

Running and Walking in Brooklyn

Warwick Ford

Warwick Ford is an outdoor enthusiast and principal author of the Fun on Foot series of urban runners' and walkers' guides, the latest of which is "Fun on Foot in New York" released in spring 2009. He is presently in training for his first marathon, the 2009 ING New York City Marathon. Visit www.funonfoot.com for more information or to link up with Warwick and his wife and running buddy Nola.

Brooklyn is an exciting part of New York City, full of character and diversity. It also has an enthusiastic running community, some excellent running clubs, and some outstanding running trails. Brooklyn is convenient to reach from Manhattan, either on foot from Downtown or by subway from anywhere on the island, so you do not have to be a Brooklyn dweller to consider running or walking here.

The focal point for running in Brooklyn is Prospect Park, Brooklyn's answer to Central Park. It is 526 acres, roughly two-thirds the size of Central Park. It has a paved loop road, 3.35 miles around, closed to vehicle traffic much of the time. It has some significant hills at the northern end, making for a great training location. It is easily reached by subway, or you can connect on foot from City Hall via the Brooklyn Bridge, scenic Brooklyn Heights, and Downtown Brooklyn (about four miles).

For longer distance runs, I love the triangle of Prospect Park, Bay Ridge, and Coney Island. You can get from Prospect Park to the Bay Ridge shore via Fort Hamilton Parkway, Leif Ericson Park, and the shore trail. The shore trail will also take you on to the Coney Island Boardwalk. You can then get from Coney Island back to Prospect Park via wide and friendly Ocean Parkway. The whole loop is about 20 miles but you can easily just do pieces of it since there are subway stations at all apexes of the triangle. Both Bay Ridge and Prospect Park are excellent places to end a long run because there are many good casual restaurant/bars close by for winding down afterwards. Coney Island is not so good for restaurants and bars but it does have an amusement park and Nathan's Famous hot dogs so it may work for you as a destination.

The third leg noted above is the route of the Brooklyn Half-Marathon run in late May – the course of that race involves a couple of loops of Prospect Park followed by the run along Ocean Parkway to finish on the Coney Island boardwalk. This is a great race that I would recommend to anyone.

Brooklyn also has some excellent longer distance running further out. The trail following the Belt Parkway along the shore can take you about seven miles from Canarsie to Sheepshead Bay, optionally continuing further along the streets to Coney Island. There is also a long route connecting that trail to the Rockaway Beach boardwalk in Queens. All of the endpoints in the above – Canarsie, Sheepshead Bay, and the Rockaways - are served by subway so you can devise some very interesting outings here without making it an out-and-back route.

Even if you are not so keen on long runs, be sure to run or walk the Brooklyn Bridge (and/or the Manhattan Bridge) and continue up to Brooklyn Heights to admire the Manhattan skyline from that angle.

Enjoy your running or walking in New York's most fascinating borough, Brooklyn!
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Image 1: Prospect Park

Image 2: The Shore Trail, Brooklyn

