

# MOMMY POPPINS



Get More out of Long Island with Kids



Engage in exhibits at the Long Island Children's Museum. Photo courtesy of LICM

## 13 of the Best Family-Friendly Museums on Long Island

2/21/20 - By [Felissa Allard](#)

Few things are more satisfying for parents than introducing children to culture while also having some fun. Luckily, Long Island is home to a host of museums that cater to a younger crowd. In fact, many of these sites offer hands-on, interactive activities that can be enjoyed by children of all ages.

From air and space to science and trains, these spots offer special exhibits and programs to keep children engaged, entertained, and educated. So why not visit? In the meantime, scope out some more fun in our [guide to indoor play spaces](#) on Long Island as well as our [event calendar](#). And our [museums and arts guide](#) offers the complete lowdown on Long Island [planetariums](#), [science centers](#), [historic sites](#), and more.

# Nassau

## [Cradle of Aviation Museum](#) — Garden City

A living museum that recreates Long Island's aviation history, the [Cradle of Aviation](#) is sure to delight little flight and space enthusiasts. Planes are suspended from midair in the all-glass atrium as you enter. Check out the IMAX theater for kid-friendly showings or the X-Ride Theater for riders 36 inches or taller. Annual events such as the "Pumpkin Smash" attract kids from all across Long Island. There's even a separate play space for younger kids. Daily and annual memberships are available. Memberships include free admission to the museum, discounts on the museum store, and discounts on the Planetarium, Nunley's Carousel, and Theater. Family Memberships receive discounts on birthday parties and camps.

## [Garvies Point Museum and Preserve](#) — Glen Cove

This natural history museum on Nassau's North Shore has been a Long Island institution for more than 50 years. Have a dino-lover in the family? Take him or her to Garvies' paleontology programs for hands-on lessons on dinosaur habits and habitats. Garvies also boasts archeology and bird-watching programs as well as Native American education and cultural seminars. Now through summer, check out an exhibit on Seashells from Around The World. Summer camps feature half and full-day sessions from June through August. Birthday parties are also available.

RELATED: [Where to Learn About Cultural Diversity on LI](#)



*The climbing structure is an adult-free zone at the Long Island Children's Museum. Photo courtesy of LICM*

## [Long Island Children's Museum](#) — Garden City

LICM offers year-round, hands-on exhibits for kids that even adults find fun and engaging. An outdoor water play area is open during warmer weather. The museum, on Nassau County's Museum Row, offers weekly activities as well as [STEM summer programs](#), [early childhood programs](#), and more. The LICM Theater puts on live performances regularly. This season, enjoy Elephant and Piggie's rocking musical "We Are In a Play!" Annual memberships include free guest and theater passes, as well as discounts if you host your child's birthday party there.

## [Nassau County Museum of Art](#) — Roslyn

This might look like a museum for adults, but there are plenty of [kid-friendly options](#) to delight little ones. From Family Sundays to Studio Saturdays, this museum affords kids and parents plenty of hands-on [experiences](#) from which to choose. There is also an after-school program on Thursdays for kids ages seven and up that teaches kids art-making and contemporary concepts. Special monthly programs are also offered for families. Daily passes and annual family memberships are available.

## Science Museum of Long Island — Manhasset

This [nonprofit science center](#) is located on Leeds Pond Preserve on Nassau County's North Shore. It offers enrichment workshops for children on weekdays and during school vacations. Check out after-school workshops like STEM club and The Amazing Human Body. Summer camp and birthday party options are available.

## Suffolk



*Kids will thrill to the drop-in programs at the Hecksher Museum of Art. Photo courtesy of the museum*

## Heckscher Museum of Art — Huntington

The Hecksher Museum of Art offers a variety of programs and resources specifically for families and children. Ongoing activities include a Paint-A-Selfie Station and a Digital Action station. On select Sunday afternoons, the museum hosts [Heckscher Family Hour](#) for kids ages 5-10 and their families. Summer drop-in workshops on Wednesdays and Fridays allow children to create works of art under the guidance of museum educators. Daily passes and annual memberships are offered.



