



# Highland Park/ Ridgewood Reservoir

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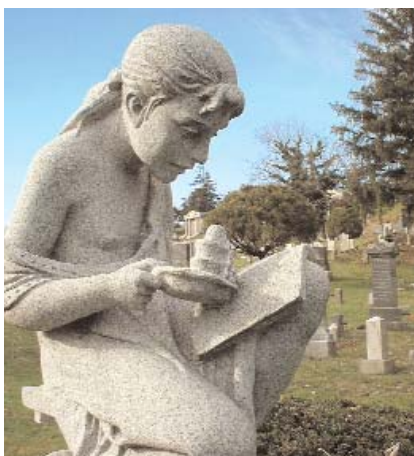
**Length:** 6.6 miles  
**Estimated travel time:** Biking—1 hour; Walking—3 hours  
**Attractions:** Highland Park, Ridgewood Reservoir, several historic cemeteries, neighborhoods of Brownsville, Ocean Hill, and Highland Park

**Character:** This leg starts out on fairly busy streets and includes a hefty climb. Lush Highland Park and a skirt around the edge of Ridgewood Reservoir are ample rewards to the perseverant.

**Directions at a Glance**

*Start at Eastern Parkway and Buffalo Avenue, at the northeast corner of Lincoln Terrace Park*

*The garden cemetery movement of the nineteenth century led to the development of sculpture parks on the hills of Brooklyn and Queens.*



- Mile**
- 0.0 Travel south on Buffalo Avenue along eastern edge of park.
  - 0.2 Turn left on East New York Avenue.
  - 0.6 Continue forward on Pitkin Avenue.
  - 0.7 Turn left on Legion Street, then right at East New York Avenue.
  - 1.3 Right on Mother Gaston Boulevard.
  - 1.4 Left on Liberty Avenue.
  - 2.2 Left on Vermont Street.
  - 2.8 Right on Sunnyside Avenue.
  - 2.9 Left on Miller Street (very steep).
  - 3.0 Right on Highland Boulevard.
  - 3.1 Left on Heath Place into Highland Park. Follow Greenway signs through park.
  - 3.7 Cross Vermont Avenue to stairs leading up to trail around Ridgewood Reservoir. Turn right at trail.
  - 4.3 Right at ramp to Cypress Avenue. Turn right on Cypress Avenue.
  - 4.4 Left at Cypress Hills Street (careful— heavy traffic and no traffic lights for pedestrians and bicyclists).
  - 5.2 Turn right on Cooper Avenue.
  - 6.0 Ease forward to 78th Avenue.
  - 6.3 Turn right on 79th Street.
  - 6.5 Turn left on Myrtle Avenue.
  - 6.6 End at Myrtle Avenue opposite 79th Street.

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*The Brooklyn-Queens Greenway trail adjacent to Ridgewood Reservoir*

## Subways

Take the 3 train to Sutter Avenue-Rutland Road or the 3 or 4 to Crown Heights-Utica Avenue. (For the latest information, visit the MTA website at [www.mta.info](http://www.mta.info) or call 718-330-1234.)

## Where to Eat

You'll find restaurants and grocery stores on Fulton Street and along Myrtle Avenue.

## Public Restrooms

Public restrooms can be found in Highland Park.

## Area History

This stretch is the longest so far of unshielded, on-street walking and biking. It also has the most sustained climbing, as you travel over the crest of the terminal moraine. Highland Park is the reward. Straddling Brooklyn and Queens, Highland Park is situated on a high plateau that commands dramatic views of nearby cemeteries, East New York, Woodhaven, the Rockaways, and the Atlantic Ocean. The history of Highland Park cannot be separated from the history of Ridgewood Reservoir, which operated from the 1860s until 1989.

Most New Yorkers are aware of the

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*Cypress Hills National Cemetery—Walkers pass an orderly Civil War grave field where Union and Confederate soldiers are buried side by side.*

extensive system of reservoirs in the Catskill Mountains that supply modern New York City. Less known is the fact that in the mid-1800s, the City of Brooklyn received its drinking water from an extensive system of reservoirs, lakes, conduits, and pumping stations in Long Island that eventually stretched as far as Massapequa. Ridgewood functioned as the main reservoir for Brooklyn, working in tandem with the smaller Mount Prospect Reservoir, which was located in what is now Mount Prospect Park, near the beginning of the Eastern Parkway leg of the Brooklyn-Queens Greenway. Ridgewood Reservoir has not been used since 1989; the last of its three sections was drained in that year.

