



# Kissena-Cunningham Corridor

8

**Length:** 5 miles  
**Estimated Travel time:** Biking—45 minutes; walking—2 hours  
**Attractions:** Kissena Corridor Park, Queens Botanical Garden, Kissena Park, Kissena Park Historic Grove, Kissena Park Velodrome  
**Character:** Mixed residential streets and sheltered park trails.

**Directions at a Glance**

*Starting at College Point Boulevard and Fowler Path (next to Lawrence Playground)*

- | Mile  | Mile   |
|---|--|
| 0.0 Turn right on College Point Boulevard. and left on Booth Memorial Avenue using the crosswalks for safety at this busy intersection.   | 2.7 Trail veers right and leaves street at 170th Street, skirting edge of Kissena Park Golf Course.  |
| 0.4 Turn left on 137th Street.  | 2.8 Cross Fresh Meadow Lane.   |
| 0.5 Turn right on 56th Avenue. Cross Main Street and continue to end.   | 2.9 At Utopia Parkway, dismount. On sidewalk, turn left, walk about 50 yards to Underhill, then turn right to cross Utopia. Remount, then continue forward on Underhill.   |
| 0.7 Right on 142nd Street.  | 3.2 Cross 188th Street.  |
| 0.9 Turn left on 56th Road.   | 3.6 Cross 58th Avenue.   |
| 1.3 Turn left at 150th Street. Trail enters Kissena Corridor near end of 150th Street.  | 3.7 At 196th Street, trail veers right to bridge over Long Island Expressway. At end of bridge, trail enters Cunningham Park, passing through Saint Francis Preparatory School and Public School 179 facilities. |
| 1.2 Follow trail around ball courts to Peck Avenue and 151st Street.  | 4.0 Just before Francis Lewis Boulevard, trail hooks right back towards 199th Street.  |
| 1.4 Continue forward on Peck Avenue.  | 4.2 Trail enters wooded corridor following 199th Street.   |
| 1.6 Just before Kissena Boulevard, trail veers left kitty-corner from the 153rd Street sign. Cross Kissena Boulevard to corner of Rose Avenue and Kissena Boulevard. Follow marked trail into Kissena Park. | 4.5 Bridge over 73rd Avenue.   |
| 2.3 Cross 164th Street to Underhill Avenue. Continue forward on Underhill Avenue.   | 4.8 Bridge over Francis Lewis Boulevard  |
|   | 5.0 Trail ends at ballfields.  |

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## Subways

Subway coverage is sparse in this area of Queens. The Flushing-Main Street stop on the 7 line is near the beginning of this segment. For your return trip, you can either back-track, or continue on to the next leg of the greenway to Alley Pond Park, and return via the Long Island Railroad. Be forewarned: You will need a permit to bring your bike on the LIRR. The MTA's website has permit applications that you can mail in, or you can acquire a permit at Grand Central or Penn Stations. (For the latest information, visit the MTA website at [www.mta.info](http://www.mta.info) or call 718-330-1234).

## Where to Eat

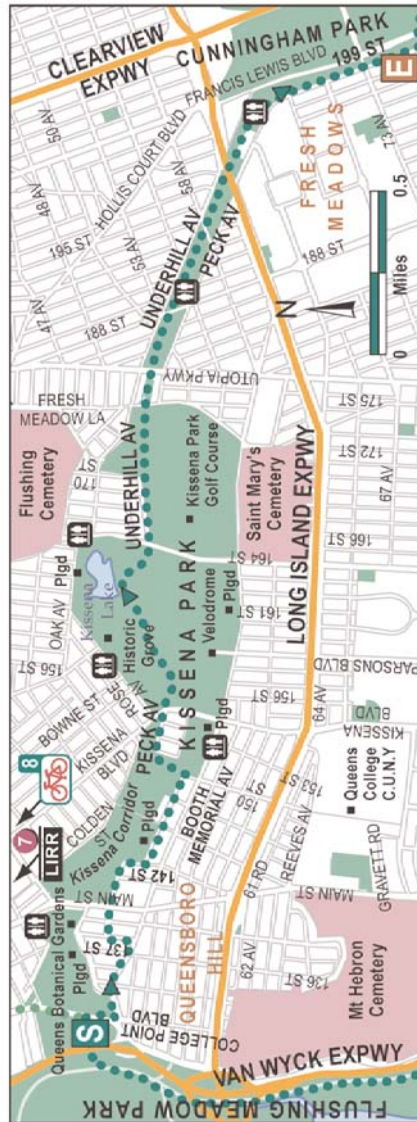
There are restaurants along the Long Island Expressway service road near 188<sup>th</sup> Street in Fresh Meadows and Francis Lewis Boulevard.

