the past few years almost every weekend, and it's fun every time," 13-year-old Bronx resident Jamal says. Open daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

## For entertaining teens

### Watson Adventures Grand Central Scramble Family Scavenger Hunt (\$29.50)

866-811-4111, [watson-adventures.com](http://watson-adventures.com)

The only thing harder than keeping a toddler happy is keeping a teen entertained. Watson offers scavenger hunts at several NYC spots, but we like the one that exposes kids to Grand Central gems, like the "Whispering Gallery." Clues all over, from an upside-down tree to a secret "ghost train." Dec. 26, 27 and 31 at 10:30 a.m.



### Experimenting with Dimensions (\$11)

The Children's Museum of the Arts; 103 Charlton St.; [cmany.org](http://cmany.org)

The Children's Museum of the Arts has interesting and creative programs throughout the year, but tech-savvy teens will be interested in their current exhibit "Into the Third Dimension: 3D Printing for Young Artists" that illustrates how to create art from the 3D printing process. "3D printing is just the coolest thing," Abby Ryan, 15, of Manhattan, says. "It makes you look at things in a completely different way. I can't wait to experiment with my own work." Open Mondays & Wednesdays: 12 to 5 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays: 12 to 6 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed on Tuesdays and Christmas and New Year's Day.

Alamy



### Improv For Kids (\$25)

Broadway Comedy Club; 318 W. 53rd St.; [improv4kids.com](http://improv4kids.com)

Have a future stand-up comic on your hands, or maybe just the class clown? Then they'll love this show, which encourages kids to participate in spontaneous sketches and funny songs and dances. Audiences yell out suggestions and are also invited on stage with the talented troupe. "My friend John was singing on stage with the cast at one point," says Thomas S., 15, of Queens. "He was actually pretty funny, too. I was impressed." The 3 p.m. shows held during the week appeal to all ages, but teens will prefer the 8 p.m. Eight Is Never Enough Improv Comedy show on Dec. 27.

### Holiday Highlights and A Christmas Carol Mash-up (\$8 teens, \$5 children)

The Paley Center For Media; 25 W. 52 St.; [paleycenter.org](http://paleycenter.org)  
The good news for your teenagers is that they won't even have to talk to you as they watch vintage holiday TV specials. Then, there is a mash-up of all the versions of "A Christmas Carol" and all the actors who played Ebenezer Scrooge, including Kesley Grammer, Yosemite Sam, Patrick Stewart, and our personal favorite — Mister Magoo. Screenings on Dec. 27 and 28.