

enlarged in 1966 with the addition of the Susan E. Wagner Wing, which includes a grand ballroom and two intimate reception rooms.

The Gracie Mansion Conservancy was established in 1981, and under its guidance, the first major restoration was undertaken between 1981 and 1984. In 2002, the interior and exterior were again restored, and the house was transformed into the “People’s House” with increased accessibility to the public and to City agencies. It has also been used to accommodate visiting officials and dignitaries, such as former guests First Lady Rosalynn Carter and President Nelson Mandela.

QUEENS

GrowNYC Markets

Our markets are as diverse as the city itself! No matter where you are in NYC, you can find a bustling space filled with neighbors, families, office workers and chefs all shopping side-by-side for the freshest of products. Regardless of their size, each market is an anchor to its community providing not only fresh, locally-grown food, but a gathering place where neighbors can come together, share recipes, watch a cooking demonstration, take a tour with a chef and learn about local agriculture. For more specific location information, call 311.

Now Open in Queens:

Astoria - Wednesday
 Atlas Park Glendale - Saturday
 Corona - Friday
 Douglaston - Sunday
 Elmhurst - Tuesday
 Jackson Heights - Sunday
 Socrates Sculpture Park - Saturday
 Sunnyside - Saturday
 Ridgewood Youthmarket - Saturday

Queens Public Library - Arverne Branch (Children’s Programs)

312 Beach 54 Street; 718-634-4784
 Wednesdays, July 11 – August 22 @ 10:30 a.m.

Storytime and Craft (Infants–5-year-olds)

Mondays, July 9 – August 20 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 1-3)

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 21 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 4-6)

Queens Public Library - Arverne Branch (Teen Programs)

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 21 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading for Young Adults

Queens Public Library - Astoria Branch (Children’s Programs)

14-01 Astoria Boulevard; 718-278-2220
 Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Family Storytime and Crafts

Thursdays, July 12 – August 16 @ 2:00 p.m.

Science Club (Ages 6-12)

Queens Public Library - Auburndale Branch (Children’s Programs)

25-55 Francis Lewis Boulevard; 718-352-2027
 Wednesdays, July 11 – August 22 @ 10:30 a.m.

Little Dreamers, Big Dreams: Read to Me (Ages 18-36 months)

Mondays, July 9 – August 20 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades Pre K-2)

Mondays, July 9 – August 20 @ 4:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 3-6)

Queens Public Library - Auburndale Branch (Teen Programs)

Mondays, July 9 – August 20 @ 4:00 p.m.

Childhood Collage Project

Queens Public Library - Baisley Park Branch (Children's Programs)

117-11 Sutphin Boulevard; 718-529-1590

Mondays, July 9 – August 20 @ 2:00 p.m.

Gardening Club (Ages 8 and up)

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 21 @ 2:00 p.m.

Game Day (All ages)

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 22 @ 11:30 a.m.

Read to Me (Infants-5-year-olds)

Queens Public Library - Bay Terrace Branch (Children's Programs)

18-36 Bell Boulevard; 718-423-7004

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 22 @ 10:30 a.m.

Family Storytime

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 22 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Fun with Crafts and More

Thursdays, July 12 – August 23 @ 1:30 p.m.

Game Day

Queens Public Library - Briarwood Branch (Children's Programs)

85-12 Main Street; 718-658-1680

Fridays, July 6 – August 24 @ 4:00 p.m.

Arts and Crafts (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - Briarwood Branch (Teen Programs)

Tuesday, August 7 @ 2:30 p.m.

Jewelry-Making Workshop

Queens Public Library - Broadway Branch (Children's Programs)

40-20 Broadway; 718-721-2462

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 29 @ 10:30 a.m.

Read, Play, Dream: Family Fun Time

Tuesday, 7/24; Wednesday, 7/25; Thursday, 7/26; and Friday, 7/27 @ 2:00 p.m.

Manga-Style Summer Mural

(Ages 8-12) (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - Broadway Branch (Teen Programs)

Friday, July 6 @ 4:00 p.m.

