

# New York's Canals by Boat & Bike

Trip planning for boaters,  
paddlers, and cyclists



Hosted by:



Canal  
Corporation



BOATING

# Resources

[www.canals.ny.gov](http://www.canals.ny.gov)

[www.canals.ny.gov/Boating-Information](http://www.canals.ny.gov/Boating-Information)

[Boater-Resource-Guide-Digital\\_R1-2025.pdf](#)

[Free Outdoor Activities - On the Canals.](#)

[Notice to Mariners Alerts | NYS Canals](#)

[Medina Art Triennial](#)

[Water Music - Albany Symphony Orchestra](#)



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GETTING STARTED

# Resources

[Start Your Trip Here](#)

- [Multiday Itineraries](#)
- [Road Trips](#)
- [Canal Heritage](#)

[Getting Here](#)

[Enjoy Events and Festivals](#)

[Cycling Day Trips](#)

[Kid Friendly Rides](#)

[I Love NY](#)

PADDLING

# Resources

[NY Canals Map](#)

[Paddling Day Trips](#)

[Guidebook and Map Set](#)

[Paddlecraft Rentals](#)

[Camping](#)

[Stewardship](#)

[Water Trail Events](#)

[Safety](#)



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CYCLING

# RESOURCES

[Cycle the Canalway Trail Trip-Planning Website](#)

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[100 Must See Miles of the Erie Canal](#)

[Erie Canal Museum events newsletter](#)



# OUR PRESENTERS



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# AGENDA

- I. Why the Erie Canal?
- II. Boating
- III. Paddling
- IV. Cycling
- V. Making the most of your trip

Q&A



# Why New York's Canals

## History

- Originally constructed in 1825 to create a path of travel from New York City into the American Interior
- Enlarged three times

## National Significance

- National Heritage Corridor established in 2000
- 2016 designated as a National Historic Landmark
- NYS Canalway Water Trail designated as a National Water Trail in 2022
- Empire State Trail completed in 2020

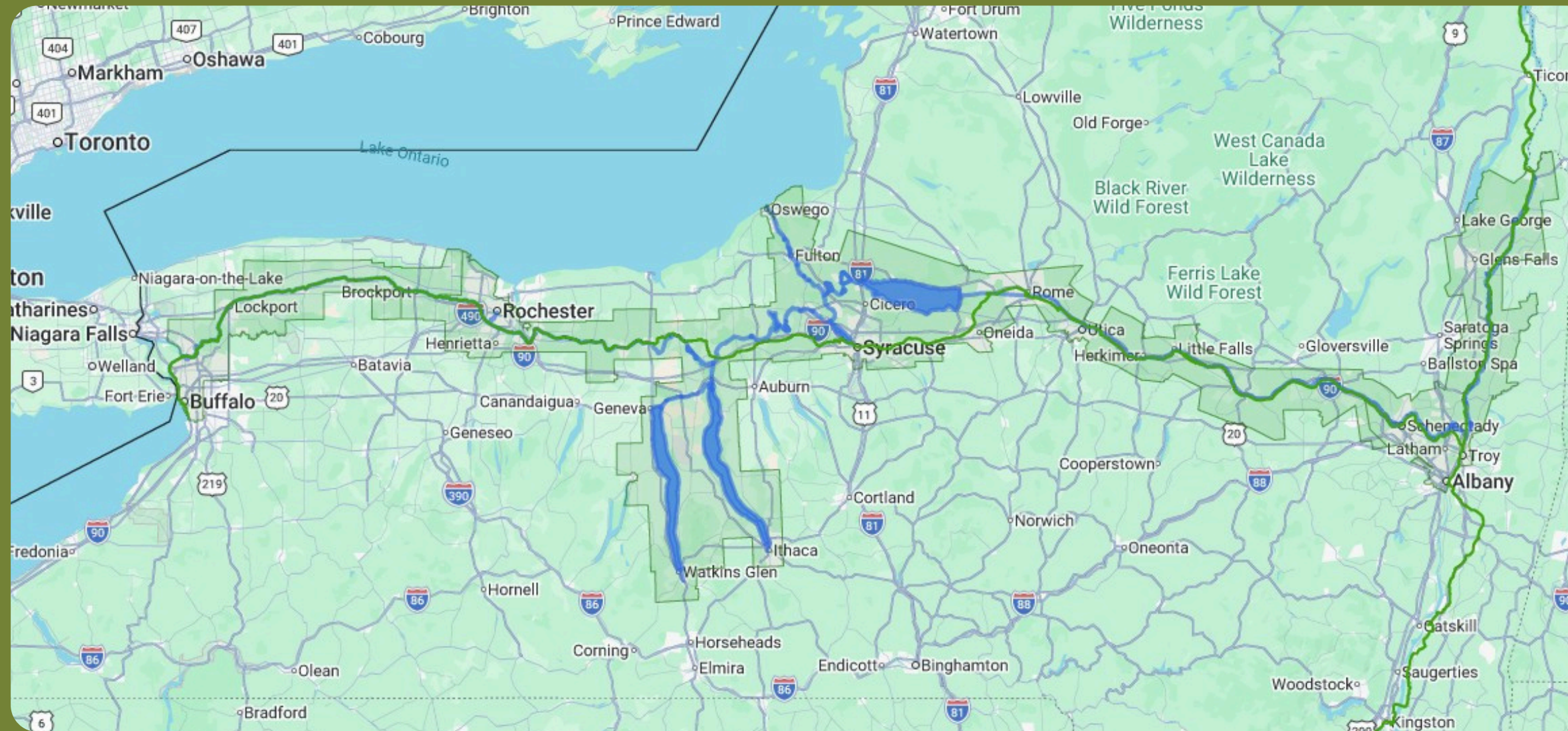


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[eriecanalway.org](http://eriecanalway.org)

