Something to Write Home About

When you explore the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca, or Oswego Canals, you’re traveling in the wake of generations of families, canal boat workers, and world travelers who have plied these waters and walked its towpath since the Erie Canal opened in 1825. Some of our more famed visitors include Marquis de Lafayette, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mark Twain.

If you travel the entire length of the Erie Canal, you’ll join a growing number of today’s “End-to-Enders” who are enjoying a big adventure and sense of accomplishment as they walk, cycle, row, kayak, or cruise nearly 400 miles from Albany to Buffalo. But you don’t have to travel the entire distance to have something to write home about.

You can ride the Canalway Trail for an hour or two, visit one of the Canalway Corridor’s premier canal museums and historic sites, discover the charm of canal villages, or step onboard a tour boat to get a sense of how much the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has to offer.

Use this guide to make the most of your visit…and feel free to write home or write us to share what you liked best.

Wish You Were Here...

Before Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook, people sent messages to friends and relatives on postcards. As the social media of its day, postcards were cheap and fast. Notes were often short and without detail, but they connected sender and recipient in much the same way that a quick tweet, Instagram, or Facebook post does today.

Thousands of post cards of the Erie Canal are saved in museums and historical society collections across the state. They provide a fascinating record of life along the canal in the 1800s and 1900s.

For the fun of it, send us a postcard or post to our Facebook page to let us know what you like best about the Erie Canalway. We’ll share selected “postcards” on our social media sites and in our publications to spread the word farther.

SEND US A POSTCARD:
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
P.O. Box 219
Waterford, NY 12188

FACEBOOK:
www.facebook.com/eriecanalway

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Come Aboard

What better way to experience America’s oldest continuously-operating canal than to get on the water? You can cruise in your boat or get on board a tour boat, seek out an overnight excursion, or rent a self-skipped canal boat. The waterway is also great for kayaking and canoeing.

The New York Canal System includes four historic canals: the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca. Together, they create an inland waterway that spans 524-miles of upstate New York, connecting the Hudson River with Lake Champlain, Lake Ontario, Cayuga Lake, Seneca Lake, and Lake Erie via the Niagara River.

If you like boats but prefer to watch them from shore, stop by one of the many canal harbors, visitor centers, or parks on the water. Or visit one of the waterway’s 57 locks to watch a passing boat “lock through.” You’ll see tugboats, barges, and historic replica canal boats plying canal waters alongside today’s cruisers, motorboats, and kayaks.

Consult our chart to find boat rentals and tours. You’ll also find the latest information about canoe and kayak launches, boat ramps, boat rentals and cruises, marinas, and more using the New York Canal Map: www.canals.ny.gov/maps.

**New York State Canal Corporation**

The New York State Canal System is owned and operated by the New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York State Thruway Authority. The canal is typically open for boating from May 1st through November 15th. For current information on fees for boating through the locks, up-to-date notices to mariners, or to order the official Cruising Guide to the New York State Canal System, visit www.canals.ny.gov or call 1-800-4-CANAL-4 (1-800-422-6254).

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**Erie Canalway Map & Guide**

- Erie Canal: Western Region
  - Colonial Belle–Erie Canal Cruises, Fairport
  - Corn Hill Navigation, Pittsford
  - Erie Canal Boat Company, Fairport
  - Genesee Waterways Center, Rochester
  - Lock 32 Whitewater Kayaking Park, Pittsford
  - Lockport Locks and Erie Canal Cruises, Lockport
  - Niagara River Cruises, No. Tonawanda, Niagara Falls, Grand Island
  - Erie Canal Boat Company, Fairport
  - Erie Canal Cruises, Herkimer
  - Erie-Champlain Canal Boat Company, Waterford
  - Erie Canal: Central Region
    - Camillus Erie Canal Park, Camillus
    - Erie Canal: Mohawk-Hudson Region
      - The Boat House, Schenectady
      - Erie Canal Cruises, Herkimer
      - Erie-Champlain Canal Boat Company, Waterford
  - Erie Canal: Mohawk-Hudson Region
    - The Boat House, Schenectady
    - Erie Canal Cruises, Herkimer
    - Erie-Champlain Canal Boat Company, Waterford

**Cayuga-Seneca Canal**

- Canal Side Experiences, Waterloo
  - Captain Bill’s, Watkins Glen
  - Cornell Outfitting Rental Center, Ithaca
  - Cruise-USA, Union Springs
  - Erience Canal Cruises, Seneca Falls
  - Finger Lakes Boat Rental, Aurora
  - Finger Lakes Boat Tours, Geneva
  - Finger Lakes Water Adventures, Waterloo
  - Force Seven Charters, Inc., Seneca Lake, Waterloo
  - Fuzzy Guppies, Waterloo
  - Ithaca Boat Tours, Ithaca
  - Liberty Boat Tours, Seneca Falls, Geneva
  - Paddle-N-More, Cayuga Lake
  - Water to Wine Tours, Cayuga Lake
  - Chummie’s, Fairport

