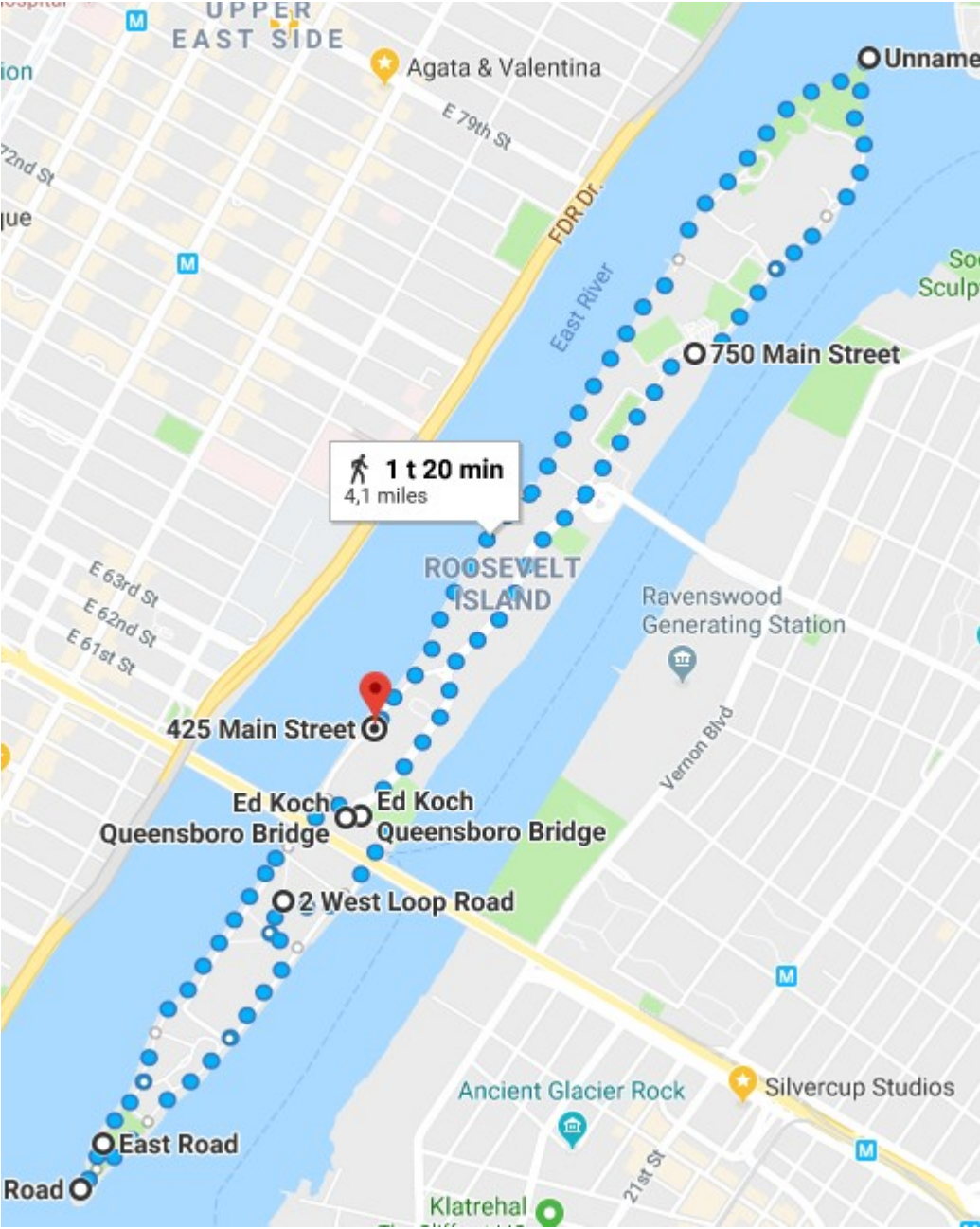


Roosevelt Island walking tour



BOUNDARIES: Roosevelt Island, East River

DISTANCE: 4 miles

SUBWAY: N, R, W to 59th street/Lexinton.

Google Maps: <https://goo.gl/maps/1cVdmamSJEq>

ROUTE SUMMARY

1. Walk East from the station on 59th street towards 2nd Avenue.
2. When you come to Tramway Park, take the tram way to Roosevelt Island.
3. When arriving at Roosevelt Island, walk West on Main Street.
4. Turn left and walk South on West Main Street.
5. Follow the pedestrian path to E Road.
6. Continue walking South to the tip of Roosevelt Island.
7. Turn around and walk North on the East side of E Road.
8. Walk North on E Loop Road.
9. Make a left towards Cornell Tech.
10. Walk East on N Loop Road and turn left on East Main Street.
11. Continue North on East Main Street, which turns into East Road.
12. Continue walking North to the tip of Roosevelt Island.
13. Walk South on the pedestrian path(West side of the Island) until the train station.
14. Take the F line back to Manhattan.

