

In partnership with the National Park Service

LEVEL 7 MARKET RESEARCH

# VISITOR RESEARCH 2017

**Funded by Market NY through I LOVE NY, New York State's Division of Tourism, as a part of the State's Regional Economic Development Council awards.**





- Who is most likely to visit?
- What do visitors think of their experiences?
- How much do they spend?
- What are the best methods of reaching target audiences?
- What role do events play in bringing people to the Corridor?







- Online Quantitative 1,068
- 20 Qualitative Interviews
- 479 Insider / 589 Outsider
- 631 Recent / 437 Prospects





## WHO VISITS?

Recent canal visitors skew older, travel in smaller parties and come from higher income households.



**Canal Visitors were 3X more likely to travel internationally.**



## WHERE THEY LIVE

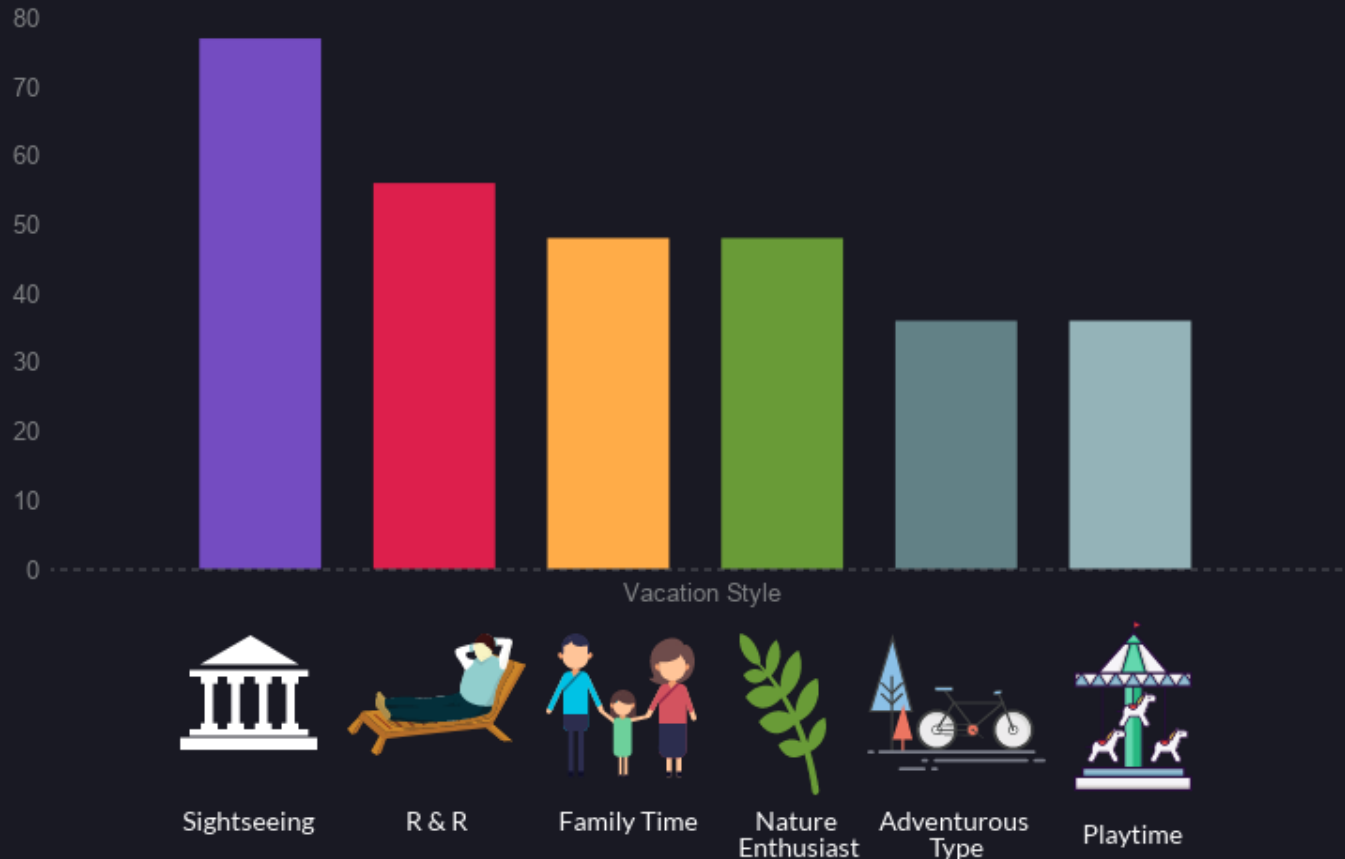
Half of our respondents were from New York, with a strong representation from PA, OH, NJ, MI, and VA.





