



Alley Pond Park to Fort Totten

9

Length: 9.6 miles
Estimated travel time: Biking—1.5 hours; walking—3 hours
Attractions: Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, Alley Pond Park, Alley Pond Environmental Center, Joe Michaels Mile, Little Bay Park, Fort Totten Park, Throgs Neck Bridge, neighborhood of Bayside.

Character: Mostly sheltered park corridors with some on-street sections. The only heavy traffic is briefly encountered at Northern Boulevard.

Directions at a Glance

Starting at 75th Avenue and 199th Street in Cunningham Park

- Mile**
- 0.0 Follow the well-marked trail, which is the remnant of the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, over the bridge crossing at Francis Lewis Boulevard, then, near ballfields, tunnel under the Clearview Expressway.
 - 2.5 Trail ends at Winchester Boulevard. Turn around and backtrack.
 - 3.1 Trail exits park corridor at Cloverdale Boulevard. You will turn right, then travel forward on Cloverdale.
 - 3.2 Near 76th Avenue, trail turns right, enters park again. Follow marked trail to exit at Cloverdale and 73rd Avenue.
 - 3.7 Forward on Cloverdale Boulevard.
 - 3.8 Turn right on 69th Avenue.

- Mile**
- 4.0 Turn left on 230th Street.
 - 4.1 Turn right on 67th Avenue.
 - 4.2 Turn left on 233rd Street.
 - 4.5 Cross West Alley Road, then straight ahead on East Hampton Boulevard, to end.
 - 5.2 Soft left onto 232nd Street.
 - 5.3 Left on 50th Avenue, then right on Horatio Parkway.
 - 5.5 Right on Cloverdale Boulevard.
 - 5.8 Right on Northern Boulevard.
 - 6.0 Cross Northern Boulevard to beginning of Joe Michaels Mile. Follow marked route past Fort Totten to the base of the Throgs Neck Bridge.
 - 9.6 End near Utopia Parkway.

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ALLEY POND PARK TO FORT TOTTON

Subways

There are no subways close to this segment of the Greenway. At the end of the segment you can backtrack to the Flushing-Main Street stop on the 7 line (see inset map p. 70). The Long Island Railroad provides the closest public transportation. The Auburndale, Bayside, and Douglaston stops are relatively near sections of the Greenway. You need a permit to bring your bike on the train. The MTA's website has permits applications that you can mail in, or you can acquire a permit at Grand Central or Penn Station. (For the latest information, visit the MTA website at www.mta.info or call 718-330-1234).

Where to Eat

There are numerous restaurants on Northern Boulevard and a snack bar on Joe Michaels Mile that is open from April to October.

Public Restrooms

Public restrooms can be found at Telephone Playground at 75th Avenue and Bell Boulevard, Alley Pond Park: 67th Avenue and 230th Street; Alley Pond Environmental Center; Crocheron Park: Little Neck Parkway and 33-35 Avenues; John Golden Park: 215th Place and 32nd Avenue.

Area History

This is one of the most historically rich segments of the Greenway. It travels through the outer reaches of

the old Flushing township to Little Neck Bay, encountering Fort Totten and the Throgs Neck Bridge. The segment begins by running through the corridor of the historic Long Island Motor Parkway, known as the **Vanderbilt Motor Parkway**. The idea for the Parkway was prompted in 1906 by William K. Vanderbilt Jr., a descendant of the family that presided over the New York Central Railroad and Western Union. Vanderbilt conceived of the route as a raceway, but it also served as a fast track for the wealthy to their estates on Long Island. Later, during the 1920s and prohibition, the route became known as Rum-Runners Road, since as a private road it was so frequently used by bootleggers outrunning the police. It was featured in the 1937 movie *Topper*, starring Cary Grant. The movie is worth renting to get a sense of the pastoral landscape of the area 60 years ago. You'll find the area is now built over with neat-as-a-pin middle-class houses. In the 1930s, Robert Moses undercut the Vanderbilt by constructing the free-of-toll Northern State Parkway. With its revenue severely reduced, the Vanderbilt shut down in 1938, to be shortly resurrected by Moses as a recreational path.

Alley Pond Park is at the other end of the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway. Alley Pond Park is a vast, rambling park featuring some of the most dramatic kettle ponds and satisfying forest and marsh experiences in New York City. Kettle ponds were formed during the retreat of the big glaciers 20,000 years ago. Huge blocks of dense glacial ice became mixed with the rest of the rubbly glacial till. When the ice melted, it left a big hole in the ground. Twenty

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The Joe Michaels Mile section of the Greenway as it approaches its terminus near Fort Totten

thousand years later, these big holes remain as isolated ponds, largely fed by precipitation instead of streams or springs.