WIKIPEDIA

Roosevelt Island is a narrow island in New York City's East River. It lies between Manhattan Island to its west and the borough of Queens, on Long Island, to its east. It is politically part of the borough of Manhattan, and New York County. Running from the equivalent of East 46th to 85th Streets on Manhattan Island, it is about 2 miles (3.2 km) long, with a maximum width of 800 feet (240 m), and a total area of 147 acres (0.59 km²). Together with Mill Rock, Roosevelt Island constitutes Manhattan's Census Tract 238, which has a land area of 0.279 sq mi (0.72 km²),

and had a population of 9,520 as of the 2000 United States Census. It had a population of 11,661 as of the 2010 United States Census.

The island was called Minnehanonck by the Lenape and Varkens Eylandt (Hog Island) by New Netherlanders, and during the colonial era and later as Blackwell's Island. It was known as Welfare Island when it was used principally for hospitals, from 1921 to 1973.

It was renamed Roosevelt Island (after Franklin D. Roosevelt) in 1973.

Roosevelt Island is owned by the city but was leased to New York state's Urban Development Corporation for 99 years in 1969. Most of the residential buildings on Roosevelt Island are rental buildings. There is also a cooperative named Rivercross and a condominium building named Riverwalk. One rental building (Eastwood) has left New York State's Mitchell-Lama Housing Program, though current residents are still protected. It is now called Roosevelt Landings. There are attempts to privatize three other buildings, including the cooperative.

History

In 1637, Dutch Governor Wouter van Twiller purchased the island, then known as Hog Island, from the Canarsie Indians. After the English defeated the Dutch in 1666, Captain John Manning seized the island, which became known as Manning's Island, and twenty years later, Manning's son-in-law, Robert Blackwell, became the island's new owner and namesake.

In 1796, Blackwell's great-grandson Jacob Blackwell constructed the Blackwell House, which is the island's oldest landmark, New York City's sixth oldest house, and one of the city's few remaining examples of 18th-century architecture.

Through the 19th century, the island housed several hospitals and a prison. In 1828, the City of New York purchased the island for \$32,000 (equivalent to \$730,085 in 2018), and four years later, the city erected a penitentiary on the island; the Penitentiary Hospital was built to serve the needs of the prison inmates. By 1839, the New York City Lunatic Asylum opened, including the Octagon Tower, which still stands but as a residential building; it was renovated and reopened in April 2006. The asylum, which was designed by Alexander Jackson Davis, at one point held 1,700 inmates, twice its designed capacity. In 1852, a workhouse was built on the island to hold petty violators in 220 cells. The Smallpox Hospital, designed by James Renwick, Jr., opened in 1856, and two years later, the Asylum burned down and was rebuilt on the same site; Penitentiary Hospital was destroyed in the same fire. In 1861, prisoners completed construction of Renwick's City Hospital (renamed Charity Hospital in 1870), which served both prisoners and New York City's poorer population. In 1877, the hospital opened a School of Nursing, the fourth such training institution in the nation.

During the impeachment process of New York State Supreme Court Justice George G. Barnard in 1872, the first charge that the New York City Bar Association brought against Barnard was that

he discharged at least 39 prisoners from the Blackwell's Island penitentiary before their sentence was expired.

In 1872, the Blackwell Island Light, a 50-foot (15 m) Gothic style lighthouse later added to the National Register of Historic Places, was built by convict labor on the island's northern tip under Renwick's supervision. Seventeen years later, in 1889, the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, designed by Frederick Clarke Withers, opened. By 1895, inmates from the Asylum were being transferred to Ward's Island, and patients from the hospital there were transferred to Blackwell's Island. The Asylum was renamed Metropolitan Hospital. However, the last convicts were not moved off the island until 1935, when the penitentiary on Rikers Island opened.

The 20th century was a time of change for the island. The Queensboro Bridge started construction in 1900 and opened in 1909; it passed over the island but did not provide direct vehicular access to it at the time. In 1921, Blackwell's Island was renamed Welfare Island after the City Hospital on the island. In 1930, a vehicular elevator to transport cars and passengers on Queensboro Bridge started to allow vehicular and trolley access to the island. In 1939, Goldwater Memorial Hospital, a chronic care facility, opened, with almost a thousand beds in 7 temporary solution to the then-lack of subway service to the island, which began in 1989 with the opening of the Roosevelt Island subway station, on what is now the [F](#) train.

