Enjoy the Great Outdoors Along New York’s Canals

Head to the water to find adventure and fun along more than 500 miles of canals and connected waterways and trails. This is the perfect year to look to the canals for memorable and safe day trips and vacation getaways. From boat rentals to multiday bike rides to visiting state and national parks, there’s plenty to explore on and off the water.

Get the Trail
The Canalway Trail is an ideal place for fitness and fun. Spend a few hours walking or cycling and seeing the sites or plan a longer cycling trip to really experience all the trail has to offer. The 360 mile east-west trail from Buffalo to Albany parallels the Erie Canal and is part of the newly completed Empire State Trail, which also extends north-south from New York City to Lake Champlain.

Discover Canal Communities
One of the best parts of visiting the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is exploring the many cities, towns, and villages along the waterway. Many of these communities provide visitor centers with restrooms, showers, and other services for boaters, cyclists, and paddlers within walking distance of shops, restaurants, and attractions. Be sure to visit local museums where you’ll learn about people, places and innovations along the canals.

Canals and COVID-19
Please refer to current guidelines and recommendations from the State of New York and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to safely enjoy all the Canalway Corridor has to offer.
Get on the Water

Welcome boaters! The NYS Canal System is open from May 21 through October 13. After more than 200 years of continuous service, New York’s canals are still working waterways that serve all types of boats, from pleasure boats to tugboats and barges to canoes and kayaks. Cruise or paddle the historic and scenic waterway and you’ll discover scenic vistas, abundant wildlife, and unique communities where you’ll find amenities and numerous sites of interest. Visit one of the NYS Canal System’s 57 locks to see their massive gates and mechanical gears, and watch boats pass through.

Canal Boating Basics
- Boating is free and no permit is needed to go through a lock.
- Lock tenders are on hand to assist you and make your experience going through the locks easy and enjoyable.
- It takes 15 to 20 minutes to go through a lock.
- Power boats and paddlers share the canal, so be mindful of speed limits and wakes.
- There are more than 80 public boat ramps where you can launch your boat.
- The canal is open daily from 7 am to 5 pm, but many locks and lift bridges are open on demand until 10 pm.

Launch Your Own Boat
There are more than 80 public boat ramps along the NYS Canal System where you can launch your own boat for a few hours or a multi-day trip. The Erie Canal connects with Oneida, Onondaga, Cazenovia, Seneca and Cayuga Lakes where you can enjoy other water sports, beaches, and sailing. Marinas and public docks provide services and overnight accommodations. Many communities offer showers, laundry facilities, hook-ups, and other boater amenities right in the center of town.

The New York State Canal System includes:
- Erie Canal, which connects the Hudson River with Lake Erie, 365 miles to the west;
- Champlain Canal, which connects the tidal portion of the Hudson River with Lake Champlain, 55 miles to the north;
- Oswego Canal, which follows the Oswego River from the Erie Canal 25 miles north to Lake Ontario;
- Cazenovia-Seneca Canal, which connects the Oneida Canal to 32 miles of canalized rivers and lakes, including the Seneca River and Cayuga and Seneca Lakes.

The New York State Canal System is operated by the New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority. For current information and up-to-date Notices to Mariners, visit canals.ny.gov.

Boat Tours and Vacation Rentals
You can get on the water for a scenic ride or enjoy a lunch or dinner cruise on one of the many tour boats along the canals. Specialty cruises, sailing adventures, and wine tours are offered on lake and river sections of the waterway.

Vacation rentals provide an idyllic way to experience the canal at a relaxed pace. You’ll get lessons in steering, docking, and locking before heading out, so you can feel confident on the water even if you’re not an experienced boater. Rental boats are well-equipped with sleeping quarters, a galley, and deck space for relaxing; many come with bikes so you can enjoy the Canalway Trail too.

Find a list of boat tours and vacation rentals at www.eriecanalway.org/boating. Additional boater resources and maps include:
- nyscanalmap.com
- canals.ny.gov
- eriecanalway.org

Longer Voyages
The NYS Canal System is part of a 6,000-mile boating route known as the Great Loop. Boaters traverse 15 states, 100+ locks, and typically take a year to complete it. Retirees, families, and a growing number of 20-somethings take up the journey for the freedom and challenge it offers, as well as the opportunity to see and learn from people and places all along the route. greatoop.org

Paddling
The NYS Canalway Water Trail welcomes kayaks, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards with more than 140 public access points and lots of amenities and places of interest. Paddlers experience century-old locks; pass stunning stone aqueducts used to carry boats over rivers and streams in the 1800s; paddle alongside tugboats and cruisers; and experience namesake canal channels and wider river segments. You’ll find rental outfitters at numerous locations. Use the NYS Canalway Water Trail Guidebook to plan an outing or multi-day trip. This mile-by-mile guide includes launch sites, amenities, places of interest, and safety information. The guide is available at outfitters, visitor centers, and at eriecanalway.org/watertrail.

