

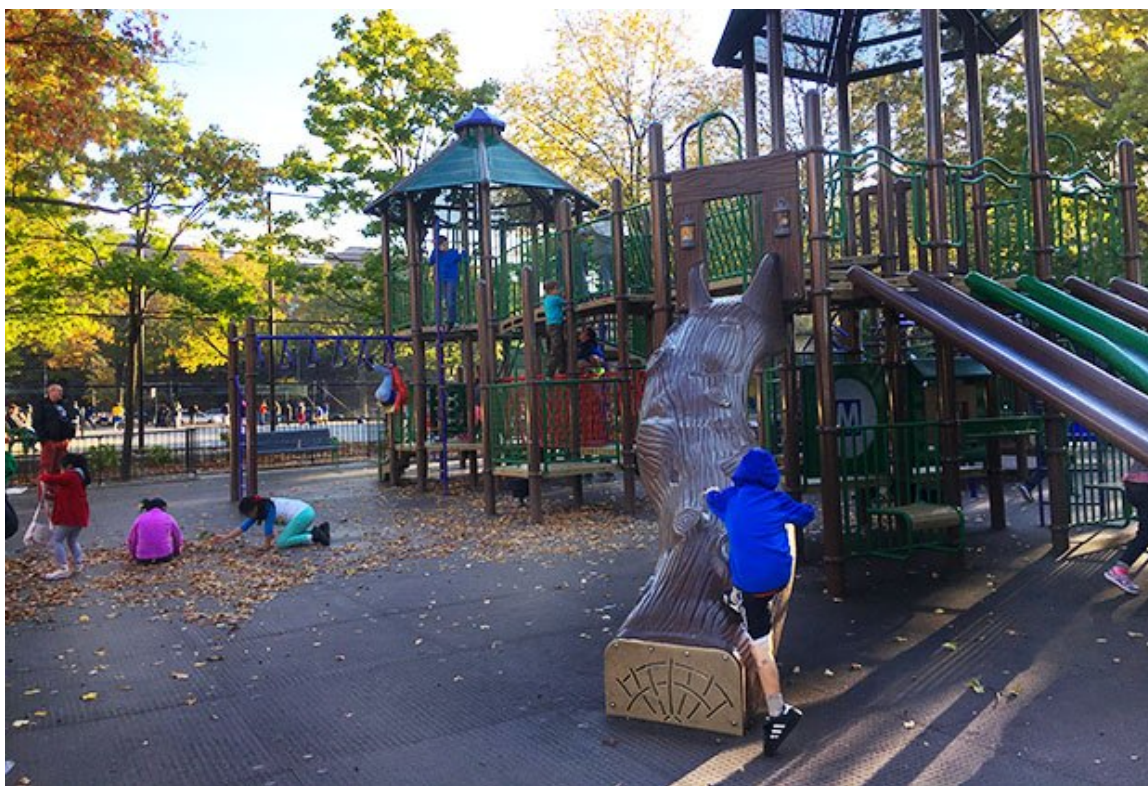


MOMMY POPPINS

Get More out of New York City with Kids

30 Fun Things to Do with Kids in Jackson Heights, Queens

11/4/16 - By [Fiona Taylor](#)



Jackson Heights is often thought of as a hot, up-and-coming [NYC neighborhood](#), but really it's just been flying under the radar for the last hundred years or so. This community, one of the most diverse in the United States, has been called an “international Mayberry” due to the small-town feel and the peaceful co-existence of so many different types of people. The fact that it was the nation’s first planned garden district—meaning that most of the buildings in the historic section are built around lush, green courtyards—doesn’t hurt, either.

Eleven years ago, I moved to this [Queens](#) neighborhood from the [East Village](#)—which has its own, very different charms—hoping that a down payment and a dream would keep me from missing those Manhattan lights. I soon discovered that mere acquaintances here greet each other on the street, and I find myself in conversations with interesting people from all over the world. Once I had a baby, I met even more neighbors.

To make it a little easier to find those great [Jackson Heights](#) gems with your children, we've compiled a list of neighborhood highlights. Enjoy!



Play Street is open to pedestrians, not cars, year round. Photo courtesy of Play Street.

1. Hit the main [playground](#), [Travers Park](#), and the neighboring [Play Street](#), which is often the site of kid-oriented activities, including the recent [John Lennon Educational Tour Bus](#) Block Party.
2. Browse the wonderful selection of toys, children's books, and baby clothes at [Lockwood](#) Jackson Heights. (There's plenty for parents who love housewares and gifts, too.)
3. [Lety's Bakery and Café](#) is often crowded, but once you taste the pastries, you'll understand why.
4. Pique your child's interest in healthy food at the [Jackson Heights Greenmarket](#) on Sundays, one of the largest and busiest in New York City—and best of all, just steps from Travers Park.
5. Cool off with a [cholado](#), a decadent Columbian concoction of shaved ice, condensed milk and fruit.

