TRACING HISTORY
CANALWAY CHALLENGE
TRACKING MILES

RESULTS ACHIEVED 2026

OBJECTIVES:

1. Solidify New York's canal corridor as a prime destination for world-class recreational experiences.
2. Increase visitation to the NYS Canal System, communities, heritage sites, parks, local businesses, and other attractions.
3. Increase multiday trips and maximize economic impact of canals, trails, and recreational events.
4. Enhance wellness and pride of place.

BY THE NUMBERS

2,026
CHALLENGES CREATED

3,066
PARTICIPANTS

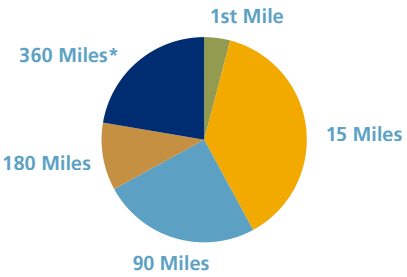
18%
OF FINISHERS FROM OUTSIDE NYS

32
US STATES REPRESENTED BY FINISHERS

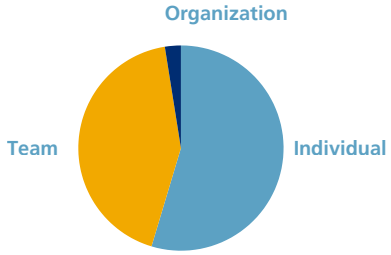
$1.04 MILLION
ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

292,244
TOTAL MILES LOGGED

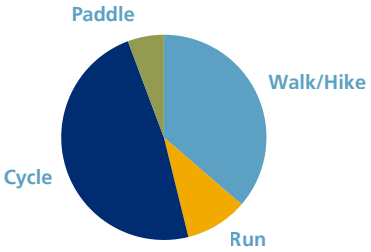
MILES PLEDGED



PARTICIPANTS BY CHALLENGE TYPE



METHODS USED



ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

*A partnership with Parks & Trails New York brought the Canalway Challenge to Cycle the Erie Canal participants, who earned 360 End-to-End status during the eight-day bike tour from Buffalo to Albany.

canalwaychallenge.org



Jan S., 90-Miler, Glen Rock, PA

EVERY MILE TELLS A STORY

Behind the miles are inspiring stories of memories made with family and friends, new places explored, challenges overcome, and satisfaction gained from increasing fitness and achieving goals.



THE POWER OF PERSEVERENCE

In 2022, Abby McCarthy was diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer that affected her central nervous system and left her to relearn how to walk and see. She underwent treatment that concluded in 2024. As a former endurance athlete, she sought out a new physical challenge to celebrate how far she'd come in her recovery--that's when she discovered the Canalway Challenge. Abby walked non-stop from her home in Rochester to her father's home near Canajoharie. She completed the 200-mile distance in just three days, 14 hours and 27 minutes. Her journey is a testament to what is possible with perseverence and motivation.

"It was 'only' 90 miles but for someone who hasn't been active or even owned a bike in a decade, it was incredibly satisfying and liberating to be outside in the sun and active again. I am so thankful for this challenge to encourage me to start practicing a healthy lifestyle again. Thank you!" – ***Ryan K., 90-Miler, Lancaster, NY***



"We have been riding the canal for many years, but this was our first time doing the Canalway Challenge. My son and I had a great time. The weather was really nice, we took breaks at the locks, and saw many beautiful scenes, I will remember this trip for a very long time."
– Ivan G., 15-Miler, Utica, NY

"I saw a part of the nation and its history that I had never seen before and did not know much about, made new friends, met marvelous people and had an all around great time."
– Jan S., 90-Miler, Glen Rock, PA (pictured above)

