



Forest Park

6

Length: 3.5 miles

Estimated travel time: Biking—45 minutes; walking—2 hours

Attractions: Forest Park, which includes Seuffert Bandshell, Strack Pond, hiking trails, the Pine Grove, and Forest Park Carousel, Forest Hills Gardens (side trip)

Character: Protected park trails and low-traffic park roads. Forest Park Drive is auto-free between Woodhaven Boulevard and Metropolitan Avenue.

Directions at a Glance

Starting at Myrtle Avenue entrance to the park, across from 79th Lane

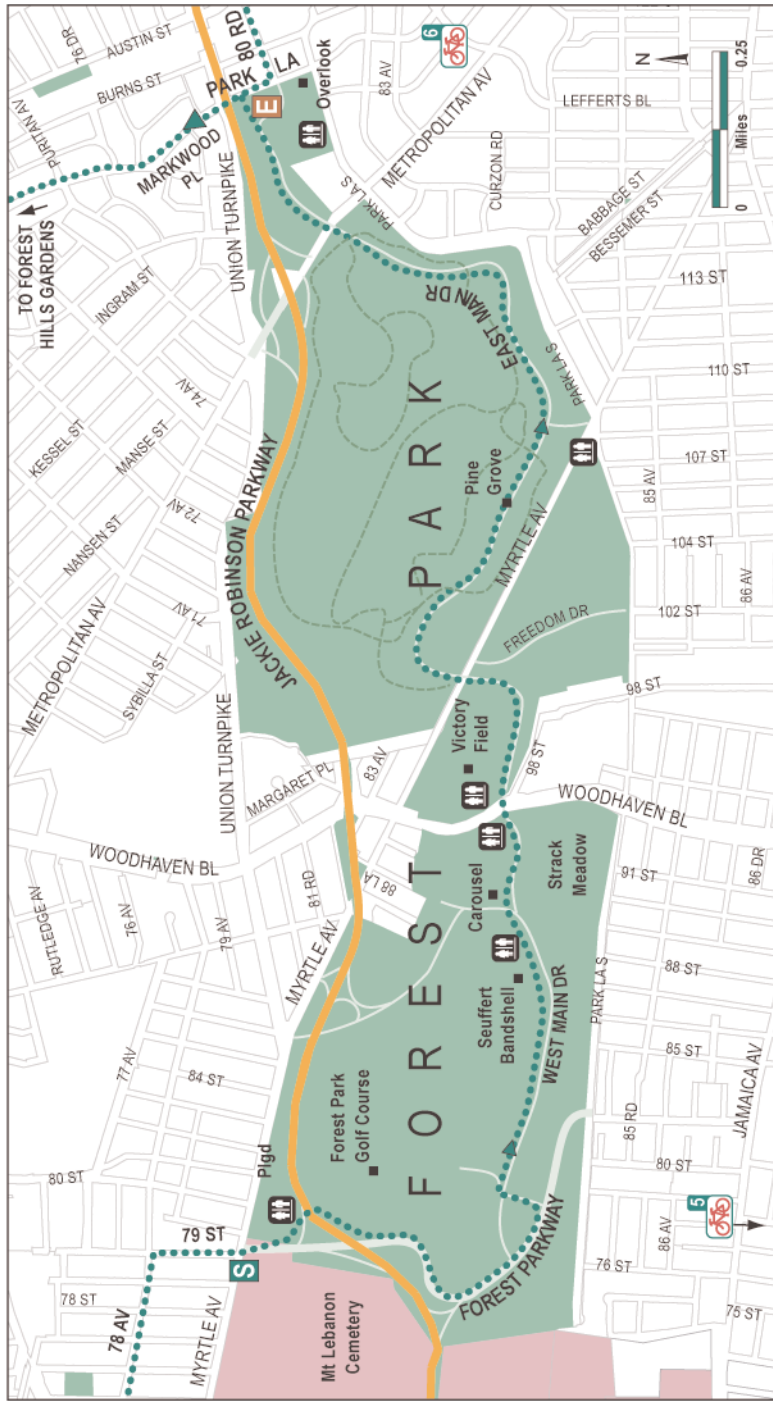
Mile

- 0.0 Follow marked trail around basketball court, bocce court and playground, then through a tunnel. The trail skirts the edge of the Forest Park Golf Course.
- 0.6 Trail runs into roadway to Jackie Robinson Parkway. Do not try to cross this road—it is a blind curve and cars are going very fast and not looking for pedestrians. Instead, turn left on walkway and continue on to intersection of Forest Park Drive.
- 0.7 Turn left, following signs for Seuffert Bandshell and Forest Park Golf Course.
- 1.6 Cross Woodhaven Boulevard.
- 2.0 Cross Myrtle Avenue.
- 3.2 Cross Metropolitan Avenue.
- 3.5 End at Forest Park Drive and Park Lane.



A tranquil Forest Park walk

FOREST PARK



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Subways

The J and Z (Z line rush hours only, no weekends) lines roughly parallel Forest Park through the Queens neighborhood of Woodhaven. The Woodhaven Boulevard stop offers an uncomplicated route to Forest Park and our starting point. (For the latest information, visit the MTA website at www.mta.info or call 718-330-1234).

Where to Eat

There are a number of eateries on Metropolitan Avenue.

Public Restrooms

There are restrooms in Forest Park at the Myrtle Avenue entrance, the visitor center on Woodhaven Boulevard and Forest Park Drive, Victory Field on Woodhaven Boulevard and near the Overlook.

Area History

Forest Park is one of the most pristine parks in New York City. Forest Park Drive was designed by the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1890's. Of the park's 543 acres, 411 are woodland. The rest of the park includes a golf course, ballfields, tennis courts, a bandshell, and even a carousel. This is a park that you could spend the day exploring.

The history of this park is an interesting example of inter-borough