## Public Restrooms

Public restrooms can be found in the Queens Botanical Garden and Kissena Park (in the Kissena Boathouse near Oak Avenue and West 164<sup>th</sup> Street and at the tennis courts near Rose Avenue and Bowne Street).

## Area History

This segment of the greenway explores the historic township of Flushing, providing a broad perspective of the history of Queens. It includes some of the oldest and most significant historic buildings in New



York City, evidence of the agricultural history of Queens, and vivid encounters with the diverse immigrant communities that make up Queens.

Towards the end of the Flushing Meadows segment, the greenway

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roughly follows the channelized remnant of the Flushing River. By seventeenth century standards, the Flushing River was navigable, making the colonial town of Flushing a minor port serving the farmsteads of the surrounding region. The town was founded in 1642 by a colony from the Dutch city of Vlissingen—in Dutch, ‘v’ is pronounced similarly to ‘f’ in English. The town was officially chartered in 1645.

Almost from the beginning, specialty farming was an important part of the economy of Flushing. Possibly the first commercial nursery in the United States was established in 1735 by the Prince family. Leave it to the British—during the Revolutionary War, the British chopped down 3,000 cherry trees to make supports for hop vines, used in brewing beer. George Washington visited the nursery in 1789, as part of a presidential tour of Long Island. The site of the nursery is located just south of Northern Boulevard, between Prince Street and Flushing Creek. The site is completely built over and no trace of the nursery remains.

You can still find traces of the large nineteenth century nursery founded by the brothers Samuel Bowne Parsons and Robert Brown Parsons, descendants of one of the oldest and most socially prominent families in Flushing. Their nursery provided many of the trees used by Olmsted and Vaux in Central Park and Prospect Park. In the mid-1870s, Samuel Parsons opened a new

nursery near Kissena Lake. He even built a road, now known as Parsons Boulevard, to lead customers to his establishment. Samuel satisfied the eclectic and exotic horticultural tastes of the Victorian era and introduced many new plants into the trade, including the still popular Japanese maples. When he died in 1906, the city purchased the land of his nursery and combined it with several other parcels to form **Kissena Park**. In 1981, a group of summer interns happened upon an unusually diverse collection of trees near Rose Avenue and Parsons Boulevard. A survey of the species found nearly 100 separate species of trees, including many rarities. This 14-acre plot is now known as the **Historic Grove**.

Two other recent renovations have spiffed up Kissena Park. Historically, **Kissena Lake** was a natural pond. In the 1930s, it was drained and lined with concrete, making it a “bathtub lake.” Over the years, it became choked with algae and phragmites, an invasive weed. A recently completed renovation has left the lake sparkling, with a new aeration system, a natural edge leading to the lake, and a protected island for turtles and water fowl.

Just south of the lake you'll find the **Kissena Park Velodrome**, or bicycle track. This 400-meter, banked asphalt track was originally built in 1962 for the Olympic trials. It fell into disrepair, but a major renovation completed in 2004 reaffirmed its status as the robust hub of New York



*Shaded playgrounds and ball fields are an Underhill Playground feature.*

City's bicycle-racing community.

As you travel through any part of Queens, but especially the Flushing area, you cannot help but be struck by the borough's rich ethnic diversity. Approximately 140 different languages are spoken in Queens. Flushing, perhaps the oldest part of Queens, is home to some of its newest immigrant groups. In 1965, immigration laws changed to allow more immigration from non-European countries. According to the 2000 Census, the overall population in Queens increased since 1990 from 1.95 million to 2.22 million people, with 46 percent of those people foreign-born. The number of Asians increased from 229,830 to 390,164—an almost 70% increase. Today, more than one out of four residents of Flushing is of Asian descent, from countries such as China, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines,

Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Of course, all of these countries have very different cultures. Flushing is a vital residential, cultural, and commercial center for all these groups.

### Trip Description:

Most of this stretch of the Greenway is everything that a greenway should be: an extended corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists shielded by green and lively parks. At one end is the superb Queens Botanical Garden; at the other, the start of the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, which is now a protected trail traveling through a wooded corridor.