Lovers of big old trees will find plenty to adore throughout the park's woodlands. Be on the lookout for huge old tulip trees, as well as beech and red oak. The bottom of the kettles support red maple swamps. Bird watching is popular, thanks to the park's varied habitats. And the park is able to support the most varied amphibian population in New York City outside of Staten Island.

The area has a long human history. The Matinecock were the first nation to inhabit the area. In 1637, a man of European descent named Thomas Foster acquired 600 acres surrounding Alley Pond and, in 1663, built a permanent home. Forays by the Matinecock were still occurring, and

the house was fortified with stone walls. Around 1750, Alley Creek was dammed and its energy harnessed for a grist mill. The area became a commercial center, with commercial vessels traveling up Alley Creek. In 1821, the north shore's first post office was installed near the grist mill. A stagecoach ran between Douglaston, at the mouth of the creek, and Brooklyn. The area even had its own notoriously rowdy bar, named the Bumble Bee's Nest.

Unfortunately, during the 1950s the park fell victim to habitat fragmentation in connection with the building of the Long Island Expressway/Cross Island Parkway Interchange and cloverleaf. Even Alley Pond, after which the park is named, was partly filled in to create a bridge base for the Expressway. (The Pond has recently been restored in a different location). By the late 60s, the remnants of the

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park were critically degraded. Its gullies were favorite dumping grounds, especially for cars. In the face of that and of plans for more highway construction through the park, filling in of Pea Pond, and elimination of many of the park trails, a vibrant citizens movement emerged to save and reinvigorate the park and its habitats. In 1969, an umbrella group called the Alley Restoration Committee hosted a “Walk in the Alley.”

The Alley Pond Environmental Center provides education on the environments, creatures, and issues of the park, and preserving the environment in an urban setting. You’ll find their offices at 228-06 Northern Boulevard, just east of the Cross Island Parkway. Visit their website for information on current programs and events: www.alleypond.com or call 718-229-4000.

You’ll notice that this is a hilly area. Alley Pond Park follows the slope of the glacial moraine down to Little Neck Bay, and the Greenway goes right along with it, weaving in and out of the park and local sideroads. Little Neck Bay is a glorious natural setting, and indeed the Queens neighborhood of **Bayside** was the preserve of the rich and famous, including many of the early film stars of the 1910s and early 20s. The film industry was new and Queens was a major production center. Perhaps comedian W.C. Fields is its best remembered resident. It is also the location of silent film star Rudolph Valentino’s summer home, which is now a restaurant called Caffé on the Green. Escaping the rampages of highway construction, Little Neck Bay’s opposite shore in Nassau County still preserves its posh suburban character.

The Greenway curves past **Fort**

Alley Pond



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Totten, a historic Army base, a large portion of which was transferred to the Parks Department and opened to the public in 2005. A bucolic military campus featuring open space areas, military fortifications dating back to the Civil War, and turn-of-the-century historic buildings, Fort Totten represents an exciting new addition to the City's park system. The fort, originally called the Fort at Willets Point, was established in 1857 as a major component in the defense system of New York Harbor. Its sister fort, Fort Schuyler, can be spotted across the bay on the Bronx side of the Throgs Neck Bridge. Together, both forts formed a pinch point, or narrows to prevent enemy ships from entering the East River from the Long Island Sound.

Located on the northern end of Fort Totten, the **Historic Battery** is the site of fortifications dating from the Civil War, the late nineteenth century, and the early twentieth century. Fort Totten is also home to the Officers' Club which is designated a local historic landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Located adjacent to the fort is **Little Bay Park**, a waterfront park which, like Fort Totten, offers sweeping views of Long Island Sound, Little Bay, and the Throg's Neck Bridge.

