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# Classes & Camps

## Is your child ready for commuter camp?



Elmwood Day Camp

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While the Big Apple presents countless cultural experiences for youngsters, your fondest memories of summer may be dominated by boundless countryside and splashing in pools and lakes under the sun. Commuter camps offer that kind of idyllic experience for city-dwelling kids.

Just 30 to 40 minutes from NYC, these not-so-faraway programs give children the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors without staying the night, so your little one can end each day in her own bed. An abundance of options exist near the city, with transportation from locations throughout Manhattan and, in some cases, other boroughs.

For the right child, a commuter camp has several advantages over its urban counterparts. "We have quite a bit of space, which means there's freedom to learn about nature out in the open," says Todd Rothman, director of Deerkill Day Camp in Suffern, New York. In addition to absorbing the wildlife around them—most campgrounds are rife with lakes, streams and scenic views—kids will find activities most city programs don't offer, such as rope courses (used for team-building challenges) and zip lines. Plus, there's plenty of room for other outdoorsy offerings, like boating and Frisbee golf.

These programs also foster a sense of independence in campers, according to Alan Saltz, camp director at the 92nd Street Y, which runs Yomi and Tevah. "The 40-minute bus trip can have a big psychological effect," he says. "It's the first step in getting away, and at the end of the day kids feel like they've really been somewhere." Because of this, he says, commuter camps provide a natural segue to sleepaway programs.

If you're still apprehensive about sending junior out of town—even if he comes home every evening—consider your kid's temperament. Children who are open to new people and experiences generally thrive at camp, says Bobbi Wittenberg, director of Elmwood Day Camp in White Plains, New York. "The most important attribute is wanting to be a friend and make friends."—*Amy Sirot*



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