Annual Teen T-Shirt Painting Project

Wednesday, August 8 @ 4:00 p.m.

Teen Talent Show

Queens Public Library - Douglaston/Little Neck Branch (Children's Programs)

249-01 Northern Boulevard; 718-225-8414

Selected* Thursdays, June 14 – August 23 @ 6:30 p.m.

Twilight Tales (Ages 1-5) (Prereg.)

*Call or visit www.queenslibrary.org for more information.

Queens Public Library - East Elmhurst Branch (Teen Programs)

95-06 Astoria Boulevard; 718-424-2619

Tuesdays, July 10, 17, 24, and 31; August 7 @ 2:30 p.m.

Dream It – Claim It: Tap into the Career for You

Queens Public Library - East Flushing Branch (Children's Programs)

196-36 Northern Boulevard; 718-357-6643

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 14 @ 2:00 p.m.

Preschool Story and Crafts (Ages 2-5) (Prereg.)

Thursdays, July 12 – August 16 @ 2:00 p.m.

Dream Big Time!**Queens Public Library - East Flushing Branch (Teen Programs)**

Thursdays, July 12, 19, and 26; August 2, 9, and 16 @ 5:00 p.m.

Chess Instruction and Tournament**Queens Public Library - Far Rockaway Branch (Teen Programs)**

1637 Central Avenue; 718-327-2549

Thursday, July 26 @ 4:00 p.m.

Mock Presidential Election**Queens Public Library - Flushing Branch (Teen Programs)**

41-17 Main Street; 718-661-1200

July 9 – August 16

Movie Mondays**Tuesday Games****Thursday Crafts****Friday Teen Happy Hours****Queens Public Library - Fresh Meadows Branch (Children's Programs)**

193-20 Horace Harding Expressway; 718-454-7272

Mondays and Wednesdays July 9 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Read to Me (Ages 2-5) (Prereg.)

Mondays and Wednesdays, July 9 – August 15 @ 1:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Crafts (Grades 1-6)**Queens Public Library - Glen Oaks Branch (Children's Programs)**

256-04 Union Turnpike; 718-831-8636

Tuesdays, July 3 – August 21 @ 1:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 1-3)

Thursdays, July 5 – August 23 @ 1:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 4-6)**Queens Public Library - Hillcrest Branch (Children's Programs)**

187-05 Union Turnpike; 718-454-2786

Thursday, June 7 @ 5:00 p.m.

Dream Big Carnival (Ages 6-14)**Queens Public Library - Hollis Branch (Teen Programs)**

202-05 Hillside Avenue; 718-465-7355

Fridays, July 27 and August 31 @ 3:00 p.m.

Movie Day**Queens Public Library - Langston Hughes Branch**

100-01 Northern Boulevard; 718-651-1100

Thursday, June 7 @ 2:30 p.m.

A Mouse in the City: A Puppet Musical (Ages 3 and up)

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 21 @ 2:30 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 1-3)

Thursdays, July 12 – August 23 @ 2:30 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 3-6)

Queens Public Library - Laurelton Branch (Children's Programs)

134-26 225 Street; 718-528-2822

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Read to Me (Ages 18 months–5 years) (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - Lefferts Branch (Children's Programs)

103-34 Lefferts Boulevard; 718-843-5950

Thursdays, July 5 – August 16 @ 1:15 p.m.

Dream Big: Read (Ages 3-7)

Tuesdays, July 3 – August 14 @ 1:15 p.m.

Dream Big Storytime and Crafts

(Ages 8-12)

Queens Public Library - Lefferts Branch (Teen Programs)

Fridays, July 6, 13, 20, and 27; August 3 and 10 @ 3:30 p.m.

YA Graphic Novel Club

Queens Public Library - Lefrak City Branch (Children's Programs)

98-30 57 Avenue; 718-592-7677

Weekdays beginning July 5 – August 17 @ 2:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Fun Club

(Ages 6-12) (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - Long Island City Branch (Teen Programs)

37-44 21 Street; 718-752-3700

Tuesdays (all summer) @ 4:00 p.m.

