

Where to Run, Walk in New York: Old Favorites and New Ideas

Warwick Ford

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New York City is the best running and walking city in the world, thanks to the many pleasant parks, riverside and coastal trails, and the enthusiasm of local runners and walkers. New Yorkers are generally very committed pedestrians, with the automobile taking a low ranking as a desirable means of day-to-day transport. On top of that, there is an enormous athletic running and walking community with activities ranging from frequent competitive road races to organized recreational fun runs or walks.

However, even with that backdrop, New Yorkers and visitors to the city often feel they do not get outdoors enough. Something that always helps one get out more is a good choice of route. When running or walking in an attractive and interesting environment, time passes more quickly and the inevitable result is spending more time outdoors exercising. This applies equally to competitive athletes in training, recreational visitors, and everyone between.

The city has some very well known exercising places. The one that everyone knows and loves is Central Park. It is indeed a great place to run. I live on the Upper West Side and run there more than anywhere else. However, in training for a marathon, I can assure you that repeatedly running around the Park Drives loop soon loses its appeal. I need some variety. The city also has other well-known favorites, such as the Hudson trail from Riverside Park down to Battery Park. But that also is of limited appeal in practice.

So here are a few ideas for different places to exercise around the city - routes you might want to use to make your exercising more interesting.

Let us start with something really simple, which visitors will embrace. Everyone wants to run or walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. But then what? Most people turn around and run or walk straight back. However, you can easily connect from the Brooklyn end of that bridge to the walkway of the Manhattan Bridge and come back to Manhattan that way. You have fewer crowds, no bicycles, and new scenery all the way.

For longer distance exercisers in Uptown, especially on the East Side, here is a winning idea. Run over the Queensboro Bridge and north through Queens to Astoria and the ramp onto the Triborough (or RFK) Bridge. Cross that bridge to Wards Island and connect to the East River footbridge. Complete the loop on the East River multiuse trail. The scenery is spectacular and the running on the bridges totally exhilarating.

On the West Side, consider running or walking up the Hudson to Dyckman Street and climbing the bluffs into beautiful Fort Tryon Park. Go past the Cloisters and the fort and catch a train back.

As another idea, consider the Jersey side of the Hudson. You can catch a ferry from Midtown to North Hoboken and run about eight miles down the Hudson, with a magnificent skyline view of Manhattan all the way. You end in Liberty State Park, 2000 feet from the Statue of Liberty. Have a beverage at the marina and catch a ferry or train back to Downtown Manhattan.

There are also several exciting routes from Downtown Manhattan extending into Brooklyn. Yet another idea is to ride the Staten Island Ferry and do some fascinating runs there.

New York City has so much to offer in terms of attractive running environments. Be sure to take advantage of them all!

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Image 1: Central Park

Image 2: Liberty State Park