**Oswego Canal**

- River Run Kayaks, Oswego
  - Oswego Canal

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- Some tours accessible for people with disabilities, including wheelchair users. Please call ahead to discuss your specific needs. ▲ Adaptive paddling available.
Hit the Trail

Walking or cycling on the Erie Canalway Trail offers a glimpse of what traveling across the state with a canal boat in tow might have been like. It’s also a perfect way to access all sorts of interesting canal sites that you’d miss in a car. The 365-mile trail closely parallels much of the Erie Canal from Albany to Buffalo; more than three-quarters is off-road.

You can also access short off-road trails along the Champlain Canal in Waterford, Halfmoon, and Schuylerville. The Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail is a nine-mile trail from Fort Edward to Glens Falls that passes the Five Combines, an intact series of five locks, on the Old Champlain Canal in Fort Edward.

The Erie Canalway Trail is open to hikers, joggers, and bicyclists, as well as cross-country skiers in winter. Some paved sections are suitable for in-line skating.

### Erie Canalway Trail Resources

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<tr>
<th>TRAIL SECTION</th>
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| Erie Canal Heritage Trail      | 120   | Buffalo to Lyons  
Great cycling along the canal through Western Erie Canal towns. |
| Old Erie Canal–Port Byron to Camillus | 28  | Schael Park in Port Byron to Warners Road in Camillus  
Follows old Erie Canal route through Central New York; traverses Camillus Erie Canal Park, which includes restored aqueduct at Nine Mile Creek. |
| Old Erie Canal Historic State Park | 36  | Dewitt to Rome  
Follows the old Erie Canal; Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum is on route. |
| Rome to Utica                  | 14    | Rome to Utica  
Trail follows the Erie Canal/Mohawk River with some lovely views along a largely shaded path. |
| Mohawk Hudson Bikeway          | 86    | Little Falls to Albany  
Plenty to see and do; visit locks, historic and cultural sites, and canal towns. Short segments are easy to access for day trips. |
| Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail | 9     | Fort Edward to Glens Falls  
Follows the 1832 feeder canal that supplied water to the Champlain Canal. Connects with the Glens Falls Bikeway to Lake George. |

Explore more!

**Bicycle Loop Routes**

See more of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor using new bicycle loop routes that connect with the Erie Canalway Trail. The on-road routes, ranging from easy to challenging, will take you through scenic countryside in Orleans, Ontario, Wayne, and Madison counties.

A trail brochure for each route will help you to explore a variety of local attractions, including: canal villages, farm stands, wineries, museums, and state parks. Download maps directly from each county tourism agency’s website or call us to request a copy.

**Passport to Parks**

Record your visit to the Erie Canalway with special passport cancellation stamps, available at selected cultural heritage sites. The free stamps are part of the Passport to Your National Parks® program, which enables visitors to collect stamps in a spiral-bound National Park Service Passport at national parks and NPS-affiliated areas nationwide. Look for stamp pads and stamps in each site’s visitor center, gift shop, or headquarters. The stamp lists the site and the date as a memento of your visit. A special Kids’ Passport® to Your National Parks Companion is also available from www.eparks.com/store or 1-877-628-7275.
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Begin your journey in the east, west, or right in the middle of New York State, you can’t go wrong—the canal’s treasures are strung together along the waterway like gems on a necklace.

Getting Here

The canal is accessible by car, boat, bicycle, and train, and from major airports in Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. The New York State Thruway (I-90) and Amtrak parallel the Erie Canal from Albany to Buffalo. Northway I-87 and NY Rte 4 provide access to the Champlain Canal from Albany to Whitehall. State and county roads thread through the hamlets, villages, and cities that grew along the waterways and provide access to canal towns, attractions, and historic sites. Plan your visit using our online guide: www.eriecanalway.org/explore.htm

Canal Adventure

- 524 miles (800 km) of continuous navigable waterway
- 365-mile (587 km) Erie Canalway Trail
- Vacation boat rentals
- Canal tours
- World class fishing
- Kayaking and canoeing
- Crew races

Culture & Heritage

- Four national parks
- 34 national historic landmarks
- Historic canal sites, vessels, and museums
- 100-mile mural trail
- Grand movie palaces and theaters
- Renowned art museums and galleries
The image contains a map of the Erie Canal, detailing various locations and events along its route. The map highlights different sites, such as Lock 17, Fort Edward Visitor Center, and Schoharie Crossing. It also includes information about festivals and events, regional flavor, and nature & scenic beauty.

