



# PING POD



## Previewing PingPod: The Autonomous Ping Pong Revolution

By Zachary Greenberg

Ping-pong, a classic Shabbat pastime for many, has been given a contemporary twist. If you've played ping-pong before, you'll love PingPod — a new addition to Fort Lee that presents a fresh take on this beloved sport. Recently, my wife Ahuva and our friends Aryeh and Yocheved Sunshine joined me in visiting PingPod's newest location at Hudson Lights.

Ahuva and I found nearby street parking at the beautiful Fort Lee Park, which has a cool "Be Fort Lee" sign on its meadow lawn. On Sundays, parking is free, but on weekdays there is a metered parking system. The PingPod store is located right next to the IPIC movie theater. We met up with Aryeh and Yocheved, who were waiting outside and walked into the store together. Immediately, we were greeted by David Silberman and his girlfriend, who welcomed us to the location.

Silberman shared with us that since he was five years old, he enjoyed playing ping-pong and has improved his skills over the years. He's always felt that there weren't enough opportunities to play, believing that the demand outweighed the supply.

He's recognized that other niche sports like bowling have been a staple for Americans to play for decades, yet despite it being a fun, simple and enjoyable sport that most people know how to play, table tennis has never taken off in the same way.

After working in the finance industry in equity research, Silberman transferred his skillset to become a co-founder and CFO of the PingPod franchise. He conceived the idea of an autonomous ping-pong facility that would utilize modern technology and offer a sleek feel to enhance the experience. David pitched the idea to two individuals: Ernesto Ebu, the former No.1 U.S. tennis player in 2016 who later became the chief product officer of PingPod, and Max Kogler, a highly successful businessman with experience at Goldman Sachs and founding a management consulting firm, who would go on to become the future CEO of PingPod.

Kogler and Ebu loved Silberman's idea, and together the trio opened its first location in the Lower East Side in 2020. Since then, PingPod has expanded to six locations in New York, with one in the Upper West Side opening soon, one in Philadelphia and counting the Fort Lee installation, two in

New Jersey (the other being in Chatham). The brand is also planning to launch new facilities in Boston and Miami, making PingPod a name that will soon be associated with fun, high-tech ping-pong experiences across the United States.

What makes PingPod unique is that it is open 24/7 and does not require on-site staff. With just a few clicks on their website or app, available time slots and durations can be easily selected, and even a coach can be booked for those seeking professional training. After signing up, a calendar invite is sent to the party with its allotted time slot. To ensure security, surveillance cameras provide live monitoring. Once signed up, party members can access the facility using a key obtained through the website or app.

As we explored PingPod, we discovered some amazing features that make it stand out from other ping-pong venues. For instance, each of the four PingPod tables has buttons on both ends that enable players to add or remove points on the scoreboard, displayed on a nearby tablet. One of the coolest features was the ability to save replays of exciting hits or great volleys by having the sequence sent directly to your email. And if you need a break between games, you can



Couple Doubles!

chill out on one of the lounge couches that PingPod provides for its guests.

During our conversation with Silberman, he shared a humorous story about a Jewish couple who wanted to have a date in one of the private ping-pong pods. The guy, however, was worried about violating *shmirat ha'ayin* since the room would be secluded and locked. So he kept on asking Silberman detailed questions that he tried his best to answer. When David explained how the room is being watched by a surveillance team in the Philippines, the young bachur said it was fine and was able to enjoy his date. Silberman joked that they even got married afterward, but he then clarified that he doesn't



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The four of us with David.

actually know. (Note: there are private pods in most locations like the 37th Street one in Manhattan, but not in Fort Lee.)

Following our conversation with Silberman, we were eager to put our newfound knowledge to the test by playing doubles ping-pong. Initially, we played couples against each other, enjoying a few volleys back and forth. However, we then switched things up and divided into teams of guys versus girls. With only one player from each team allowed to return the ball at a time, the game became increasingly challenging as the speed picked up. Additionally, the positions of the server and receiver alternated between teammates every two serves, adding another layer of strategy to the game.