Trip Description

The Greenway proceeds easterly on Vanderbilt Motor Parkway. Built for motorcars, today this part of the

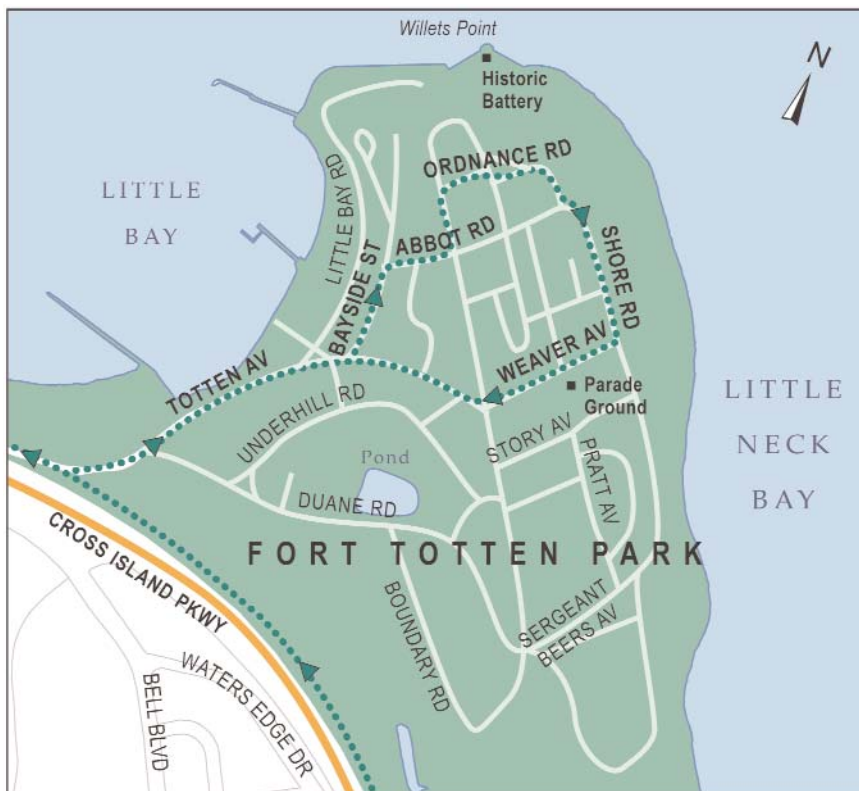


The fortifications of Fort Totten, now New York City parkland

Greenway is popular with all manner of human-powered recreationists. On a typical excursion, you will encounter folks out for a heavy-duty work-out or just an afternoon stroll with the family. Bicyclists, follow the well-marked trail to its end on Winchester Boulevard. Pedestrians may want to turn into the main part of the park a little bit sooner.

To avoid erosion and conflicts with pedestrians, most of the park's natural paths are off-limits to bicycle riders. In order to explore some of the more interesting areas of the park, you will need to dismount. One such attraction is **Little Alley Pond**. To find it after backtracking from Winchester Boulevard, you will stop short of the Cloverdale exit. Instead, after crossing the bridge over the Grand Central Parkway, you will turn right at the second path. You'll soon encounter Little Alley Pond, a classic glacial kettle pond. The stairs a little further on, have a convenient asphalt ramp for walking your bike if you have one. Poke around the pond a bit, and then return to the trail.

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Continuing on, you should find a Greenway sign directing you to the trail exit at Cloverdale Boulevard off to your right. In any event, you can see Cloverdale from the trail. Move forward on Cloverdale and very shortly, near 76th Avenue, a Greenway sign will indicate a right turn back into the park. Follow the signed route to the trail exit at Cloverdale and 73rd Avenue. You will find yourself in a quiet residential neighborhood, although the traffic on 73rd Avenue can be a bit speedy.

Carefully cross 73rd Avenue to move forward on Cloverdale, then turn right

on 69th Avenue. You will turn left again on 230th Street, right on 67th Street, then left on 233rd Street. What you are doing is following the contour of the park in a zig-zag manner.

Continue on to West Alley Road, which you will cross (carefully) to the beginning of East Hampton Boulevard. There is a glorious trail called the **Tulip Tree Trail** that begins near here. At one time, the Tulip Tree Trail was part of a series of bike paths that Robert Moses designed next to many of his expressways. Access to this trail for bicycle transportation has been blocked. The compensation to

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the loss of this trail is the fact that the route down to Little Neck Bay is all downhill. Follow East Hampton Boulevard to 50th Avenue. Keeping the park on your right, follow 50th Avenue to Horatio Parkway where you'll veer right, then turn right again onto Cloverdale. The now "cherry-stemmed" Tulip Tree Trail begins very shortly on, opposite the end of Birmingham Parkway. This is a highly recommended side trip.

Continuing down Cloverdale, you'll soon pass pleasant Oakland Lake, which is a good place to stop and sit on a bench while watching the passing ducks and people.