# VACATION STYLE

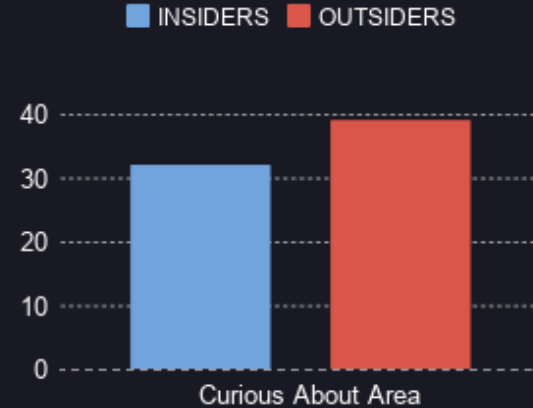
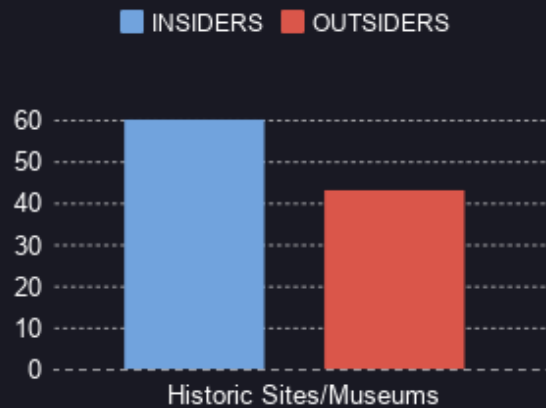
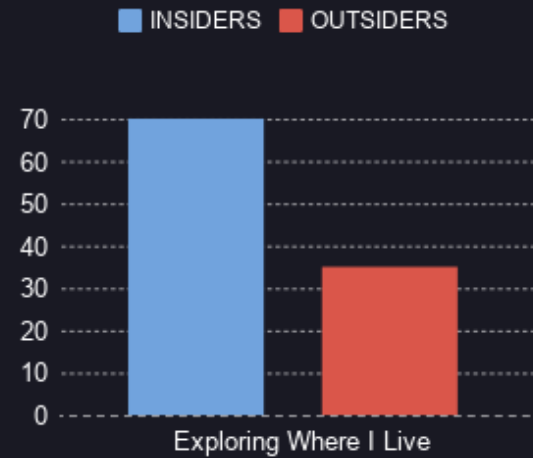
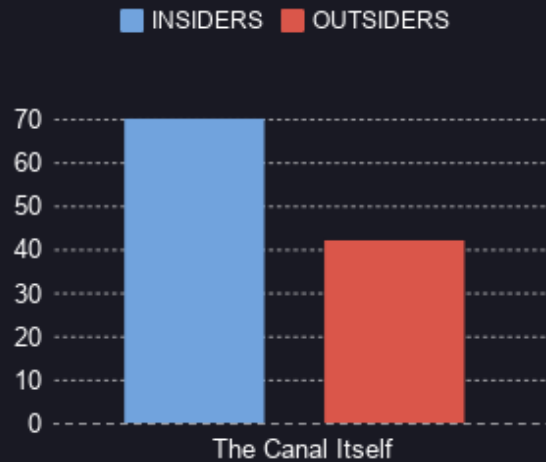
Sightseeing was by far the most preferred vacation style with over three-quarters choosing it in their top three types.





# WHY VISIT? TOP MOTIVATIONS

Insiders and Outsiders have different motivations for visiting.

