



The Erie Canal Path -- Palmyra to Newark

By Pete Peterson

THE STATE OF NEW YORK is slowly but surely expanding the Erie Canal Path, with the latest section to open being very close to “OP territory”, the Palmyra-Newark link.

With the installation of three bridges at Swift’s Landing last spring the trail is now open as far east as Newark. This section is very picturesque and parallels the canal closely for the entire nine and one-half miles.

Obviously, one can start the journey at either end (or pick it up at several spots in between), but as the western end of the section in Palmyra is a bit closer, we’ll begin there.

Getting Started

From the Canandaigua area, take Route 21 north into Palmyra and turn west (left) on Route 31. As you leave Palmyra, turn right into Aqueduct Park, where there is ample parking.

The trail east towards Newark passes under the newly restored Aldrich Change Bridge in the park. There is an information board near this historic piece of canal architecture, and a Canal Trail kiosk with trail info.

This first section of trail runs between the original canal prism on your right and a swampy area on your left. There are plenty of winged and four-legged creatures to be seen along this stretch. About one mile east of the park you will reach Division Street and the “Muddy Waters Café”, which offers sandwiches, wraps, desserts and soft drinks.

Crossing the Canal

Take a left on Division Street and cross the canal on the bridge sidewalk. Just

after the bridge, cross Division Street (carefully!) and take the trail which parallels the canal on the north..

You’ll soon travel under Route 21 on the smooth stone dust trail and in another mile and a half reach the “rusted iron” bridges over Red Creek and Ganargua Creek.

BE SURE TO STOP at the informational kiosk and bench for an outstanding view of the spillway which allows canal water to flow into Ganargua Creek as it heads north. This is one of the most scenic spots on the canal in this



Rest area and information kiosk overlooking Ganargua Creek spillway

area. Stone abutments on which the new bridges rest once carried the West Shore Railroad over the creek, and the trail east from this point to Galloway Road is on the old railbed.

Just over the bridges is a trail to Swift’s Landing Park, which features pavilions, large grassy playing fields and rustic bathrooms. Ample parking is available here if you wish to begin your journey closer to Newark. (Galloway Road leads to the park and runs north off State Route 31.)

Hilly Section

Continuing east from the bridges you’ll cross under Galloway Road and find some gentle rolling hills as the trail continues close to the canal. To your left (north) you can see the overgrown raised roadbed of the old West Shore Railroad, which paralleled not only the canal, but the New York Central, which

absorbed the West Shore in the late 19th century and later tore up most of the tracks.

In a little over two miles you’ll travel under Port Gibson Road through a newly-constructed culvert. The “Widewaters” stretch of the canal is very visible from this point on. On the far side is Rte 31 and a number of seasonal cottages. You’ll see numerous fishermen not only on the canal, but along the shore by the canal path. Near the eastern



Erie Canal “Widewaters” Section West of Newark

end of the Widewaters you’ll cross a bridge over a spillway that drains into a swampy area. On the far side of this swamp is a culvert which carried the West Shore Railroad.

Whitbeck Road and Newark

You’ll soon reach the Whitbeck Road parking area, complete with picnic table and informational kiosk. This could be a starting or turnaround point; you’re about seven and a half miles from Aqueduct Park and 1.7 miles from Route 88 in Newark. (To reach Whitbeck Road from Newark take Route 31 west, turn right and cross the bridge.)

TO CONTINUE TO NEWARK cross under Whitbeck Road (duck your head!) and continue on the trail. There are a few small hills on this section. You’ll pass through a rest area with a former street bridge (now pedestrian/biker only) over the canal into Newark.

The end of the trail, as far as this journey is concerned, is at the parking lot behind the Quality Inn on Route 88, just north of the canal. There is plenty of parking here if you wish to begin the trip in Newark and go west to Palmyra.

The canal trail continues east under Route 88 (walk your bike) but ends very quickly in a small canalside park. Future plans are for the trail to continue to Lyons and beyond. A walk or ride on this new addition to the Erie Canal Path is a great way to spend a few hours...and it’s close to “home”.



New “Rusted Iron” Bridge over Ganargua Creek on the Canal Trail