Turn right on Northern Boulevard. Kitty-corner from the **Alley Pond Environmental Center**, cross Northern Boulevard to the beginning of **Joe Michaels Mile**, a spectacular—and very popular—pedestrian/bicycling route along Little Neck Bay. Take it slow and be careful here; you'll want to appreciate the pleasant homes with private docks across the bay, the boats, the fishermen, the birds, and the refreshing break from vehicular traffic.

At 212th Street right before Little Bay Park is Fort Totten Park. Take a side trip through this bucolic park by entering through Totten Avenue. Bear left at the triangle onto Bayside Street. Go up a slight hill and make a right onto Abbott Road. Past the ballfield, make the first left onto North Loop and then a right onto Ordnance Road. Go to the end and make a right onto

Shore Road. Make a right onto Weaver Road (in front of gazebo) and pass the historic parade grounds and the Commanding Officer's house. At the end of the road make a right back onto Totten Avenue, view the Officer's Club, and exit the park.

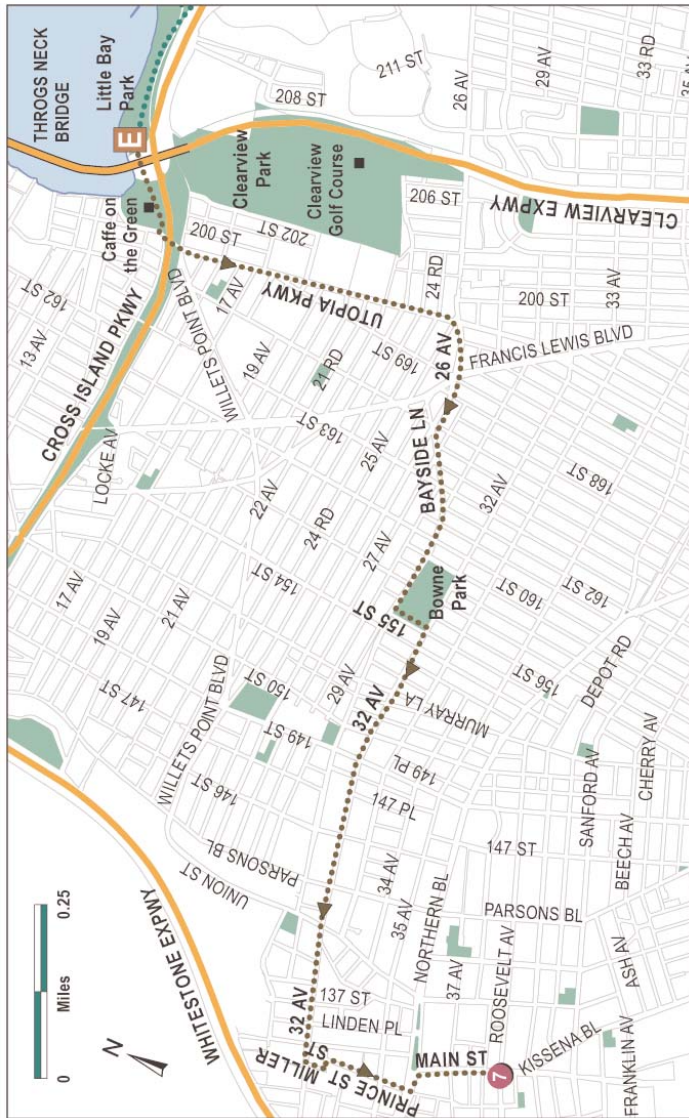
As you leave Fort Totten Park, you will be entering Little Bay Park. The Greenway ends just past the Throgs Neck Bridge. There is no convenient subway stop nearby.

To get to the Long Island Railroad, follow Utopia Parkway to Station Road (about 0.8 miles) and turn left to reach the Auburndale stop.



Little Bay Park jetty and Throgs Neck Bridge

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To get back to the 7 subway station in Flushing, follow these directions:
(See map).

- Left on Utopia Parkway.
- Right on 26th Avenue, crossing Francis Lewis Boulevard.
- Left on Bayside Lane.
- Left on 155th Street (far corner of Bowne Park—a welcome relief).
- Right on 32nd Avenue.
- Left on Miller Street, rounding the square to Prince Street.
- Right on Prince Street.
- Left on Northern Boulevard, go one block.
- Right on Main Street to subway stop.

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