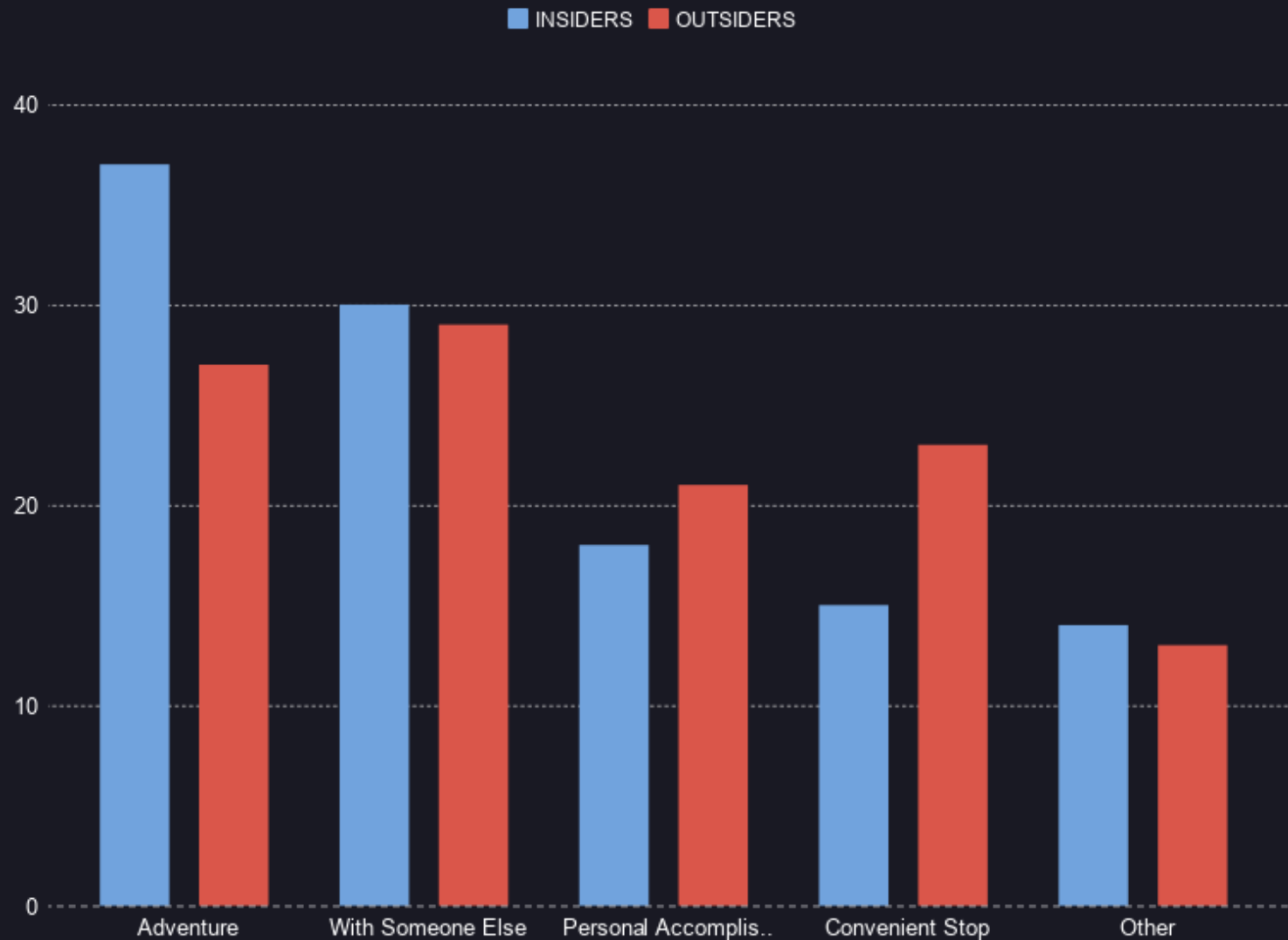








# WHY VISIT? OTHER REASONS





## WHAT DO PROSPECTS WANT TO DO HERE?

79%

want to take a canal  
boat tour

69%

want to visit historic  
sites and museums

Festivals



Canal Communities



Beer/wine tasting



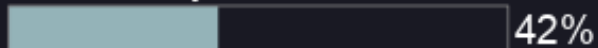
Shopping at outlet malls



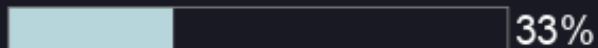
Hike the Trail



Canoe/kayak



Bike the Trail





## WHAT DID RECENT VISITORS DO HERE?

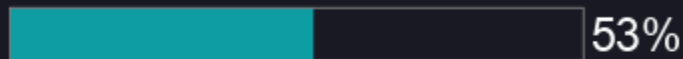