At first, Aryeh and I took a commanding 5-0 lead, but then the girls, slowly but surely, the girls kept creeping back. Eventually,

we led 20-18, meaning that if we had scored one more point, we would have won. But the girls would not go down without swinging, and Yocheved and Ahuva used their best moves to tie the game up. After a few more rounds, the girls ended up defeating us 23-21! With the game over, we used PingPod's scoop nets, which reminded me of fish nets on a stick at pet stores, to scoop up all of the balls. It was a strange but fascinating experience as the net seemed to trap the ball with ease while having to turn it upside down to release it. Cleaning up had never been so much fun and so effortless.

If you don't bring your own ping-pong gear, PingPod offers paddles for guests to use. They also have an array of refreshing drinks, snacks and exclusive merchandise for purchase. Guests can join open Slack group chats where coaches can be asked for

advice on equipment, information about upcoming tournaments, and watch amazing replays.

My first cousin Esther is a PingPod pro who works there full-time as an event coordinator. On Monday night of Chol Hamoed, April 10, from 7-10 p.m., Esther is organizing a public tournament at the Fort Lee location with a grand prize of \$50. The entry fee for the tournament is just \$15.

Don't have someone to play against? No problem. Many of the facilities have a robot machine that you can play against. You can adjust the machine to focus on either your backhand or forehand and adjust the speed accordingly. Alternatively, you can book a coach or a hitting partner. Hitting partners don't have to pay; they are people in the area who enjoy playing and will play with you when you need a partner.

Overall, our visit to PingPod in Fort Lee was a blast. We enjoyed meeting Silberman, playing some competitive table tennis, and exploring the awesome facilities. With equipment available for guests to use and the chance to purchase refreshing drinks and snacks and cool PingPod merchandise, there's plenty to keep you entertained. And, if you're interested in taking your game to the next level, you can even book a coach or participate in upcoming tournaments such as the one organized by PingPod's very own event coordinator, Esther. As David pointed out, "One of the cool things about PingPod

is that it attracts a diverse group of people of all ethnicities and ages coming together to have fun in our ping-pong oasis." So if you're looking for a swinging good time, be sure to check out PingPod in Fort Lee!

Hours: 24/7

Admission: Varies by time of day; to reserve a table is \$15 for 30 minutes and as low as \$22.50 an hour at non-peak hours. Members also get unlimited free play at non-peak hours and reduced prices.

Coaching: Players can book a personal coach for training during the allotted time slot.

Single's Tournament: Monday, April 10 from 7-10 p.m. (\$50 gift card to winner). Sign up here: <https://app.pingpod.com/community/events/1bd6ef28-83fb-402c-a643-6c5efc592680>. \$15 per person to compete.

Address: 2025 Hudson St, Fort Lee, New Jersey

Phone: (908) 718-7890

Website: [www.pingpod.com/fort-lee](http://www.pingpod.com/fort-lee)

Use promo code JLINK50 to get a 50% discount on the first booking at any of the PingPod locations.

Zachary Greenberg is a consultant at Semler Brossy and the TABC track coach. His wife Ahuva is a matchmaker on YUConnects. Additionally, Zachary recently watched the film "Shazam! Fury of the Gods" in theaters. If you have any recommendations of fun places for Zachary to cover, email him at [zachary@jewishlink.news](mailto:zachary@jewishlink.news).

## Chol Hamoed Activity Contest

Send in a photo of yourself/your family at a location mentioned in our Chol Hamoed Activity Guide!



1st Place - 6 Legoland tickets  
2nd & 3rd Place - \$25 Chickies gift card

**Deadline is April 23rd!**

Winners will be announced in the April 27 issue.

Email your entries to [contest@jewishlink.news](mailto:contest@jewishlink.news)