



Eastern Parkway

4

Length:
Estimated travel time:
Attractions:

2.5 miles
Biking—30 minutes; Walking—1.5 hours
Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Library, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn Museum, Weeksville Historical Society, Brooklyn Children’s Museum, Mount Prospect Park, McNair Park, Franklin Avenue Shuttle Community Garden, historic neighborhoods of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, Wingate

Character: Sheltered historic parkway with cross-traffic at intersections.

Directions at a Glance
Starting at northern corner of Prospect Park, at intersection of Grand Army Plaza and Flatbush Avenue in front of the Brooklyn Public Library

- Mile**
- 0.0 Begin in front of Prospect Park at Grand Army Plaza. Cross Flatbush Avenue to plaza in front of the Brooklyn Public Library’s Central Library.
 - 0.1 Walk across plaza to Eastern Parkway. Cross Eastern Parkway at Underhill, traveling around circle counter-clockwise
 - 0.2 Turn right on service road. Multi-use path begins on median strip between service road and main drive of parkway.
 - 0.6 Cross Eastern Parkway at Washington Avenue. Cross Washington Avenue to pedestrian/bike path through parkway mall.
 - 2.5 End at Buffalo Avenue.



Tropical Paradise: The space-age conservatory at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden provides relief from winter without the high airfares.

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Subways

Take the 2 or 3 to Grand Army Plaza. Other subway lines are nearby. (For the latest information, visit the MTA website at www.mta.info or call 718-330-1234).

Where to Eat

You can find restaurants and grocery stores along Nostrand, Kingston, and Utica Avenues. The Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden also contain eateries.

Public Restrooms

Public restrooms can be found in the Brooklyn Public Library, Mount Prospect Park, Brower Park, and Lincoln Terrace Park.

Area History

Any way you cut it, Eastern Parkway is an only-in-Brooklyn experience. It combines the nineteenth century grandeur of an Olmsted design with dizzying cultural diversity.

Eastern Parkway follows the course of Jamaica Pass, a low area between two terminal moraines. A moraine is an accumulation of boulders, stones, or other debris carried and deposited by a glacier. The Parkway is a natural land route, the site of an historic Native American path. The British took this route in the summer of 1776 on their way to confront rebellious Americans in what is now Prospect Park.

Built between 1870 and 1874, it is the world's first parkway, the testing ground for an idea that Olmsted and Vaux adopted from similar grand boulevards in Paris and Berlin. Eastern Parkway, however, is much longer than these and, instead of cutting through an already dense city, was built through what was then a largely undeveloped countryside. Olmsted and Vaux envisioned a pleasant carriage drive between two tree-lined pedestrian malls. Two service roads formed the outer edges of the route, facilitating delivery to the luxurious residences that Olmsted anticipated would line the route of the parkway.

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Brooklyn stoops: These Crown Heights row houses boast a variety of window shapes and the omnipresent New York high steps to the parlor floor.

With the turn of the century boom in Brooklyn’s population, the parkway’s character changed from a pleasant country drive to a major thoroughfare.

Trip Description

The marked bikeway begins at Washington Avenue, just past the Brooklyn Museum. If you’re on a bike, walk it up until that point. Don’t worry—there’s enough to see and do along this stretch that slowing down is well worth it. If you’re in a hurry, however, the best bike route to Washington Avenue is the center island along the north side of Eastern Parkway, which begins just past Underhill Avenue. Avoid biking on the central vehicular lane. Traffic within the roadway of the Parkway is crowded and speedy. Cars will be

zinging past you less than two feet away. The Parkway starts at the central branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. Then it continues through **Crown Heights**, a neighborhood shared by two highly contrasting cultures: African/Caribbean and



This Saturday Greenmarket at Grand Army Plaza attracts shoppers from all over Brooklyn.

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Lubavitcher Jewish.

Let's start at Grand Army Plaza. First stop: the Central Library of the **Brooklyn Public Library** (www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org) system, whose modernist façade faces the arch. You really owe it to yourself to step inside and admire the stone carvings over the entry. Once inside, you'll pass through a wide hallway to enter a light-filled atrium that, with the removal of the paper card catalog, now functions as a lively exhibition space. The library has bike racks out front.

As you begin traveling up Eastern Parkway, you will see Mount Prospect Park on the south side, and, on the north side a row of large apartment buildings, at one time among the most prestigious addresses in Brooklyn. Traveling along the southern, park-

side of the route by foot is recommended.