# Why New York's Canals

- 524 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York, including the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain Canals
- A system of interconnected waterways
- 23 counties and home to 3.2 million people



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# Regional Variety

Western NY



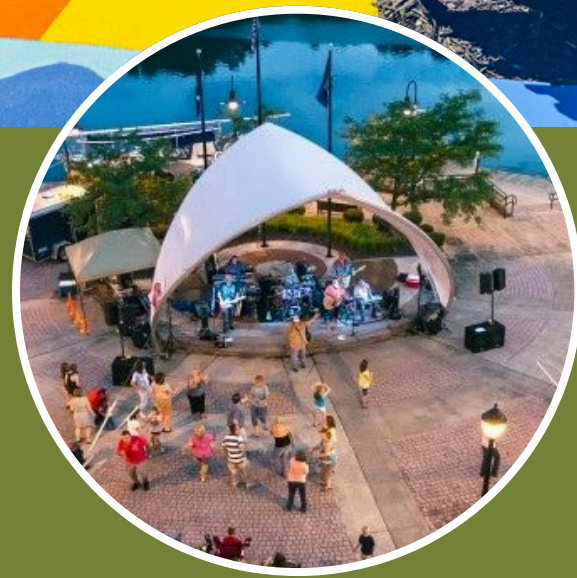
Greater Rochester



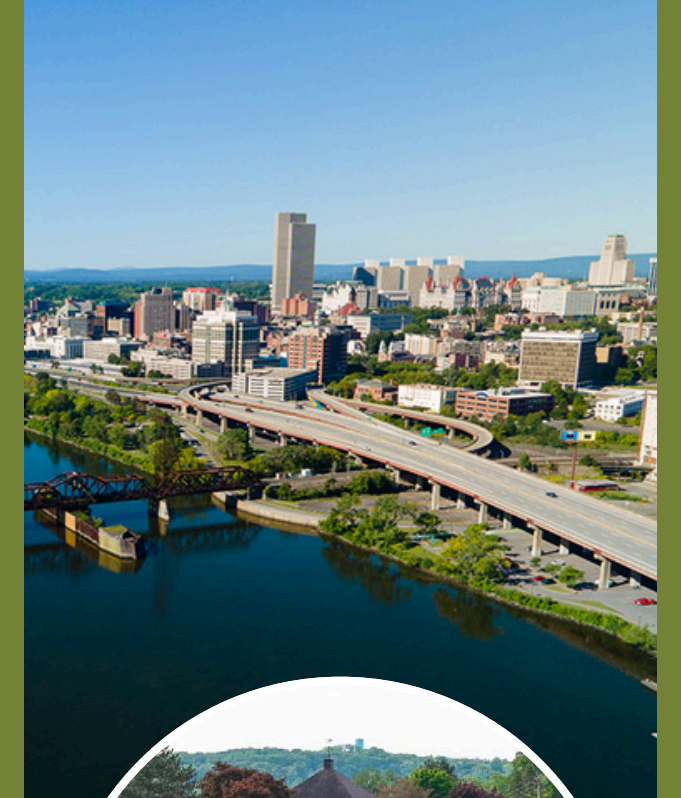
Central NY



Mohawk Valley



Capital Region



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[eriecanalway.org](http://eriecanalway.org)

# Regional Variety

Champlain Canal



Oswego Canal



Cayuga-Seneca Canal



## Resources

[eriecanalway.org/explore](http://eriecanalway.org/explore)

- Road Trips
- Multiday Itineraries by region
- Boat rentals and tours
- Cycling and paddling day trips
- Events



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[eriecanalway.org](http://eriecanalway.org)



# BOATING NEW YORK'S CANALS





NY Power  
Authority

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# New York's Canals by Boat



*Have you  
ever  
navigated on  
New York's  
Canals?*



**Erie Canal**

**Champlain Canal**

**Oswego Canal**

**Cayuga-Seneca Canal**

# Topics

- **New York's Canals**
- **Preparing for Navigation**
- **Canal Structures: Locks, Lift Bridges, Guard Gates, Movable Dams**
- **Camping, Accessibility, Communities**



## Erie Canal

- Miles: 338
- Locks: 35
- Lift Bridges: 16
- Channel Depth: 12-14
- Bridge Clearance: 15.5-21'
- Connector to Lake Erie, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

## Champlain Canal

- Miles: 60
- Locks: 11
- Channel Depth: 12'
- Bridge Clearance: 17'
- Connector to Lake Champlain, Vermont, and Canada

## Oswego Canal

- Miles: 24
- Locks: 7
- Channel Depth: 14'
- Bridge Clearance: 21'
- Connector to Lake Ontario & St. Lawrence Seaway

## Cayuga-Seneca Canal

- Miles: 12
- Locks: 4
- Channel Depth: 12'
- Bridge Clearance: 16.5'
- Connector to the Finger Lakes Region



# Preparing for Navigation

**2026 Navigation Season: May 15 - October 14**

# Boater Registration Requirements

- **Notice To Mariners (NTM)**
- Valid vessel registration is required issued by State Department of Motor Vehicles
- **NYS Brianna's Law** – completion of state-approved boating safety course.
- Mindful of minimum clearance requirements across the canal.





## *Preparing for Navigation*

# Sailboat Step-Masting

- Sailboats are required to demast prior to entering the canal.
- Minimum clearance: 15'-21' for different sections of the canal.
- Some marinas do provide mast storing services

## *Preparing for Navigation*



# Clean, Drain, Dry

- Help stop the spread of **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)**
- NYS Regulations prohibit boats from launching without cleaning visible plant and animal material from their equipment.
- Clean, drain, and dry all equipment that comes in contact with the water, plants, fish, or animals before transporting.