Chess Club

Wednesdays, July 10 - August 22 @ 3:00 p.m.

Computer Kreations

Queens Public Library - Maspeth (Teen Programs)

69-70 Grand Avenue; 718-639-5228

Friday, July 27 @ 3:00 p.m.

Kobolds Ate My Library

Friday, August 24 @ 3:00 p.m.

Video Game Day

Queens Public Library - McGoldrick Branch (Children's Programs)

155-06 Roosevelt Avenue; 718-461-1616

Mondays @ 2:00 p.m. and Thursdays

@ 4:00 p.m., July 2 – August 16

Arts and Crafts (Ages 7 and up)

Tuesdays, July 3 – August 13 @ 4:00 p.m.

Summer Activity Day (Ages 7 and up)

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Preschool Storytime

Queens Public Library - North Forest Park Branch (Children's Programs)

98-27 Metropolitan Avenue; 718-261-5512

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Read to Me (Ages 2–3)

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 11:30 a.m.

Read to Me (Ages 4–6)

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 14 @ 2:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Ages 6–12)

Queens Public Library - Ozone Park Branch (Children's Programs)

92-24 Rockaway Boulevard; 718-845-3127

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 14 @ 2:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades K-3)

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 2:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 4-6)**Queens Public Library - Ozone Park Branch (Teen Programs)**

Tuesday, July 17 @ 4:00 p.m.

Stuff and Decorate a Fluffy Pillow

Tuesday, August 7 @ 4:00 p.m.

Paint and Decorate a Picture Frame**Queens Public Library - Pomonok Branch (Teen Programs)**

158-21 Jewel Avenue, Flushing; 718-591-4343

Mondays, July 9, 16, 23, and 30; August 6 and 20 @ 3:00 p.m.

7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

Monday - Friday, August 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 @ 3:00 p.m.

Acting Workshop

Thursday, August 9 @ 3:00 p.m.

All About The Hunger Games

Monday, August 27 @ 3:00 p.m.

Teen Summer Reading Party**Queens Public Library - Poppenhusen Branch (Children's Programs)**

121-23 14 Avenue; 718-359-1102

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Read to Me

Thursdays, July 12 – August 16 @ 2:00 p.m.

School-Aged Dreamers: Fun with Reading**Queens Public Library - Poppenhusen Branch (Teen Programs)**

Friday, July 27 @ 3:00 p.m.

T-Shirt Design

Friday, August 10 @ 3:00 p.m.

Fingernail Art

Friday, August 17 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Party**Queens Public Library - Queens Village Branch (Children's Programs)**

94-11 217 Street; 718-776-6800

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 2:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades K-3)

Thursdays, July 12 – August 16 @ 2:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 4-6)**Queens Public Library - Richmond Hill Branch (Teen Programs)**

118-14 Hillside Avenue; 718-849-7150

Tuesdays, July 24 and 31 @ 3:30 p.m.

Wii Game Day**Queens Public Library - Ridgewood Branch (Children's Programs)**

20-12 Madison Street; 718-821-4770

Mondays, July 9 – August 27 @ 6:00 p.m.

Bedtime Stories Under the Stars

Tuesdays, July 3 – August 28 @ 1:00 p.m.

Book Buddies (Grades K-5 and teen reading partners)

Queens Public Library - South Hollis Branch (Children's Programs)

204-01 Hollis Ave; 718-465-6779

Wednesdays, June 27 – August 1 @ 11:00 a.m.

Rhyme Time (Ages 2-5)

Fridays, June 29 – July 27 @ 11:00 a.m.

Storytime (Grades K-3)

Tuesday, July 17 @ 3:00 p.m.