*Do some investigating at the Long Island Explorium.*

## [Long Island Explorium](#) — Port Jefferson

The Long Island Explorium encourages science and engineering education through play. Caregivers and children can explore, play, create, and build together. The museum's exhibits combine maritime themes with STEAM-based activities. Children can build boats, learn about mass and volume with rice, send messages to friends with a pulley system, and so much more. It offers camps when school is out, [birthday parties](#), and partnerships with the Boy and Girl Scouts.

## [Long Island Science Center](#) — Riverhead

[Back in Riverhead](#) after two years in nearby Rocky Point, this interactive science and natural history center offers magnetic experiments, an illumination station, construction zone, virtual-reality area, retro video game display, and more. During regular school weeks, the museum is open from Wednesday through Friday from 1PM until 5PM. On Saturdays and Sundays, you can visit from 11AM until 5PM. Birthday Parties, special preschool workshops, and Science Saturdays are all part of the fun. See our review of the new Riverhead location [here](#).

RELATED: [Historic Sites on LI Kids will Appreciate](#)



*The Vanderbilt Museum makes for a great family destination. Photo by Molly England*

## [Vanderbilt Museum](#) — Centerport

This expansive property did once belong to the famous Vanderbilt dynasty. Now it houses a series of museums sure to delight young and old. Adults will love the mansion tour while kids will thrill to the planetarium, [Hall of Fishes](#), photo gallery, and more. Exhibits include sharks, birds, and insect life. Did we mention the view? From high atop a hill, peer down to Centerport Harbor or, on a clear day, across the Sound to Connecticut. It's an ideal destination for a family picnic. The museum is generally open on the weekends from 11:15 AM until 4PM. There are also some hours on Tuesdays and extra weekdays during school breaks. The [museum](#) offers a number of school break instructional camps, but register early.

## [Whaling Museum & Education Center](#) — Cold Spring Harbor

The *If I Were A Whaler* interactive exhibit enables kids of all ages to be part of Long Island's once-vibrant whaling industry. Kids can dress up, play, and explore in an old general store circa the 1800s. There are plenty of educational exhibits on whaling and boating, including Folk Art and a Diorama of Cold Spring Harbor c. 1850. The [museum](#) also holds holiday events throughout the year and offers [summer camps](#).

## East End



*Take a walk down "Main Street" at the Children's Museum of the East End. Photo courtesy of the museum*

## Children's Museum of the East End — Bridgehampton

Even the littlest ones will enjoy this museum. On select days for an additional fee, the museum holds a [Tot Spot](#) mommy-and-me class for ages 16 months to 3 years and a [baby and me](#) class for 2 months through 16 months. Hands-on exhibits promote imagination-based play, learning, reading, building, and more. An indoor area offers play structures and soft foam gymnastic equipment. [The museum](#) even has a special play area for crawlers. An art room is ready for your little one's creations. Weekly classes for arts, crafts, cooking, and dance are offered. When the weather gets warm, head outside for some playground fun, a live performance in the half-round theater, or a round of nine-hole mini-golf. Daily passes and annual memberships are offered. Tax-deductible family memberships include free admission and discounts at local businesses.

## **Railroad Museum of Long Island — Riverhead, Greenport**

Both the Riverhead and Greenport locations are closed during winter, but come spring and summer, big and small conductors will enjoy this ride through [Long Island's railroading history](#). Enjoy both indoor and outdoor tracks. An indoor 40-foot track allows visitors to operate part of the layout. Board several stationary trains on-premises and check out the conductor's quarters, sleeping areas, and more. The admission fee includes a ride on its World's Fair miniature train. Children under five years old are admitted for free. Visitors also can hop aboard a train for a trip between the two East End communities. Tickets are good for both locations in one calendar year, so save your ticket to visit both.

## **South Fork Natural History Museum and Nature Center — Bridgehampton**

The museum features both live and re-created exhibits of animals in their natural habitats. Wonderful murals cover the walls from floor to ceiling, adding to the beautiful aesthetic of the museum. The exhibits continue outside, with a butterfly and wildflower garden, as well as a nature walk through the Vineyard Field Preserve. There is also a marine touch tank, where brave kids can hold sea stars and urchins in the water. If you are visiting as a guest, tots under two years old are admitted for free. Memberships include free admission for your whole family.

*A version of this article was originally posted in 2015.*