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USA: Cruising the Erie Canal from the Hudson

It used to connect NY State with the Great Lakes. Today it's a tourist attraction.

A long boat ride on the Erie Canal. It's all you need to rediscover the beauty and the fascination of dozens of villages situated along the Hudson River in Upstate NY. Opened in 1825, the Erie Canal originally connected the State of New York, particularly the Hudson River with the Great Lakes region.

Today, the commercial importance is replaced by a revitalization of its recreational use. Be it fishing, strolling, biking or relaxing – the Erie Canal is one 800 km long exploration.

Naturally, the water is the main attraction with its long list of recreational activities, including day and night cruises, kayaking, canoeing and boating. The more adventuresome can rent a boat and cruise along the canal on their own, without a skipper.

For those who prefer to experience the canal on land, a 600 km long walking and biking trail connects the capital of New York State, Albany, with Buffalo.

But the Erie Canal is also an engineering marvel with its 35 locks, various lift bridges and antique towers, which in the past served to operate the canal. From the Hudson River to Lake Erie, the Erie Canal elevates up to 174 meters. When you navigate the canal by boat, you will experience being put into something like an 'elevator' when you are being 'raised' in the lock. When you go on land, the fun doesn't stop. From spring to fall there is one cultural or food and wine related festival or event after the other.

In particular, the dozens of restaurants lined up along the water are worth a stop. Some of them have historical significance, such as the 'Richardson Canal House' with its adjoining guesthouse, which since 1818 has been a pub for several hundred years before it was closed during prohibition and reopened again at the end of the 1970s. A sunset dinner with the lights reflecting off the water is just spectacular.

A visit to 'Letchworth State Park' is also worth a trip. It is located about 50 km from Rochester and considered the Grand Canyon of the east coast, encompassing an area of approx. 6,000 hectares along the Genesee River. The river that runs through a gorge rushes down three cascades, of which the tallest one is over 180 meters high. It's a natural spectacle and the park is a paradise for excursionists offering another 25 trails totaling 106 km. There are also trails for horseback riding, biking or skiing in the winter. During the summer you can dive into the pool or admire the park from above in a hot-air balloon.