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Hidden Brooklyn Gems - Part I

New York City, Brooklyn, 3 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Scratching the surface of Brooklyn's hidden gems: from Park Slope to Brooklyn Heights and Dumbo.

Photo: Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park. By Sarah.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - New York City, Brooklyn

DAY NOTE: You'll need a home base to explore Brooklyn, and Park Slope's Bed and Breakfast on the Park is a charming, homey option in an elegant brownstone on the edge of Prospect Park. (For a larger hotel, and a location closer to Manhattan, try the Brooklyn Marriott.) Amble through the park out to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for a tranquil walk: highlights include the rose garden in summer, spring's cherry trees in bloom, and the Japanese garden. If you've got the energy and the inclination, the Brooklyn Museum is just past the entrance to the Botanic Garden. After a full day of exploring the area, have an early dinner at the small but renowned Italian trattoria Al di La. Later on, take a stroll along Park Slope's Fifth Avenue for a taste of Brooklyn's nightlife; the Gate is a great spot for an outdoor drink.



Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Bonsai bonanza



Brooklyn Museum of Art

Stately museum near Prospect Park houses vast art collection



Al di Là Trattoria

Homey Italian trattoria



Gate (The)

Sip a beer with your dog



Alma

Mexican with a view

Day 3 - Brooklyn

DAY NOTE: For a leisurely final day, have Sunday brunch at Applewood (dinners here are also sensational) and spend the afternoon lazing around Prospect Park.



Applewood

Slow food New American



Prospect Park

Brooklyn's largest park

Day 2 - New York City, Brooklyn

DAY NOTE: On your second day, explore a new area of Brooklyn: Brooklyn Heights and Dumbo. Wander around the historic Brooklyn Heights neighborhood and end up at the Promenade, where you can walk northwards along the East River and enjoy picturesque views of the Manhattan skyline. Once you reach the Brooklyn Bridge, you enter Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, a great place to stop for a picnic or an ice cream at Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory. For dinner, try the nearby Superfine, or take a trek out to Carroll Gardens/Red Hook (F train to Carroll Street) and sample some great Mexican food at Alma. The real draw here is the rooftop dining area, where you can sip margaritas or mojitos while taking in another, even more stunning angle of that famous skyline at sunset.



Empire - Fulton Ferry State Park

Nine acres of grass

Day 1 - New York City, Brooklyn

QUICK NOTE

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contact:

tel: +1 718 623 7200
<http://www.bbg.org>

location:

900 Washington Ave
New York NY 11238

hours:

Apr-Sep: Tu-F 8a-6p, Sa-Su & holidays 10a-6p; Nov-Mar: Tu-F 8a-4:30p, Sa-Su & holidays 10a-4:30p

1 Brooklyn Botanic Garden

DESCRIPTION: This small but beautiful botanic garden features a Japanese hill and pond garden, as well as the Cranford Rose Garden, herb garden, the Children's Garden and the Steinhard Conservatory of indoor flowers and plants. In all, there are 52 acres and 12,000 varieties of botanicals, ranging from the tiny bonsai to the towering oak. Self-guided tours, individual classes and certificate programs are all available. Students come with your valid id cards, if you want to avail of a concession. © wcities.com



contact:

tel: +1 718 638 5000
fax: +1 718 501 6136
<http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/>

location:

200 Eastern Pkwy
New York NY 11238

hours:

Wed-Fri 10am-5pm; 1st Sat of the month 11am-11pm, each Sat thereafter 11am-6pm; Sun 11am-6pm

2 Brooklyn Museum of Art

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The museum hosts a free party from 5-11 pm on the first Saturday of each month (except September). Check out the adjoining Brooklyn Botanic Garden for a little nature to go with your art.