Mount Prospect Park is a pleasant little park that contains the second highest point in Brooklyn. The park features a brand new playground, bathrooms and one of the lushest lawns in New York City.

Right next door you'll find the north entrance to the world-famous **Brooklyn Botanic Garden** (www.bbg.org). Gardens are creatures of the seasons, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden takes advantage of all four of them. This 52-acre facility is jam-packed with amazing features including the Cranford Rose Garden in early summer and the always lovely Japanese garden. Even in the depths of winter you might find a blooming witchhazel outdoors, or you can visit the indoor Conservatory,

Brooklyn Botanic Garden in bloom



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Sukkah: Jewish custom requires dining in an open to the sky “desert hut” for eight days in autumn.

which replicates desert, rainforest, and temperate habitats. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden also has bathrooms and a café.

The adjacent **Brooklyn Museum of Art** is housed in a formidable Beaux Arts building. It is the second largest art museum in New York City, which in a city of art museums, says a lot. Its Egyptian collection is top notch and terrifically displayed. The museum also contains bathrooms and a café as well as a beautiful plaza for anyone to rest and enjoy. For current exhibits and events, visit their website at www.brooklynart.org. If you aren't careful, you can spend the entire day here. But you won't want to miss the rest of the parkway.

The bike lane begins at Washington Avenue on the south side of the Parkway. **Dr. Ronald E. McNair Park**

anchors the corner here. This is a very formal and dignified—yet leafy—park, a befitting memorial for the second African American to venture into space. The park is located within Crown Heights where the West Indian Carnival parade takes place each year on Labor Day. Hundreds of thousands line the route to cheer on a colorful procession of floats, steel drum bands and dancers. And the Caribbean food and craft stalls that line the service roads on that day would be a great reason to come even if the parade was not happening.

From here on, the buildings along the Parkway become a mixture of middle-class family row houses and small apartment buildings. You'll soon pass the **Franklin Avenue Shuttle Community Garden**. In its modest way, this garden is an expression of the culture of the local community. A

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Weeksville: A nineteenth century free black agricultural colony becomes a venue for the celebration of afro centric cultural life as the stilt-man "spirit" dances to a traditional drum band.

team of expert gardeners concentrate on growing the food that they grew up farming and eating.

The Parkway bends at Bedford Avenue. Just a little past this intersection, stop and look behind you for a pleasant view of stately trees, solid buildings, and active people. New York at her best.

The Brooklyn Children's Museum (www.bchildmus.org) is a wonderful side trip, especially if you're traveling with children. You'll find it at the corner of St. Marks and Brooklyn Avenues, six blocks to the north of the Parkway. The museum complex incorporates bits of recycled architecture, including a trolley kiosk from the Queensboro Bridge and an immense sewer pipe. But the creative exhibitions are the real reason for going.

Just a little bit before Brooklyn Avenue, pedestrian traffic includes more and more bearded men dressed in black suits, sporting fedoras. This is a sign that you're entering the Lubavitcher Hasidic area of Crown Heights. The Lubavitcher community is a branch of Orthodox Judaism with historical roots in eastern Europe. Because they are restricted from riding in automobiles or even elevators on the Sabbath, the Lubavitcher Hasidim live in close-knit neighborhoods where they can walk to temple, a practice that also creates a strong sense of local community. Their world headquarters is at the busy corner of Kingston Avenue.

The Parkway moves along to **Lincoln Terrace Park**. Eastern Parkway's ups and downs are gradual, so you may find surprising the park's initial steep slope—but remember, you are climb-



Lubavitch Headquarters at the corner of Eastern Parkway and Kingston Avenue.

ing a moraine. Many of the trees in the park are magnificent. The highlight is a grand European-style allée lined with large Sycamores. The tennis courts on Buffalo Avenue are popular, a good place to witness some excellent back and forth.

You are now officially in the historic community of **Weeksville**. This area was settled by free blacks in the late 1830s. It was one of the few places in New York in which black people could own property. The Parkway actually destroyed the character of the community by barging through the old streets and imposing a grid upon what had been a rambling village streetscape. The remnants of this community can be seen at 1698-1708 Bergen Street, between Buffalo and Rochester Avenues, where the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville (www.weeksvillesociety.org) is

headquartered.

Eastern Parkway ends two blocks past Rochester Avenue, near the intersection of Ralph Avenue. Eastern Parkway Extension, which does not have sheltered malls, continues on from Ralph Avenue. Turn off Eastern Parkway at Buffalo Avenue to start the next segment of the Greenway.

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