ERIE CANALWAY
National Heritage Corridor

canalwaychallenge.org



2026 FINISHER SURVEY

42% RESPONSE RATE

1,483
FINISHERS

42%
STAYED OVER

17
AVERAGE DAYS TO COMPLETE

$699
AVERAGE SPENT

2
AVERAGE NIGHTS

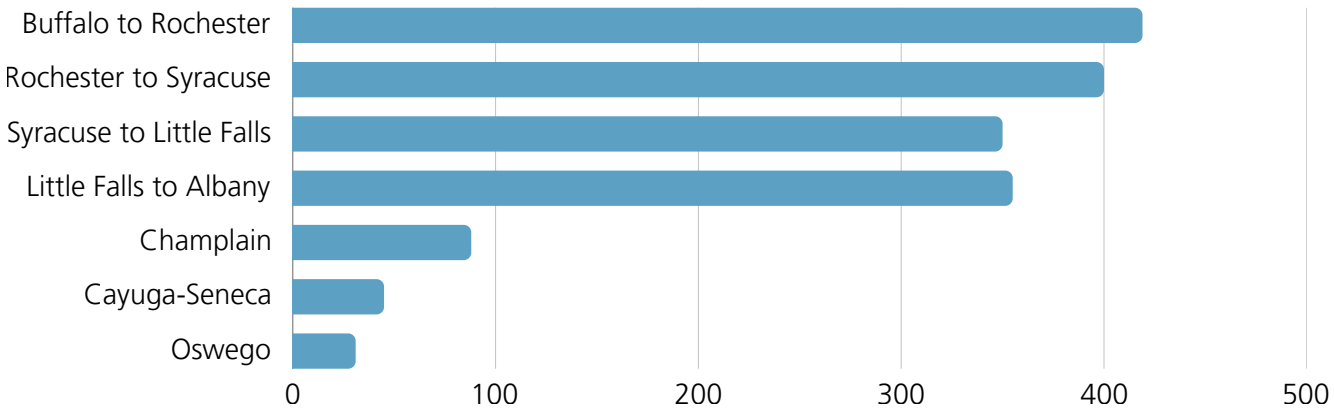
$7 MILLION

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT SINCE 2019

PRIMARY MOTIVATION	
Fitness and Fun	52%
Athletic or Personal Challenge	17%
Explore the Canalway Corridor	14%
Trip with Family/Friends	11%
Maintain Health	4%
Other	2%

SITES VISITED	
Canal Town or City	65%
Canal Structures/Vessels	54%
Museum/Historic Site	51%
Restaurant/Bar	49%
Wildlife/Nature Preserve	27%
State or National Park	22%
Craft Brewery/Winery/Distillery	20%
Event	10%

VISITS BY REGION



ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

canalwaychallenge.org



2026 SPECIAL INITIATIVES

FEBRUARY 15

It was another exceptional FEBRUARY 15 Challenge! This initiative encourages people to stay active and continue exploring parks, trails, and other places in the Canalway Corridor in winter.

497
CHALLENGES CREATED

302
PARTICIPANTS FINISHED

6,964
MILES LOGGED

"This is an amazing challenge to encourage us to be active in the winter. We would never have gone out in the cold if it wasn't for this challenge." – ***Kadydiane F., 15-Miler, Rochester, NY***





AMBASSADORS

From May through October, Canalway Challenge Ambassadors were out on the trail engaging with trail users, sharing information about the Challenge, connecting with businesses and local organizations, and volunteering at events. The response from Ambassadors has been fantastic. In the program's second year, we have 26 Ambassadors from across the Corridor: 13 returned from 2025, and 13 are new to the group.

637
HOURS VOLUNTEERED

2,576
PEOPLE ENGAGED

40
BUSINESSES ENGAGED



ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

canalwaychallenge.org






THANK YOU!

AMBASSADORS

This network of enthusiastic volunteers helped promote the Canalway Challenge to other trail users. Their efforts were critical to the success of the Canalway Challenge in 2026.

Mitchy & Andy Beach
Nam Cao
Alana Connolly
Peter & JoAnn Douglass
Maureen Doyle
Bill Fahy
Karl Fisher
Heidi Fox
Glenn Gordon
Cathy Handt
Megan Klein
Patricia Louise
Gary Mosbruger
Ann Netter
Carol Palaszewski
Keith Partington
Debra Pasch
Scott Pelzer
Elaine Peters
Lisa Saunders
Steven Welch
Mark Wells
Kelly Zaryk
Megan Zoladz

PROMOTIONAL PARTNERS

More than 100 organizations and businesses spread the word and encouraged participation in the Canalway Challenge. Their support is critical to helping us reach a broad audience, generate excitement, and maximize program benefits.

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

We are grateful for the critical funding provided by the National Park Service, New York State Canal Corporation, and our tourism supporters.

NEW YORK STATE Canal Corporation

Spruce Creek Campground
Stewart's Shops
Wegmans
BoatUS
DISCOVER ALBANY
OCED







ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

canalwaychallenge.org