# Canal Structures

Locks, Lift Bridges, Guard Gates & Movable Dams



# Lock E20, Marcy, NY



**Lift Bridge, Fairport, NY**



# Guard Gate, Waterford, NY



# Movable Dam Lock E12, Tribes Hill, NY



**Working & Commercial Vessels**

# How to “Lock Through” NYS Canal Locks

## Approaching the Lock

- Advise the Lock Operator of your approach.
- Wait for **GREEN LIGHT** to enter.
- **Approach slowly**

## Entering the Lock

- **Enter slowly**, stay in line with approach.
- Station vessel along lock wall as directed by the operator

## Inside the Lock Chamber

- Keep bow and stern close to chamber wall
- Hold the lines provided or loop a line to a holding apparatus

## Exiting the Lock

- Gates will open once the water in the lock chamber reached the proper level
- Take in lines once gates are fully open and shove off wall
- **Proceed slowly**





# Camping, Accessibility, Communities



# Camping

- 17 cyclist-hiker-boater campsites.
- “Primitive” sites with limited and varying amenities.
- No potable water available.
- Stays limited to 48-hours



[www.onthecanals.com](http://www.onthecanals.com)

## Accessibility On The CANALS

- Free Outdoor, Cultural, Accessible, & Educational Adventures to do near the NYS Canal System
- Excursions include Kayaking, Hiking, Cycling, Cruising, Outdoor Painting, Snowshoeing, and more adaptive accessible adventures.



**Communities**

**Flotsam River Circus, Waterford, NY**

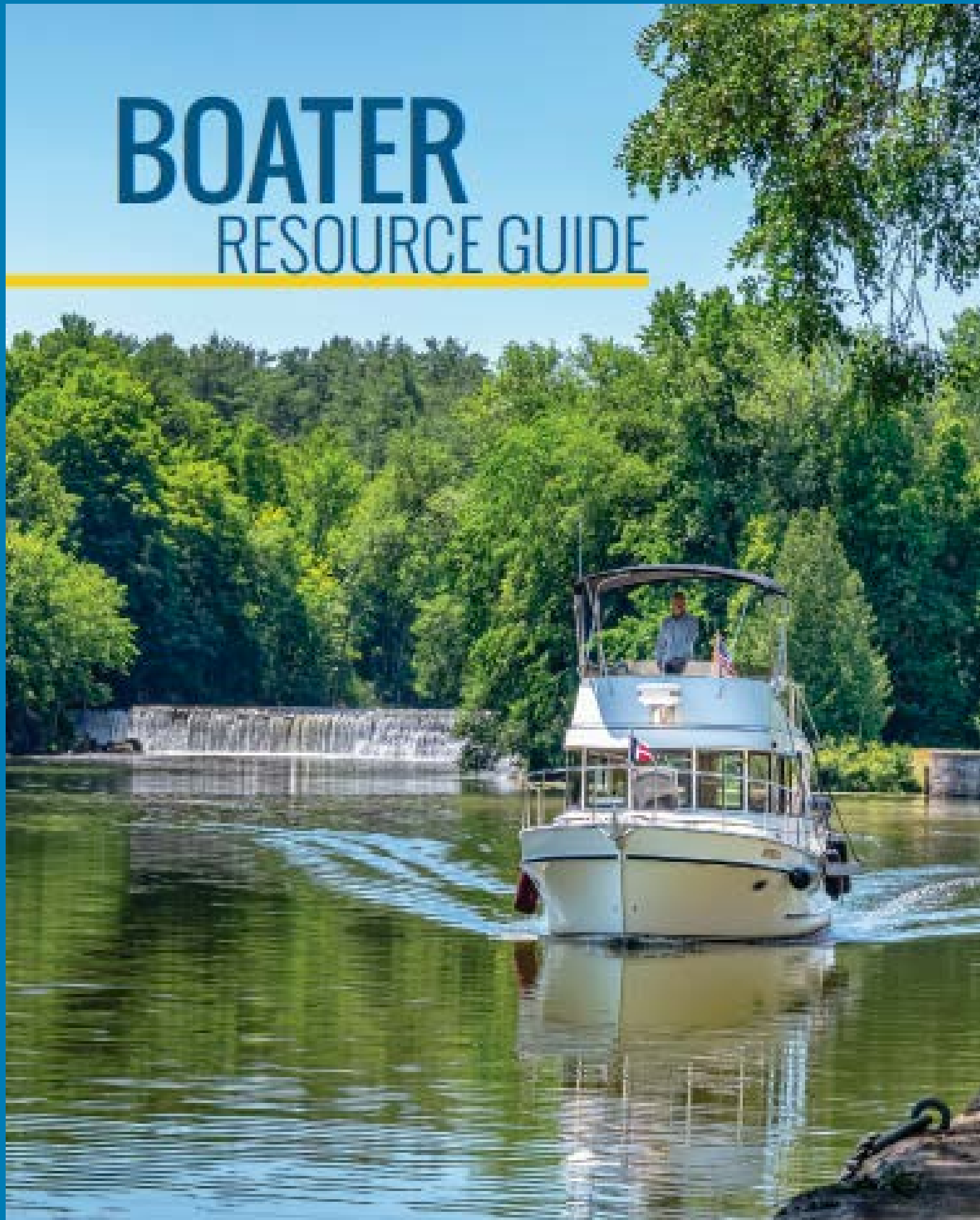


# New York's Canal Communities are Ready for Your Visit!

- Medina Art Triennial, June – September
- Fairport Canal Days, June
- Albany Symphony Orch. Water Music Series (Waterford, Rome, Tonawandas) July/August
- Garlic & Herb Festival, Little Falls September
- Sasquatch Calling, Whitehall September
- Tugboat Roundup, Waterford September
- Harborfest, Frankfort NY September
- Canal Boat Rentals, Macedon
- Tour Boat Excursions – Systemwide



