

Cruising The NY Canals

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NY Canal Website [<https://www.canals.ny.gov/>] for a complete listing of canal resources available and to sign up for Notice to Mariners

NY Canals Season & Hrs of Operation - [<https://www.canals.ny.gov/boating/hours.html>]

Locks operate from mid to late May – mid Oct.

Normal Lock hours are 7AM – 5PM but some locks operate 7AM – 7PM and others 7AM – 10PM. Note: early season there are sometimes reduced hours and / or staffing

Lock Info [<https://www.canals.ny.gov/wwwapps/boating/locks.aspx>] –

Boater tie-off attachment method, Mile marker, lift, & **phone #**

Erie Canal Port Distances [[Erie Canal Port Distances \(SM\).pdf](#)]

Communications: NY canals generally monitor Ch 13

Lockmasters will provide their status and any delays etc if you contact them.

Usually once you start thru a section, they ask how far you are going and will call ahead to alert the next lock.

Notice to Mariners Alerts –

[<https://www.canals.ny.gov/wwwapps/tas/tascanals/index.aspx>]

Signing up to receive (email or Txt) will keep you updated with short -term & long-term delays, closures and any reported hazards to navigation.

Bridge & Guard Gate Clearances -

[<https://www.canals.ny.gov/boating/bridgeheights.html>]

Note: the Western Erie has a RR bridge below E-32 with a height limit of 15.65 ft at normal water lev and 15.01 ft at high water level.

This is the lowest clearance but there are several bridges & guard gates with similar (w/in 1 ft) clearances on the western section.

Best to check the listing and water levels carefully and contact the NY Canal Corp with specific questions.

NY locks are **not** all the same set-up... (See Lock Info Link above for attachment specifics) Some have cables fixed top & bottom and you place a line around it to hold your vessel normally bow or mid ship and another at stern. If you are uncertain about first lock you could tie off and walk to the lock to see how it is set up and develop a plan.

Some locks have all (or partial) lines fastened at top but only a weight at bottom. Those are the most challenging to control the boat.

A couple tricks...

Do not tie off but it can help to wrap one horn of a cleat to assist holding vs just pulling on the line.

If windy or turbulent going up lock, walk towards the opposite side deck at bow / stern to better hold yourself closer to the lock wall.

When going down lock the bow crew member will not be able to reach a pipe or cable w/o getting off the boat. They can grab a loose line with a boat hook by grabbling the loose line **below** the float.

I try to use a fixed cable, pipe or ladder at the windward end, if possible, and use the loose lines at the leeward end... less tendency to swing you way out from the wall.

All NY locks fly a flag and is a very helpful wind indicator. Just be aware that in some situations wind will blow you one direction (say towards a wall) at top but when you get down to the bottom the reflected wind will blow you opposite (away from the wall)

Single handing is more of a challenge but doable with good planning / prep. If fixed pipe or cable is available you may be able to use a mid-cleat - it can be beneficial to run a longer line from bow or fwd cleat around the pipe / cable and then to stern or aft cleat. This allows some control of both ends vs only using only a mid-line.

Where no fixed pipes or cables are present some boaters will use the ladder at either end of the lock as a tie-off. If wanting to use this option the skipper should coordinate with other boaters re: preference and be prepared to enter first or last to take the fwd or rear ladder...

DO NOT enter first and tie up to the rear ladder forcing others to maneuver around you.

Gloves are helpful as lines & cables frequently slimy.

I always have and recommend having a sharp knife with me or handy just in case a line jams in a cleat when going down... don't hesitate to cut the line in an emergency.

A boat hook for each crew member / end of the boat is essential.

Fenders are a must (and fender boards beneficial). If boat traffic is busy it may be helpful to rig both port & stbd just in case your preferred side is full when entering a lock. If busy it is preferable to make radio contact with other boats to coordinate positioning before entering the lock.