**Regional Flavor**
- 230 canal communities
- Winery and brewery tours
- Canal-side dining
- Ethnic foods and regional cuisine
- Farmer's markets
- One-of-a-kind shopping

**Festivals & Events**
- Hundreds of canal-side festivals & events
- Concerts
- Parades
- Fireworks
- Family-fun activities
- Crafts
- Demonstrations & re-enactments
- Local food celebrations

**Nature & Scenic Beauty**
- Two national wildlife refuges
- Four national natural landmarks
- 24 New York State parks
- Exceptional birdwatching
- Nature photography
- Quiet getaways
Take the Kids!

Spending special time with family or friends is a favorite pastime of any child. There are lots of ways to share a fine afternoon or an entire vacation in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Here are our top five things to do with kids:

1. **Take a Boat Trip.** Kids especially love the experience of going through locks or under lift bridges. See our list on page 2 for canal tours and boats for hire.
2. **Cycle on the Erie Canalway Trail.** The off-road trail is a great, safe place to ride. From budding two-wheelers to teens ready for a multi-day trip, the trail offers options to suit every skill level.
3. **Experience Hands on History.** Most canal-related history museums offer special programs and hands-on displays for children. Call ahead for a calendar-of-events or to ask about kid-friendly activities. Find them using our online guide: [www.eriecanalway.org/explore.htm](http://www.eriecanalway.org/explore.htm)
4. **Go Fish!** Cast your line in the canal itself, or in smaller streams and lakes throughout the Corridor. Common catches include walleye, northern pike, small and large mouth bass, and panfish. Check fishing regulations and advisories before you go: [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7917.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7917.html)
5. **Cultivate a Sense of Wonder.** Enjoy swimming, hiking, and nature study at state parks, nature preserves, and National Natural Landmarks. You’ll find dramatic waterfalls, lakes, trails, and vast wetlands full of bird life. Some great picks include: Moss Island National Natural Landmark, Little Falls; Green Lakes State Park, Fayetteville; Buttermilk Falls State Park and Robert H. Treman State Park in Ithaca.

**Tips for Cycling with Kids**

- Go far enough to have fun, without pushing it beyond what kids can handle. Plan short rides initially and lengthen them as your child’s interest and stamina grow.
- Stop along the way. Make brief pit stops to see old aqueducts, bridges, locks, or wildlife.
- Choose a destination where you’ll turn around. This gives kids a sense of accomplishment and a point to shoot for as they ride.
- Be prepared with snacks and water or plan a picnic to celebrate the end of the ride.


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**It’s a Hard Knock Life**

**Kids on the Canal in the 1800s**

Picture walking along a dirt path, the smell of animals mixed with that of laboring men—day after day, mile after mile, through hot sun and driving rain—and the life of a mule driver on the canal begins to come into view. What’s harder to imagine today is that many mule drivers were children.

The demanding job of the mule driver was often held by boys (and occasionally girls) as young as eight-years old. They walked 15 to 20 miles each day, typically completing two six-hour shifts as the canal boat traveled to its destination. At the end of the day, no hot shower or soft pillow awaited. Boys often slept with the animals and tended to their needs in stalls onboard the canal boat.

Some mule drivers worked alongside their families, pitching in as expected to run a family-run canal boat business. Others were orphaned immigrants. Children whose parents did not survive the trans-Atlantic journey were sometimes sent north from New York City to work on canal boats. Low wages and rough conditions marked the life of the mule driver.
Ship Shape

Sailors have long been obliged to keep their quarters neat and secure, especially given tight space onboard ships and turbulence at sea—hence, the phrase ship shape came to mean neat, tidy, and in good condition. Today, keeping a fleet of historic vessels in ship shape is the task of every member of the NYS Canal Corporation’s crew.

Most of the blue and yellow vessels you see on the canal were built prior to 1940. Thanks to the diligence of generations of canal captains, engineers, and deck hands, these vessels are still at work, brass and paint still gleaming. Shown at right are a few of the vessels you may see and the jobs they do.

Tugboats

Watch for the powerful tugs Gov. Roosevelt and Gov. Cleveland (both built in 1928 as icebreaking tugs), tugs Syracuse, Pittsford, and Lockport, or one of the smaller, but still mighty Tender Tugs pushing scows loaded with dredged material, stone rip-rap, and other construction material.

Tugboat Urger

This is the flagship vessel in the New York State Canal Corporation’s fleet. Built in 1901, this venerable tug has been plying the waters of the canal since 1921. The Urger is now used to educate school children and adults about the importance of New York’s historic canal system and the role that inland waterways have played—and continue to play—in the lives of people who live along them. Watch for tug Urger at community festivals throughout the summer.

