Only one more year to go! By this time next year, we’ll be celebrating the completion of the Empire State Trail - and when done, it’ll be the longest multi-use trail in the country! The 750-mile-long trail will connect 27 counties and hundreds of communities, from New York City north through the Hudson Valley and the Adirondacks to the Canadian border and from the state capital in Albany west along the historic Erie Canal corridor to the shores of Lake Erie in Buffalo. The excitement is building as we get closer to seeing this vision become reality!

More than three-quarters of the projects for the Empire State Trail are in construction or complete. In August, a new 2-mile section between Pendleton and Amherst opened, completing the off-road trail between Buffalo and Rochester.

In Syracuse, work continues to complete the trail across the city, with a trail connecting Camillus with the State Fairgrounds poised to open early next year, the completion of the Loop the Lake Trail and a connection to downtown currently underway, and the Elevating Erie project providing an off-road alternative along busy Erie Boulevard set for completion next year.

The Mohawk Valley will see extensive work as well, with ongoing construction on new stretches of trail between Utica and Schuyler, and between Frankfort and Little Falls. A long-awaited pair of tunnels under active rail lines are set to be installed in Rotterdam Junction, helping riders avoid a busy stretch of NYS Route 5S. Montgomery County hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate their victory as the first county to completely pave its entire portion of the trail. With all these improvements, the already great Erie Canalway Trail is getting even better!

The Champlain Canalway Trail is seeing a flurry of activity also, with a portion of the trail between Waterford and Mechanicville having recently opened. The remainder of the trail between those two cities is set to open in December 2020. A new trail connecting Hudson Crossing Park with the village of Schuylerville opened this past summer, and work is underway on a new trail that will run between Fort Edward and Fort Ann along one of the most scenic sections of the Canalway Trail system. Throughout the state, work is ongoing to enhance on-road connections and trail segments, including marking the connection from Whitehall to the Canadian border.

The Empire State Trail will link the Canalway Trail system with New York City, linking existing trails with more than 50 miles of new paths. Work has begun on constructing the Maybrook Trailway in the Hudson Valley, which, once complete, will create a continuous off-road route between New Paltz and New York City, linking together the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, the Walkway over the Hudson and the Dutchess Rail Trail with the Putnam Trailway, the Westchester North and South County Trails and the Putnam Greenway Trail in the Bronx’s Van Cortlandt Park. Shovels are also in the ground for the construction of the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail, which will run from Albany south to Hudson.
A Trip Back Through Time

The Canalway Trail showcases all eras of American history

While the Canalway Trail follows corridors that have been used for travel by native peoples for many centuries, the ease of travel between the Atlantic Seaboard and the Great Lakes was revolutionized with the completion of the Erie and Champlain canals. The Champlain Canal opened from Fort Edward to Lake Champlain in 1819, and the first section of the Erie Canal, running between Rome and Utica, opened the same year. While only a few traces remain of the original 1825 “Clinton’s Ditch” iteration of the Erie Canal, at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site and at Montezuma Heritage Park, you can catch a quick glimpse of that time in history.

By contrast, many places across the state showcase the history of the “Enlarged Erie Canal,” reflecting upgrades to the system between 1835 and 1862, including the main aqueduct at Schoharie Crossing, the “Flight of Five” locks in Lockport, and the Nine-Mile Creek Aqueduct in Camillus. The canal stimulated economic development across upstate, and great examples of this can be found at the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum in the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park, and at the Erie Canal Museum, located in the historic “Weighlock” building in downtown Syracuse. All of these sites are located along the Erie Canalway Trail.

Although 200 years later, the Canal is no longer used for its original industrial transportation purpose, many communities continue to reinvent themselves around the historic canal and the Canalway Trail. Buffalo’s Canalside, boasting events year-round, is the centerpiece of a successful waterfront revitalization. Pittsford’s Schoen Place features canal-related buildings right on the trail, where travelers can stop at canalside businesses and shops. And, in Amsterdam, the trail links up with the recently constructed Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook, a burgeoning regional destination and community center that spans the Mohawk River. The Canalway Trail truly is a pathway through history.

Mark Your Calendar for 2020 Events

We can’t wait for these great events and more coming in 2020! Check out ptny.org/events for more information

2020 Canal Clean Sweep, April 18-19, 2020
Each Earth Day, the New York State Canal Corporation and Parks & Trails New York host Canal Clean Sweep, a day of spring cleaning on sections of the Canalway Trail, in canalside parks, and in other public areas throughout the Canal corridor. For more information and to register your event, visit ptny.org/cleansweep.

Cycle the Erie Canal Bike Tour, July 12-19, 2020
More than 650 cyclists will leave their cars behind in Buffalo on July 12 to pedal along the historic Erie Canalway Trail to Albany as part of the 22nd annual Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour. This 400-mile, fully supported eight-day tour highlights the small town charm, history, and culture along the Erie Canalway Trail. Four-day options are also available. Register today or find more information at CycletheErieCanal.com
Canalside communities are thriving, thanks in large part to the hard work of our great volunteers - Trail Ambassadors, Trail Adopters, and participants in the annual Canal Clean Sweep.