Cruising Notes – NY Canals

Oswego to Three Rivers

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1. Oswego
 - 1.1. Oswego marina – we do not stay here but do stop for fuel & supplies (& customs check-in video phone – best to fuel here as there isn't fuel until you get to Baldwinsville, grocery up the hill just above the marina if needed
 - 1.2. Tie up – we usually stay overnight on the wall above 1st lock (#8) no power but fairly quiet & easy walk to stuff in town
 - 1.3. If we are in town longer or need utilities – Wrights Landing is a town park marina – back out towards the breakwater and head west – 315-342-8172? or 343-8430
If you heading up the Oswego there are a couple of stops depending on how much time & how far you want to go that day...
2. Minetto – above lock 5 there is a free floating town dock w/ power & rest rooms ashore
3. Fulton – has a small town marina – between locks 2 & 3 – we stayed here many yrs ago but it doesn't seem to get much traffic these days – you can also tie on the wall just beyond the marina
4. Phoenix – about 4.5 hrs from Oswego -above lock 1 – free tie up w/ limited power, water, park & friendly kids as host during the day. Free self service Pump out works (sometimes?) Limited restaurants close by but some will deliver

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Three Rivers to Lake Erie + Cayuga-Seneca Canal & Lakes

1. Baldwinsville – lock 24 – about 2 hrs from Phoenix – nice free wall w/ power(\$5?) above the lock. OK wall w/ no power below the lock if top side is full – need to check... Above Can be busy and crowded if close to / wkend as there are wkend concerts in the shell across from the wall. Locals have started to bring their boats over and tie up Wd – Thurs to reserve a spot and they show up on Fri or sat for the concert. Good restaurants & limited supplies nearby. RR & showers behind the bandshell (25 c)
Coopers marina – just west of the lock has fuel, supplies & transient docking – usually at the gas dock – also great rest Italian restaurant very close.
It's a fairly long trip through Montezuma to Cayuga Lk w/o much in the way of stops or services. There are 2 stretches thru Montezuma where you can get up on plane and make some time but I don't have my book w/ nav marker # notes @ home. If you are interested remind me in a couple of weeks and I can get the marker #'s for you. Other sections are short between cottages, docks, small marinas etc that req's limited wake. We figure on roughly a day trip from B'Ville to Sampson on Seneca Lk or stop in Seneca Falls if we have time to burn

2. Cayuga Lk – side trip if interested - there is a good anchoring spot on Cayuga – head through the marked channel at the N end and look for Frontenac Is on the E side of Cayuga (only Is in the Finger Lakes) – just N of the Is is a sandy cove that is fairly protected and popular for day of swimming and/or overnight anchoring. There is a row a white buoys but entering is OK @ slow speed - Just stay away from the N side going in as there are some rocks there – balance is good sandy bottom – we sometimes get into the shallows stop and walk boats back a little further looking for a good spot w/ no weeds to set anchor & swim. Goose Watch Winery is on the W shore at 42° 45.057' N 076° 46.015' W they have good docks and the winery is a short hike up the hill.
3. Seneca Falls – Cayuga – Seneca Canal lock 2-3 – very nice wall w/ power, laundry, showers, RR above the lock & just past the “Lake”. Community building beyond the park, has WIFI and workout area. Restaurants close by in town & a pleasant stop.
4. Wateloo – C-S lock 4 – not much here
5. Seneca Lk
 - 5.1. We usually fuel up in the canal (Barretts Marine has gas just before the RR bridge) before heading out on Seneca Lk.
 - 5.2. N end is good sandy bottom and shallow – good place to anchor for a swim as long as there isn't a strong S wind.
 - 5.3. Sampson State Park (Our home) is on the E shore about 8 Mi south of the canal. Fairly easy to spot as it's just a little N of the Large Barge that is permanently moored middle - W shore just below Sampson.

Sampson Marina hass undergone a major renovation and now includes a refurbished seawall, dredged marina, all new docks and utilities. Free live music, food trucks, on-site food concession available Friday evenings throughout the season

More info and Transient slips can be obtained via SenecaLakeResorts.com website or by calling 315-539-3353

Navy / Air Force Military Museum on the grounds is open Wed – Sun (I believe?) – worth an hr or two – about 700k Navy & AF troops trained here during WWII & Korea

Lots of places to walk in the park but no services close by.

If we are around we can assist w/ run for groceries, etc
 - 5.4. Miles winery accessible from the water on Seneca W shore below Long Pt – 42° 36.974 N 76° 55.184 W
 - 5.5. Watkins Glen – best transient docks are at Village Marina – S end right nest to Capt Bills tour boats. It's an easy walk into town, Watkins Glen State Park - worth a few hrs of walking the Glen). Most everything you could need including a WallyWorld within walking distance.