**78%**

hike or cycle the  
Canalway Trail

**60%**

visit historic/  
cultural sites

Visit canal communities



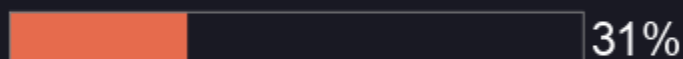
53%

Canal Boat Tour



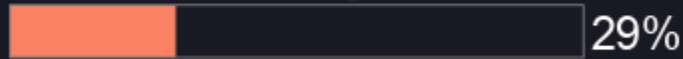
35%

Festivals



31%

Beer/wine tasting



29%

Canoe/kayak



22%

Outlet mall

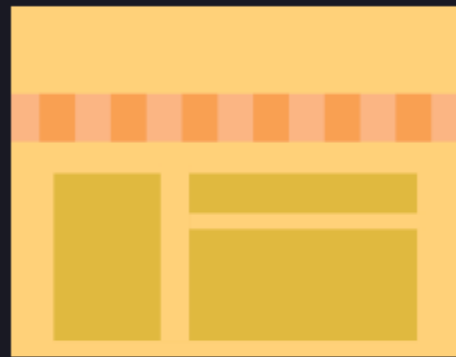


16%





**LET'S NOT FORGET FOOD!**

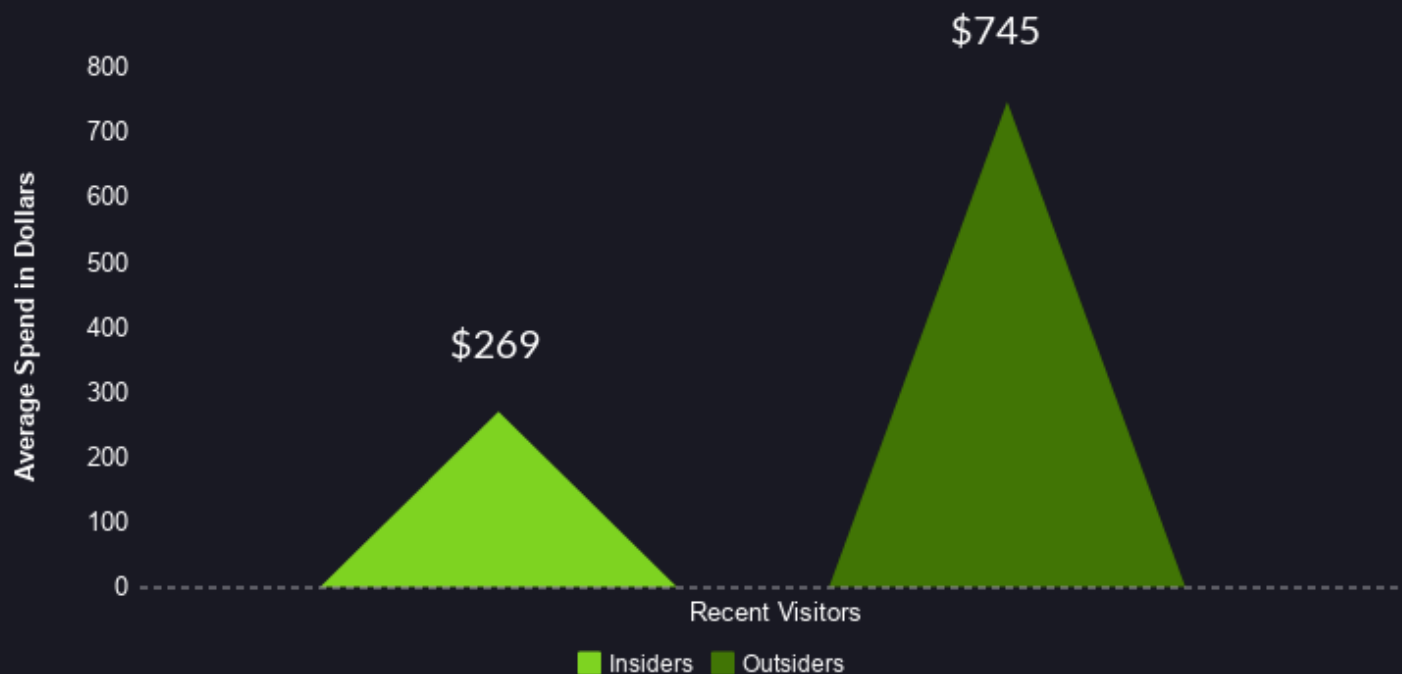


