



# Prospect Park

# 3

**Length:** 1.6 miles for half loop, 3.2 miles for the entire park loop

**Estimated travel time:** Biking—15 minutes; Walking—1 hour, suggest 2-3 hours to explore.

**Attractions:** Parade Ground, Prospect Lake, Wollman Rink, Audubon Center at the Boathouse, Prospect Park Zoo, Lefferts Homestead, Carousel, Bandshell, Third Street Playground, Battle Pass, Harmony Playground, Vale of Cashmere, Tennis House, Concert Grove

**Character:** Asphalt road throughout the park that is auto-free on weekends and non-rush hours.

### Directions at a Glance

*Starting at Park Circle entrance to Prospect Park*



### Mile

- 0.0 Follow Park Circle into Prospect Park, passing Parade Ground on your right.
- 0.1 Turn right onto South Lake Drive. Follow South Lake Drive towards Grand Army Plaza. Veer right to park exit road.
- 1.6 End at Grand Army Plaza.

If you are traveling the Greenway from North to South, enter the Park at Grand Army Plaza, turn onto West Drive. Follow West Drive to the Park Circle exit.

*Grand Army Plaza*



### Subways

To get to Park Circle, take the F train to Ft. Hamilton Parkway or the Q to Parkside Avenue. To get to Grand Army Plaza take the 2 or 3. (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 several food kiosks within the park as well as Song Bird Cafe in the Boathouse. Outside the park, Park Slope’s Seventh Avenue, Windsor Terrace’s Prospect Park West and Flatbush Avenue have a wide variety of restaurants and several grocery stores.

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Prospect Park Boathouse

## Public Restrooms

Prospect Park has several public restrooms which are open daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.. Restrooms can also be found within the Brooklyn Public Library's Central Library.

## Area History

Frederick Law Olmsted's and Calvert Vaux's first foray into New York City was designing Manhattan's Central Park in 1858. Then they took what they had learned and designed Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

Prospect Park takes its name from Mount Prospect, which lies on the other side of Flatbush Avenue from the park. The borough fathers had originally intended Mount Prospect to be part of Prospect Park. But Calvert Vaux convinced them that Flatbush Avenue would be a marring disruption. Luckily, tracts of land to

the south of their allocated parcels were available for purchase, and the 526-acre diamond outline of Prospect Park was born. The park was laid out in 1866 and 1867.

The land had a significant Revolutionary War history. Look for **Battle Pass** on the East Drive just north of the zoo (look for the plaque). This is the site of one of the major actions in the Battle of Brooklyn, which was the first battle between the United Colonies and the British following the issuance of the Declaration of Independence. At this spot on August 27, 1776, British forces overwhelmed some 900 Americans under the command of Major-General John Sullivan. After the Americans surrendered, some 500 were killed by Scot Highlanders, German Hessians and English infantry and cavalry.

For information on upcoming events within Prospect Park, stop at any

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entrance sign where there are maps and up-to-date program information, visit the Prospect Park website at [www.prospectpark.org](http://www.prospectpark.org), or contact the Prospect Park Alliance at 718-965-8999.

On weekends and outside of rush hour, Prospect Park is auto-free. Most of your company will be huffing, puffing joggers and serious racing bicyclists. Don't use them as an example. Instead, experience the Park at a leisurely pace, much as you would inside a horse-driven carriage on a no-rush Sunday afternoon. Open up your senses, and see the unfolding views as a series of panoramic pictures.

## Trip Description

The following trip description starts at Park Circle.

You will see the **Parade Ground** at

this location which has bathrooms, a snackbar, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts and soccer and baseball fields.

After you pass Park Circle, you can't miss the Peristyle, also known as the Grecian Shelter, on your right. Designed by McKim, Mead & White in the neoclassical style with columns, the structure both shelters and punctuates the landscape.

Rounding another bend, you'll be on East Lake Drive which climbs steadily past **Wollman Rink** into the Midwood section of the park. But don't miss the **Audubon Center**, housed in the Boathouse, which lies behind some trees just past **Concert Grove**. The Center has nature exhibits and an idyllic esplanade along the tiny Lullwater Lake—well worth a stop.

The **Prospect Park Zoo** is another



*In the shade of giants: A young tree near Prospect Lake survives and waits for an opening to the sky.*



*A family enjoys a day in the sun at Prospect Park's Long Meadow.*

worthwhile stop for nature-lovers. Its presence in the park is muted, but you'll notice its back boundary nestled into the outer edge of the Midwood. The Prospect Park Zoo is open all summer and spring weekends and has lots of great activities as well as a bathroom and snackbar. For more information go to [www.prospectparkzoo.com](http://www.prospectparkzoo.com).

You'll find the entrance to the zoo on Flatbush Avenue if you take the park road exit by the Boathouse and then turn left. If you do this, you'll pass **Lefferts Homestead**, a restored Dutch Farmhouse built in 1777, and the festive **Carousel**.

Back on the drive in the park, you'll really start to climb as you venture further into the Midwood, the shady heart of the park's wild forest. Take it slow and let the world pass you by.

You'll be having a much better time. To your left will be a steep wooded slope, the backside of the terminal moraine that forms the backbone of the park.

Relief will be in sight as you reach the northern end of the Long Meadow. You'll still be climbing, but for not much longer. The **Vale of Cashmere** will be to your right. This is an especially pretty and tranquil spot with its lush flowering vegetation and flowing water fountains. It gets its name from an epic poem in 1817 by Sir Thomas Moore. If you wish, follow the path down to an intricate series of formal ponds.

The drive exits at **Grand Army Plaza**. After you get yourself to Grand Army Plaza, look around a bit. This is one of the grandest urban spaces in New York. The plaza is an oval. Its center-



*Beautiful sunset at Prospect Park.*

piece is an 80-foot arch, designed by John H. Duncan, designer of Grant's Tomb in Manhattan. Completed in 1892, the arch honors the Union forces in the Civil War with sculptures by Frederick McMonnies, who also designed the Horse Tamers. The fountain in the center, Bailey Fountain, recently restored, was completed in 1932. The fountain features allegorical figures often interpreted as Wisdom and Fertility. On Saturdays, this is the site of a lively farmers market, where you can pick up a snack.

If you are entering the park from Grand Army Plaza, turn right onto West Drive. The West Drive starts off nice and easy with the Long Meadow on your left. This segment is almost a mile long. Past the **Tennis House**, you'll see the Pools, which mark the beginning of the park's Ravine, which was restored between 1998 and 2000. The first building you'll encounter to

your left is the **Picnic House**, and then the Tennis House. A little further on to your left you'll see the **Bandshell** at 9<sup>th</sup> Street. This is the venue for Celebrate Brooklyn, a fabulous series of free performances held each summer. Call 718-768-0855 or go to [www.celebratebrooklyn.org](http://www.celebratebrooklyn.org).

Rounding the bend past a complex of ballfields, you'll be going downhill to Prospect Lake. Olmsted and Vaux took advantage of the original flat farmland to hollow out this sparkling waterbody.



*Fall colors are reflected in the waters of Prospect Lake.*

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