

48 Liberty State Park

On this adventure the skyline isn't broken by towering oaks, sycamore, or white pines but by Lady Liberty, Columbus Monument, Liberation Monument, and Manhattan skyscrapers. The route takes advantage of walkways, the nature path, Interpretive Center, the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal, and especially the Liberty Walk. All these border salt marshes, coves, ponds, the Hudson River, and the Morris Canal Big Basin. This flat loop outing is bustling with bicycles, yachts, tugs, helicopters, and multinational sightseers. Come early to experience this Saroyan-esque scene. Side trips to Millennium Park, Ellis Island, and Statue of Liberty are doable along the route.

Start: Park Headquarters parking lot at Morris Pesin Drive

Distance: 5.1-mile loop

Approximate hiking time: 2.5 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Trail surface: Walkways, paths, and sidewalks

Seasons: All

Other trail users: Bicycles

Canine compatibility: Leashed dogs permitted

Land status: State park

Nearest town: Jersey City

Fees and permits: None

Schedule: Dawn to dusk

Maps: *DeLorme: New Jersey Atlas & Gazetteer* p.33, 81; USGS Jersey City, NJ, quadrangle; a map is also available at the park or online at www.getnj.com/lsp/lspmmaps.shtml.

Trail contacts: Liberty State Park, Morris Pesin Drive, Jersey City 07305; (201) 915-3440; www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/liberty.html

Special considerations: The park may fill up on weekends or for special events/occasions.

Finding the trailhead: From the juncture of Interstates 95 and 78 in Newark, travel east on I-78 (also called New Jersey Turnpike Extension), crossing the Newark Bay Bridge. Take exit 14B (Jersey City/Liberty State Park). From the tollbooth bear left and then turn left onto Bay View Avenue, all the while following Liberty State Park signs. Travel 0.2 mile till you come to a rotary. Take the first exit from the circle onto Morris Pesin Drive, taking it 0.7 mile through the entrance to the park and following it to the third and final parking lot on your right (just past Freedom Way on the left). The park office, restrooms, and concession are at the southeast end of the parking lot.

The Hike

This hike takes us past the historic Morris Canal Basin, the world's best view of Manhattan, a spectacular historic train shed and railroad terminal, views of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, and the site of an infamous island munitions depot. If you want to OD on history and landmarks, you're in the right place! Before this area was part of Jersey City, it was Communipaw Cove. The famous Morris Canal connected with the bay in the canal basin on the north side of the park here. Later, the Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRRNJ) bought acreage here in 1864 and built a rail terminal and depot. By the Civil War it was a hub of industry and transportation.