**66%**



## HOW MUCH DID THEY SPEND?

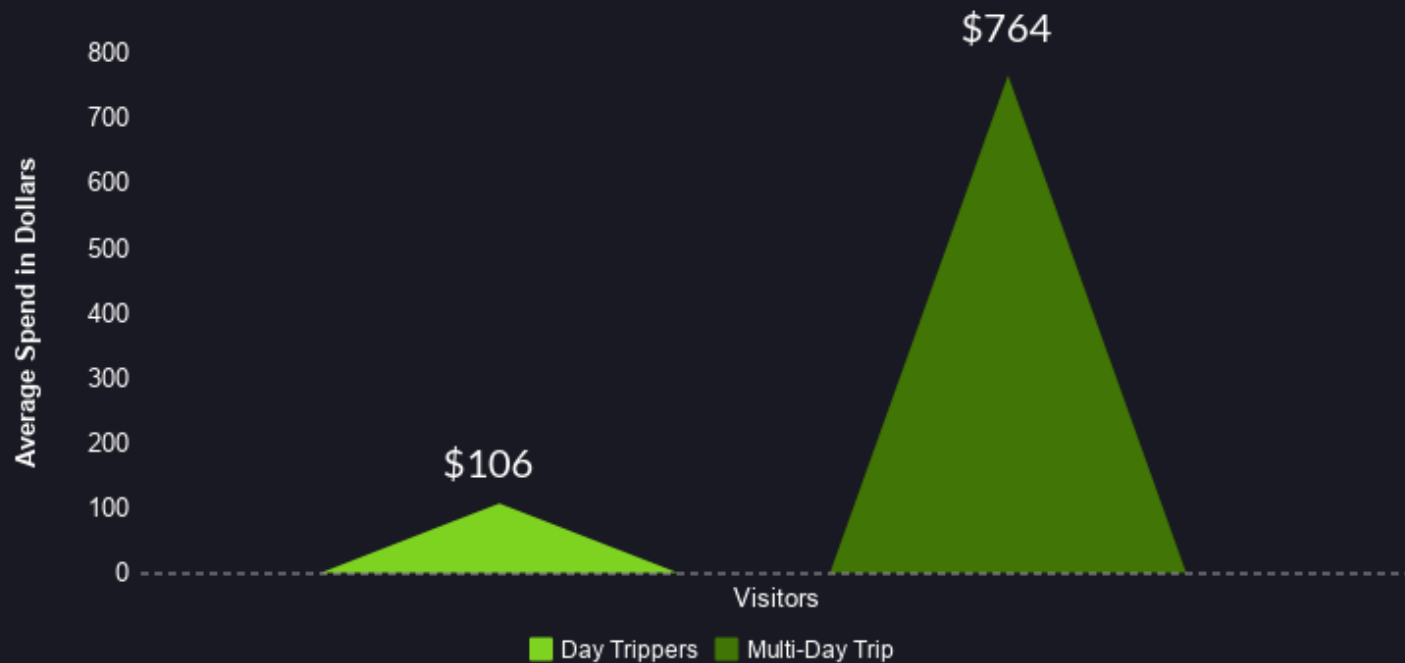
People who travel here from outside the canal corridor spent 2.5 x more than insiders.





## HOW MUCH DID THEY SPEND?

Multi-Day Visitors spent 7x more than Day Trippers. Boaters spent the most.



\$865



\$563



\$542





## RATE YOUR TRIP EXPERIENCE



**8**

**OUT OF TEN**

*MOST VISITORS RATED HIGH*



## WHAT STOOD OUT?



UNIQUE TOWNS



CANAL SETTING

Base: Recent Visitors with memorable experience (n=376)

Yes, What was it?

