Dig In!
Celebrations Begin for Canal Bicentennial

You’re invited! This year marks the 200th anniversary of canal construction and exciting bicentennial events are on tap. You’ll find boat tours, bike rides, festivals, music, and family-friendly activities all year long. Start here to discover what makes the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor an unparalleled national treasure. Then head out to join the festivities along New York’s historic canals!

Building Success
New Yorkers were thinking big when they turned the first shovel of earth to construct the Erie Canal 200 years ago. Fueled by a bold vision and audacious plans, workers toiled mile after mile, year after year. They dug through fields, forests, rocky cliffs, and swamps to connect the Hudson River at Albany with Lake Erie at Buffalo.

The Erie Canal was America’s largest early public infrastructure project—designed, built, financed, and operated by the State of New York. Although Europeans had been building canals for more than 300 years, the Erie Canal was longer and more complex than any other in the world. It crossed rivers on aqueducts and overcame hills with 83 lift locks. It gave rise to the country’s first engineering schools, and spurred innovation and invention.

The Erie Canal sped the transport of goods and people across the state and opened up the interior of North America to settlement. Towns and cities grew along the canal’s path. It opened markets for mid-western farmers, loggers, miners, and manufacturers and spurred New York City to become the nation’s busiest port and financial center. The Erie Canal and a system of connecting waterways populated New York from border to border and generated wealth for the state and the nation.

Equally important, the canal brought a flow of people and new ideas. Social reform movements promoting the abolition of slavery and women’s rights arose across New York’s canal corridor, along with utopian communities and a number of religious movements. The Erie Canal carried more westbound immigrants than any other trans-Appalachian canal. These newcomers infused the nation with different languages, customs, religions, and foods.

Today, you can still traverse the state via New York’s legendary canal system, which has recently been designated a National Historic Landmark. You can see stone locks from the 1800s and cruise through the massive concrete locks that replaced them in 1918. You can ride your bike from Buffalo to Albany along the path mules once trod and explore villages and cities that rose on the banks of the world’s Eighth Wonder.

There’s a lot to celebrate in 2017! Head to the water and let the fun begin!
500 Miles of Waterway

The centerpiece of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is the canal itself—widely regarded as an engineering marvel, the Internet of its day, and the waterway that opened the nation. New York’s canal system has been in continuous operation since 1825.

The New York State 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.

Canal travel offers a variety of scenery and experiences: cruising from village to village; travelling down dramatic rivers; navigating through towering locks; sampling local food and beverages. Canal towns are welcoming places. You’ll find dockside tie-ups in many places where you can visit for a few hours or stay overnight. Many offer showers, restrooms, water, and electrical hook-ups, as well as information on places to eat, shop, and sight-see.

Going through a lock is one of the unique aspects of traveling along the canal. If you’ve never done it or are feeling a little nervous, rest assured! Friendly lock operators are on hand to offer step-by-step coaching to make locking safe and enjoyable.

Take to the Water

What better way to celebrate 200 years of canal heritage than to get on the water! Here’s how:

- **Take a canal cruise**
  Get on board one of the many tour boats for an hourly cruise, dinner cruise or themed tour. Most boat tours will give you the unique canal experience of going through a lock.

- **Rent a boat**
  Spend a day, weekend, or an entire week exploring the canal at your own pace. Rental boats are well-equipped with sleeping quarters, a galley, and plenty of deck space for relaxing. You’ll get lessons in steering, docking, and locking through before heading out. Many rental operators provide bicycles so that you can explore on land and experience the Canalway Trail, too.

- **Launch your own boat**
  With more than 125 public boat launches along the NYS Canal System, it’s easy to find one close by. The canal connects with Oneida, Onondaga, Cross, and Cayuga and Seneca Lakes where you can enjoy other water sports, beaches, and sailing. Marinas and public docks provide services and overnight accommodations.

- **Visit a canalside park**
  Enjoy the water from shore at canalside harbors, visitor centers, and parks. Many of the NYS Canal System’s 57 locks include waterfront parks for picnicking, fishing, playing, or just sitting on the bank and watching boats go by.

Find details on boating, rentals, tours and paddling access points at: www.canals.ny.gov and www.eriecanalway.org/explore.
Get a Whole New Perspective

No doubt about it. You'll gain a whole new perspective when you explore the canal via kayak, canoe, or standup paddle board (SUP). A wealth of historic sites and beautiful scenery await canal paddlers, and going through a lock makes for a singularly unique journey.

