



NEWS RELEASE

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Popular Canalway Trail system drew 3.3 million visits in 2021

ALBANY, NY – The Erie Canalway Trail, the east-west leg of New York’s 750-mile Empire State Trail, was visited more than 3 million times during 2021, according to the [Who’s on the Trail: Canalway Trail 2021 report](#) from Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation (NYSCC). The Canalway Trail system as a whole saw an estimated 3.3 million visits during the year, including approximately 215,000 visits to the 60-mile Champlain Canalway Trail between Waterford and Whitehall. These figures reflect the results of major investments in closing the gaps in the trail network and the completion of the Empire State Trail, and the increased interest and participation in outdoor recreation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, PTNY counted visits at nine locations along the Erie Canalway Trail. Electronic counters recorded usage at Tonawanda, Pendleton, Brockport, Macedon, Canastota, German Flatts, Little Falls, Amsterdam, and Watervliet. Volunteers also performed observational trail counts in Rochester. The highest annual use recorded for 2021 was at Niawanda Park in Tonawanda, which saw an estimated 230,000 cyclists, walkers, runners, joggers, and other users enjoying the trail. The counter installed at Robinson Road in Pendleton saw more than 80,000 visits in 2021, a more than 50 percent increase over the use recorded at this location from 2016 to 2017, the last time a count was conducted on this section of trail.

All ten count locations saw the heaviest use on weekends and holidays, suggesting the trail is particularly popular for recreational activities. Peak use for all locations occurred between May and September, though the busiest month varied by location. Total visits to the Erie Canalway Trail were down from a peak of 4.2 million visits in 2020, likely due to increased use of trails during the lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, use was higher than in 2019, suggesting a long-term trend of increased trail use.

In 2021, the *Who’s on the Trail* report also includes, for the first time, information on those trail users who completed an end-to-end journey on the trail and registered as an official Erie Canalway Trail “End-to-Enders.” In 2021, 37 percent of registered End-to-Enders called New York home; the rest of End-to-Enders came to the Canalway Trail from 33 other states, as well as from the United Kingdom and Canada. End-to-Enders found many options for accommodations along the Erie Canalway Trail, as

85 percent of riders spent at least one night at a hotel or motel during their trip, while 29 percent camped at least one night during their journey.

Each year PTNY issues the *Who's on the Trail: Canalway Trail* report to provide a detailed summary of trail use along the Erie and Champlain Canals. Locations vary each year to ensure that usage is measured in all parts of the state. The reports highlight the most popular stretches of trail and the most popular day, time, and season for trail use. Collectively, these numbers tell a compelling narrative about the trail's popularity and provide further justification for continuing to invest in these popular resources.

The usage figures are based on a methodology employed by the Hudson River Valley Greenway and Alta Planning and Design to estimate the annual [number of users](#) (8.6 million) expected to use the now-complete 750-mile Empire State Trail.

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, "I am delighted to see so many millions of New Yorkers enjoying our Canalway Trail system. Our trails are an exceptional way to experience not only the Erie and Champlain Canals, but some of the most incredible outdoor destinations in our state, with easy access to communities, attractions, and amenities throughout the entire Canalway Corridor. As warm weather approaches, we look forward to welcoming more visitors to these beautiful trails this summer."

Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Robin Dropkin said, "Across the historic Erie Canal corridor, millions of residents and visitors alike are enjoying the Canalway Trail system, a true testament to the impact investments made to complete the statewide Empire State Trail have had. The popularity of the Canalway Trail demonstrates the potential of outdoor recreation and eco-tourism to play a key role in our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To read the full report visit www.ptny.org/trailcounts.

About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1998, PTNY has been working in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation to help canal communities plan, develop and promote the Canalway Trail. PTNY organizes Cycle the Erie Canal, an eight-day bicycle tour along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants each year. In 2021, the organization published an updated version of the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 360 miles of Adventure and History along the Erie Canalway Trail*. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

About the New York State Canal System

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trail, a network of approximately 400 miles of multi-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trail create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.