Buoy Boats

From the 1920s into the 1960s, over 2,100 kerosene lanterns burned on buoys and channel markers along New York’s Canal System. Buoy Tenders used these steel-hulled boats to patrol a section of canal and refill lamps along the way. Today, these vessels are used for general errands, maintenance work, and to take channel soundings.

Dredges

Dredges remove sediments from the bottom of the canal to maintain the navigation channel. Hydraulic dredges use rotary cutters at the end of long suction pipes to chew through gravel bars. The slurry of mud, stones, and water is sucked up by giant pumps on board and discharged through a long string of pipes on floats to settling lagoons onshore.

Quarter Boats

Canal maintenance work often happens a long way from any town. The big blue floating boxes with windows that you may see near dredging operations are Quarters Boats where crews sleep and eat.

Scows

Scows are flat-bottomed boats with square ends. Hopper scows haul dredged material. Deck scows carry construction machinery, materials, and dredge pipe.

Share Your Point of View

2014 Photo Contest

Share your unique perspective on the sites and scenes of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor for our 2014 Photo Contest. Judges will select winning images in four contest categories: Bridges, Buildings and Locks; On the Water; Fun and Festivities; and the Nature of the Canal. We’ll feature winning images in our 2015 Erie Canalway calendar.

Deadline for submissions: August 30, 2014

Every child learns in school that building the Erie Canal was a heroic feat of engineering and construction. Hailed as a new world wonder, the Erie Canal stirred immense pride throughout the state of New York and the nation while forging fundamental aspects of the American character. In addition to establishing New York City as the nation’s premier seaport and commercial center, the Erie and its lateral canals shaped settlement patterns in the Northeast and Midwest. The canal system inspired early tourism—travelers published hundreds of accounts of their journeys—as well as songs, illustrations, and other ingredients of popular culture. Social movements including abolitionism, women’s rights, and religious revivalism flourished along the canal. Today, New York’s canals still link communities together and offer an exceptional way to explore the state. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor collaborates with partners at the local, state, and federal level to preserve and share our extraordinary canal heritage and foster vibrant communities connected by our treasured waterways.

Get involved! Stay informed by signing up for our e-newsletter; volunteer for canal-related projects in your community; or make a donation to our nonprofit organization to expand our work and impact.

Have a safe season on the water

Whether you are a new or experienced boater, follow these tips for a safe season on the water.

• Take a New York Safe Boating Course. A new law requires that anyone born on or after May 1, 1996 is required to successfully complete an approved boater education course to operate a motorboat. Find one near you at: www.WearItNewYork.com.

• If you are renting a motorboat or personal watercraft, no certificate is required, but you must be at least 18 years of age.

• Check your life jackets. Every boat must have one U.S. Coast Guard approved, properly-sized life jacket in good condition and readily accessible for each passenger. Who must legally wear a life jacket?
  – Children under 12 years of age unless in a fully enclosed cabin
  – Everyone riding on a personal watercraft
  – Everyone being towed (tubing, waterskiing, etc.) behind a vessel
  – Everyone on any vessel less than 21 feet in length between November 1 and May 1.

NYS Parks recommends wearing a life jacket at all times, especially in small boats such as canoes, kayaks and stand up paddleboards, when boating alone, or for adults when boating with small children. Set the example for safety!

2014 Events

Join the fun at festivals and events all season long. We’ve listed the major cross-corridor events here; check online for a complete calendar of events: www.canals.ny.gov

Path Through History Weekends
June 7-8 and 14-15
Join in this statewide celebration of New York’s heritage and culture at hundreds of special events and programs. www.paththroughhistoryweekends.com

Journey Along the Erie Canal
June 30 - July 11
Spend a few hours or a full day cycling the Canalway Trail with the Our Ability team, as they complete a second cross state bike ride along the Erie Canal to raise funds for adaptive sports, education and employment for people with disabilities. www.ourability.com

2014 Tour of the Lois McClure
July through September
Step on board canal schooner Lois McClure! Free tours offered at multiple stops along Lake Champlain, the Champlain Canal, and Hudson River. Get the full schedule at www.lcmm.org

Cycling the Erie Canal
July 13-20
500 riders, 400 miles, 8-days of adventure and fun along the Erie Canal. Join the ride or the cheering section! Organized by Parks & Trails New York. www.ptny.org

Canal Splash!
August 8-10
Discover what the canal corridor has to offer at guided walks, rides, tours, and canal-side events and festivals throughout the Erie Canalway. www.canals.ny.gov/index.shtml