DESCRIPTION: In a city bursting with culture, the Brooklyn Museum, opened in 1897, is one of the highlights. Located just past beautiful Prospect Park, and adjacent to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the museum is housed in a majestic building designed by the architect Stanford White. In addition to various special exhibitions--a particularly notorious one, featuring works from the collection of Charles Saatchi, was criticized by then-mayor Rudolph Giuliani and led to a court battle over public funding for controversial art--the museum's permanent collection contains a wide range of Pacific, African and New World art, Asian art, Egyptian and ancient Middle Eastern art, decorative art, European, American and contemporary painting and sculpture.
© NileGuide



contact:

tel: 1 718 783 4565 / 1 718
636 8888
<http://www.aldilatrattoria.com/>

location:

248 5th Avenue (Carroll
Street)
Brooklyn NY 11215-1201

hours:

M & W-Th 6p-10:30p, F
6p-11p, Sa 5:30p-11p, Su
5p-10p

3 Al di Là Trattoria

DESCRIPTION: A vibrant ambience, colorful interior, and spacious feel are what this trattoria is all about. Al di Là serves up authentic North Italian cooking in an atmosphere that molds itself to your needs—if you're with a date, it can pass off as very romantic, and if you're with the family, as cheery and warm. The menu boasts of such dishes as creamy salt cod, braised rabbit, and tagliatelli with meat sauce, and the Italian wine list provides select accompaniments. Prices are reasonable, but no reservations are accepted, so make sure you come early—it can take up to two hours to get a table on weekends! © wcities.com



contact:

tel: 718 768 4329
<http://www.thegatebrooklyn.blogspot.com>

location:

321 Fifth Avenue
Brooklyn NY 11215-2808

hours:

Mo to Fr from 03:00 PM to
04:00 AM, Sa to Su from
01:00 PM to 04:00 AM

4 Gate (The)

DESCRIPTION: This is a laid back neighborhood bar with a great outdoor space for the summertime. It boasts seasonal microbrews, a great jukebox, and a chalk wall to doodle. It's also dog-friendly! © wcities.com



Day 2 - New York City, Brooklyn

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: On your second day, explore a new area of Brooklyn: Brooklyn Heights and Dumbo. Wander around the historic Brooklyn Heights neighborhood and end up at the Promenade, where you can walk northwards along the East River and enjoy picturesque views of the Manhattan skyline. Once you reach the Brooklyn Bridge, you enter Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, a great place to stop for a picnic or an ice cream at Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory. For dinner, try the nearby Superfine, or take a trek out to Carroll Gardens/Red Hook (F train to Carroll Street) and sample some great Mexican food at Alma. The real draw here is the rooftop dining area, where you can sip margaritas or mojitos while taking in another, even more stunning angle of that famous skyline at sunset.

contact:

tel: +1 718 858 4708

<http://nysparks.state.ny.us/parks/info.asp>

location:

26 New Dock Street
New York NY 11201

hours:

Daily

1

Empire - Fulton Ferry State Park

DESCRIPTION: If you are looking out for a picnic spot where you can throw a frisbee around with your friends, then head out to this sprawling green spot. Since it is nestled in the old industrial area, one can't help but notice the two huge warehouses nearby. The Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park offers a great view of the bridge and lower Manhattan on a clear day.
© wcities.com



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contact:

tel: 718 643 5400

<http://www.almarestaurant.com>

location:

187 Columbia Street
Brooklyn NY 11231

hours:

Monday-Thursday 5:30-10:30 pm; Friday 5:30-11 pm; Saturday 10 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-11 pm; Sunday 10 am-2:30 pm and 5:30-10 pm

2

Alma

DESCRIPTION: This Carroll Gardens/Red Hook Mexican restaurant is known for its rooftop terrace dining, with an unparalleled view of the Manhattan skyline that is worth the trek from Manhattan all by itself. The food is also good, ranging from simpler dishes like ceviche and corn tamales to innovative entrees such as pork-stuffed ancho rellenos with raisins and green olives. The menu offers a variety of seafood options, including red snapper that is pan roasted and served with spinach in a champagne, orange and chipotle chile sauce. Make sure to try one of Alma's margaritas, which feature house-made tequilas infused with such flavors as vanilla or habanero.



