

Discover the Erie Canal

FIND YOUR PARK

Head to the water to discover how two mighty rivers shaped a region and opened a nation. See the second largest waterfall in New York and then marvel at the simple engineering genius that unlocked waterway travel west from Albany. Choose from boating, cycling and hiking options to add active adventure to your journey.



Lock 3, Waterford

Start your trip here ▼

Canal construction in the 1800s was both training and proving ground for America's first generation of engineers. Faced with the challenge of getting boats around the 75-foot Cohoes Falls, engineers adapted European canal technology with innovation and ingenuity to meet American conditions. Engineers established training programs at nearby Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy and Union College in Schenectady, the nation's oldest engineering schools.

Cohoes Falls

231-341 North Mohawk Street, Cohoes
www.friendsofcohoesfalls.org

The spectacular 75-foot Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River is a must-see destination that was pivotal to construction of the Erie Canal and the industrialization of America. During the 1820s, engineers constructed 18 locks on the Erie Canal threading through Cohoes to lift and lower boats around the falls. The falls also supplied water power for Harmony Mills and other Cohoes textile companies that turned out millions of yards of cotton goods and fabrics. In 1915, the falls were harnessed for hydroelectric power at the School Street Hydroelectric Facility. Today, that facility is owned by Brookfield Renewable Energy, Harmony

Mills have become luxury apartments, and the falls remain a powerful attraction for residents, visitors, industry, and new investment.

Falls View Park is located at the north edge of the Harmony Mills National Historic Landmark District. It has a large observation area, fishing access, and picnic tables. Stairs and a hiking path leading to the base of the falls are open in the summer (conditions dependent). Overlook Park on School Street is open year-round. After visiting the park, walk down North Mohawk Street and look for several interpretive panels that share the history of the canal, industry, and mills.



How far? Sites are located within a six mile radius of each other. Note, however, that cycling between them is tricky due to road crossings and traffic; use caution when cycling and see the Get Active! section for off-road cycling options.



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Waterford Flight and Old Champlain Canal

*One Tugboat Alley, Waterford
(518) 233-9123*

www.town.waterford.ny.us/harbor-visitors-center.html

The Erie Canal was enlarged and rerouted and the locks replaced by the remarkable Waterford Flight in 1915. For more than 70 years, the five locks of the Waterford Flight composed the highest lift over the shortest distance in the world, raising and lowering boats 169 feet in just over 1½ miles. Stroll alongside the canal and visit Lock 2 at the Waterford Harbor; then consider driving up Flight Lock Road to see Locks 3 through 6. Enjoy a lovely view east toward Troy from the top. The Waterford Flight was designated a National Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers in 2012.

Other nearby sites of interest include the Waterford Historical Museum and Cultural Center and two miles of the Old Champlain Canal and towpath, which is suitable for walking or cycling.



Peebles Island State Park

*One Delaware Avenue, Cohoes
(518) 237-8643*

<https://parks.ny.gov/parks/>

Across the bridge from Lock 2 in Waterford at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers is Peebles Island State Park. Hike the perimeter trail for beautiful views of the Mohawk River and surrounding rocky islands. The 190-acre park is primarily upland oak forest, with several small wetlands and open grassland habitat. Trails are open for walking and jogging, as well as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in winter. Picnicking, fishing and canoe/kayak access are also available.

You'll also discover an island steeped in history. Its strategic location attracted Native Americans, Dutch traders, Continental soldiers during the Revolutionary War and, more recently, manufacturers who could import raw materials and export finished products by water and rail. From 1909 to 1972, miles of cotton fabric were bleached and dyed here, to be cut and sewn into "Arrow" shirts, across the Hudson in Troy. Workers at Matton Shipyard on Van Schaick Island built tugboats, submarine chasers and other vessels from 1916 to 1983. Today, the bleachery complex is home to the New York State Historic Preservation Office and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Get Active! ▼

Choose from these great options for active recreation in this area:

Hike at Peebles Island State Park

We recommend the perimeter trail, a 1.84-mile loop around the island with excellent views. Several connector trails cut through the island interior, if you want a shorter hike.

Paddle the Erie Canal

Launch your kayak, canoe, or standup paddle board at Peebles Island State Park or from the boat ramp near the Waterford Harbor Visitor Center. Rentals are available at **Upstate Kayak Rentals: www.upstatekayakrentals.com**



Cycle the Erie Canalway Trail

The trail is known locally as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. There are several excellent cycling options. All are out and back, so you can go as many miles as you like. Find maps: www.mhbht.org. Suggested routes:

- Start in Albany at the Corning Preserve, which marked the eastern end of the Erie Canal during the 1800s, and cycle along the Hudson River to Watervliet and back; 9 miles round trip.
- Begin at Colonie Town Park on Schermerhorn Road and cycle west to Lyons Park/River Road in Niskayuna; 15 miles round trip.
- Start at Lyons Park and go west to Schenectady; 20 miles round trip with a stop at Lock 7 along the way.

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Explore More ▼

Burden Iron Works Museum

1 E Industrial Parkway, Troy
(518) 274-5267

www.hudsonmohawkgateway.org

Constructed between 1881 and 1882 in the Romanesque Revival style, the former office of the Burden Iron Works contains an extensive exhibit on Troy's industrial history throughout the 19th century. Much of the cutting-edge technology of the day was developed at nearby Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Walking tours of the region's historic architecture, engineering, and manufacturing sites also available. Call ahead to visit or schedule a tour.



Mohawk Towpath National Scenic Byway

Waterford to Schenectady
(518) 371-7548

www.mohawktowpath.org

This National Scenic Byway is a 26-mile driving route that follows the Mohawk River/Erie Canal from Waterford and Cohoes to Schenectady. Discover the waterway west, the Erie Canal and the role that local communities played in the westward expansion of the country and in the Industrial Revolution. Audio tour available at (518) 649-9990.

New York State Museum, Library, and Archives

222 Madison Avenue, Albany
(518) 474-5877

www.nysm.nysed.gov

Discover science, history, education and art exhibits of state, national, and international importance at the Museum. A special exhibit celebrating the bicentennial of construction of the Erie Canal will be on display in 2017. The Archives and Library hold an extensive collection of maps, engineering records, journals, and other documents related to the Erie Canal.

Best Bet Dining Options ▼

The Capital Region has lots of dining options. You'll find a variety of choices in Waterford, Cohoes, Troy, and Albany. Or enjoy a picnic at Peebles Island, Cohoes Falls or Waterford Harbor. If you are exploring on a Saturday, consider adding the Troy Waterfront Farmers Market to your trip. Open from 9am to 2pm, the open air market hosts more than 80 growers, bakers, chefs and artisans. On Sundays, the Waterford Harbor Farmers Market is open from 9am to 1pm, June through October.

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TOURISM INFORMATION

www.albany.org

www.iloveny.com

Find other adventures in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor at www.eriecanalway.org



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