Paddling on the canal has grown dramatically in recent years. The NYS Canal Corporation recorded nearly 8,000 non-motorized vessel lockings in 2016, a 52-percent increase over the previous year.

To make the canal friendlier for paddlers, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is spearheading efforts to further develop the NYS Canalway Water Trail. A water trail is a route on navigable waterways that has been mapped out and includes paddler-friendly access points, amenities, and maps. The Hudson River Greenway Water Trail stretches from Whitehall to New York City and includes the Champlain Canal.

Online maps and routes for the eastern Erie Canal from Rome to Waterford are available now. Additional amenities and access points and a printed guidebook are in the works.

Find places to rent a kayak, canoe, or SUP and get on the water: www.eriecanalway.org/watertrail

Make boating safety a priority!
- Always wear a properly-sized life jacket
- Stay a safe distance from dams, buoys and barriers
- Respect all signs and warning signals
- Let someone know about your plans and destination
- Use designated boat ramps to launch your boat
- Boat sober
- Be cautious near hydroelectric facilities, as water conditions can change quickly.

Brookfield brookfieldrenewable.com/publicsafety

Cycle the Erie Canalway Trail

Pull out your bike, strap on your helmet, and go! Adventure, fun, and a sense of accomplishment await when you cycle the Erie Canalway Trail. You can ride for just a few miles or cross New York State—regardless, you’ll enjoy great scenery, fascinating history, and unparalleled cycling along the way.

The Erie Canalway Trail is not your average bike bath. Extending 365 miles from Buffalo to Albany, the trail’s route alongside the historic Erie Canal makes cycling here truly unique. This living waterway adds distinctive flavor in the form of canal structures like locks and lift bridges, working tugs and other vessels, friendly vacationers in boats of all stripes, and canal communities that are intriguing and fun cycling destinations.

The trail follows both active and historic sections of the Erie Canal. More than three-quarters is off-road. Trail markers and wayfinding signs make it easy to follow and to connect off-and-on-road segments. Because the trail closely parallels the Erie Canal, it offers relatively level cycling with only a few steeper climbs or descents.

Go the Distance
If you’re ready for a longer cycling trip, there are great options for weekend and multi-day vacations. You’ll find excellent online and printed guidebooks and maps to help you plan your trip. A variety of fully supported tours are offered annually if you’d like a group ride without the hassle of carrying your gear. Visit www.cycletheeriecanal.com for complete details.

Along the Champlain Canal
Short off-road trails along the Champlain Canal are also available in Waterford, Halfmoon, and Schuylerville, and extension of the network is underway. The Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail is a nine-mile trail along the historic feeder canal from Fort Edward to Glens Falls. The trail passes the Five Combines, an intact staircase of five locks built in 1832 near Fort Edward.
### A National Treasure

Designated as a National Historic Landmark, the New York State Canal System is among the premier historic sites in the United States. Visit and you’ll see locks, bridges, gates, and other unique structures used to operate the canal system today. You’ll also discover the remarkable remains of stone locks, aqueducts and other structures built during the 1800s. Here are a few must-see sites:

**Lockport Flight of Five**

Visit Lockport’s renowned staircase of locks, located alongside the similarly remarkable Erie Barge Canal Locks 34 and 35. Take a boat tour through the locks and be sure to check out the restoration underway of the historic locks.

**Erie Canal Western Terminus**

Head to Canalside, Buffalo’s historic canal terminus, to enjoy the city’s lively waterfront. Canalside features several fully restored facets of the original Erie Canal harbor. Events, tours, boat rentals, and more make it a fun destination. The western terminus of the Erie Canal today is located on the Niagara River in Tonawanda.

**19th Century Aqueducts**

Aqueducts are “water bridges” that carried the original Erie Canal over rivers and creeks. Visit the Camillus Erie Canal Park to see the fully restored Nine Mile Creek Aqueduct or find the best surviving remnants at Montezuma Heritage Park, the Old Erie Canal State Park in central New York, and Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site in Fort Hunter.

### Lift Bridges

See the distinctive “low bridges” of the Erie Canal in villages from Lockport to Fairport. When a boat approaches, these bridges are raised 15 feet to give clearance. Climb the stairs when the bridge is up for a unique view above the canal.
Find Your Way to Great Experiences with Erie Canalway Itineraries!

Take a day or a weekend and discover great places to explore and enjoy! Erie Canalway itineraries make it easy for you to find your way to some of the best historic sites, parks, museums, and recreational experiences available within the Canalway Corridor. Each itinerary features must see sites, as well as options for side trips. Suggestions for cycling, paddling, walking and canal tours, as well as nearby places to eat or picnic are also included. Download itineraries for free at www.eriecanalway.org/explore

Highest Lock
Visit Lock E17, which lifts boats a whopping 40 feet. It was the tallest lock in the world when it opened in 1915. Nearby, you can also see the stone remains of one of the five locks that operated here in the 1800s.

