

## Explore The Bronx

# Bronx Bucket-List Destinations

## Keep Local Tourism Hopping



The New York Botanical Garden

Looking for a great place canoe in New York City? The Bronx may not be the first place that comes to mind, but perhaps it should be.

"You can canoe on the Bronx River and all of a sudden you feel like you're in the country," says Olga Luz Tirado, executive director of The Bronx Tourism Council. "Then you turn the bend and realize you're in an urban backdrop. Then you turn the bend again and are in the forest."

Canoeing is just one of many recreational offerings in the Bronx that are drawing both New Yorkers and visitors to the borough at a time when tourism in New York City is seeing an uptick. Both landmarks such as the Bronx Zoo, the New York Botanical Garden and Yankee Stadium and under-the-radar attractions are bringing visitors, and new energy, to the borough.

"When you peel back the layers, you discover a borough that has so much to offer—dining, culture, recreation, sports," said Chris Heywood, SVP, Global Communications at NYC & Company, the official destination marketing organization for the city. "Just in the last couple of years we've had the addition of the New York City Football Club." The new American professional soccer club, based in New York City, currently plays its home games at Yankee Stadium. "For sports enthusiasts, it is definitely a hook," said Heywood.

### Eat. Drink. See.

For foodies, there is no shortage of tempting destinations in the Bronx, with Arthur Avenue among the best known. "This is the city's real Little Italy neighborhood," said Heywood. "It really is authentic. You can go to Mike's Deli and see mozzarella-making demos, pasta stores where they are making pasta by hand. When you go there, you feel an authentic sense of what the real Little Italy is."

East of Little Italy is Zeppieri & Sons Italian Bakery, a family-owned business at 3004 Buhre Ave., near the No. 6 subway, in Pelham Bay. The bakery is known for its sfogiatelle, a cheese-filled pastry; and custard-filled lobster tails, handmade using traditional techniques.

City Island, a historic seaport community, and popular local-restaurant mecca, is home to busy eater-

ies such as Lobster Box, City Island Lobster House and Sammy's Fishbox Restaurant. Visitors can stroll down a vibrant retail strip and take in the City Island Nautical Museum, which offers a glimpse of New York's shipbuilding history.

The local craft brewery scene is also starting to take off. Craft beer lovers can head to new gathering spots such as Bronx Brewery at 136th Street; and Gun Hill Tavern, located at 780 East 133rd St., run jointly by the Port Morris Distillery and Gun Hill Brewing Co. and slated to open in November, to sample local brews. For those who want to see the whole scene, the Bronx Tourism Council runs the Savor the Bronx Breweries & Distilleries Trolley Tour, where they can sample everything from pale ale to Puerto Rican moonshine.

With the Bronx's art scene percolating, visitors are flocking to local attractions such as the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage, where Poe wrote famous poems such as "Annabel Lee"; and the Bronx Museum of the Arts, which specializes in contemporary art from diverse cultural backgrounds. Music lovers can make a pilgrimage to Casa Amadeo, a historic salsa-record shop at 786 Prospect Ave. that recently appeared in the TV series *Bare Feet*, which looks at the dance world.

Another key Bronx destination, the New York Botanical Garden, will be hosting an exhibit by acclaimed sculptor Dale Chihuly in April, his first major exhibition in New York in 10 years. "We have some great cultural gems," said Heywood.

And by 2018, the borough will also have a new diversion for families, the Bronx Children's Museum. "One of our mantras has been, 'the new New York,'" Heywood said.

### Learn and Enjoy

For architecture buffs, High Bridge, New York City's oldest standing bridge, has been making frequent appearances on lists of must-sees. It has recently reopened after being closed for more than 40 years. High Bridge connects Washington Heights in Manhattan with the Bronx's Highbridge community. The High Bridge water tower at the bridge is also being repaired. "It'll probably be a year before we can go up there," said Corey William Schneider, CEO and found-

er of the New York Adventure Club, hoping to add that experience to his group's excursions.

Meanwhile, the Bronx is full of attractions for history buffs. For instance, the Van Cortlandt House Mansion and Museum—which was under British control during most of the revolutionary war—offers a crash course in early American history. George Washington stayed at the mansion in 1776. Another popular draw, says Tirado is Bronx Community College's Hall of Fame for Great Americans. Visitors can wander through a 630-foot open-air Colonnade, which houses 98 striking bronze portraits of the honorees, among them Alexander Graham Bell and Mark Twain.

For those who love the outdoors, other big draws in the area are Wave Hill, a public garden and cultural center overlooking the Hudson River; and Van Cortlandt Park, a 1,146-acre park located in the northwest Bronx that is home to Van Cortlandt Lake, the largest body of freshwater in the city.

"We like to remind people of all the vibrancy and green space this borough has," said Heywood.

Walking tours are also picking up steam in the borough. At the New York Adventure Club, Schneider often likes to find unusual attractions for his members to visit.

On one trip he planned recently, he and a group of 10 club members will arrive at the Fulton Fish Market in Hunts Point at 4 a.m., when the market will be bustling but the sky will still be dark. He's arranged for a group tour with the security director.

On another tour, his members met with Sam Goodman, a celebrated urban planner in the Bronx, to see local sites including the magnificent Andrew Freedman Home, a mansion that was originally a retirement home for the formerly wealthy created by the self-made millionaire after the stock market crashed in 1929. It has since become a community center and arts hub.



Arthur Avenue is the Little Italy of the Bronx

Sightseers also flock to Woodlawn Cemetery, a National Historic Landmark that spans 400 acres, with walking tours of some of the most striking outdoor scenery. It offers excursions like the Illuminated Mausoleums Night Tour, which often sells out. "[Woodlawn Cemetery] has the most beautiful sculptures from the 1800s," said Alexandra Maruri, a Bronx native who runs the tour company Bronx Historical Tours. "It's a beautiful place to go bird-watching and take photos."

Bird watching? In the Bronx? While the Bronx may not be popularly known for such activities, as more and more New Yorkers and out-of-towners venture into the borough, its image seems ripe for an update.