



Child-Related Activities

Groff Park, 83 Mill Lane in South Amherst - The playground is a good one with lots of picnic tables, some shady areas, and a spray park in the summer.

<https://www.amherstma.gov/1756/Groff-Park>

Jessica's Boundless Playground, 59 State Street in Belchertown - The most extensive playground we've found in this area. It is designed for kids of all ability levels.

(Note: It gets very hot in the summer; Groff has more shade.)

Mill River Recreation, 95 Montague Road in North Amherst - has a shallow kid pool as well as a regular size pool open during summer months. The playground is older and not well equipped but there are walking trails in the area.

Additional Swimming, on Mattoon Street near Amherst High School has an outdoor pool open during summer months.

The Amherst area also has a few **indoor pools** where kids can take swim lessons all year, including one nearby at **Hampshire Athletic Club**.

Contact **Wonder Waters Swim School** for more info.

<https://www.waterwondersswimschool.com/learntoswim>

The Amherst Recreation Dept. offers youth swim lessons at the Amherst Middle School and also adaptive swim lessons. <https://www.amherstmarec.org/>

People enjoy **Lake Wyola** in Shutesbury and the **Belchertown Town Beach**, both with sandy beaches. **Puffer's Pond** is Amherst's largest open body of water and is sometimes open for swimming, depending on water quality.

Eric Carle Museum, 125 West Bay Road - adjacent to the Hampshire College campus, a unique museum that celebrates picture book art. It might pay to get a membership if you're there often or plan to bring guests. I think the Jones Library sometimes has free passes too. There is no charge to enter the museum shop.

<https://carlemuseum.org/>

The Jones Library in the center of town has a children's room and many scheduled activities. You can stay informed by getting on the mailing list. And there are also two other small library branches in Amherst. <https://www.joneslibrary.org/188/Kids-Room>

Amherst Community Theater provides great opportunities for kids and adults to showcase their talent while the wider community benefits. And their website offers other options for children interested in the performing arts. <https://amherstacts.org/>

The Children's Museum at Holyoke, 44 Dwight Street - an interactive place for young kids. There's a nearby playground and spray park for the warmer months.

<https://www.childrensmuseumholyoke.org/>

Lupa Zoo is an easy drive to Ludlow yet there are more animals to see at the **Zoo at Forest Park** in Springfield at 293 Sumner Ave. <https://www.forestparkzoo.org/>

McCray's Farm, 55 Alvord St., South Hadley - small petting zoo, food, ice cream, hayrides, mini golf. <https://www.mccrays-farm.com/>

Look Park in Florence (edge of Northampton) is large.
Check out the activity options here: <https://www.lookpark.org/activities/>

Amherst Dog Park, Old Belchertown Road - a fun meeting spot which can get very lively after school hours and on weekends, for children 8 years old and older. There are divided areas for big and small dogs. Check park rules here: <https://amherstdogpark.org/rules/>

The Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 845 West Street - offers programs for kids and adults to enhance understanding of nature and the environment.
<https://www.hitchcockcenter.org/>

Old Sturbridge Village is a great destination for those who don't mind a longer drive.
Wikipedia: *"Old Sturbridge Village is a living museum located in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, which recreates life in rural New England during the 1790s through 1830s. It is the largest living museum in New England, covering more than 200 acres."*
<https://www.osv.org/>

Yankee Candle, 25 Greenfield Road in South Deerfield - an entertaining place for kids and adults. Kids can make their own candles here, enjoy the holiday feel all year, etc.
<https://www.yankeecandle.com/south-deerfield-village.html>
Hillside Pizza is adjacent.

Magic Wings Butterfly Conservatory and Gardens, 281 Greenfield Road in South Deerfield (just down the road from Yankee Candle) - a magical place and a warm refuge on a cold day.
<https://magicwings.com/>

Beneski Museum of Natural History is on the campus of Amherst College and is "one of New England's largest natural history museums, featuring three floors of exhibits...dramatic displays of fossil skeletons, an extraordinary collection of dinosaur foot prints"... etc. An impressive skeleton of a Columbian Mammoth is on display here and inspired the college's choice for a mascot. This museum is free and open to the public.
<https://www.amherst.edu/museums/naturalhistory>

Ice Cream

- Scoop at the Silos, at Maple Valley Creamery (seasonal)
- Atkins Farms (seasonal)
- Flayvors at Cook Farm (open all year)

Dance Schools

- **The Center**, 321 Main St, Amherst
<https://thecenterdance.com/>
- **Pineapple Dance School**, 83 Sunderland Road, Amherst
<https://www.pineappledance.net/about.php>

Hampshire Gymnastics School, 461 West St in South Amherst

<http://www.hampshiregymnastics.com/>

Central Rock Gym, 165 Russell St in Hadley has climbing programs for kids.

<https://centralrockgym.com/hadley/>

Muddy Brook Farm, 646 West Street in Amherst - offers horse riding lessons for all ages.

<https://www.muddybrookfarm.com/>

The Amherst area has other riding options too.

The Hampshire Mall in Hadley offers “Fun Hub Action Park” and other activities.

<https://hampshiremall.com/directory/>

Ice Skating is available at the UMass Mullins Center with some public skating times available.

<https://www.mullinscenter.com/mullins-community-ice-center>

You can book a birthday party here too.

The Duck Pond on the UMass Campus is a fun place for young kids to observe and feed ducks during the warmer months (near the Fine Arts Center). The campus is also a good place to ride a bike, especially in the summer when most students are gone. Check out the Blue Wall in the Campus Center for some good eating options.

Norwottuck Rail Trail - an eleven mile combination bicycle/pedestrian paved rail trail, running from Northampton through Hadley and Amherst to Belchertown. The Station Road entrance and parking are very close to our neighborhood. <https://www.mass.gov/locations/norwottuck-rail-trail>

Sledding - on the old landfill area across from the intersection of Wildflower and Teaberry. And some folks enjoy sledding at the Amherst College hill in the center of the campus.

There are many summer programs, including those at **The Common School**, **Hampshire College Farm and Garden Camp**, **Hampshire College Art and Nature Camp**, **The Hartsbrook Farm Camp**, **The Hitchcock Center Summer Camp**, and others too numerous to list here. And check the Daily Hampshire Gazette (in late winter) for camp listings.

The camps generally fill early so you'll want to register months in advance.

The Town of Amherst sponsors various youth programs, summer camps, and youth sports that include softball, baseball, basketball, tennis, ultimate, volleyball, swim lessons, ski club and more. You might need to do a separate online search for information on some of these offerings.

<https://www.amherstma.gov/3564/Recreation-Department>

Local small businesses could use our patronage and have child-related items.

- **The Toy Box**, 201 N. Pleasant Street - a happy, helpful place, offering free gift wrapping.
<https://www.thetoyboxamherst.com/>
- **General Store and Art Gallery**, 91 Cows Road in the Mill District of North Amherst - has many gifts, old-time toys, and “penny candy”. Kids will love the bathrooms there too.
<https://www.generalstorelocalgallery.com/>
- **Barnes and Noble** in Hadley is not small but it has a great selection of children's books, games, puzzles, etc.

Updated August 2025 by Arlene Seldin