During the 21st century, the area became more gentrified. In 1998, the Blackwell Island Light was restored by an anonymous donor. In 2006, the restored Octagon Tower opened, serving as the central lobby of a two-wing, 500-unit apartment building. In 2010, the Roosevelt Island Tramway reopened after renovations. A year later, Southpoint Park opened south of Goldwater Memorial Hospital, near the island's southern end, Cornell Tech, a joint venture between Technion – Israel Institute of Technology and Cornell University, was announced the same year. In 2012, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park was dedicated and opened to the public as a state park. Construction of the new Cornell Tech campus began in January 2014 with the arrival of equipment on Roosevelt Island for the building of a fence around the construction site and for the demolition of the existing Coler-Goldwater Specialty Hospital's south campus; demolition began in March 2014, but city officials say they do not have plans to close the north campus of the hospital. The buildings on 9.9 acres (4.0 ha). Thirteen years later, Bird S. Coler Hospital, another chronic care facility, opened, and three years after the Coler Hospital's opening, Metropolitan Hospital moved to Manhattan, leaving the Lunatic Asylum buildings abandoned. The same year, 1955, the Welfare Island Bridge from Queens opened, allowing automobile and truck access to the island and the only non-aquatic means in and out of the island; the vehicular elevator to Queensboro Bridge then closed, but wasn't demolished until 1970. As late as August 1973, though, another passenger elevator ran from the Queens end of the bridge to the island.

More changes came in the latter half of the century. In 1968, the Delacorte Fountain, opposite the headquarters of the United Nations, opened Mayor John V. Lindsay named a committee to make recommendations for the island's development in the same year. A year later, the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) signed a 99-year lease for the island, and architects Philip Johnson and John Burgee created a plan for apartment buildings housing 20,000 residents. In 1973, Welfare Island was renamed Roosevelt Island in honor of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and two years later, planning for his eponymous park, Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park, started. Federal funding for redevelopment came from the New Community Act. In 1976, the Roosevelt Island Tramway opened, connecting the island directly with Manhattan, but it was eight years before the New York State legislature created the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) to operate the tramway, with a nine-person board of directors appointed by the Governor, two suggested by the Mayor of New York City, and three of whom are residents of the island. The tramway was meant as a hool began operations on the

island in fall 2017.

Architecture

designed by Gruzen Samton, was not started until 1998, and is still in the process of development. When complete, Southtown will have 2,000 units in nine buildings.

The Octagon, one of the island's six landmarks, was restored in April 2006, and the national landmark building is now a high-end apartment community. It also houses the largest array of solar panels on any building in New York City. When The Octagon opened its doors, many young, affluent tenants started to occupy the studios and one-, two-, and three-bedroom units; 100 of the units therein are set aside for middle-income residents.

In 2006, ENYA (Emerging New York Architects) made the island's abandoned southern end the subject of one of its annual competitions. In addition to Louis Kahn's 4-acre (1.6 ha) Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Park at that tip, whose public dedication on October 17, 2012 was tangled in litigation, the island has also been the site of numerous other architectural speculations. Rem Koolhaas and the Office of Metropolitan Architecture proposed two projects for the Island in his book "Delirious New York": the Welfare Island Hotel and the Roosevelt Island Redevelopment Proposal (both in 1975–76). That proposal was Koolhaas's entry into a competition held for the development of Northtown Phase II. Other entrants included Peter Eisenman, Robert A. M. Stern, and Oswald Mathias Ungers.

As of 2013, six of the Southtown buildings, with a total of 1,200 units, have been completed. Residential development of Southtown has brought new retail businesses to Roosevelt Island, including a Starbucks and a Duane Reade. Roosevelt Island has long had a limited variety of restaurants; however, as a result of Southtown development, four new restaurants – Nonno's Focacceria (opened January 2008), Fuji East (opened April 2008), Riverwalk Bar & Grill (operational 2009–2018), and Pier NYC (operational only in 2012) – appeared on the West Promenade. Though small, Roosevelt Island has a distinguished architectural history. It has several architecturally significant buildings, and has been the site of numerous important unbuilt architectural competitions and proposals. The island's master plan, adopted by the New York State Urban Development Corporation in 1969, was developed by the firm of Philip Johnson and John Burgee. The plan divided the island into three residential communities, and it forbade the use of automobiles on the island; the plan intended for residents to park their cars in a large garage and use public transportation to get around. Another innovation was the plan's development of a 'mini-school system,' in which classrooms for the island's public intermediate school were distributed among all the residential buildings in a campus-like fashion (as opposed to being centralized in one large building).

The first phase of Roosevelt Island's development was called "Northtown". It consists of four housing complexes: Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood (also known as the WIRE buildings). Rivercross is a Mitchell-Lama co-op, while the rest of the buildings in Northtown are rentals. Eastwood, the largest apartment complex on the island, and Westview were designed by noted architect Josep Lluís Sert, then dean of Harvard Graduate School of Design. Eastwood, along with Peabody Terrace (in Cambridge, Massachusetts), is a prime example of Sert's high-rise multiple-dwelling residential buildings. It achieves efficiency by triple-loading corridors with duplex apartment units, such that elevators and public corridors are only needed every three floors. Island House and Rivercross were designed by Johansen & Bhavnani. The two developments were noteworthy for their use of pre-fabricated cladding systems. Subsequent phases of the island's development have been less innovative, architecturally. Northtown Phase II was developed by the Starrett Corporation and designed by the firm, Gruzen Samton, in a pseudo-historical post-modern style. It was completed in 1989,

over a decade after Northtown. Southtown (also referred to as Riverwalk by the developers) is the third phase of the island's development. This phase, also