jostling. It was originally purchased by Brooklyn, parcel by parcel, between the years 1895 and 1898, in the days when it was a forward-thinking metropolis and Queens was still a loose amalgam of farming villages. The land, part of the terminal moraine ridge line, is sloping. Not useful for farming, it was seen as a recreational resource for outdoors-starved Brooklynites. After the incorporation of Queens into greater New York City in 1898, the land was designated and preserved as part of the Queens park system.

While you're here, take a good look at the park's topography and vegetation. It preserves distinctive glacial features: kettle hole ponds, knobby hilltops (kettles and knobs), and "erratic" boulders. The forest is still largely native red oak and black oak. Many of the trees are over 150 years old.

The neighborhoods surrounding the park—Woodhaven, Richmond Hill, Kew Gardens, and Forest Hills—make wonderful sidetrips. The grand Victorian houses of north Richmond Hill are especially worth seeking out.

Trip Description

The Greenway through Forest Park is well-marked. You'll follow the bike route as it curves around the buildings and playing fields, through a tunnel, and then out near the Forest Park Golf Course. The forest is well managed; you'll



Shingle roofed pre-war homes along a tree lined boulevard at the edge of Forest Park

experience a refreshing variety of indigenous plants, including viburnums, ferns, and even—in season—ephemeral forest floor wildflowers.

You enter the park near a bocce court, which is just past the basketball court. Bocce is an Italian game that resembles a kind of leisurely lawn bowling mixed with shuffleboard. If a game is in progress, you owe it to yourself to stop and watch a European tradition still being passed on through a cohesive Italian community. You'll find a restroom in the park building next to the bocce courts.

After a leisurely tour around the golf course, you'll bump up against some concrete barriers. The curving road on the other side leads up to the Jackie Robinson Parkway. The automobiles are traveling fast and

can't see you until it's too late to stop. Do not try to cross this road. Instead, turn left on the walkway and follow it a short distance until the roadway forks with Forest Park Drive. Take the left fork, following the signs indicating Forest Park Golf Course and Seuffert Bandshell. Traffic is light through here, and there is a designated bike lane. So take it slow and enjoy the forest. You'll soon spot **Seuffert Bandshell** near Woodhaven Boulevard. Seuffert is a true Queens institution. The facilities have gone through several incarnations, the most recent upgrade being completed in 2000. During the warmer months, it's a venue for a wide variety of music.

