

**BETTER SLED OFF**

Grab your Flexible Flyer, saucer or toboggan and head for the hills, as we rate NYC's slippery slopes

**PULSE**

Nine-year-old Park Slope pals Jack (from left), Katie, Dela and Luna give a thumbs-up for the slopes in Prospect Park.

By ROSE GORDON SALA

**S**NOWFALL brings New Yorkers out of their apartments and onto their sleds for some downhill action that makes everyone feel like a kid again. Here's a roundup of some of the best places to slip and slide.

**PROSPECT PARK:**  
PICNIC HOUSE  
Third Street and Prospect Park West, Brooklyn



On snow days, Park Slope families jam onto every possible peak in this Brooklyn park. Popular spots include a medium-size hill adjacent to the Picnic House, where, one Friday during a recent nor'easter, the area teemed with kids and parents.

Anything goes at this chaotic scene, where children careen down all sides of the hill, often landing in a big pile at the bottom. At one point, a dog pulling his young charge by sled stopped to do his business in the middle of the hill, and kids leapt out of saucers to avoid the steaming pile of poo.

"They're kinda rookies here in the city," says Robert Sluymer, 51, a Toronto native who has lived in Park Slope for more than a decade.

But kids don't seem to mind, including Sluymer's 9-year-old daughter, Dela, who packed onto the family's wooden toboggan with a giggling pack of PS 107 friends before getting a push from Dad.

Walter, a 12-year-old off to a running start before dive-bombing down the hill headfirst, shouts, "It feels like you're indestructible!"

Teens crowd Long Meadow to practice jumps and snowboarding, while a

bunny slope for tots faces the bandshell. (Watch out for trees at the bottom.)

**Insider tip:** Patience is a must at this park's popular spot, where sledders queue up before pushing off. The sprawling park is littered with hills. Keep exploring until you find enough space to sled safely in fresh powder.

**Rating:** 

The park's most popular spots are boisterous and friendly but overrun with crowds, including those of the four-legged variety.

**TURN PAGE FOR MORE PARKS**

# WHEN IT COMES TO SNOW

From Page 25



Ten-year-old Sam Laskey (above) zooms down a well-worn slope in Riverside Park aboard his plastic sled and dubs it "awesome," while another sledder (right) heads downhill on his wooden ride.

## RIVERSIDE PARK

105th Street and Riverside Drive

The picturesque stretch along Manhattan's West Side known as Riverside Park serves up hills for every age group. Several hills are within just a few blocks of each other, making it easy to sample them all. Preschoolers and their parents favor the more petite slope at 103rd Street. "It's just gentle enough that my 4-year-old can go sledding, but it's thrilling for him," says Martha Wilkie of Morningside Heights, as her son, Peter, clammers back onto his sled, sporting a knit Viking hat.

The bravest sledders test their nerves farther north, at 105th Street. This gnarly hill was by far the steepest slope visited by The Post. Sledders whiz down the hill, barreling straight for the Hudson River. Strategically placed hay bales, along with the walking path and benches, prevent sledders from skidding onto the West Side Highway — or into the water. Jumps dot the edges for thrill-seekers looking to add to their adrenaline rush.

"It was terrifying," says Emily Nelson, mom to Gavin, 8, who chose to slide down the hill face-first on his belly, as if it were a welcoming water slide.

By the end of a school snow day, kids had



worn the center track down to the frozen dirt. Asked why he had chosen this slope over others, 10-year-old Sam Laskey's answer was simple: "It's more awesome." But he says a little more snow would have been nice. "It feels like rocks."

**Insider tip:**

Bundle up, or the winds off the Hudson will plant icicles on your earlobes.

**Rating:** 

Sledders can traverse the inner path of Riverside Park all day and easily reach multiple hills of varying daring, all the while taking in a view of the Hudson through the trees.



Upper West Side 4-year-olds Leif (left) and Peter are ready for a thrill on a hill at Riverside Park.

Although kids may moan about crowds, Juniper Valley Park has a nice neighborhood vibe.



## JUNIPER VALLEY PARK

Juniper Boulevard North and 78th Street, Queens

Arrive early or bring your sharpest elbows to make room for a spot at this popular Middle Village park that is packed end-to-end with families from all over Queens.

Nine-year-old triplets Abigail, Isabelle and Jonathan Fallon from Maspeth answer almost in unison when asked to describe the hill: "Too crowded!"

The stubby but wide hill pitches sledders straight into a short dive-bomb that ends very quickly.

"It's so high that you go fast," says Iris Sanchez, 9, of Corona.

Older kids create snowboarding

## CENTRAL PARK: PILGRIM HILL

72nd Street and Fifth Avenue

This beloved Central Park landmark attracts impressive, multigenerational crowds. The modest-size hill delivers a leisurely, lengthy run with multiple dips before the landscape rolls out flat, bringing your sled to a halt.

"I think I was going like a motorcycle," says Sofia Ladines, 7, who was shuttled in from Long Island City by her mother, Claudia Ovando.

"There's one hill [in Long Island City], but not like this," says the 39-year-old mom.



runs and jumps to liven up the hill, which empties into a field free of debris and obstacles. The wide hill creates a half-moon circle, allowing mobs of kids to line the ridge.

The neighborhood vibe endears it to locals. "We've met so many park friends here," says Denise Stronge, 47, of Middle Village, who arrived with her husband and 6-year-old son. "It's friendly. We love it."