Alma

Day 3 - Brooklyn

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: For a leisurely final day, have Sunday brunch at Applewood (dinners here are also sensational) and spend the afternoon lazing around Prospect Park.

contact:
tel: 718.788.1810
<http://applewoodny.com>

location:
501 11th Street
Brooklyn NY 11215

hours:
Tuesday-Saturday 5-11 pm;
Sunday brunch 10 am-3 pm;
closed Monday

1 Applewood

DESCRIPTION: A constantly changing menu showcases organic and local ingredients in a cozy and warm dining space. Housed on the ground floor of a turn-of-the-century storefront, Applewood projects a relaxed, neighborhood feel with its dark wood bar, working fireplace, and comfortable seating, both indoors and out. It's perfect for both a casual neighborhood meal as well as a special event. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of

contact:
tel: +1 718 965 8951
<http://www.prospectpark.org/>

location:
Eastern Parkway to Parkside
Avenue
Brooklyn NY 11225

hours:
Daily 6a-dusk

2 Prospect Park

DESCRIPTION: The same architects who designed Central Park in Manhattan, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, were responsible for creating this beautiful Brooklyn park. Unlike its more famous cousin in Manhattan, Prospect Park is not surrounded by skyscrapers. Many Olmsted fans dub this 526-acre park his crowning achievement. It features horseback riding, ice skating, tennis, paddle boats and a carousel, as well as the Prospect Park Wildlife Center. There is a band shell for concerts, and Prospect Lake is full of ducks, geese and swans. © wcities.com



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New York City Snapshot

Local Info

New York, New York: There's truly no other city in the world like it. The city reaches far and wide with neighborhoods and people changing at every block you cross. Don't let the Big Apple intimidate you though, it's got a little bit of everything for travelers of all kinds to enjoy. Shopaholics and fashionistas roam the pricey boutiques of Soho while downtown locals flock to the street food of Chinatown. View stately museums of the Upper East Side or challenge your knowledge of art browsing Chelsea, this sprawling metropolis offers the best of all worlds...and that's just the big city of Manhattan. Here's an overview of some of that island's noteworthy neighborhoods, as well as the basics on the outer boroughs, too—Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island. To dig deeper on any of these destinations, check out the relevant Neighborhood Information section.

Midtown

This is the beating heart of the Big Apple, complete with towering skyscrapers, packed streets, and many of the city's top destinations for sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment, including Times Square, the United Nations, the Empire State Building and Rockefeller Center. This is must-see New York, but make sure to spend some time outside this neighborhood if you want to breathe a bit more freely.

Central Park

Nestled between the Upper West and Upper East Sides, this 843-acre oasis is the most visited urban park in the country. Among its many charms are miles of winding pathways, several lakes and ponds, two skating rinks, a zoo, and a conservatory. Visit in the summer if you can, when the park hosts free concerts and plays.

Times Square/Theater District/Hell's Kitchen

The once seedy Times Square zone is all cleaned up and packed full of chain restaurants and other tourist-friendly attractions. Catch a Broadway show in the Theater District, or head west to Hell's Kitchen, also cleaned up from its seedier days and full of dining and nightlife options.

Chelsea

Chelsea has been the center of the city's art scene since the mid-1990s, with more than 200 galleries centered mostly in its western reaches (near 10th and 11th Avenues). In addition to the High Line, a newly opened public space along an old elevated railway, it also boasts some of the city's hottest nightclubs, is chock-full of busy restaurants and bars, and has long been seen as the heart of gay-friendly New York. □

Gramercy/Flatiron/Union Square

This central neighborhood has a little of everything, from pedigreed Gramercy Park to bustling Union Square (site of the city's largest greenmarket). It's also home to a number of the city's most popular restaurants, and the dining options abound on Park Avenue South and the area around Madison Square Park, near the iconic Flatiron Building.

