



Ocean Parkway

2

Length:
Estimated travel time:
Attractions:

5.9 miles (one way)
Biking—45 minutes; Walking—2 hours
Gravesend Cemetery, residential neighborhoods of Manhattan Terrace, Ocean Parkway, Borough Park, and Ditmas Park

Character:

Sheltered historic parkway with cross traffic at intersections.

Directions at a Glance

Starting at corner of Ocean Parkway and Surf Avenue

Mile

- 0.0 Start on Ocean Parkway where it meets Seabreeze Avenue. Head north on Ocean Parkway staying on the left, (western) side, of the parkway.
- 5.1 Follow Ocean Parkway to Church Avenue. Bicyclists must keep to the bike lane.
- 5.3 At southwest corner of Church Avenue, cross Ocean Parkway to eastern side. Cross Church Avenue to northeast corner, then cross service road to bike/pedestrian path.
- 5.7 Follow path as it curves towards the east.
- 5.75 Path ends. Cross East 8th Street. Turn left.
- 5.8 Turn right at Park Circle. Follow circle counter-clockwise to entrance of Prospect Park.
- 5.9 End at the park entrance.



Hand in Hand: Some moments are too good for cycling.

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Subways

The F, Q and B (the B train does not operate on weekends) trains each make several stops on streets parallel to Ocean Parkway. (For the latest transit information, visit the MTA website at www.mta.info or call 718-330-1234).

Where to Eat

Ocean Parkway is almost completely residential, however, you can find businesses, including neighborhood restaurants and grocery stores, on many of the intersecting streets. Neptune Avenue, and Avenues U, P, N, I, J, Kings Highway, Ditmas Avenue, and Church Avenue are especially bustling. The Assyrian-Jewish shopping center at the corner of East 3rd Street and Kings Highway is a great place to shop for middle-eastern specialties. Avenue J is the spot for kosher restaurants and bakeries. One of the best pizzerias in the city, DiFara's Pizza, is located on Avenue J and East 15th Street.

Public Restrooms

Public restrooms can be found: in Grady Playground near Brighton 4th Road and Brighton 4th Street; in the Colonel David Marcus Memorial Playground near East 5th Street and Avenue P; in Friends Field Park near East 4th Street and Avenue L; in Di Glio Playground near McDonald Avenue and Avenue F and at the Parade Grounds near Prospect Park.



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Ocean Parkway on a summer day

Area History

Conceived by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1866, Ocean Parkway was to be one of the four legs of a parkway system radiating out from Prospect Park. Only two of the legs were built: Eastern Parkway and Ocean Parkway, finished in 1880. The parkways were inspired by the boulevards of Paris and Berlin, but leave it to Americans to make them wider and longer.

The Olmsted/Vaux parkways were designed to be both scenic and practical. The main thoroughfare, the carriage drive, was originally conceived as a "shaded pleasure drive," but now functions as a busy roadway. Shaded, grassy malls buffer both sides of the drive. Here's where you'll find the bike and pedestrian paths and long rows of benches. Service roads line the outer edge of the parkway, providing safe access and parking.

In 1894, a strip of Ocean Parkway's pedestrian lane became the country's first bicycle path. Reportedly, so many bicyclists crowded the path on opening day, the city was forced to widen it. In 1983, the National Park Service declared Ocean Parkway a National Scenic Landmark. Traveling along Ocean Parkway is more about the pleasure of the whole route, rather than any particular "sights" along the way. It is about the trees and the grass that provide a green counterpoint to a hodge-podge of twentieth-century New York buildings, from luxury apartments to substantial single-family houses, plus a few synagogues, schools, and other institutions. The architecture ranges from solid brick pre-war cooperative housing to contemporary single-family residences. Along the way are some surprising details, including the entrance arch to 270 Ocean Parkway, which is pure 1960s Miami Beach.

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It's the people who make Ocean Parkway interesting. On a busy weekend day, you'll encounter hundreds. Typical users include Orthodox Jewish families walking on the Sabbath, Russian retirees reading Cyrillic-printed newspapers, and many, many other walkers, bikers, bladders, and sit-on-a-bench-and-watch-the-world-go-byers.

Trip Description

Ocean Parkway starts a block away from the Coney Island boardwalk. The bike path runs along the western mall of the parkway. Don't let the trees and the grass lull you into complacency at intersections, however. Cars making right-hand turns off of Ocean Parkway can be unaware that bicyclists and pedestrians are crossing the street alongside of them. So look twice, then look again.

After a couple of blocks, the on- and off-ramps of the Belt Parkway interrupt the flow of Ocean Parkway. Fortunately for bicyclists, the authorized route is fairly well-signed. Just remember to stay on the western side of the parkway, and you'll be fine. The eastern side is reserved for pedestrians only.

After the Belt Parkway, it's a straight shot through middle-class Brooklyn to Church Avenue, where the parkway ends. A couple of worthwhile meanders will reveal both the contemporary life in the neighborhoods surrounding Ocean Parkway, as well as the deep historical roots of Brooklyn.

Just north of Coney Island is a small area whose grid system of streets is at odd angles to the neighborhood around it. This is what remains of the old town of Gravesend, a village founded in 1643 by a group of English

The Boardwalk near Ocean Parkway where this greenway segment begins.



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settlers lead by Lady Deborah Moody. By all accounts, Lady Moody was both cultured and fiercely independent. She became the first female grantee for land ownership in the New World. **Gravesend** was the only permanent settlement in early colonial America planned and directed by a woman. The outlines of the original village design are still easily discernible on the map: look for a large square set at a counter-angle to the surrounding grid. The square is bisected on each side, forming four smaller squares. The village graveyard, perhaps the most visible remnant of old Gravesend, sits at the outside corner of one of the smaller squares, at the intersection of Van Sicklen Street and Village Road South. The graveyard is closed to the public, but you can peek in through the fence. To explore Gravesend, take a left on Avenue V.

Kings Highway crosses Ocean Parkway a block past Avenue R. Kings Highway is another exception to Brooklyn's grid system, running roughly south to northeast. This was an old Native American path, then later a farm road. During the American Revolution, British troops marched up Kings Highway, to present day East New York, to attack American forces.

Olmsted and Vaux designed Ocean Parkway to extend all the way to the entrance to Prospect Park but with the construction of the Prospect Expressway, a brain child of Robert Moses, Ocean Parkway (as a park-

way) ends abruptly at Church Avenue.

When you come to Church Avenue, cross Ocean Parkway to the right, and make a left across Church Avenue. The path continues on Ocean Parkway, which becomes a service road at this point, running alongside the Prospect Expressway. The bike path ends near the pedestrian bridge at East 8th Street, but the service road continues to Park Circle. Follow Park Circle counter-clockwise to the Prospect Park entrance (between the two horse statues, called the *Horse Tamers*).