Trees, shrubs, and other plants have taken root in the three basins, creating a thriving young forest on the site of the former reservoir. The reservoir property was recently transferred to

the Department of Parks & Recreation for development as public parkland.

In 1891, the City of Brooklyn purchased the land surrounding the reservoir for park purposes under the jurisdiction of the Highland Park Society. The park might have been named Ridgewood Park. However, a private park operated at the time by that name in Brooklyn, and the Parks Department feared that people would get confused. Then in 1905, Parks extended the property to the south by purchasing the Schenck estate, which included a Dutch-style farmhouse that was removed in 1940. Highland Park took its present shape in 1906-08, when Parks acquired a third parcel to the west from the Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity.

### Trip Description

The beginning of this leg of the Greenway takes the traveler through

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the vibrant neighborhoods of Brownsville and East New York, before climbing the moraine into Highland Park. Traffic in spots can be heavy. Bicyclists new to city streets are encouraged to dismount and walk their bikes on the sidewalks if they're feeling overwhelmed. The point of the Greenway is to slow down and have fun, taking in the life of a perhaps unfamiliar neighborhood, not to get from point A to point B in the quickest time.

Travelling down the edge of Lincoln Terrace Park, enjoy the line of stately sycamores along the park's edge. Turn left on East New York Avenue, and follow it to where it merges with Pitkin Avenue. Continue on Pitkin and travel one block to Legion Street, which forms the long end of a pleasant triangle park. Notice the fine old

movie palace that stands at Legion and Pitkin, which is no longer in use as a cinema.

Turn left on Legion Street, and then go a short block to pick up East New York Avenue again, where you will turn right. Continue on East New York Avenue to Mother Gaston Boulevard, where you'll turn right. Turn left on Liberty Avenue, which travels through an industrial area. Turn left on Vermont Street, which will bring you back into a residential area. Vermont Streets starts to climb to Sunnyside Avenue, where you'll turn right. Turn left on Miller Street, where you'll really be asked to climb. Most bicyclists may find it easier and safer to just walk up this block to Highland Boulevard. Turn right, and be on the lookout on your left for Heath Place, which will lead you into **Highland**



*Highland Park*

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**Park**, where the Greenway again becomes green.

The Greenway through the park is exceptionally well marked. Highland Park is a beautiful expanse of tree-filled green, well-used by the community. It is short on architectural pretensions, and long on trees, grass, and recreational amenities such as baseball fields and basketball courts. It even has a community garden for children, tucked in the park's southwest corner along Jamaica Avenue.

The Greenway winds pleasantly through the park until it reaches busy Vermont Avenue. Cross Vermont Avenue (take your time!) and walk up the steps to the trail around **Ridgewood Reservoir**. By the way, you have left Brooklyn and are now in Queens.

Turn right on the trail around the reservoir, and get ready for some

spectacular views over the Brooklyn flatlands. After a bit over half a mile, you'll spot Cypress Hill Avenue and the ramp that will take you down to it.

The trail around Ridgewood Reservoir can feel somewhat isolated. Although the trail makes a complete loop around the reservoir, turn left to remain closer to street traffic. At the far corner of the reservoir you'll pass some abandoned buildings and then, in quick succession, a stairway and then a ramp to Cypress Hills Street—take one, you pick.

Turn right on Cypress Hills Avenue, and then left when you come to Cypress Hills Street. Frankly, this is one of the most confusing turns on the Greenway—there is no elegant way to do it. You may want to backtrack up Cypress Hills Street to the pedestrian lights if traffic is too heavy. But even these crossings aren't complete.



*Ridgewood Reservoir*

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Attached houses line a hillside as the Greenway heads to Highland Park.

Ultimately, you want to be heading downhill, towards the blue-green copper dome of what is the Hungarian Benevolent Society Building. Once you're on your way though, the downhill run is a fitting reward for whatever frustration you may have experienced coming uphill. On your left you will pass the Beth El Cemetery, where Harry Houdini is buried.

Turn right on Cooper Avenue. Just before Cooper Avenue jogs left you'll

be nicking a corner of **Cypress Hills Cemetery** (718-277-2900), where Jackie Robinson and Mae West are buried. At the intersection of 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Cooper Avenue turns abruptly left, towards the north. ***Do not follow Cooper Avenue.*** Continue straight ahead along 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Follow 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 79<sup>th</sup> Street and turn right. Go a couple of short blocks to 79<sup>th</sup> Lane, opposite the end of which you'll see the entrance to Forest Park, which is the next leg of our journey.