Greenwich Village/West Village

With its labyrinthine (compared to the Midtown grid) streets and historic townhouses, the Village is classic New York. Its eastern region contains Washington Square Park and New York University, while the charming, formerly bohemian West Village is home to increasingly upscale shopping and restaurants. Head further west to the Meatpacking District, now a mecca of expensive dining/nightlife options.

East Village □

The East Village stands out for its young, arty, funky (though nowhere near as edgy as in years past) vibe, on display in its many shopping, dining and nightlife options. History buffs will appreciate landmarks like St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery Church, while a cleaned-up Tompkins Square Park offers great people-watching.

Lower East Side

□ Go below Houston Street on the east side and you'll find even more restaurants, boutiques and bars lining the streets of the ever-more-upscale Lower East Side. Though this area was once home to some of the city's worst slums, its gritty past has made way for a vibrant shopping, dining and nightlife scene. Learn about the neighborhood's past at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (it's free!) or check out the historic Orchard Street Shopping District.

Soho

Though many galleries have moved to Chelsea, Soho still boasts its own art scene. Shopping is the real draw in this neighborhood, however, from high-fashion boutiques to the chain stores that line Broadway. At the eastern end of Soho, Nolita is perfect for shoppers who favor smaller, more unique stores. A plethora of kitschy Italian restaurants still draw tourists to the lively neighborhood of Little Italy, around Mulberry Street, including the throngs attracted by the annual San Gennaro Festival.

Lower Manhattan

This diverse zone encompasses Chinatown (with its designer knock-offs and dim sum), swanky Tribeca, family-friendly Battery Park City, and the bustling (at least during the week) Financial District. Must-see spots include South Street Seaport, Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange, and the World Trade Center site.

Upper East Side □

The Metropolitan, the Whitney, and the Guggenheim are only the biggest players in this stately, museum-filled neighborhood, which also boasts some of the city's best high-end shopping (Madison Avenue) and some of its highest-priced real estate (Fifth Avenue along Central Park, Park Avenue).

Upper West Side

The beautiful Upper West Side, historically a mecca for New York City artists, writers and intellectuals, is also one of the city's most family-friendly neighborhoods, with brownstone-lined streets, brunch spots, shops galore, and easy access to Central Park. It's also home to Lincoln Center, the Museum of Natural History, architectural gems like the Ansonia and the Dakota, and (a bit further north) Columbia University.

Harlem

Long a vibrant center of African-American history, music and culture, Harlem has changed a lot in recent years, as a diverse new crowd of residents have started calling its stately old brownstones home. It's still a great destination for soul food (try stalwarts like Sylvia's) as well as live jazz and nightlife at historic spots like the Cotton Club or the Lenox Lounge.

New York City Snapshot continued

Brooklyn

From the galleries of Williamsburg to the brownstones of Brooklyn Heights, from family-friendly Park Slope to kitschy Coney Island, devotees of this borough wouldn't live anywhere else. Walk across the Brooklyn Bridge and check out the views from the Promenade, or stroll in Prospect Park, for just a taste of what Brooklyn has to offer. But don't neglect this outer borough on your next visit, there's plenty reason for Brooklyn to be worth your while.

Queens

The largest borough, Queens is also the most ethnically diverse, boasting arguably the best food in the city, from Greek in Astoria, to Indian in Jackson Heights, to Chinese and Korean in Flushing. It is also a popular destination for sports (Citi Field--new home to the New York Mets--and U.S. Open tennis) and culture (check out P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City).

The Bronx

Though New York's northernmost borough is best known to many as the home

of Yankee Stadium, the Bronx offers a good deal more than meets the eye. Explore its beaches and museums, its world-famous zoo and botanical garden, its own Little Italy, quaint City Island, and more parkland than any other borough.

Staten Island

The breathtaking views from the free Staten Island Ferry are just the beginning of this borough's charms. With a more suburban feel than any of the other boroughs, Staten Island boasts a number of parks, as well as a zoo, a children's museum, a botanical garden, a minor league baseball stadium, and a restored colonial village.