6. Pick up a book at the small but bohemian [Liberia Barco de Papel](#) (even though it's technically *just* across the Elmhurst border). Most books are in Spanish, but there is an English-language section. The kids' section is fun and hands-on.
7. Kids 5 and younger can ease into dance with fun classes taught by local dancer [Dionne Kamara](#).



Get creative after school with Art for a Start. Photo by Deb Wasserman.

8. Is your child a budding Picasso? Local mom and artist Deb Wasserman offers [Art for a Start](#), a popular after-school and summer program for kids and teens.
9. Every September, the [Viva La Comida festival](#) on 82nd Street features musical performances and food trucks celebrating the diverse cuisine of Queens.
10. Encourage your little one's love of music with [Music Together](#).
11. Dig in the dirt! The [Jackson Heights Beautification Group](#) offers volunteer opportunities to plant flowers and maintain trees within the neighborhood.

12. Learn to swim at [Tiny Tadpoles](#), held in the Garden School pool and taught by a warm and patient local mom.

13. Wear your costume and march in the [Jackson Heights Halloween Parade](#), one of the largest children's parades in the city.



"Big" kids and little ones will thrill to watch the planes land from LaGuardia Landing Lights Park. Photo by [Jason Eppink](#) via Flickr.

14. Watch planes land at LaGuardia at [Landing Lights Park](#). The grassy field is also a great place for a pick-up baseball game.

15. Enjoy a hot chocolate and read a selection from the basket of children's books at [Espresso 77](#), a popular neighborhood hangout. Teens might join the new poetry slam series.

16. Compete in basketball, soccer, or track with the [St. Joan of Arc Youth Council](#), open to all local kids.

17. Your little slugger can sign up for [Elmjack Little League](#). Both boys and girls are welcome.

18. Visit [Jahn's](#), one of our favorite [Queens ice cream spots](#), for a Kitchen Sink, featuring 30 scoops of ice cream and almost as many toppings.

RELATED: [11 Favorite Baby and Me Classes Around Queens](#)



Arepas from the legendary Arepa Lady are coveted by fans of the Colombian treat across the city. Photo courtesy of [Robyn Lee](#).

19. Try a Colombian delicacy at one of the "[seven restaurants that changed New York](#)." The legendary [Arepa Lady](#), whose cart is tracked by avid fans on Twitter, has also opened a restaurant.

20. Take a music, voice, dance, or theater class at the [Performing Arts Conservatory of New York](#).

21. Learn to build a Raspberry Pi micro-computer at [The Raspberry Heights Workshop](#), run by a neighborhood dad.

22. I'm not going to lie: [Diversity Plaza](#) doesn't look like much, but the community is working on it. It hosts concerts, a food fest (Momo Crawls where you can try \$1 Himalayan dumplings at various venues), and pop-up reading rooms with kids' books.

23. [Bulova Park](#) is off the beaten path, but is a great place to learn how to ride a bike without crowds and (hopefully) casualties. In addition to the [playground](#), other amenities include a wheelchair-accessible baseball field as well as bocce and handball courts.



At the Hibrodos Art Collective's Day of the Dead celebration kids enjoy a picnic and write poems. Photo courtesy of the collective.

24. Plant daffodils and write poems at a Day of the Dead celebration at a unique-to-Jackson-Heights location: [Leverich Cemetery](#), a 17th-century burial ground that used to be part of a family farm. During the warmer months, [Hibridos Art Collective](#) sponsors several other events there, as well.

25. Take a soccer class—or if you prefer, a dance, theater, martial arts, or piano class—from [Super Kickers](#), a budding Queens empire run in several locations and founded by a local mom. (Also check out the after-school care, holiday mini-camps, and summer camp.)

26. Visit [Wink the Penguin](#), a statue dressed in costume for every holiday and special occasion, then head over to see the [Scrabble street sign](#). (A resident created the game in 1938.) As a bonus, you'll end up near [GC Stationery](#), a great place for arts, crafts, and school supplies.



Pick up some Indian desserts at Raibhog Sweets. Photo by [Sonia Chopra](#) via Instagram.

27. Head to [Rajbhog Sweets](#) for a roti and mango lassi and watch Bollywood music videos that play on the overhead TVs.
28. Catch a kid-friendly film at PS 69 during the [Queens World Film Festival](#) in May.
29. Sign up your future Broadway star for one of [Unity Theater's](#) productions. If your child isn't into the limelight, just watch the impressive final production.
30. On a rainy or snowy day, or just for a fun family night out, [there's always bowling](#). (It's technically in Woodside, but barely.)

Top photo: Travers Park playground. Photo by the author.