The lock keepers were very friendly and willing to share information about the canals and communities.  
(Outsider)

Scenery, history, the locks. Visiting the harbor facilities at Waterford, Baldwinsville, St Johnsville, Phoenix and other canal towns. (Outsider)

"Port" towns embracing the heritage, especially Lockport, Brockport, Spencerport, Newark, Lyons, Sen Falls, Baldwinsville (Insider)

People were knowledgeable and friendly, happy to answer our questions. Genuinely seemed to be excited and happy to pass information our way (we stopped in Amsterdam, Fort Hunter and Waterford).  
(Outsider)

Every venue we have visited had some feature or people or local eatery that made an impression.  
(Insider)



# ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Base: Recent Visitors Rating 7 or less (n=167)

Wish there were more hotel options within walking distance of the canal public docks, would also like to see more restaurants cater to boaters. (Outsider)

Grew up here so take many of the assets for granted, but as a visitor experience its too much like a third world country. The place is pretty run down, people depressed and not hospitality friendly.(Insider, Boater)

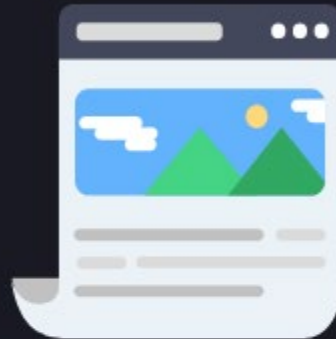
Could use more places to tie up or dock with bathrooms, showers for boaters. (Insider)

Worried about in-between amenities. (Insider, Boater)

We use the Canalway for regular recreation, don't really think of it for vacations. (Insider)

I have cycled on other trails in the Eastern United States that are in much better condition and offer more amenities for cyclists. The Canalway trail has too many sections that are rough, unmaintained, and in need of drinking water and toilet facilities. (Insider)

## WHERE DO PEOPLE LOOK FOR TRIP IDEAS AND INFORMATION?



**83%**  
websites

**65%**

friends & relatives

**55%**

brochures



# Erie Canalway Map & Guide



Photo: Marilyn Anderson

## Dig In! Celebrations Begin for Canal Bicentennial

**Y**ou'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!

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Erie Canalway Map & Guide 2017

## FIND YOUR PARK

### Follow Where Mules Once Trod



**ERIE  
CANALWAY**  
National Heritage Corridor



In partnership with the National Park Service





**TOP  
TAKE  
AWAYS**



1

# KEEP SPREADING THE WORD

Average knowledge  
was barely above  
neutral!

Website

Word of Mouth

Social Media

Brochures

Trip Advisor

What can  
I do here?