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Fun Facts

New York State: New York **Country:** United States

New York City By The Numbers:

Population: 8.3 million (city); 19.8 million (metropolitan)
Average January Temperature: 32°F / 0°C
Average July Temperature: 77°F / 25°C
Annual Rainfall: 47 in / 1200 mm
Waterfront: 578 mi / 930 km
Elevation: 87 ft / 27 m
Location shoots:

40,000 annually
Number of islands that NYC is made up of: 50

Quick Facts:

Time zone: GMT- 5 (GMT- 4 from first Sunday in April to Saturday before last Sunday in October); Eastern Standard Time (EST)
Electricity: 110/120 volts, 60Hz; round two-pin plugs are standard.
Country dialing code: 1
Telephone area code: Manhattan 212, 646 & 917; outer boroughs 718, 347 or 917

Did You Know?

The nickname, The Big Apple, came from sportswriter John Fitzgerald eavesdropping on stable hands in New Orleans, terming NYC's racetracks as "The Big Apple".

The department store Macy's is the world's largest store.

Babe Ruth slammed his first home run in the first game ever played at Yankee Stadium.

Once the skyline of NYC wasn't dominated by tall skyscrapers. In the 1660s, a two-story windmill was the highest building in New York City.

©

Brooklyn Snapshot

Local Info

Just across the East River lies one of the largest and most distinctive cultural boroughs of New York City: Brooklyn. Only a subway ride away from Manhattan, this historical piece of the city transcends traditions, cultures, and cuisine unlike any other part of New York. Downtown Brooklyn is the borough's business center, up north is where creatives and artists have revealed working studios, while in the south you'll find some of the best and cheapest food including everyone's favorite- pizza, and in the center stretches Prospect Park which dissects several neighborhoods surrounded by literary and community institutions. There's the Russian-speaking community at Brighton Beach, the Irish, Italians and Norwegians at Bay Ridge, the Polish at Greenpoint and the Hispanics and Chinese at Sunset Park. Aside from this amazing diversity, Brooklyn is an exciting spot to visit because of its proud residents and the feeling of true community.

Sights

From the landmarks that have made Brooklyn famous to the parks and museums that dot this distinct city, you'll never run out of things to see. Walk or cycle to Manhattan via the Brooklyn Bridge, view the late 19th and early 20th century rowhouses at the Park Slope Historic District and ride the world's oldest wooden rollercoaster ride, the Coney Island Cyclone. And don't forget to make time in your itinerary to view the many museums in Brooklyn. Go to the Brooklyn Museum at Prospect Park which, by the way, is home to over 200 species of birds in their natural habitat, the New York Transit Museum in the Downtown area and the Brooklyn Children's Museum at Bedford-Stuyvesant. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden with its over 10,000 plant species and the 800-acre Marine Park are also well worth the trip. If you're in Brooklyn during the summer, Coney Island is still a favorite beach and amusement park hangout. And don't forget to grab a world-famous Coney Island Hotdog at Nathan's. Check out the New York Aquarium while you're there, too.

Dining

Brooklyn's diversity is also reflected in its food. 8th Avenue hosts high-end gourmet restaurants alongside cheap noodle shops. If you're craving Italian, Mexican or Japanese, head to Park Slope, which has a ton of restaurants reviewed in the Zagat's guide. Pizza lovers can take A Slice of Brooklyn pizza tour. Sample a taste of local beers at the Brooklyn Brewery. The Kensington, Fort Greene and Williamsburg Districts are also home to trendy restaurants. There's also a thriving restaurant scene in Smith Street at the Carroll Gardens area.

Shopping

Downtown Brooklyn is the main shopping district. Like any American city, you can find a great number of shops and department stores that sell anything from clothing to electronics. Go to Cobble Hill district if you want to shop for books and to Park Slope for health food options. For local jewelry and arts and crafts, check out the Brooklyn Flea in Fort Greene on Saturdays from 10 am to 5 pm.

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