Dare to Dream: Create Your Own Dream Catcher (Grades 4-6)

Queens Public Library - South Ozone Park Branch (Children's Programs)

128-16 Rockaway Boulevard; 718-529-1660

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 28 @ 1:30 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades K-3)

Tuesdays, July 10 – August 28 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Grades 4-6)

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 29 @ 10:30 a.m.

Picture Book Time

Queens Public Library - St. Albans Branch (Children's Programs)

191-05 Linden Boulevard; 718-528-8196

Thursdays, July 5 – August 16 @ 2:00 p.m.

Dream On: School-Age Summer Reading Club (Prereg.)

Tuesdays, July 3 – August 14 @ 2:00 p.m.

Sweet Dreams: Read to Me (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - St. Albans Branch (Teen Programs)

Monday, July 9 @ 2:00 p.m.

Mosaic Tile

Monday, August 13 @ 2:00 p.m.

Lanyard Making

Queens Public Library - Steinway Branch (Children's Programs)

21-45 31 Street; 718-728-1965

Mondays, July 9 – August 13 @ 10:30 a.m.

Playgroup (Ages 18-36 Months)

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 15 @ 10:30 a.m.

Storytime (Ages 3-5)

Thursdays, July 5 – August 16 @ 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Arts and Crafts for School-Age Children

Queens Public Library - Sunnyside Branch (Children's Programs)

43-06 Greenpoint Ave; 718-784-3033

Wednesdays, July 18 – August 15 @ 3:00 p.m.

Summer Reading Club (Ages 6-12) (Prereg.)

Fridays, July 20 – August 17 @ 11:00 a.m.

Summer Reading Club (Ages 3-5) (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - Sunnyside Branch (Teen Programs)

Tuesday, July 31 @ 3:00 p.m.

Teen Glass-Beaded Necklace-Making Workshop

Queens Public Library - Whitestone Branch (Children's Programs)

151-10 14 Road; 718-767-8010

Thursdays, July 12 – August 16 @ 6:30 p.m.

Pajama Storytime (Ages 4-12)

Fridays, July 13 – August 17 @ 10:30 a.m.

Mother Goose Time (Ages 18-30 months) (Prereg.)

Fridays, July 13 – August 17 @ 11:30 a.m.

Toddler Time (Ages 2 ½-5 years) (Prereg.)

Queens Public Library - Woodhaven Branch (Children's Programs)

85-41 Forest Parkway; 718-849-1010

Wednesdays, July 11 – August 22 @ 10:30 a.m.

Toddler Time

Alley Pond Park

Queens, For directions, or for more information about the Adventure Course or its programs, call (718) 217-4685.

Sundays from 10:00 AM – 4:00 ON, May through November (weather permitting).

The Alley Pond Park Adventure Course

Free Public Sunday Programs every Sunday from May 6 through November 18

10:00 am and 1:30 pm

Free Sunday Programs

Alley Pond Adventure Course is an outdoor adventure that fosters trust, problem-solving, and team-building right in your own backyard at beautiful Alley Pond Park. Our Adventure Course programs are designed for you to have fun outdoors while learning team-building skills. The Adventure Course is fun and free for everyone age 8 and older.

For the month of July and August, pre-registration is required. Online registration will begin on June 25, 2012. We would like to invite individuals and families to join us Sundays starting July 1, 2012 and ending August 26, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. You must register to participate. This offer is limited to four participants per registered party.

Please visit our Urban Park Rangers program registration page to enter your name into the lottery. For more information about the program, please call 311 and ask for the Urban Park Rangers.

Please dress appropriately: no sandals, flip flops, or open-toed shoes are allowed. Our programs are appropriate for those ages 8 and older. The Adventure Course program lasts about two hours. Due to its popularity, we ask that you arrive at least half an hour before the start time of each program. Space is limited. A valid Photo ID is required for participants ages 18 and older.

Forest Park Skate Park, Rockaway Skate Park and Astoria Skate Park

Offers an opportunity for individuals to perfect their skills on inline skates, skateboards, and bikes. Unless otherwise specified, the Department of Parks & Recreation will provide an attendant during official operating hours. Each participant will be required to sign a waiver (those under 18 will need their guardian's signature) before being allowed to use the facility. Requirements for use: A signed liability waiver; helmet; knee pads; elbow pads.

