



Canal
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NEWS RELEASE

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Canalway Trail System now receives 4 million visits per year

Data from more than thirty count locations over the last five years indicates investments in the trail continue to drive visitation to the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails.

ALBANY, NY – The Erie Canalway and the Champlain Canalway Trails continue to receive high levels of use year after year, according to the newly released *Who's on the Trail 2023: Canalway Trail* report from Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation (NYSCC). The report estimates that the Canalway Trail System receives roughly 3.95 million visits per year, based on data from electronic counters installed at 33 locations over the past five years.

Who's on the Trail 2023: Canalway Trail estimates that the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail—running between Albany and Buffalo—receives approximately 3.84 million visits per year, with the 60-mile Champlain Canalway Trail—Waterford to Whitehall—welcoming around 112,000 visits annually.

In 2020, the Canalway Trail was incorporated into New York's flagship Empire State Trail, part of a 750-mile trail network stretching from New York City north to the Canadian border, and from Albany west to Buffalo. As part of the Empire State Trail Project, millions of dollars were invested in closing major gaps in the trail. Since the opening of the Empire State Trail, the state, local governments, and private entities have continued to invest in improving the quality of the trail, including resurfacing projects and installing additional trailside amenities. These investments are clearly paying off, as evidenced by the nearly four million visits to the trail, comprised of everyone from local residents out for a walk to visitors traveling from across the country to cycle the entirety of the trail from Buffalo to Albany.

Who's on the Trail 2023: Canalway Trail highlights fifteen locations along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails where electronic trail counters were used to assess the number of visitors. These counts were augmented by manual counts conducted by volunteers at eight discrete locations within four communities along the Erie Canalway Trail. Additional electronic counts were also performed by four partners: The Genesee Transportation Council counted visitation at six locations and the City of Rome counted visitation at one location along the Erie Canalway Trail, with the Hudson River Valley Greenway counting trail use at one location on the Champlain Canalway Trail. Warren County Planning

conducted trail counts at an additional six locations along the Champlain Canalway Trail and Feeder Canal Trail. In addition to the report, the data and annual trail use estimates are displayed and available for download on an interactive map at ptny.org/trailcounts.

Thanks to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, supporting data collected from 2023's [Canalway Challenge](#) finishers is also included to provide additional context to the numerical count data. In 2023, over 450 Canalway Challenge finishers completed mileage goals ranging from 1 mile to the full 360-mile trail. Data on Canalway Challenge participants provides information about the demographic composition of trail users as well as trip characteristics. These details provide insights about where visitors are coming from, what types of sites and overnight accommodations are being visited, and how these trail users are impacting the local economies of trailside communities.

The 2023 *Who's on the Trail* report is the 18th edition of this report. Once again, trail counts and analysis reveal the growing statewide popularity of the Canalway Trail System, totaling an estimated 3.9 million visits per year. Investments to the trail including gap closures and resurfacing projects continue to drive visitation. Used heavily by both walkers and cyclists, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike, the trail system is a major recreational asset for communities across the canal corridor. Trail improvements result in increased economic value for trailside communities, underscoring the need and opportunity in continued promotion, investment, and maintenance.

Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Paul Steely White said, "Thanks to recent investments, the Canalway Trail now receives as many annual visitors as the top parks in New York State. In fact, of the 180 State Parks, only four receive more visitors than the Canalway Trail system. That's an amazing achievement, and one that is paying major economic dividends to local communities. Hooray for the Canalway!"

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, "For the millions of visitors who travel along New York's Empire State Trail and Canalway Trail, their recreational experience is like a trip through time. Much of today's trail follows the original Erie Canal towpath where mules once hauled boats filled with raw products and cargo across the state. The annual 'Who's on the Trail' report reaffirms how important a safe and accessible trail is to so many fellow New Yorker's and visitors alike, and the need for our continued investment."

To read the full report visit www.ptny.org/trailcounts.

About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1998, PTNY has been working in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation to help canal communities plan, develop and promote the Canalway Trail. PTNY organizes Cycle the Erie Canal, an eight-day bicycle tour along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants each year. The organization also publishes the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 360 miles of Adventure and History along the Erie Canalway Trail*. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

About the New York State Canal System

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trail, a network of approximately 400

miles of multi-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trail create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.