Our intrepid set of trail ambassadors went the extra mile in 2019, as these volunteers logged tens of thousands of miles on the trail. Ambassadors help to promote and maintain our world-class Canalway Trail System, and always eager to share their passion with visitors to the trail. In the Capital Region, eagle-eyed Ambassadors continued to provide detailed maintenance reports and fill us in on everyone they met and all the great work they do along the trail.

For the 14th year in a row, the Canal Clean Sweep served as the symbolic kick-off for Earth Day celebrations. The 100+ cleanup events across the state saw hundreds of volunteers contribute towards a day of spring cleaning throughout the Canal corridor. More than 80 volunteer groups across 120 miles of the Erie, Champlain and Oswego Canalway Trails provided hundreds of hours of volunteer maintenance and TLC.

Our trail Adopters do so much more than just cut back weeds, vines, and vegetation. They’re also some of the trail’s most vocal advocates, reporting back to us on issues such as misuse of the trail, harm to the environment, or safety concerns. Sandy Guzzetti and her Lockport-based group, the Trail Keepers, shared great stories and great pictures of the canal and cyclists out enjoying the Canalway Trail on a regular basis! Some groups, like the Erie Canal Neighbors Association, are even blogging about their trail encounters! These stories provide readers with real-time updates on bird sightings, improvements, and trail conditions.

Wherever you find yourself on the Canalway Trail, our volunteers are the eyes and ears!

Our Volunteers Hit the Ground Running This Year

Across the state, volunteer groups devoted time and energy, making an impact in their canal communities

AMBASSADOR REPORT FOR AUGUST 2019

A little shorter ride than usual this morning to beat the rain and heat. Trail was clear to the railroad tracks dead end other than thumb size branches and tips scattered along the way that were easily seen/avoided/ridden over. Wildlife seen today included green heron, wood ducks, mallards, painted turtles, and a couple deer that crossed the path between the stocking footed bench overlook and historic lock 23.
End-to-End on the Erie Canalway Trail: What Motivates You?

“Growing up in NY, I learned about the Erie Canal in school. My wife homeschooled our 3 boys and last year they learned about the Erie Canal (though we live in Virginia). We visited Chittenango last year and when I read that you could ride from Buffalo to Albany, it sounded like a great ride through parts of NY that I wasn’t as familiar with.”

Chris from Williamsburg, VA

“I decided to bike the Erie Canal with my mother and my daughter. We were three generations and three women biking a historic route through our home state. Overall we had a wonderful experience, completing the trail in 7 days.”

Sara from West Chazy, NY

“My husband organized this trip and I was so excited after reading about the trail and the history of the Erie Canal. This was not only a personal accomplishment but a historical and beautiful adventure. We started in Buffalo and finished in Albany for a total of 376.3 miles over 7 days.”

Tiffanie from Chestertown, NY

“We were looking for an entry level experience to bike trail-riding. Our friends had done the GAP and suggested we do the Erie Canal together. My parents had boated it. We wanted to do the whole thing if we were going to do it at all.”

Pamela from St. Agatha, Ontario

“We did it because I went to school in upstate New York and I love the countryside there and wanted to see one of the great engineering wonders of the 19th century, the Erie Canal.”

Bennie from Boston, MA

Register your End-to-End journey, pick up a copy of Cycling the Erie Canal Guidebook, and check out the interactive Canalway Trail map at CycletheErieCanal.com
Canalway Challenge Participants Trace History and Track 285,000 Miles

People from 26 states and Canada walked, ran, cycled, and paddled their way to fitness and fun this year as part of the new Canalway Challenge, launched by our partners, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in May 2019. More than 1,279 individuals, 267 teams, and 30 organizations signed on. Participants completed 285,000 miles on the Canalway Trail and NYS Canal System, the equivalent of circling the globe 11 times.

The Canalway Challenge brought people to every part of the Canalway Corridor. Most participants took multiple trips and visited new communities, historic sites, and local businesses, resulting in increased tourism and improved awareness of all that New York’s canals offer.

In addition to meeting a fitness goal of 15, 90, 180, or 360 miles, Canalway Challenge participants expressed excitement about exploring new places, spending time with friends and family, and seeing wildlife while on the waterway and Canalway Trail. The Challenge appealed to people seeking more adventurous weekend getaways and vacations, as well as to local residents seeking to get or stay fit.

The Canalway Challenge continues in 2020! Gather family and friends, set your mileage goal, and join the fun! Visit www.canalwaychallenge.org.

“The Erie Canal is an experience of discovery! How awesome is that?” said Meg Kolodzie, who earned status as a 180 Miler. “We passed through NY’s heartland, gliding, biking, and hiking near historic quaint canal towns, scenic farmlands, and thriving wildlife preserves. The canal joins attractions both modern and historic, so there’s something new around every bend.”

Steven Sheppard came from Williamstown, Massachusetts to cycle 180 miles. “The Canalway was wonderful. I’ve done tours of this length in France (along the Canal du Midi) and in Florida (up the Atlantic Coast from Key West to Georgia) and the Erie Canalway was comparable to these experiences. I can’t wait to come back and do the western portion!”

