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FIELD STATION: DINOSAURS' NEW HOME IN OVERPECK PARK

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They're a little cramped in their temporary digs, but the dinosaurs don't seem to mind. *Field Station: Dinosaurs* (<http://www.fieldstationdinosaurs.com/index>), which lost its 16-acre spot in Secaucus' Laurel Hill Park last year so the town could build a school on the site, reopened over Memorial Day weekend on 14 acres in the Henry Hoebel section of Overpeck Park in Leonia. A permanent spot is planned on a 35-acre site in the Teaneck section of the park and is scheduled to open in 2017. In the meantime, Field Station is up and running.

“Everybody here has been great,” says Field Station/CEO Guy Gsell. “A lot of our guests are really local, from Teaneck and Fort Lee, towns that don’t have a lot of people coming from Secaucus, they’re coming in droves now, which is fun.”



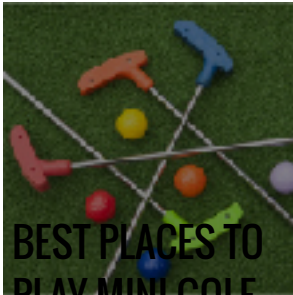
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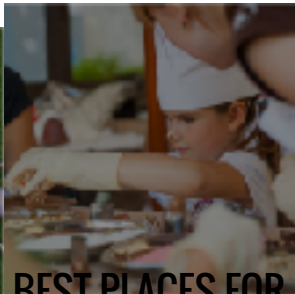
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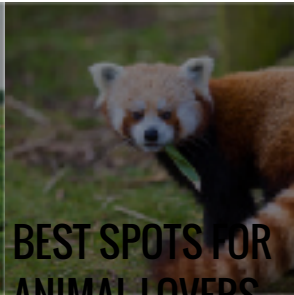
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At the Secaucus site, the tents set among winding, hilly trails and trees made you feel like you'd wandered into an actual paleontological dig—and the roaring animatronic dinosaurs seemed to jump out at you from the woods. In Leonia, the space is more flat and there isn't much landscaping around the wheelchair-accessible mesh pathways, so you can easily see many of the park's 33 dinosaurs at once. (No trees also means no shade, so bring a hat or sunglasses.)



Gsell says they're planning to add landscaping to the site. "It's sort of ongoing, as we can figure out where things can go and what views are good, and what needs a little more background...And we're learning a lot from the guests, and what the kids like. So our first thought was, when you first come in and you see a bunch of dinosaurs, that's a very different experience than we had in Secaucus. Our feeling was, we should change that. But we have guests who come in, and they really like that. The little kids come in and they see sort of a vista with three or four dinosaurs and they can see them all at once, and it's exciting. It's like that opening scene in *Jurassic Park* where they come in and they see dinosaurs from the helicopter...So we're not gonna change it."



The experience otherwise remains the same. At various tents and tables scattered throughout the site, groups such as the Department of Environmental Protection and the Bighorn Basin Dinosaur Project (part of the New Jersey State Museum) run different activity spots where kids can sift for fossilized sharks' teeth or examine a fossilized dinosaur egg. They can even walk through the *Jurassic Park*-esque scene of a tent being invaded by small dinos.



Jumpin' Jamie, aka the Dinosaur Troubadour, is back performing his dino-themed songs—"pretend you're at a Bon Jovi concert," he tells kids to get them to clap along—singing "The Mighty T-Rex" right before a life-size Tyrannosaurus Rex puppet ambles out to playfully threaten the audience. Field Station's "dinosaur handlers" tell the story of the Hadrosaurus, New Jersey's own dino, whose bones were excavated in Haddonfield in the 1800s—the first nearly complete skeleton of a dinosaur ever to be discovered.

Ticket extras include the chance to see T-Rex's claws and touch a Triceratops tooth in the Commander's Tent or to view a 3-D screening of the BBC Earth documentary *Walking with Dinosaurs: Prehistoric Planet*, which depicts dinosaurs doing what they did best—that is, fighting and killing each other—so it might be a little intense for some younger paleontologists.



Field Station: Dinosaurs did have a few mishaps on the way to reopening. One of the dinosaurs, a 90-foot-long *Argentinosaurus*, caught a spark during routine welding maintenance in early May and burned down. (The same dino also needed repairs after Superstorm Sandy blew it over in 2012, so possibly it was just unlucky.) Gsell says *Field Station* plans to replace it by mid-summer. Additionally, the park had to delay its grand opening by a day to account for last-minute preparations.

In the meantime, *Field Station*'s engineers are surveying the eventual permanent site, figuring out where to build. "Not that we do much building. We put trails down," Gsell says. They want to make sure they stay respectful of the environment by not building on wetlands, for instance. "We try not to be disruptive at all. If there's a family of deer there, we want that family of deer to stay there. There are old-growth trees there, we don't want to take those trees down. Our goal is to be completely non-invasive when we come in."



Gsell says there's an underlying point to all those roaring dinos. "Kids come here and they're already dinosaur maniacs when they walk in the door. So we want to give them the latest, the newest information about dinosaurs...But our goal is also to take their love of dinosaurs and turn that into a love of science in general, a love of exploration. So we talk about more than just the dinosaurs, we talk about geology and we talk about global warming. We talk about a lot of scientific issues, just making kids excited to be scientists. In our opening speech, we say, 'We want everyone here to come with the spirit of a scientist.' And that's what we do."

Field Station: Dinosaurs is located at 40 Fort Lee Road in Leonia. The park is open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm on Tuesday through Sunday now through Labor Day (September 5). Daily passes are \$15-40, free for children under 2. For more info, visit their [website \(http://fieldstationdinosaurs.com/\)](http://fieldstationdinosaurs.com/) or call 855-999-9010.

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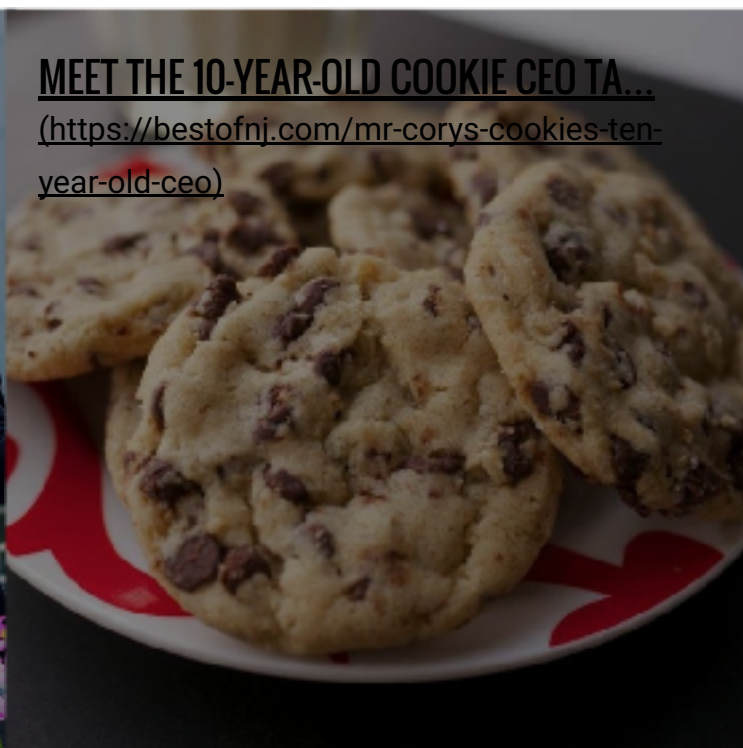
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