The **Forest Park Carousel** presides just up the hill from the bandshell. The carousel's fancifully and intricately carved animals, created in 1903, are the work of Daniel

Muller, who created twelve carousels in his lifetime. This is one of the only two that have survived.

At some point you might want to dismount and follow one of the side paths (no bike riding allowed) for an even more intimate experience of the forest. Forest Park is known as a hiker's park for good reason. Just before you cross Woodhaven Boulevard, you may want to stop and experience the PFC Laurence **Strack Pond** on foot. Strack Pond is a beautiful kettle pond teeming with life including plants, salamanders, frogs and other wetland species. This pond provides nature lovers with a great spot to see butterflies, red-tailed hawks, and great blue herons. Visitors can enjoy the pond's trail and viewing area while listening to the calls of the Tufted Titmouse, the Baltimore Oriole, and the Kingbird.

After you cross Woodhaven, the hiking opportunities multiply. East Main Drive, closed to traffic, is a special stretch of the Greenway. Keep your eye out for the **Pine Grove**. This is an expanse of evergreen pine trees which was planted in 1914 after a tree blight devastated thousands of chestnut trees. The ground is soft and fragrant from all the fallen pine needles. The canopy is evergreen and softly rustling. In 1923, an additional 70 pine trees were planted on either side of the drive, one for each Richmond Hill or Woodhaven casualty of World War I.



Strack Pond is home to a three-acre freshwater wetland habitat. It's a great spot for bird and nature lovers to enjoy the kettle pond's tranquility.

For more extensive hiking through this 165-acre oak forest, take one of the three marked trails that all begin along the East Main Drive. The Blue Trail starts next to the LIRR overpass and is a 1.7-mile loop. The 2.4-mile Orange Trail can be picked up opposite the Pine Grove and takes you along the forest's perimeter. The Yellow Trail, designated a Millennium Trail in 2000, is located near Metropolitan Avenue, and is one mile. Both the Blue and Yellow Trails have interpretive signs and maps.

Shortly after crossing Metropolitan Avenue you'll spot the Overlook. This is the Queens Park Headquarters. While the view here is now blocked by trees and buildings, it's still a good spot to stop and loll on the grass to collect your energy before heading off into a more trafficked part of the Greenway.

Side Trip: Forest Hills Gardens

This sidetrip takes you through Forest Hills Gardens, a landmark in urban planning.

Forest Hills Gardens is a 175-acre planned community designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (landscape architect) and Grosvenor Atterbury (architect). Inspired by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement, the development was supposed to have been a model for middle-income communities, providing a taste of pre-industrial building and countryside for people toiling away in the city. Halfway through the development, however, a residents' organization took over and installed a series of restrictive covenants, turning the development into an upper-income community. Ironically, these same restrictive covenants may have preserved the character of the area. Today, this is a neighborhood of magnificent Tudor-style homes, lush greenery and stately trees.

To get there, take this route:

On leaving Forest Park, turn left on



Forest Hills Gardens was designed as an idealized tudor village with green spaces.

Park Lane. Cross the highway on Markwood Place into Forest Hills Gardens. Note: At this point, please walk your bike. This is a one-way route into a private residential community. The streets here are not public. If you want to preserve access for the future, please be on your best behavior.

Follow Markwood Place to Greenway North, which is the road that circles Forest Hill Gardens. Greenway North turns into Greenway South at Greenway Terrace. Stop and take it all in. Greenway Terrace is a brick-paved evocation of a European town square. The Long Island Railroad station is a particularly fine example of Tudor-style building.

Cross the square and exit under the LIRR tracks, turning right onto Continental Avenue.

Cross Queens Boulevard. Here Continental Avenue ends, and you are at the corner of 70th Road. Continue down 70th Road to 112th Street. Turn right on Jewel Avenue. Jewel Avenue is one of the more challenging blocks of the Greenway, with heavy traffic and a highway entrance speeding cars up even more. Ride carefully here.

Jewel Avenue turns into 69th Road. After it crosses the Grand Central Parkway (where you have a good view of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park), cross 69th Road at the traffic light on the corner, then backtrack slightly on foot to the marked paved path into Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

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