





Summer camp is always [hot topic \(https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-summer-camp-guide\)](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-summer-camp-guide) in New York City, but we've never seen a camp experience quite like the one unveiled last week with the opening of CAMP Store in the [Flatiron District \(https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city/downtown/flatiron\)](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city/downtown/flatiron).

Situated on the corner of 16th and Fifth Avenue, CAMP looks like just another retail shop; albeit one with an onsite Milk Bar and a funky collection of merchandise—from toys and games to books and clothing—but there's something spectacular hiding behind a secret door. Find the entrance (with the help of a super-friendly CAMP counselor) and you're in for hours of fun and a cool new [indoor place to play \(https://mommypoppins.com/newyorkcitykids/20-indoor-places-to-go-for-free-in-nyc\)](https://mommypoppins.com/newyorkcitykids/20-indoor-places-to-go-for-free-in-nyc).



*Kids will be blown away by the secret door surprise and path that leads to Basecamp.*

The door leads to a secret path that deposits you right into Basecamp. At its heart, [the 10,000-square-foot store \(https://camp.com/\)](https://camp.com/), is meant to be an experiential retail space. You'll see the camp map and signs pointing you to all the important places any great summer camp has: a canteen, sports field, lake, "Campitheater," mess hall, bunks, and more.

RELATED: [Other NYC Stores Where Kids Play FREE \(https://mommypoppins.com/ny-kids/stores-to-play-in-for-free\)](https://mommypoppins.com/ny-kids/stores-to-play-in-for-free).



*Visitors can spend hours exploring the different sections at CAMP.*

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Each of these sections is stocked with a funky, fun, curated selection of toys and gifts curated by a trio of buyers. And while my kids saw plenty of things they wanted to have, they also spent nearly two hours exploring the space, focused on having fun and interacting with the energetic, kid-friendly counselors. In the end, we walked out with some edible bubbles, a whole lot of memories, and a burning desire to go to CAMP again soon!

RELATED: [NYC's Most Amazing Destination Toy Stores \(https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/top-nyc-destination-toy-stores\)](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/top-nyc-destination-toy-stores).



Flavored bubbles blown by a camp counselor were a huge hit.

Some of the fun, interactive elements in the space that will keep us coming back? A bunk bed with a tube slide that lands you right into the Dance Hall, where, much to the delight of my daughters, the walls are covered in mermaid-style sequins for tons of sparkly sensory fun. At The Lake, we had fun running up and down a mini-bridge, which doubles as a piano ([watch out, FAO \(https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/stores-services/fao-schwarz-returns-to-nyc-next-week-with-new-store-in-rock\)](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/stores-services/fao-schwarz-returns-to-nyc-next-week-with-new-store-in-rock)!) for lots of music-making fun. I had the hardest time pulling them away from the Lick-A-Bubble table in the Canteen, where a staffer endlessly mixed and blew bubbles for them: cake-flavored bubbles, unicorn (aka cotton candy)-flavored bubbles, and even root beer-flavored bubbles. The Mail Room and Arts and Crafts stations were so entertaining, I had to bribe them with a trip to Milk Bar to leave the store. S'mores-themed ice cream sundaes for the win!



Explore the lake and campfire, where touching toys is encouraged. Photo by Janet Bloom

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While the space itself is tons of fun, and interactive in so many ways, the staff also makes the experience memorable. Touching and playing with toys is encouraged. My 5-year-old commandeered a ride-on horse and rode laps, which not only wasn't frowned on, it was actually encouraged—in large part by the staffer who was racing circles around her on a scooter of her own. At the bubble station, the counselor took special care to get down to her level to make sure she got to taste the bubbles when my older daughter and her friend were licking the higher ones up too quickly. And, a no trip to camp would be complete without a few songs around the camp fire. Not only did we hear the original CAMP theme song, but also a rendition of "Shake It Off," "We're Going on a Bear Hunt," and "Baby Shark," all played and sung by a musician-turned-counselor.



Listen to some tunes around the campfire.

I was really struck by the customer service the counselors provided, as well as all the elements they brought to make the experience so special for my kids. I was told that the co-owners, Nikki and Ben Kaufman, looked for counselors who were not only great with kids, but had talents that could be showcased in programming for the space, including FREE events like [Christmas Caroling in the Campitheatre](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/event/free/christmas-caroling-in-the-campitheatre) (<https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/event/free/christmas-caroling-in-the-campitheatre>) and paid options, like crafting [Sparkle Storm Snow Globes](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/event/free/sparkle-storm-snow-globes) (<https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/event/free/sparkle-storm-snow-globes>). More arts, crafts, music, and projects will be added to the event calendar for 2019, thanks to the talented staff.



A visit to CAMP wouldn't be complete without exploring the forest, which is a safe and engaging space for the younger crowd.

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Lest you think CAMP is some one-trick pony, here's the other remarkable thing: The Basecamp setup is temporary. Every 8-12 weeks, CAMP will pack up its installation and start from scratch with a new batch of surprises to play with and to purchase. Visit Basecamp between now and March 15; then return to see what the next iteration of CAMP looks like. While New York has had its share of Instagram-worthy, interactive popups lately, from [Candytopia](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/museums/candytopia-arrives-in-nyc-for-hungry-fans-is-it-worth-a-visit) (<https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/museums/candytopia-arrives-in-nyc-for-hungry-fans-is-it-worth-a-visit>), to [Mickey: The True Original Exhibition](https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/museums/interactive-mickey-mouse-pop-up-exhibit-lands-in-nyc) (<https://mommypoppins.com/new-york-city-kids/museums/interactive-mickey-mouse-pop-up-exhibit-lands-in-nyc>), CAMP is here to stay; save a few days of downtime each time it reimagines its space.

I visited with a trio of kids ranging in age from 5 to 10, and they all had a blast and found different draws; that said, kids as young as 3 would definitely find something fun to do here.

CAMP is a cash-less retailer; but, if you have a MasterCard, there are some perks including the ability to cut the line on busy days, free gift wrap, and a treasure box of surprises that can be unlocked for your kid to pick an extra gift when you make a purchase with your card.

*Unless noted, photos by the author*

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