# BOATER RESOURCE GUIDE



## NYS Canal Corporation: *Boater Resource Guide*

[www.canals.ny.gov/Boating-Information](http://www.canals.ny.gov/Boating-Information)



# PADDLING NEW YORK'S CANALS



# The NYS Canalway Water Trail

- Unique waterway: centuries old locks, stone aqueducts from the 1800s, while paddling alongside tugboats and cruisers.
  - Narrow flatwater stretches and wide river segments offer diversity
- NYS Canalway Water Trail signs located at more than 150 access sites identify safe launches. Visible from land and water.
- Accessible paddling for all abilities with adaptive launch sites, relatively calm waters, and easily navigable.



[eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail](http://eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail)

# The NYS Canalway Water Trail

- Erie: 339 miles (2.5-3 weeks)
- Cayuga-Seneca: 12 (1-2 days)
- Champlain: 60 (2-3 days)
- Oswego: 24 (2-4 days)
- Recommend paddling downstream:
  - Erie: west to east, Champlain: North to South, Oswego: South to North

## SAFETY

- Avoid paddling close to moveable dams, mostly between Fort Plain and Schenectady
- Yield to commercial vessels
- Paddle close to shore as much as possible.



[eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail](http://eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail)

# Building Community

- Network of 100 outfitters, paddle rentals, and club partners
- Join Facebook group: 3.8K members
  - Members share stories, tips, and trip ideas
  - Search “NYS Canalway Water Trail” on Facebook
- Join over 3.8K subscribers to e-news for the latest news along the Water Trail
  - Events, trip ideas, inspiration



[eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail](http://eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail)

# Experience the Canal

- Paddle the Canals: Mohawk River Adventure - annual paddling event on Saturday, June 27
  - Registration opens next week
- Events Calendar - look for paddling events and races
- Stewardship Program - Volunteer program



[eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail](http://eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail)

# Paddling Resources

- NYS Canalway Water Trail Guidebook and Map Set 2E  
- Order on [eriecanalway.org](http://eriecanalway.org) or free download
- [eriecanalway.org/watertrail](http://eriecanalway.org/watertrail)
  - Best Bet Trips
  - Rental Outfitters
- [NYCanalMap.com](http://NYCanalMap.com)



[eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail](http://eriecanalway.org/explore/watertrail)