Weighlock Building
Take a trip to Syracuse to see the only remaining weighlock building, where canal boats were weighed and tolls assessed during the 1800s. The weighlock is now home to the Erie Canal Museum.

Waterford Flight
Explore the eastern gateway to the Erie Canal to see the five locks that make up the Waterford Flight. These locks raise boats 169 feet in just 1.5 miles. The visitor center and promenade at Lock 2 are a good place to start; drive to Lock 6 for sweeping views to the east.
**Bicentennial Q & A**

**Why did construction begin in Rome?**

To ensure early success, workers started on the easiest, most level section. Canal surveyors laid out the “Long Level” extending in both directions from Rome. This 66-mile section, from Frankfort in the east to the outskirts of Syracuse to the west, was completed without a single lock.

**How long did it take to dig the Erie Canal?**

It took a little over eight years, from July 1817 to October 1825. However, segments of the canal opened as they were finished. Boats travelled the first section, from Rome to Utica, in the fall of 1819. It took nearly two years to finish the final stretch, from Lockport to Buffalo.

**What were the biggest challenges to canal construction?**

The steep climb out of the Hudson Valley around Cohoes Falls at the eastern end of the canal required 18 locks to climb 165 feet of elevation. In the west, the Niagara Escarpment required a five-mile-long “deep cut” through hard rock and a double, five lock staircase in Lockport to deliver boats and essential water from Lake Erie to the rest of the canal. Other construction challenges included crossing the vast Cayuga Marshes near Montezuma, raising a tall embankment to carry the canal across the Irondequoit Creek Valley near Pittsford, and building aqueducts at other stream crossings.

**What was a typical workday like?**

Workers toiled from sunrise to sunset whenever weather conditions permitted. In times of peak demand, contract laborers were paid up to $12 per month or about 50-cents per day, including two meals, housing in a rough shanty or barracks, and rations of about a pint of whiskey per day. Day laborers could earn up to 75-cents per day, but were responsible for their own housing, food, and drink.

**Who dug the canal?**

Most contractors were local farmers who took on short segments of canal construction as winter work. As construction proceeded west of Rochester into largely unsettled territory in the early 1820s, labor was scarce. Contractors recruited immigrant laborers from New York City. Irish, Welsh, and free African Americans worked on the western section.

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**TIMELINE OF CANAL CONSTRUCTION**

- **April 15, 1817**
  - NYS Legislature passes the act to construct the Erie and Champlain Canals.

- **July 4, 1817**
  - Ceremonial first digging for the Erie Canal takes place at Rome; real work begins six days later on July 10.

- **October 22, 1819**
  - Erie Canal opens between Rome and Utica.

- **July 4, 1820**
  - Syracuse celebrates completion of the Erie Canal from Utica to the Seneca River at Montezuma.

- **November 18, 1821**
  - The locks at Little Falls are complete, opening navigation from Schenectady to Montezuma.

- **July 1822**
  - Erie Canal navigable from Schenectady to the east bank of the Genesee River in Rochester.
Why was the Erie Canal considered the Eighth Wonder of the World?
The Erie Canal served as a testament to human achievement in architecture and engineering. The canal provided the first all-water link between the Atlantic Seaboard and the upper Great Lakes. It was more than twice as long as any previously-constructed European canals—363 miles long and climbing over 570 feet between the tidal Hudson River at Albany to Lake Erie in Buffalo through a series of 83 locks. People from around the world came to see the canal and celebrated its achievement through art, literature, and songs.

Where can I see features of the original Erie Canal?
Much of the original canal was altered and many of its locks and aqueducts were replaced starting in the 1830s when it quickly became apparent that the canal needed to be enlarged to allow for more traffic and bigger boats. Most of the stone locks, aqueducts, and other “towpath era” structures that you can find throughout the corridor today date from that enlargement period. You can still see locks from the original 1825 canal in Cohoes and at Schenectady Crossing State Historic Site in Fort Hunter.

The Evolving Erie
Since its grand opening in 1825, the canal has been enlarged three times to accommodate larger boats and more traffic. Changes were made to the route and to canal structures like locks and bridges each time.

1825
Clinton’s Ditch
At just four feet deep and 40 feet wide, the original Erie Canal quickly became choked with boats. It was enlarged starting in 1836 and only a few original structures remain.