Make Boating Safety a Priority
- Always wear a properly-fitted PFD
- Stay away from dams, buoys and barriers
- Be cautious near hydropower assets, water levels can change quickly
- Respect all signs and warning signals
- Tell someone your plans, destination and timing
- Use designated boat launch sites
- Be smart, no drinking and boating
- Leave no trace, carry in/carry out
- Before heading out, check the weather forecast and canals.ny.gov for current conditions

Brookfield Renewable Inc.
fieldbrookefield.com
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Designated by Congress in 2000, the National Heritage Corridor extends along New York’s canals from one end of the state to the other. As you travel, you will discover distinct regional differences that will keep you coming back to experience all that the Canalway Corridor has to offer.

Rochester to Syracuse (90 miles)
The canal is the centerpiece of vibrant cities and small towns along this stretch of the Erie Canal, where you’ll find varied terrain on water and land.

Buffalo to Rochester (80 miles)
Find charming towns connected by water and trail along the longest section of the Erie Canal that still follows much of its original path.

Plan Your Trip
Use the online New York State Canals Map to find a wealth of information on places of interest, visitor centers, boat rentals, and tours, and paddling access sites. You can filter by features such as municipal centers, public restrooms, camping, and picnic facilities. Directions and a distance calculator make it easy to plan trips by bike, kayak, boat, or car. mycanalmap.com

The Cayuga-Seneca Canal plunked us down in Geneva, Canajoharie and Schoharie (6/2 miles)
Famed for its synagogues, waterfalls, and beautiful Finger Lakes, this region also includes Seneca Falls, the birthplace of the women's rights movement in 1848.

The Champlain Canal
Waterford to Whitehall (80 miles)
Boat, paddle, or cycle a region steeped in American history along the picturesque Hudson River and Champlain Canal.

Syracuse to Little Falls (90 miles)
Travel the route of today’s canal through lively summer communities along Oneida Lake or follow the historic route of the 1800s Erie Canal through the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park. The Canalway Trail runs through the park and paddlers are welcome to explore the shallow waters of the old Erie.

Little Falls to Albany (90 miles)
The Erie Canal merges with the scenic Mohawk River through a region rich in history and culture.

Erie Canalway Map & Guide

nycanalmap.com

Directions and a distance calculator make it easy to plan trips by bike, kayak, boat, or car.
Experience the Epic Empire State Trail
The longest state multiuse trail in the nation

Put on your sneakers or hop on a bike and explore New York State’s extraordinary experiences, people, and places along the 750-mile Empire State Trail. The trail welcomes people of all abilities, from all walks of life, and backgrounds to enjoy the longest state multiuse trail in the nation.

Great Day Trips and Adventurous Journeys
The trail is both accessible and scenic, so you can head out with your family for a few miles, enjoy a full day’s journey to see the sites, or have an unforgettable multi-day adventure. Lodging, dining, and visitor services are readily available short distances off the trail.

Plan trips from different starting points, and you’ll quickly see that no two sections are alike. What makes each journey great is the changing scenery of land and water, diverse and historic cities, towns, and villages, local eateries, ice cream, and craft beverages, and variety of attractions along the route.

Guidebooks, Maps and Tours
Whether you want to cycle on your own or with an organized ride, you’ll find comprehensive guidebooks, maps and online resources to help you find trailheads, sites of interest, best bike trips, and amenities. We recommend consulting maps in advance of your trip.

BY THE MILES

750 miles
New York’s Empire State Trail extends north-south from New York City through the Hudson River Valley to Lake Champlain and east-west from Albany to Buffalo. It includes the following segments:

360 miles
The Erie Canalway Trail is a showcase of the Empire State Trail network. The trail closely parallels both active and historic sections of the Erie Canal and is mostly flat. Eighty-seven percent is off road and suitable for all ages and abilities. The remaining on-road sections are designated on the shoulders of public roadways, intended for experienced bicyclists comfortable riding adjacent to vehicle traffic. You’ll see unique structures like locks and lift bridges, working tugs and other vessels, friendly sculptures in boats of all stripes, and you’ll discover canal communities and historic sites that are intriguing and fun cycling destinations. Parking areas, restrooms, and canal amenity centers that serve boaters, hikers, and cyclists are located all along the route.