# CYCLING THE CANALWAY TRAIL





# CHAMPLAIN CANALWAY TRAIL

60 miles between Waterford & Whitehall



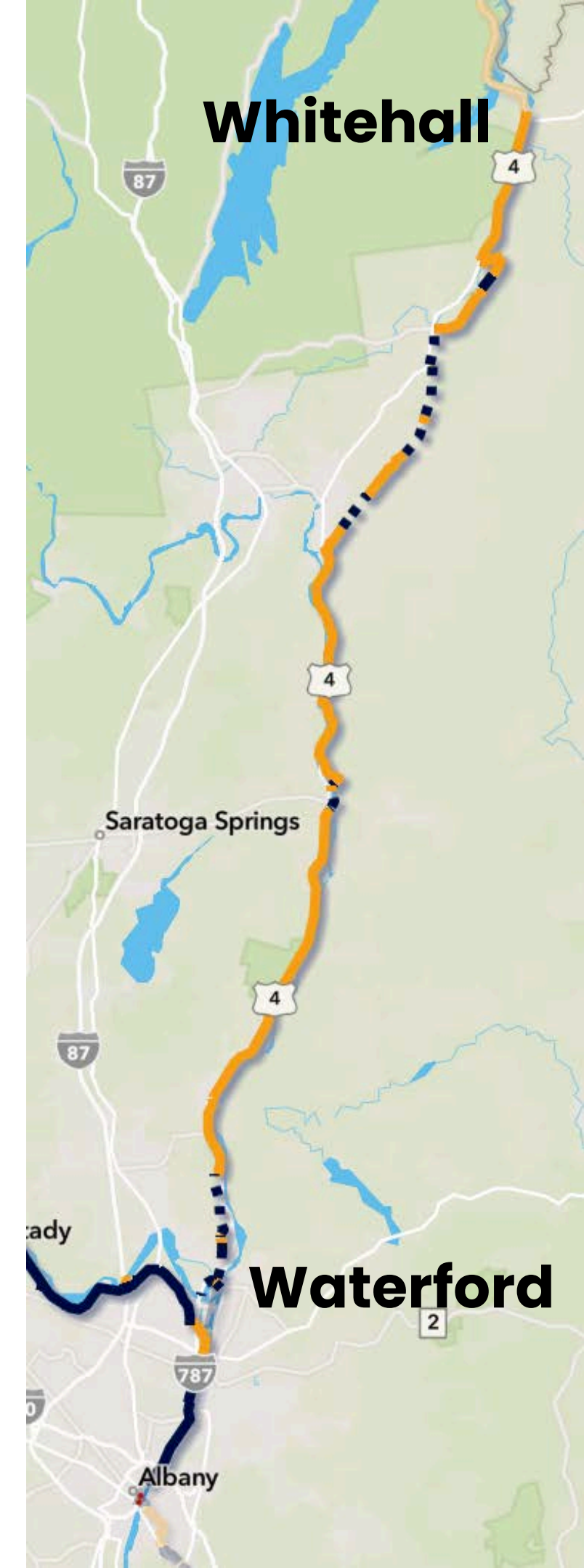
**6%**  
Paved Trail



**22%**  
Stonedust Trail



**72%**  
On Road





**EMPIRE STATE TRAIL**

- Off-Road Rail-Trails & Canalway Trails
- On-Road Bicycle Routes

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

N

LOCKPORT

BUFFALO

ROCHESTER

CLYDE

CAMILLUS

DE WITT

PORT BYRON

SYRACUSE

ROME

UTICA

LITTLE FALLS

WHITEHALL

SARATOGA SPRINGS

AMSTERDAM

ALBANY

HUDSON

KINGSTON

NEW PALTZ

POUGHKEEPSIE

BREWSTER

ELMSFORD

NEW YORK CITY

ROUSES POINT

PLATTSBURGH

Adirondack Park

Catskill Park

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY

ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

# TYPES OF RIDES



## DAY TRIPS & EXCURSIONS

Ride the trail your way – there are so many great sections to explore.



## MULTI-DAY SELF-SUPPORTED TRIP

Embrace the adventure of planning your own ride – take on the whole trail or choose a section



## MULTI-DAY SUPPORTED TOUR

Ride with a tour company or join 700 cyclists on PTNY's Cycle the Erie Canal (July 11-19, 2026)

# DAY TRIPS IDEAS

## Hit the Trail!

Try these recommended rides to explore the Erie Canal and communities along its path. These trips are on the Canalway Trail, so you'll be cycling off road most of the way. Some sections of the trail are stone dust, others are paved. Hybrid tires are ideal.

Rides are listed west to east. Mileage is round trip, so you can cut it in half and go one-way if you want a shorter trip.



### LOCKPORT WEST: 12.5 MILES

Start: Stevens Street/State Street Parking Lot, Lockport

Turnaround: Uncle G's Ice Cream, Washington St, Lockport

**Highlights:** Ride west along newly paved trail with great views of the canal. You'll see lovely gardens planted with flowers and Bike Art and



### LOCKPORT EAST: 24 MILES

Start: Erie Canal Discovery Center, Lockport

Turnaround: Village of Middleport

**Highlights:** Cycle east to Middleport and cross the lift bridge to the picturesque canalside park. Upon returning spend some time in Lockport at the Erie Canal Discovery



### BROCKPORT WEST: 11 MILES

Start: Canalfront Welcome Center, Brockport

Turnaround: Holley Canal Park, Holley

**Highlights:** Head west from Brockport to the Holley Canal Park and the Village of Holley. Cross the Holley lift bridge to reach the park on the south side. Be sure to ride on the park trail

## [Eriecanalway.org/explore](http://eriecanalway.org/explore)

Explore ideas for round trip bike rides from 6-50 miles across the corridor on the Erie Canalway Trail

## On the Canals Excursions

Free, year-round recreational excursions along the New York State Canal System, featuring kayaking, cycling, boat tours, painting, and birding

# PLANNING A SELF-SUPPORTED BIKE TRIP

## When should you go?

- Memorial Day through Labor Day to maximize best weather, daylight hours, and open attractions & businesses
- Labor Day through Mid-October for stunning foliage, cooler weather and fewer crowds

## How long do you need?

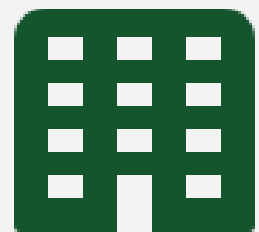
- 40-60 miles a day allows for time to sightsee and explore
- Plan for 6 to 8 days of riding

## Which direction?

- Personal choice/convenience
  - Note: Buffalo to Albany – Have the prevailing winds at your back and it's *slightly* downhill



# WHERE TO STAY



## Hotels and B&Bs

Hot showers, comfortable beds, less gear to carry!

Bike Friendly NY certification highlights accommodations ready to welcome cyclists.