Get an online liability form at: http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_things_to_do/facilities/af_skate_park.html .

Hip to Hip - Free Shakespeare Program

Go to www.hiptohip.org for performance schedule

July 25-August 18

Hamlet and Comedy of Errors

THE VENUES:

July 25, 7:30 pm - Hamlet

Flushing Meadows, 55 Avenue and 111 Street, Flushing, NY

July 26, 7:30 pm - Hamlet

Voelker Orth Museum, 14919 38th Avenue, Flushing, NY

July 27, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Lost Battalion Recreation Center, 93-29 Queens Boulevard, Rego Park, NY

July 28, 7:00 pm, Comedy of Errors

Far Rockaway Gateway Riis Park

July 29, 7:00 pm - Hamlet

Far Rockaway Beach 17th Street

August 1, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

St. Albans Park

August 2, 7:00 pm, Comedy of Errors

Fort Totten Park, At the Gazebo, Cross Island Parkway, Bayside, NY

August 3, 7:30 pm - Hamlet

Sunnyside Gardens Park, 48-21 39th Avenue, Sunnyside, NY

August 4, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Gantry Plaza State Park, 4-09 47th Street, Long Island City, NY

August 5, 5:00 pm - Hamlet

Socrates Sculpture Park, 32-01 Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, NY

August 8, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Flushing Meadows, 55 Avenue and 111 Street, Flushing, NY

August 9, 7:00 pm, Hamlet

Forest Park, At the Band Shell, Myrtle Avenue and Union Turnpike, Forest Hills, NY

August 10, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Sunnyside Gardens Park, 48-21 39th Avenue, Sunnyside, NY

August 11, 7:30 pm - Hamlet

Gantry Plaza State Park, 4-09 47th Street, Long Island City, NY

August 12, 5:00 pm - Comedy of Errors

Socrates Sculpture Park, 32-01 Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, NY

August 15, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Lefrak-Newport

August 16, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Voelker Orth Museum, 14919 38th Avenue, Flushing, NY

August 17, 7:30 pm - Hamlet

Agawam Park, at the Memorial, Windmill Lane, Southampton, NY

August 18, 7:30 - Comedy of Errors

Agawam Park, at the Memorial, Windmill Lane, Southampton, NY

All performances are free and open to the public. Running time: 90 minutes. Fun for the whole family. Bring a blanket or low chair and picnic fare and enjoy a Shakespeare play in the open air.

New York Hall of Science

47-01 111th Street, Queens, NY, 718-699-0005, Located in Flushing Meadows Corona Park

Monday - Friday: 9:30 am - 5:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

Science Under the Big Top!

Circus! Science Under the Big Top, New York's only exhibit that shows and tells the deep secrets and inside stories of the circus, teaches visitors about the science behind the tricks, hijinks, and acrobatics of the circus. Visitors can participate in circus activities including: high wire, acrobatics and the balance bar while learning parlari, the language of the circus. For more information, visit nysci.org. Free with general admission:

Adults (ages 18 & older): \$11; Children (ages 2 - 17): \$8; Students (with college ID): \$8;

Senior Citizens (age 62 & older): \$8. Additional admission fees for special shows and activities.

Socrates Sculpture Park

32-01 Vernon Blvd at Broadway, Long Island City, Queens (718-956-1819, socratessculpturepark.org).

Kayaking from Socrates Sculpture Park Beach at Halletts Cove

Selected Saturdays or Sundays, May 27 - October 7 / 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm (tide & weather permitting). In partnership with Long Island City Community Boathouse and Partnerships for Parks, Socrates hosts free kayaking in Halletts Cove. For exact schedule and more information, please visit www.licboathouse.org. In case of inclement weather or poor water quality, please consult the same website or call: 718.228.9214.