By the Numbers

- 1,632 Challenges created
- 100 people signed up for two or more Challenges
- 1,063 people completed the Challenge
- 285,000 total miles logged
- 25 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Canada represented
- 557 Facebook group members
- 81,965 times videos were viewed on social media
- 5 to 80 – ages of participants
A Well-Used and Well-Loved Trail in 2019

Hundreds of thousands of visitors experienced the wonders of the Canalway Trail System in 2019

The Canalway Trail system gives millions of New Yorkers in more than 200 canalside communities a dedicated place to walk, jog, and bike right from their doorsteps.

Trail counts taken this year show that hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, and others from near and far, took advantage of this incredible asset.

Since 2005, Parks & Trails New York and the NYS Canal Corporation have been at the forefront of quantifying the trail’s popularity through annual Canalway Trail counts. Data collection methods have changed as newer technology made collection easier and more reliable. In 2014, the first electronic trail counter was installed for a full year. This practice has produced more and better data.

The 14th annual trail counts tell a vivid story; the Canalway Trail continues to be a critical component of everyday lives for canalside communities and their residents. In 2019, automated electronic counters at five sites recorded more than 120,000 annual visits.

The 2019 counts will help local officials and community groups as they seek to enhance their existing trail network and identify opportunities for new connector trails.

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Count data can also provide insight into trail user projections for the soon-to-be complete Empire State Trail, which anticipates 8.6 million users annually! We can’t wait to use our counters to see how the Erie Canalway benefits from the completion of the Empire State Trail.

A full analysis of each location is available in the 2019 Who’s on the Trail report at ptny.org/trailcounts.

2019 Annual Trail Use

**Albany** – 120,365

**DeWitt** – 125,182

**Camillus** – 136,864

**Niskayuna** – 162,273

**Fairport** – 170,206
New York’s statewide bike-friendly certification helps cyclists and businesses connect with one another and helps communities benefit from bicycle tourism

Bike Friendly New York (BFNY) is a certification program that recognizes businesses and establishments that accommodate bicycles and the people that ride them. The program is another great collaboration between PTNY and the New York State Canal Corporation. Over nearly four years, more than 130 places across the state have been certified bicycle friendly.

The program promotes easy and inexpensive ways businesses can better welcome their cycling guests, such as having a basic repair kit available or bike racks. Eager explorers can check out all the certified businesses they want to visit on the online map found at CycletheErieCanal.com and on a list shipped with all the Cycling the Erie Canal guidebooks.

BFNY businesses are a diverse and interesting array, including hostels, cafes, workspaces, and cideries.

**HOW TO GET CERTIFIED**

1. Review program requirements at ptny.org/bikefriendly
2. Fulfill required criteria and bike friendly amenities or services for your business category
3. Complete the online application
4. PTNY will review your certification
5. Receive your certification packet, and put up your BFNY decal!

Join us for Bicyclists Bring Business in September 2020 - participate in conversations about how Canalway Trail communities can bring in more two-wheeled visitors to patronize local businesses and stimulate economic growth.

Here are a few of our favorite Bike Friendly New York businesses

**Tinsel, Albion, NY**
This ice cream shop is extra sweet to bicyclists: it is owned and managed by ECT Trail Ambassadors!

**Peppermint Cottage Bed and Breakfast, Lyons, NY**
This cozy and historic place to rest offers an abundance of amenities to bicyclists and was one of the first BFNY businesses.

**Putorti’s Broadway Market, Whitehall, NY**
This family-run business has been serving travelers along the Champlain Canal corridor for more than 90 years and, with long hours, is a great resource for those cycling long distances.
You Don’t Want to Miss This: the 22nd Cycle the Erie Canal Bike Tour returns July 12-19, 2020

The 21st Cycle the Erie Canal rolled across New York’s remarkable canal corridor last summer with more than 650 riders. Will we see you this summer for the 2020 edition? The tour gets better and better every year and we are excited for what’s in store.

Join us in experiencing the excellent cycling, inspiring scenery, and the remarkable history of the Erie Canalway Trail on the fully supported Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour. You’ll want to be there for all the memories made along this cross-state trek — we expect another great group from states and countries around the world.

You’ll experience the charm of the people, places, and history of the Erie Canal corridor, starting from the second you leave Buffalo to the lively finish line in Albany. There are countless historic and vibrant aqueducts, locks, local businesses, breweries, communities, and much more to be discovered. Riders return every year, eager to visit quirky trailside attractions and take part in the many off-the-bike activities.

We continue to improve the ride and make it even more enjoyable and meaningful for you. In 2020, look for:

- Pre- and post-tour shuttles from Albany to Buffalo: less driving, less stress.
- Our NEW Cycle the Erie Canal jersey: you can’t get this from any retailer!
- Two four-day options: We get it - the summer is a busy time; we want you to enjoy the same great cycling during the time that works best for you.

Registration for the Cycle the Erie Canal is now open at CycletheErieCanal.com

The New York Canal Corporation is proud to be the premier state sponsor of Cycle the Erie Canal since 2000.