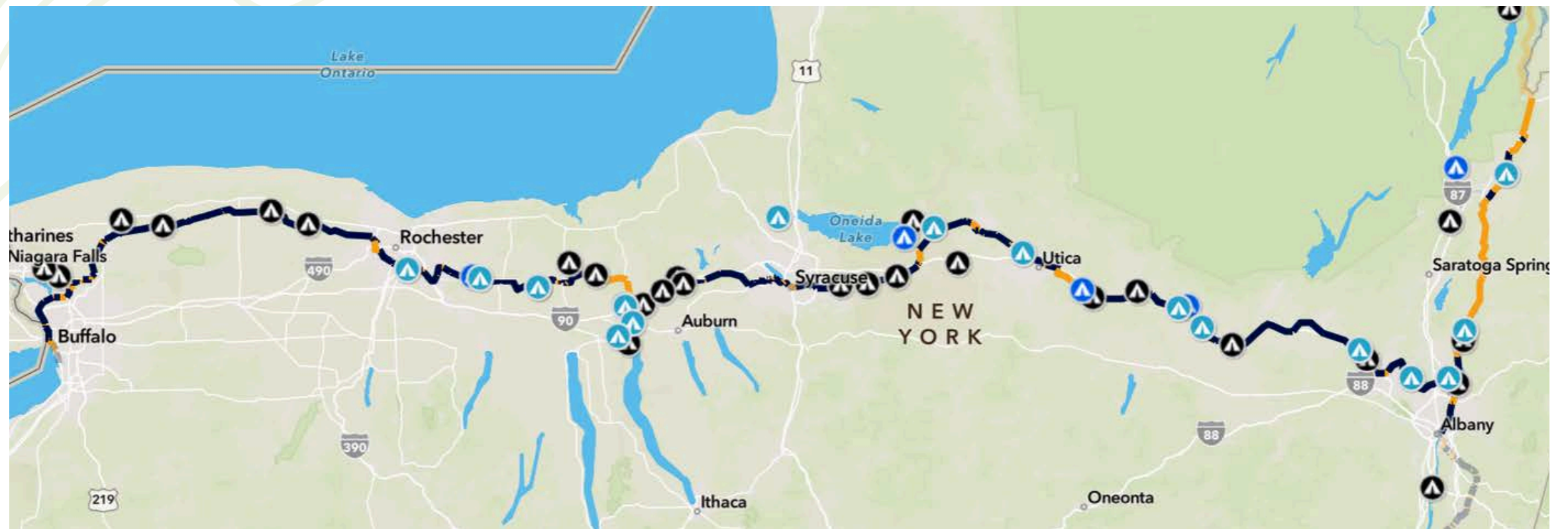
**BIKE FRIENDLY**  
NEW YORK

# WHERE TO STAY



## Camping

- Hiker/biker/boater sites at NYS Canal locks
- State Parks
- Private Campgrounds
- Municipal parks and marinas

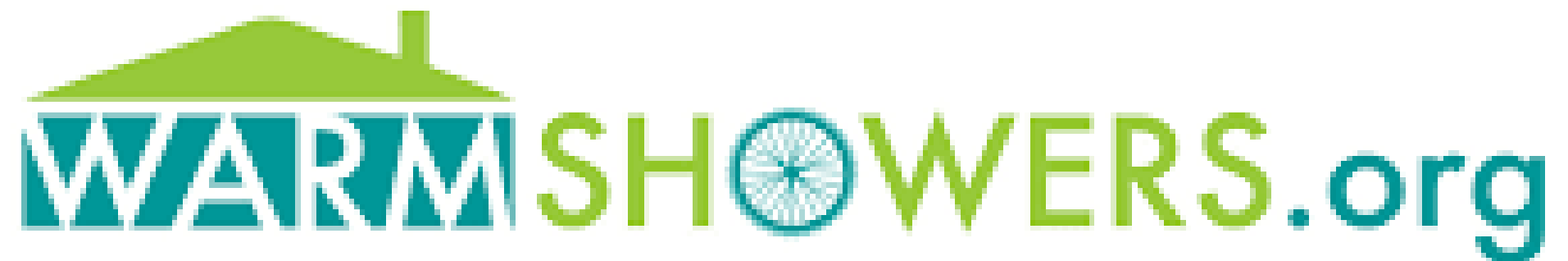


# WHERE TO STAY



## Warm Showers

A free reciprocal hospitality network that connects touring cyclists with hosts who offer free, safe, and comfortable overnight accommodation.



# TRANSPORTATION TIPS



## Amtrak

Amtrak can accommodate bicycles on trains with many stops across the canal corridor.



## Shuttles

There are a number of shuttle companies and at least one service that will shuttle your luggage.



## Car Rental

Renting a one-way car or U-haul may prove to be the most economical way of getting you and your bikes across the state.



## Long-term parking

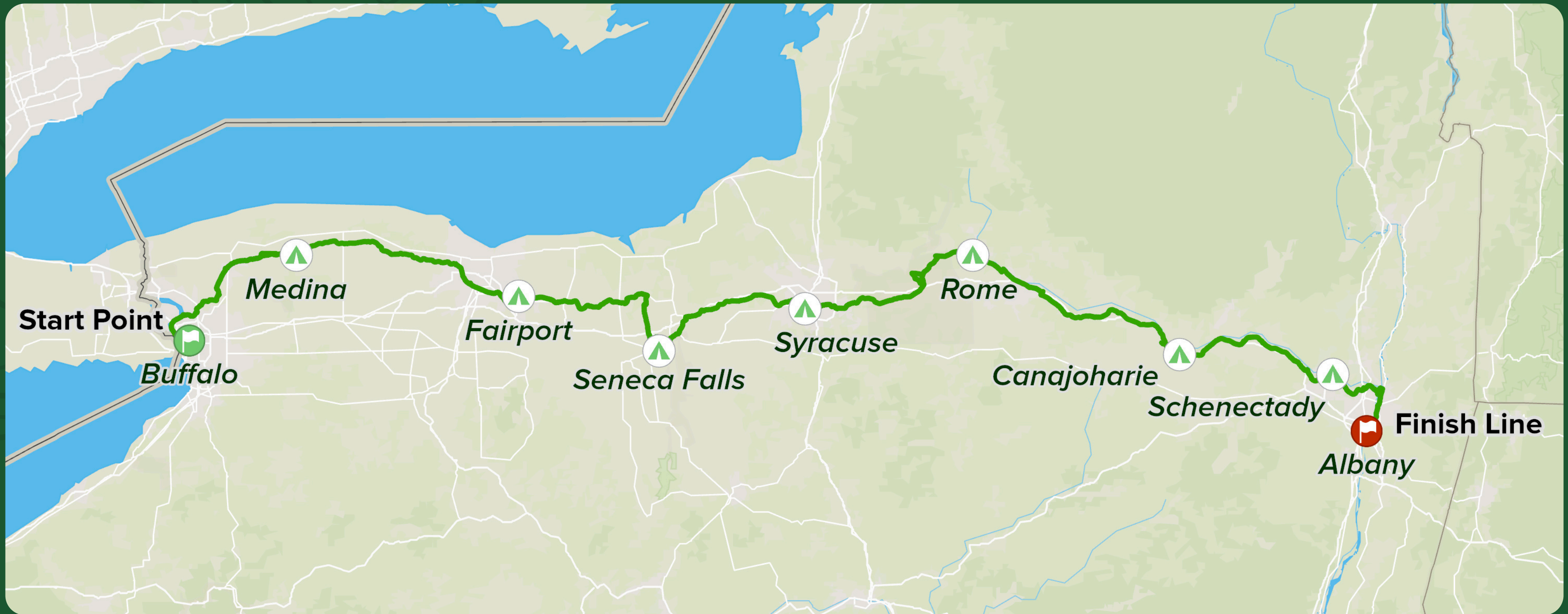
**Albany**  
Albany/Rensselaer  
Amtrak station  
**Buffalo**  
Buffalo Depew  
Station