You come out of Flushing Meadows Corona Park on College Point Boulevard. When you reach College Point Boulevard, you'll be facing the **Queens Botanical Garden**. If you

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want to visit, cross College Point Boulevard to Blossom Avenue, then follow the perimeter of the garden to the main entrance on Main Street near Dahlia Avenue. The Queens Botanical Garden is a gem, a botanical garden that takes seriously its relationship to the diverse cultures and needs of Queens residents. For more information on hours of operation and upcoming events go to [www.queensbotanical.org](http://www.queensbotanical.org) or call 718-886-3800.

Backtracking to College Point Boulevard, turn right, then make a left on Booth Memorial Avenue. You'll be climbing steeply. Walkers may want to follow the perimeter of the botanical garden along 133<sup>rd</sup> Street, then Elder and Peck Avenues, then right to 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Bicyclists—keep with the flow of traf-

fic by staying on Booth Memorial Avenue, turning left at 137<sup>th</sup> Street. At 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue, turn right; after you cross Main Street, you'll be on the edge of **Kissena Corridor Park**. Follow 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 142<sup>nd</sup> Street. Turn right onto 142<sup>nd</sup> Street and left onto 56<sup>th</sup> Road to 150<sup>th</sup> Street.

Gardeners and appreciators of Asian vegetables will want to make a short sidetrip to visit a vast community garden mostly worked by people of Korean descent. The garden is noteworthy not only for its scale, but also for the interesting techniques and vegetables employed by the gardeners. To find it, turn left at 146<sup>th</sup> Street, then left again at Colden Street, which follows the northeastern edge of the Kissena Corridor Park. You'll find the gardens between Laburum and Juniper Avenues, appropriately, across from Rachel L. Carson Intermediate



*Beautiful stone work can be found in Kissena Park.*

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*The sonic playground in Underhill Playground*

School. Backtrack to Booth Memorial Avenue to get back on the Greenway.

At 150<sup>th</sup> Street, the Greenway turns left, into Kissena Corridor Park—look for the tell-tale greenway markers as well as large wooden posts painted brown. The trail wraps around the far end of the ball courts to meet up with Peck Avenue. Follow Peck Avenue until just before it stops at Kissena Boulevard. You'll notice the trail veers slightly to the left, providing a safe crossing to the corner of Rose Avenue.

Cross Kissena Boulevard into **Kissena Park**, passing through gates decorated with steel profiles of an old-fashioned railroad locomotive. A marker in the pavement designates the spot through which a rail line ran. Follow the signs, which designate a clear route through the park. To learn more about the natural and social history of the park, look for the staircase leading up to the

Kissena Park Environmental Center and the Historic Grove.

The route exits the park at 164<sup>th</sup> Street and Underhill Avenue. Follow Underhill Avenue until it ends at 170<sup>th</sup> Street. Bear right onto a trail that travels alongside the Kissena Park Golf Course.

The protected section of the trail ends at Utopia Parkway. If you're on a bike, dismount and, staying on the sidewalk, turn left and walk a few yards over to Underhill Avenue. Cross Utopia Parkway, hop back on your bike, and proceed on Underhill Avenue. You'll be crossing 188<sup>th</sup> Street and 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue. At 196<sup>th</sup> Street, the trail veers to the right to travel on the pedestrian bridge over the Long Island Expressway. At the end of the bridge you are now in **Cunningham Park**. Follow the trail as it passes between two schools, Public School

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179 on your right, and Saint Francis Preparatory School on your left. Just before Francis Lewis Boulevard, the trail hooks right, back towards 199<sup>th</sup> Street. This hook can be a little tricky to find: if you find yourself on the sidewalk along the Francis Lewis Boulevard, you've gone too far.

Near 199<sup>th</sup> Street, the trail begins to follow a wooded corridor, which is the route of the old Vanderbilt Motor Parkway. This segment of the Greenway, somewhat arbitrarily, ends along 199<sup>th</sup> Street near 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Greenway bypasses one of the most interesting parts of Cunningham Park: the southern forest with its mature trees and kettle ponds. Unlike many forests in New York City, the understory here is largely intact, allowing many different ferns and wildflowers to flourish—a wonderful side trip before the next leg of our

journey. To get there, continue traveling forward on 199<sup>th</sup> Street, then cross Union Turnpike to enter the park. Bicyclists, please respect the delicate character of this forest by either locking up your bike or walking it as you explore this rare, nearly pristine area.

To get back to a subway, retrace the route back to Main Street, turn right to Roosevelt Avenue where you'll find the last stop on the 7 line, or go on to the last segment of the Greenway.



*Community gardeners taking a break from the midday sun*

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