Cycling with Kids
The Erie Canalway Trail is fantastic for families. Flat sections are easy for kids to manage and you can practice good bike etiquette and safety when passing, stopping, and turning. Plan shorter rides initially and lengthen them as your child’s interest and stamina grow. Choose a destination to give kids a point to shoot for as they ride and a sense of accomplishment when they reach it. Your destination may be the next lift bridge or town, a lock, park, historic site, or ice cream stand. In New York State, all children under the age of 14 are required to wear certified bicycle safety helmets. Model smart cycling and wear yours, too. Find suggested Kid Friendly Rides at ericanaulway.org/explore/cycling.

310 miles
The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail from New York City to Albany starts at the Battery at the southern tip of Manhattan overlooking New York harbor and the Statue of Liberty, and winds north through the Hudson Valley passing through bustling cities, vibrant villages, and scenic rural landscapes. Trail users can visit numerous historic sites, museums, and cultural attractions near the trail route, including the iconic Walkway Over the Hudson in Poughkeepsie. Seventy-five percent of the Hudson Valley route is off-road trail. The remaining on-road sections are designated on the shoulders of public roadways, intended for experienced bicyclists comfortable riding adjacent to vehicle traffic.

180 miles
The Champlain Canalway Trail includes a mix of off and on-road segments from Waterford towriteshead, NY. The trail closely parallels the Hudson River/Champlain Canal through a region rich in Revolutionary War history. Forty percent of the route is off road trail. At Fort Edward, the bike-only off road Glenn Park Feeder Canal Trail connects to the Goose Foot Bicycler’s Lake George North of Whitehall, the Empire State Trail is an on-road route running north through the Champlain Valley to the Canadian border at Rouses Point.

Take the Canalway Challenge
Walk • Bike • Run • Paddle

Join a growing community of canal enthusiasts who are finding fun, fitness, and adventure through the Canalway Challenge. Part fitness challenge, part journey of discovery, the Canalway Challenge is an invitation to discover all you can do along New York’s canals and Canalway Trails.

Participation is free and registration is open to individuals, teams, and organizations. Simply register online and choose a mileage goal of 1, 15, 30, 180, or 360 miles (Erie-to-Buffalo to Albany), then ride a bike, walk, run, or paddle on the Canalway Trail and NYS Canal System to achieve it. Earn mileage status and recognition when you finish. You can complete the Canalway Challenge in one big trip or many small ones. Visit the website to hear inspiring stories of people who have completed the Challenge and sign up today.

the Erie Canalway Challenge

Every Journey Begins with a Single Step
The Canalway Challenge is open to people of all ages and abilities. If you’re not used to regular exercise or you have a disability, start with the 1st Mile Challenge. Begin with small steps and work up to doing one of the Canalway Challenges by signing up for more through the Canalway Challenge.

There are numerous places along the canals and Canalway Trail that are accessible and several that offer adaptive bikes and kayaks. Complete your 1st Mile at an official 1st Mile event, or on your own with family and friends. Learn more at canalwaychallenge.org

Erie Canalway Map & Guide

Erie Canalway Map & Guide
A National Treasure

Built between 1817 and 1825, the original Erie Canal traversed 363 miles from Albany to Buffalo. It was the longest artificial waterway and the greatest public works project in North America.

The canal put New York on the map as the Empire State—the leader in population, industry, and economic strength. It transformed New York City into the nation’s principal seaport and opened the interior of North America to settlement. As the Erie Canal carried immigrants westward, they infused the nation with different languages, customs, practices, and religions.

World travelers embarked upon the Grand Tour to see the engineering marvel of the Erie Canal. Local residents packed tour boats for summer outings.

The canal was enlarged several times to accommodate larger boats and increasing traffic. The version we use today was completed in 1918 and remains fully navigable. In 2016 it was designated a National Historic Landmark for its exceptional national significance and historical integrity.

Come touch history and experience for yourself the iconic canals that changed the nation.

Canal Festivals & Events

Please find a list of events online at eriecanalway.org. Check with event organizers for up-to-date information and COVID-19 safety information.

Enter the Erie Canalway Photo Contest

Share your view of the places you love and unique scenes along the waterway for our annual photo contest. Winning images will be published in the 2022 Erie Canalway calendar. Find an entry form and tips on our website: eriecanalway.org/get-involved/photo-contest

Deadline for entries: August 27, 2021

Note: Images must be horizontal format.

Take the Memories With You!

Visit the online canal store to find shirts, hats, mugs, and totes to show your love for canals, sport your Canalway Challenge mileage, or gear up for paddling on the NYS Canalway Water Trail. All net proceeds support Erie Canalway programs.

Many thanks!

The Erie Canalway Map & Guide, NYS Canalway Water Trail, and Canalway Challenge are made possible with generous support from:

I LOVE NY iloveny.com

I am 200 New York State Canals canals.ny.gov

Brookfield Renewable U.S. brookfieldrenewable.com

Stewart's Shops stewartssshops.com