# CYCLE THE ERIE CANAL BIKE TOUR

July 11-19, 2026



# 8 DAYS, 400 MILES, 700 NEW FRIENDS



# CYCLE THE ERIE CANAL BIKE TOUR - WHAT'S INCLUDED?



## MECHANICAL SUPPORT

Our team will be right there to help with any issues on the trail.

- SAG vehicles
- Optional mobile mechanical support



## LUGGAGE TRANSPORTATION

Don't worry about your gear on the trail! We'll transport all your baggage from one camp site to the next!

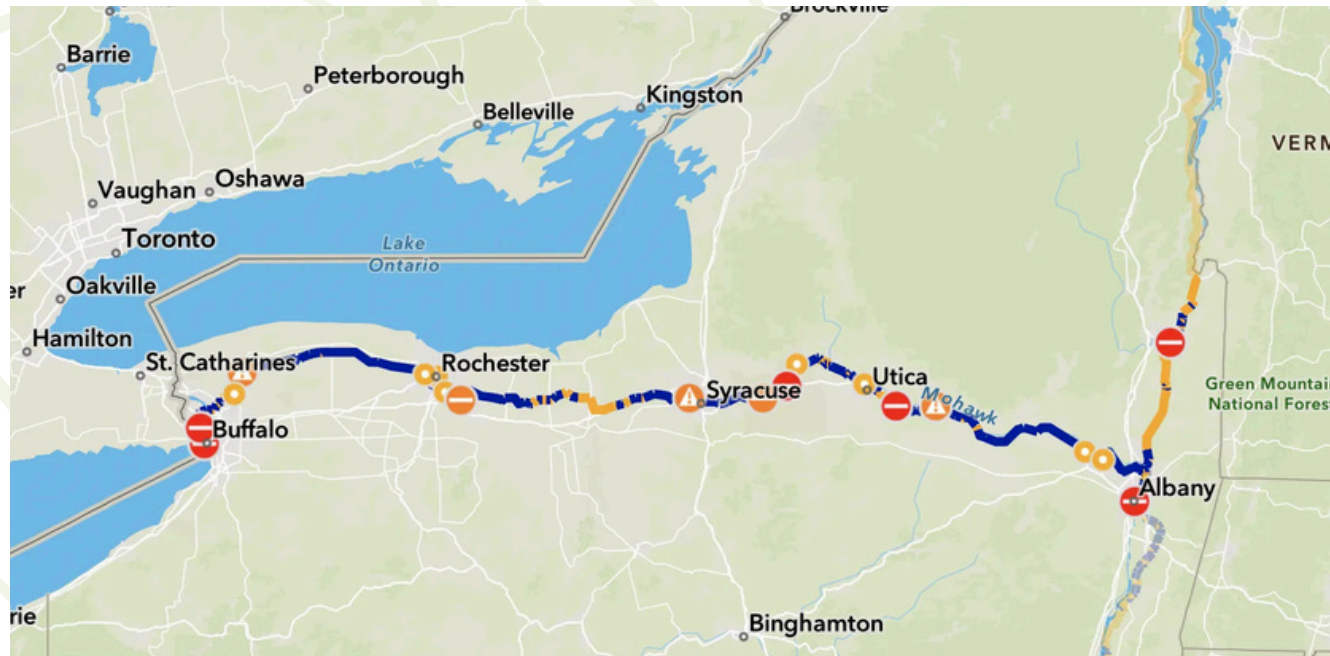


## ROUTES & TRAIL RESOURCES

- Daily maps, cue sheets, & RideWithGPS
- Painted and arrowed routes
- Pre-departure info packet, including training tips