# 2

# REVIEW YOUR WEBSITE

Attractive

Mobile Responsive

Up-to-Date

Easy to Navigate

Content Written  
for Web

Don't Assume





3

# STAY NETWORKED

Local/Regional Sites

Community Advocates

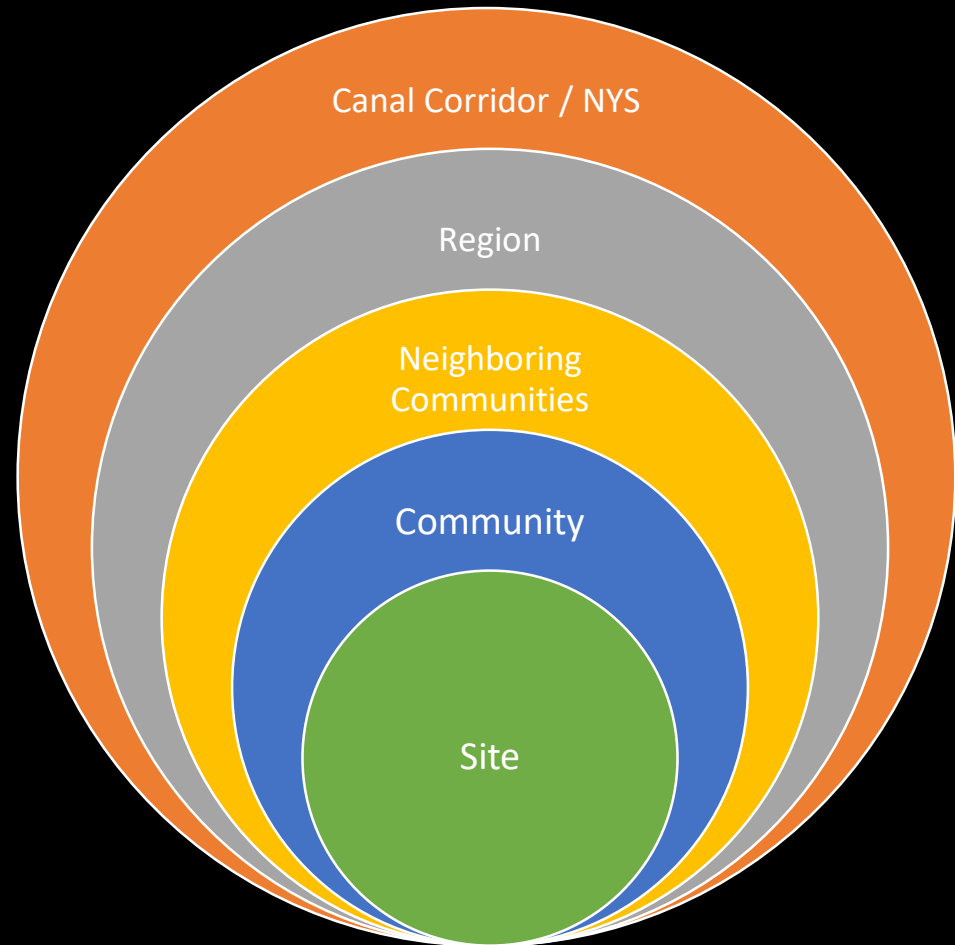
Residents, Youth

Tourism Promoters

Erie Canalway NHC

Parks & Trail NY

Canal Corporation



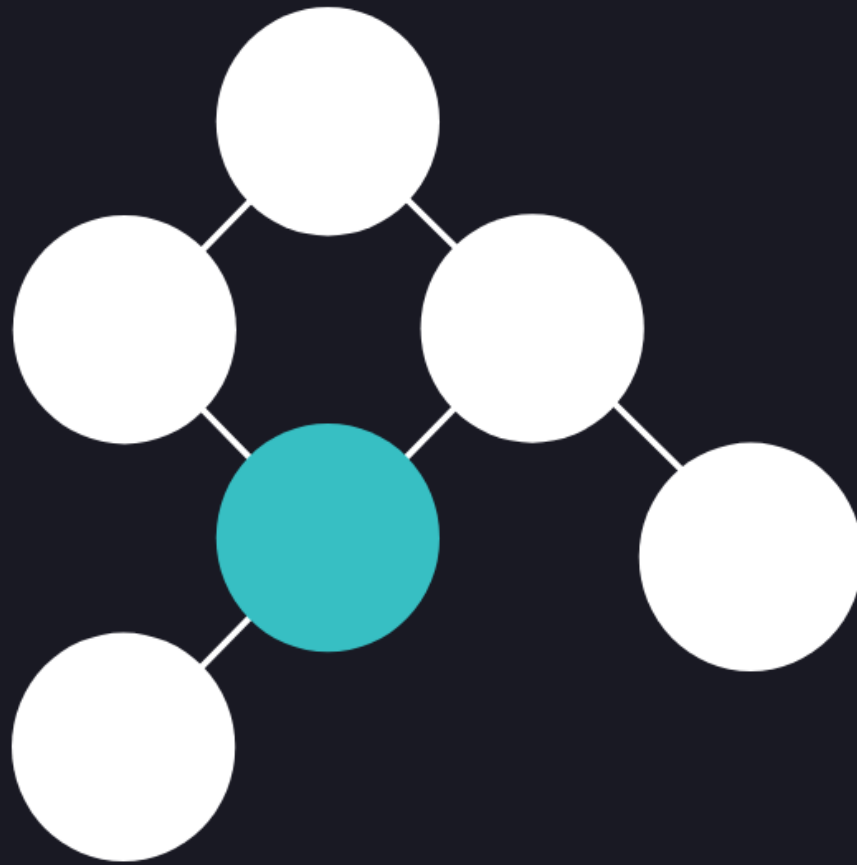
# 4

## MAKE IT WORTH THE DRIVE

Connect the dots  
for visitors

Become a “secret  
shopper”

Good to Great



5

# GO AFTER HIGH SPENDERS

Boaters

Cyclists

Paddlers

Outsiders



6

# USE EVENTS AS A DRAW

**\$1.3**  
BILLION







EVENT	MULTI-DAY	ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE
Canal Fest of the Tonawandas	■	200,000
Fairport Canal Days Arts Festival	■	200,000
Oswego Harborfest	■	100,000
Waterford Tugboat Roundup	■	20,000
Little Falls Canal Celebration	■	16,500
Seneca Falls Canal Fest	■	15,000

# Our Next Steps...

- Website & Visitor Information
- Water Trail
- Festivals & Events
- Canalway Challenge





# thank you!



[www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)  
(518) 237-7000