

CASE STUDY

Treasures Along the Erie Canal

A Collaborative Heritage Tourism Initiative



INTRODUCTION

The **"Treasures Along the Erie Canal"** initiative is a self-guided, 60-mile tour that showcases the rich history and cultural landmarks along the Erie Canal in New York State. Accessible via a mobile app, this project is a collaborative effort among Cayuga, Seneca, and Wayne counties, aiming to promote regional tourism and celebrate the Erie Canal's bicentennial.



1. Importance of Partnerships and Cooperation

The success of the "Treasures Along the Erie Canal" initiative is rooted in the strong partnerships among Cayuga, Seneca, and Wayne counties. By working together, these counties have pooled resources and expertise to create a cohesive and engaging tourist experience. The collaboration has led to the development of the mobile app, which guides visitors through historical sites, museums, restaurants, and natural attractions along the canal. This joint effort not only enhances the visitor experience but also fosters economic growth and community engagement across the region.

2. Utilization of the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor Bicentennial and I LOVE NY Branding

In promoting the "Treasures Along the Erie Canal" experience, the initiative strategically incorporates the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor Bicentennial logo and the I LOVE NY (ILNY) logo—two recognizable visual assets that lend credibility and cohesion to marketing efforts. These logos are more than decorative emblems; they are part of a coordinated statewide branding effort designed to amplify tourism messages and foster shared identity across multiple levels of engagement.

The **Erie Canalway Bicentennial Marketing Toolkit**, provided by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, was instrumental in this campaign. It includes high-quality visuals, messaging templates, and branding guidelines that ensure consistent, compelling communications. By using the Bicentennial logo—which features the canal's signature blue and gold color scheme and historically resonant iconography—the initiative connects visitors emotionally and visually to the broader celebration of the canal's 200th anniversary.

Similarly, the inclusion of the **I LOVE NY logo** aligns the initiative with New York State's premier tourism brand, increasing visibility and trust with both in-state and out-of-state audiences. With approval from the corresponding agencies, these brand assets were integrated across social media promotions.



This approach also supports broader marketing goals: utilizing shared branding assets builds a sense of unified purpose across the local (county tourism offices), regional (Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council), and statewide (I LOVE NY and Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor) levels. It encourages cross-promotion, co-branding opportunities, and consistent messaging that resonates with visitors no matter where they enter the Erie Canal experience. The Erie Canalway Bicentennial toolkit empowers local destinations to plug into a larger narrative, making their own contributions more impactful by amplifying them through a statewide lens.

3. Links and Connectivity Between Key Organizations

The "Treasures Along the Erie Canal" initiative exemplifies effective collaboration among various organizations dedicated to preserving and promoting New York's heritage.

- **Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor:** As a federally designated corridor, it works to preserve the canal's legacy and promote tourism. The corridor provides resources, grants, and promotional support to initiatives like "Treasures Along the Erie Canal."
- **Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council:** This council coordinates tourism efforts across the Finger Lakes region, including Cayuga, Seneca, and Wayne counties. By aligning regional strategies, the council ensures consistent messaging and resource sharing among the counties involved.
- **County Tourism Offices:** The tourism offices of Cayuga, Seneca, and Wayne counties play a crucial role in implementing the initiative. They manage local logistics, engage community stakeholders, and promote the tour through various channels.

The synergy among these organizations ensures a unified approach to heritage tourism, leveraging each entity's strengths to enhance the overall visitor experience.

4. Local-Level Engagement: Cayuga County's Role in Promoting Erie Canal Partnerships and Events

At the local level, Cayuga County has demonstrated strong leadership in celebrating the Erie Canal Bicentennial through a dedicated landing page on TourCayuga.com. This site acts as a central hub for promoting Cayuga County's unique canal history, spotlighting upcoming events, self-guided experiences, and the communities that continue to thrive along the waterway.

One of the standout features of the campaign is the Cayuga County Erie Canal Bicentennial poster, a custom-designed piece that visually connects communities and canal heritage through bold imagery and informative storytelling. The poster serves not only as a promotional tool but as a piece of public art, creating civic pride and drawing attention to local attractions tied to the broader bicentennial narrative.

The county's participation in Parks & Trails New York's Canal Towns program further amplifies this local engagement. Canal towns such as Montezuma, Port Byron, and Weedsport are actively involved in initiatives that enhance visitor readiness, beautify main streets, and strengthen connections between downtowns and canal-based recreational trails. These community-driven efforts are supported and promoted via TourCayuga's digital platform, ensuring visibility across audiences planning trips around the Bicentennial celebrations.

Cayuga County also plays a critical role in promoting the "Treasures Along the Erie Canal" initiative, highlighting key stops

CONCLUSION



The Treasures Along the Erie Canal initiative is a compelling example of what is possible when local, regional, and state-level partners work in alignment to celebrate shared heritage. Through the coordinated efforts of Cayuga, Seneca, and Wayne counties—supported by the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor, I LOVE NY, and the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council—this marketing effort delivers both historical resonance and contemporary relevance.

The strategic use of the **Erie Canalway Bicentennial and ILNY logos**, powered by the **Bicentennial Marketing Toolkit**, has allowed the campaign to communicate with unified visuals and messaging across diverse platforms. This consistency strengthens trust, builds brand recognition, and makes it easier for travelers to connect the dots between local experiences and a larger statewide celebration.

At the grassroots level, **Cayuga County's dedicated Bicentennial landing page on TourCayuga.com**, the custom **Erie Canal Bicentennial poster**, and community engagement through **Parks & Trails New York's Canal Towns** program demonstrate how heritage tourism can be locally activated. These efforts not only raise awareness of the canal's legacy but also foster economic development and community pride in canal-side towns like Montezuma, Port Byron, and Weedsport.

Ultimately, *Treasures Along the Erie Canal* stands as a model for how storytelling, partnerships, and strategic branding can come together to drive destination awareness and preserve cultural heritage. As the Erie Canal celebrates its 200th year, this campaign ensures that the people, places, and stories along its path remain vibrant for generations to come.