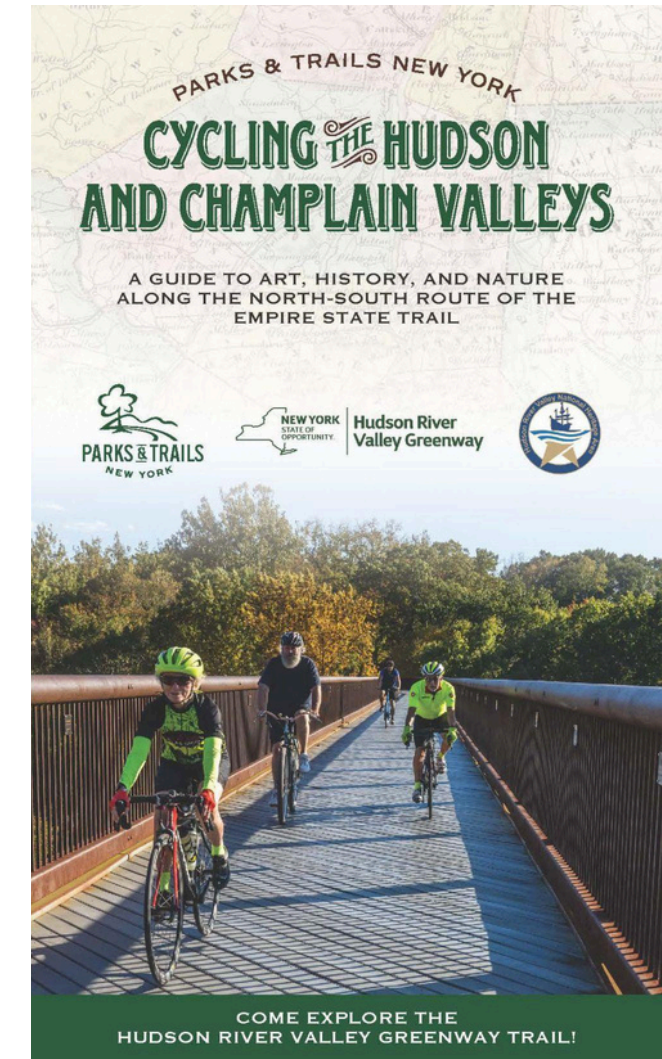
# RESOURCES



[www.CanalwayTrail.org](http://www.CanalwayTrail.org)



## Guidebooks



**Cycling the Erie Canal**

Private group · 14.2K members



+ Invite Share Joined ▾ ▾



# MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TRIP

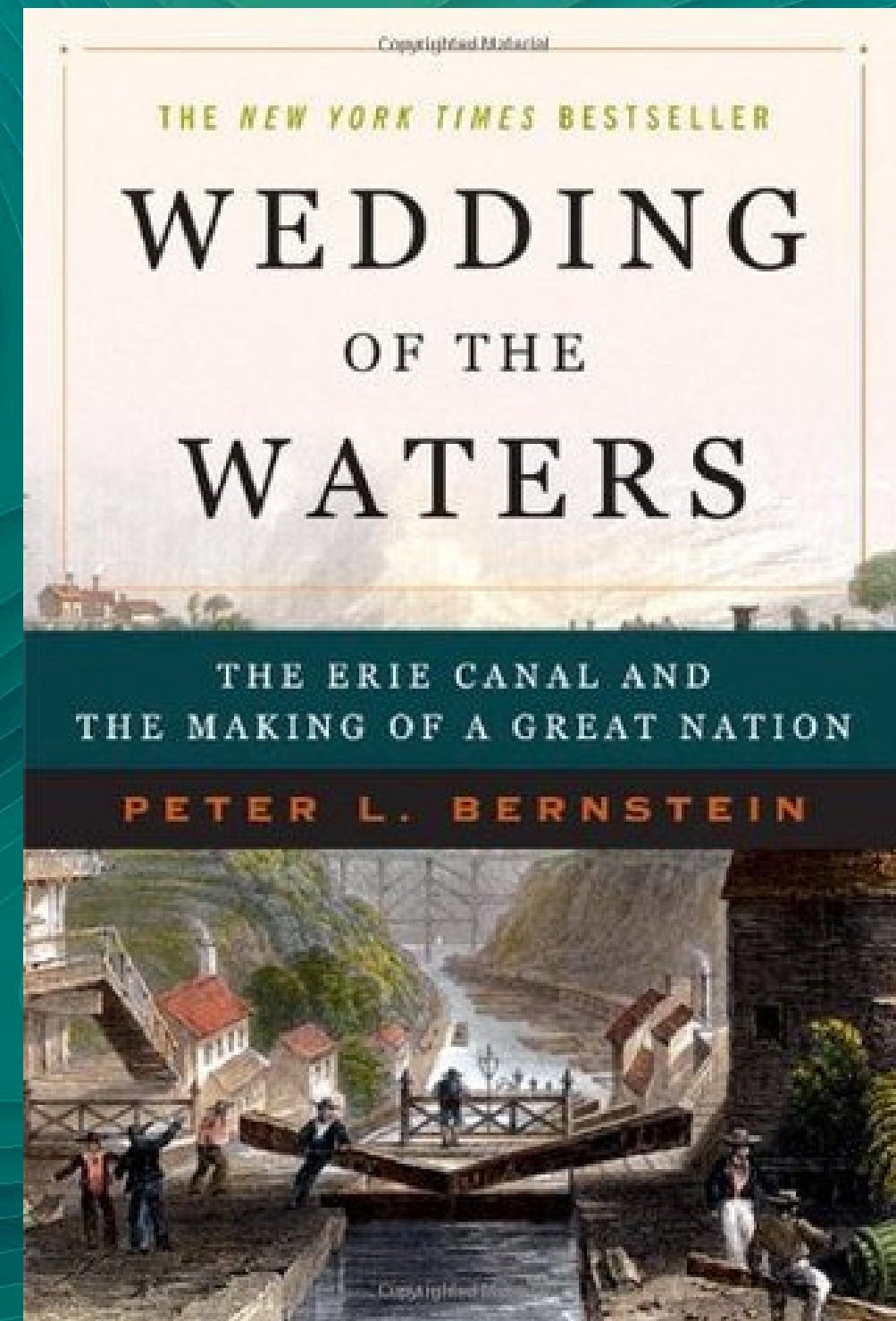


# Making the Most of Your Trip

Finding History Along the Erie Canal

# Study Beforehand

- Read at least one book about the Erie Canal
- Watch videos or listen to podcasts
- Look at maps and online resources
- Determine Must-Sees



# Stop and Smell the Roses... Or Read the Signs

- The Erie Canal was revolutionary in spite of a 4mph speed limit
- Interpretive signage throughout corridor
- Visit museums and attend programs



# Get to Know Canal Communities

- Talk to locals and locktenders
- Shop local
- Participate in community events







# Q & A





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