1836-1862
Enlarged Erie
The Enlarged Erie built upon and improved the original. At seven feet deep and 70 feet wide, the canal could handle increased loads and traffic. If you’re looking at an old stone lock, canal wall, or aqueduct, it’s probably from the era of the Enlarged Erie.

1905-1918
Erie (Barge) Canal
With the advent of motorized vessels, mules and towpaths were no longer needed along the canal. New York State enlarged the canals and moved some sections into rivers and lakes to create the New York State Barge Canal System. The structures and channels that operate today are largely unchanged from when the system went into operation in 1918.

“We are digging the Ditch through the mire;
Through the mud and the slime and the mire, by heck!
And the mud is our principal hire;
Up our pants, in our shirts, down our neck, by heck!
We are digging the Ditch through the gravel,
So the people and freight can travel.”
- Canal Digger’s Lament

postcards courtesy of the Canal Society of New York State.
sketches courtesy of the New York State Archives.
What’s Your Favorite View?

Enter it in the Erie Canalway Photo Contest!

Share your favorite places and views in the Erie Canalway and enter to win our annual photo contest. We’re looking for images that capture the corridor’s distinctive sense of place, as well as the wealth of things to do and see along the waterway. Winning images will be published in our 2018 calendar. Keep your camera at the ready when celebrating the bicentennial, cycling the Canalway Trail, paddling on the water, cruising the canal, exploring historic sites, or enjoying canal communities.

Deadline for entries: August 31, 2017
Note: Images must be horizontal format

Entering the contest is a snap: find an entry form and tips on our website: www.eriecanalway.org/get-involved/photo-contest

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**MAY**

11-13 Low Bridge-High Water, Village of Brockport
20 Canal Opening Celebration, Waterford
19-20 Erie Canal Bicentennial Conference, Utica
21 Erie Canal Half Marathon, Relay, and 5K, Utica

**JUNE**

2-4 Corning Museum Glass Barge, Fairport
3-4 Fairport Canal Days, Fairport
9 Canal Bicentennial Celebration, Amsterdam
17-18 Path Through History Weekend, Multiple Locations
17 Bicentennial Bash, Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, Chittenango
28 Journey Along the Erie Canal Bike Tour, Buffalo to Albany, Goes through July 7.

**JULY**

1 Waterford Steamboat Meet, Waterford
2-8 Albany Symphony Orchestra’s Water Music, Multiple Locations, Albany to Lockport
7-9 Corning Museum Glass Barge, Seneca Falls
9-16 Cycle the Erie Canal, Buffalo to Albany
16-22 Women’s Rights Rotilla, Seneca Falls to Rochester
16-23 Canal Fest of the Tonawandas, Tonawanda and North Tonawanda
22 Bicentennial Celebration, Rome
27-30 Oswego Harborfest, Oswego

July 5 through October 12

Legacy Tour of the Lois McClure, Multiple Locations, Erie and Champlain Canals

**AUGUST**

7-13 30th Annual Little Falls Canal Celebration, Little Falls
9-10 Happy Birthday Bash, Village of Medina
11-20 Canal Splash! Multiple Locations
12 13th Annual Cardboard Boat Race, Schuylerville
12 Towpath Day: A Voyage Through 200 Years of Erie Canal History, Camillus
27 Celebrate Our Canals, Glens Falls Feeder Canal, Hudson Falls

**SEPTEMBER**

6-10 Waterford Tugboat Roundup
23-24 Tour the Towpath, Two-Day Bike Tour, Rome to Syracuse
24-27 Corning Museum Glass Barge, Syracuse/Baldwinsville
24-28 World Canals Conference, Syracuse, Public Events on 9/24

Locktoberfest, multiple events throughout the month


**OCTOBER**

7-9 Path Through History Weekend, Multiple Locations

Locktoberfest, multiple events throughout the month

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Selected 2017 Canal Festivals and Events
Find more at www.eriecanalway.org

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The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor preserves our extraordinary canal heritage, promotes the Corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and fosters vibrant communities connected by more than 500 miles of historic waterway. We achieve our mission in partnership with the National Park Service, New York State agencies, non-profit organizations, local residents, and more than 200 communities across the full expanse of upstate New York.

R.O. Box 219
Waterford, New York 12188
518-237-7000
erie_canal@nps.gov
www.eriecanalway.org

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Coming this fall to Syracuse:

**SEPTEMBER 24 – 28**

**WORLD CANALS 2017 CONFERENCE**

Many thanks!

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www.iloveny.com

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