Exercise Classes

Saturdays/Sundays, May 12 - September 30, 2012

Classes are free and designed for all experience levels. Participants should wear comfortable clothing and, for yoga, bring a mat or a towel.

Yoga

Saturdays, 9:30 - 10:30 am & 11:00 am - 12:00 noon

Kripalu Yoga is a system of Hatha Yoga that integrates body postures, breathing techniques, relaxation, and meditation. Taught by Monique Schubert, participants are encouraged to integrate their yoga practices with this very special waterfront environment of nature and art.

Sundays, 10:00 am - 11:00 am

Yoga led by Yojaida from Timelessyoga.net This season, our Sunday Pilates program will be replaced with an additional yoga class, led by timelessyoga.net

Capoeira

Saturdays, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm

Capoeira is a lively martial art that originated in Brazil over 450 years ago. Taught by Professor Abará, self-defense techniques are concealed by graceful dance moves and spectacular acrobatics set to music.

Tai Chi

Sundays, 11:00 am - 12:00 noon

Led by certified instructors from the Taoist Tai Chi Society of the USA, these classes offer the opportunity to learn Taoist Tai Chi, improve one's health, relax, and exercise in an outdoor setting among changing exhibitions of contemporary sculpture.

The Metropolitan Opera Summer Recital Series

Thursday, August 9, 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Produced in association with SummerStage and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, The Met's Summer Recital Series will feature three talented young Met singers performing arias and duets from a variety of operas.

Visit <http://www.summerstage.org/calendar/the-metropolitan-opera-summer-recital-series-6/> for more information.

Hip to Hip Theatre Company celebrates 6 years of Free Shakespeare in the Park

Enjoy a tragedy one week and a comedy the next, performed in repertory by a professional troupe of actors. All performances are free and open to the public - fun for the whole family. Bring a blanket or low chair and picnic fare, and enjoy a Shakespeare play in the open air.

Sunday, August 5 / 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm: Hamlet

Perhaps Shakespeare's most moving tragedy – a poignant story of love, insecurity and the poisonous influence of jealousy.

Sunday, August 12 / 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm: Comedy of Errors

This merry war of wits is the quintessential romantic comedy – full of eavesdropping, deception and triumphant love.

Featured Workshop for Adults: Scarecrows with Thomas + Guinevere

August 19 - 31, 2012

Sundays / 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Weekdays / 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Saturday, August 25 / 12:00 noon - 3:00 pm

Come help renowned visiting Canadian artists Thomas+Guinevere (Thom Sokoloski and Jenny-Anne McCowan) transform the park into a field of freestanding, larger-than-life, glowing, sculptural scarecrows. Using a variety of materials and found objects, the artists will lead participants during a series of registered workshops in creating an immersive,

multicultural installation that will transpose the area's history of ghost stories, superstitions, and tales of the macabre into The Scarecrows. The scarecrows will be designed and erected to ward off misfortune and protect the creative spirit of the Park during our annual Halloween Harvest Festival.

To register, please visit: <http://socratessculpturepark.wufoo.com/forms/the-scarecrows-workshop-registration-2012/>

The Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

The Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is a good afternoon or morning escape from Queens, though you never do escape the airplanes circling nearby JFK airport. A trail loops from the Visitors Center through fairly open terrain with lots of low-lying vegetation, including a real surprise: a prickly pear cactus that thrives in the islands of Jamaica Bay. The trail continues through marshy areas of thick, tall grasses and trees. The hike is easy and not long, though you should bring plenty of water and dress properly. I recommend long pants because of the brush and bugs, and sturdy boots because of the mud and wet.

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

Cross Bay Boulevard Queens, New York, 718-318-4340

Open all year from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

Admission: Free. Before hiking you need to check in at the Visitors Center and receive a free hiking permit. There are no entrance or parking fees. The Center has a parking lot, bookstore, and bathroom. There are a few displays on local flora and fauna and bird migration and an excellent history of Jamaica Bay. Contact the Visitors Center for information on tours and special programs.