**Insider tip:** The Department of Parks & Recreation sets up here on snow days, offering free hot chocolate and even snowshoes. Watch the Web site for updates: [nycgovparks.org](http://nycgovparks.org).

**Rating:** 

Locals remain loyal to Juniper, but a short hill combined with massive crowds makes this city-designated sledding spot a bit of a downer.

Trees litter this slope, so sledders must remain alert or risk bulldozing into one — or each other. "There didn't used to be hay bales when I was a kid," says Zachary Levy, 40, who grew up on the Upper East Side and stopped by his old sledding hill one snowy Saturday in January. "We just crashed into a tree."

You'll find Pilgrim Hill just inside the park from Fifth Avenue, making it ideal for a quick sledding sojourn.

More time on your hands? A multitude of hills in Central Park offers plenty of room for freestylers seeking virgin powder. Peter Russell, 44, of Midtown, and his 6-year-old son, Kai, decided to ditch Pilgrim

# IN THE CITY, SLED IT BE!

## FORT GREENE PARK

Fort Greene Place and Dekalb Avenue, Brooklyn

 Sitting atop a hill, this Brooklyn park slopes down on all sides, making it a prime destination for sledding for snow fans across the borough. It's located just a short walk from the Atlantic Terminal, making an easy commute another reason for its popularity.

Parents Dennis and Tina Yi trekked over from Williamsburg so their 6-year-old son, Ocean, could enjoy his inaugural Brooklyn sled.

"There aren't any good hills over there," says Tina, 35.

"It brings back good memories seeing him sled."

It's less crowded than Prospect Park, and the main hill is wide and steep, offering plenty of room. The run is short, though, and obstacles litter the bottom, including trees and a fence, so kids are often seen bailing out or sticking out their feet to brake before ramming into something.

"Sometimes it feels scary," admits Ocean, out of breath but eager for another go.

Daredevils attempt the hill — or even the stairs — near the hospital-side entrance that empties out onto Dekalb Avenue.

Neighborhood sledders say they come back year after year, in part for the friendly vibe.

"We absolutely love it. It's like a 1950s ski resort," says Karen Padin, 40, of Fort Greene, who brought her 4-year-old,

Hill an hour into sledding to head north for Cedar Hill at 79th Street. "It's going to be crowded, but there's more snow and it's wider," explains Russell.

**Insider tip:** Parents, the nearest year-round bathroom is at Kerbs Boathouse, just a tad northwest of Pilgrim Hill, farther into the park.

**Rating:** 

Surrounded by a snowy, postcard-ready Central Park, you'll be reminded why you love New York — despite the hordes of people.

Marie Warsh and Zachary Levy take on Pilgrim Hill, where Levy used to sled as a boy.

Carroll Gardens kids Pablo (left) and Sunny, both 8, take the G train to Fort Greene Park, where Dennis Yi and his 6-year-old son, Ocean (lower right), grin all the way down a hill.



Andrew, for a day of sledding fun. "Half our building is out here because it's filled with kids."

**Insider tip:** No hay bales here. Parents take turns standing in front of a lamppost to prevent concussions.

**Rating:** 

A great community vibe combined with multiple wide and steep hills allow everyone to get into the action. Year-round park bathrooms mean kids can stay all day.



Photos by Christian Johnston

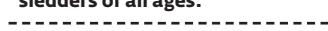


## THRILL RATING

 Your preschooler will be bored.

 A neighborhood standby, but not worth a subway schlep.

 First-rate hill appeals to sledders of all ages.

 Wear a helmet. You're sledging a black diamond.



## The search for the right ride

ANYTHING goes for sleds in New York City: trash-can lids, mattresses, pizza boxes, plastic sheeting. But the right gear can make a difference.

Tom Morton, a fifth-generation sled-maker in South Paris, Maine, and co-owner of Paricon, which produces Flexible Flyer sleds, says it actually all depends on the snow.

"Every day has different conditions," he says. "Different conditions work better with different sleds."

In the two-day aftermath of a nor'easter, the city's sledding spots went from fluffy powder to a packed-down ice crust to bare dirt. The city's sledders used everything from inner tubes to wooden toboggans to enjoy the winter spectacle.

Morton recommends a foam sled for the packed-down, icy surfaces common on the city's popular hills, where kids wear the tracks down sometimes in a few hours. "Foam sleds are typically pretty fast and fun," he says. "On a packed surface, it has very little friction, so it can go faster."

Morton's sons' favorite, though, is the PT Blaster. At \$79.99, this pricey, all-black sled looks like a mini-snowmobile complete with a steering wheel, spring-loaded brakes and skis. It offers the most control down the hill, whatever the conditions.

But the company's most popular sled is the White Lightning, a 4-foot plastic toboggan that retails for less than \$15. It's simple, cheap and lets an adult or multiple kids pile in together. It works well at creating the very first tracks in the snow, says Morton. The

saucer, a simple disc of plastic, is a close runner-up in popularity for its all-weather, all-purpose functionality, he adds.

Brad Anderson, 49, who was sledding Riverside Park's hills with his kids one recent Saturday, agreed. "The ones that look the cheapest," he says, "are sometimes the fastest."

— Rose Gordon Sala



PT Blaster \$80

White Lightning \$15