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6. Lyons –Tie-up w/ limited power on N side, Addn'l w/o power S side
Not a lot here
7. Newark – a very nice free tie-up at the chbr of commerce docks – w/ power, rest rooms, showers and free laundry & pump out– a few bar/restaurants around
8. Fairport – a real nice stop right in town w/ power, RR Showers, pump out available (S side) There is usually a dock master around in the afternoon that collects a few \$
9. There is a new & very nice town facility at Bushnell Basin – floating docks (closed in 2019?)
10. Pittsford – a pleasant free dock / wall on the S side w/ power & water - nice shops & place to walk around
11. Spencerport – nice stop & good facilities on both sides of the bridge – IMHO best restaurant in town is the Texas barbeque place – authentic and very good!
12. Holley – pleasant free dock on the S side – easy walk via path into town – recent upgrades since we were here last
13. Middleport – pleasant - we have stayed here but don't recall exactly what it had
14. Lockport –
 - 14.1. I've stayed below the locks @ town tie-up but not a lot around here
 - 14.2. Above locks – temp tie up to visit old lock museum
15. Tonawanda has a pleasant town tie-up and I believe they have done an upgrade since I was there. This is a popular stop and can get busy especially on weekends
16. Black Rock Canal – Federal Lock does not respond on 13 but does on 16 (most of the time)
17. I have gone as far as and stayed at Small Boat Hbr – S of B'flo inside the breakwaters –

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Three Rivers East to Hudson River –

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First-hand experience noted – otherwise based on observations & others reviews

1. **Pirates Cove Marina** – older marina that we’ve stayed at.
Owners are very helpful, friendly and they have a loaner car if you need to make a trip into town for shopping, etc. The restaurant has limited bar food but is convenient & pool a pleasant relief on those hot days –
2. **Brewerton** – several yards & marinas – fuel, services & restaurants available. Good place to fuel – Winter Harbor had 2nd best diesel price on canal. Brewerton Boatyard, ESS-KAY yards & Winter Harbor are the biggest / most popular here. New state? dock near the I81 bridge & restaurant on N shore.
3. **Oneida Lake** – relatively shallow & rocky lake that can get “lumpy” with any E or W winds – best to stay in the marked channel when crossing & watch charts carefully when venturing of the channel to fish, swim etc
4. **Sylvan beach** – an enjoyable stop – generally plenty of wall to stay on both N & S side of canal (no power) but convenient walk to restaurants, ice cream, groceries, liquors etc. The most convenient & popular is the N side as it is closest to the restaurants etc. Several marinas available if power is req’d. The best ice cream place – Yesterdays - is now closed.
5. **Aqua Vino Restaurant** – E of Utica Lock – I have stayed here and not a bad overnight stop, transient dockage \$ w/ power, for a few boats, restaurant looked nice but was closed when we stayed on a Sunday night. Delmonicos Steakhouse a few blocks S on N Genesee St
6. **Ilion** – Village of Ilion Marina – good reviews – dockage \$ and boater services available,
7. **Little Falls Canal Harbor Park** – transient dockage on wall \$ w/ power & water restaurants nearby (~1/2 mi)
8. **St Johnsville Municipal Marina** – We have stayed here – Transient dockage \$ with power along a wall. Best diesel price on the canal \$2.43 on 8/6/15
9. **Canajoharie** – Riverfront Park – pleasant park w/ free transient floating dock w/ 3 power pedestals – covered gazebo for cooking
10. **Amsterdam** – Riverlink Park – transient docks – both floating (2-4 boats) & high wall (5-8 boats) free pump-out. Restaurant was good but understand hours of operation are somewhat unpredictable.
11. **Schenectady yacht Club** – We’ve stayed here several times, good stop friendly folks, gas & diesel fuel, swimming pool. Not much nearby but pizza & restaurants deliver.
Note: this is the last “good” stop prior to the “flight” of locks down to the Hudson R
12. **Waterford** – below the flight on Hudson R – Waterford Visitor Center has dockage w/ power, showers, etc at a nominal fee. Restaurants nearby – McGrieveys Irish Pub good for dinner, Don & Pauls a favorite for breakfast.

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