

Discover tons of hidden fun on Long Island this summer



The Quogue Wildlife Refuge is just one of many hidden gems on Long Island to explore. Credit: Rande Daddona

By Lauren Chattman Special to Newsday Updated August 6, 2020 5:00 AM

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Long Island boasts a wealth of beautiful and uncrowded outdoor attractions. If busy beaches and state parks don't appeal during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, get out of the house and visit a serene sculpture garden, flower farm, nature preserve, or arboretum.

At the time of this writing, all of the following are open to the public, with certain rules and restrictions. To limit crowds and promote social distancing, some places require the purchase of entrance tickets online ahead of time. Others require masks. Restrooms may be closed. Benches may be roped off. Call ahead for information about hours, entry requirements, and possible closures.

Sculpture Gardens

Hofstra University Museum of Art has a collection of 70 sculptures, including works by Henry Moore, Seymour Lipton, and Paul Manship that are exhibited across the arboretum and gardens of its 240-acre campus. Download a map from the University website and take a self-guided tour.

INFO 112 Hofstra University, Hempstead, 516-463-7446, hofstra.edu



The Longhouse Reserve in East Hampton features a stunning sculpture garden with more than 60 works by Sol LeWitt, Buckminster Fuller and Yoko Ono on 16 acres of thoughtfully designed gardens. Credit: Patrick McMullan via Getty Image/Patrick McMullan

Timed ticket entry keeps crowds small at the **LongHouse Reserve**, a stunning sculpture garden with more than 60 works by Sol LeWitt, Buckminster Fuller, Yoko Ono, and many more, situated within 16 acres of thoughtfully designed gardens. **INFO** 133 Hands Creek Rd., East Hampton, 631-329-3568, longhouse.org



The Nassau County Museum of Art in Roslyn. Credit: Barry Sloan

The **Nassau County Museum of Art** has been welcoming visitors to its sculpture garden throughout the pandemic, even when the buildings were closed (the Mansion reopened July 8; the Manes Center remains shuttered). Forty sculptures by Richard Serra, Fernando Botero, and others dot the 145-acre preserve that includes eight marked nature trails and a formal garden.

INFO One Museum Drive, Roslyn Harbor, 516-484-9338, nassaumuseum.org

Animals in their Habitats



Anglers try their luck at Cold Spring Harbor Fish Hatchery & Aquarium. Credit: Raychel Brightman

At the kid-friendly **Cold Spring Harbor Fish Hatchery & Aquarium**, you can tour eight outdoor trout ponds, feed the trout, and try your hand at “catch and keep” fishing. Covid-adapted rules include mandatory face coverings while fishing and no more than eight people on the fishing platform at a time. Fishing is \$16 per person and by reservation only, and each fish you catch will cost you \$4.

INFO 1660 NY-25A, Cold Spring Harbor, 516-692-6768, cshfishhatchery.org



The Quogue Wildlife Refuge offers a chance to get back to nature. Credit: Randee Daddona

Spend some time at the **Quogue Wildlife Refuge**, bird watching or just walking the refuge's seven miles of trails, exploring diverse habitats including forests, ponds, and pine barrens. Injured eagles, owls, falcons, hawks, groundhogs, and foxes are housed in an Outdoor Wildlife Complex that is open to visitors every day (the indoor Nature Center is closed for now).

INFO 3 Old Country Rd., Quogue, 631-653-4771, quoguewildliferefuge.org

Arboretums



A family walks down a path in The Bayard Cutting Arboretum in Great River. Credit: Yvonne Albinowski

Frederick Law Olmstead designed the **Bayard Cutting Arboretum** boasts the most extensive collection of conifers — including spruce, pine, cypress, hemlock, yew, and other lesser known varieties — on Long Island. “Think of us as a museum of trees,” says the website. The grand Manor House and café are closed, but visitors can wander the property with a map, identifying the conifers as well as 100 different types of holly, and 14 species of oak.

INFO 440 Montauk Hwy., Great River, 631-581-1002, bayardcuttingarboretum.com



The Tea House is located on the grounds of the Humes Japanese Stroll Garden in Mill Neck.

The **Humes Japanese Stroll Garden**, featuring bamboo groves, a waterfall that empties into a koi pond, and 11 species of moss was built by U.S. diplomat John Portner Humes as a place of quiet contemplation. Stepping stones control the speed at which visitors move through the landscape, encouraging moment-to-moment reflection.

INFO 347 Oyster Bay Rd., Mill Neck, 516-676-4486, northshorelandalliance.org



Exterior view of Camellia House in Planting Fields Arboretum in Oyster Bay. Credit: Yvonne Albinowski

Planting Fields Arboretum is part of the 409-acre Gold Coast estate formerly owned by William Robertson Coe and Mai Rogers Coe. Its extensive collection of formal gardens includes a heather garden, a rose garden, a hydrangea collection, a day lily garden, and a dahlia garden. The Italian Garden, the center of which is sunk below the surrounding level of the park for the sake of seclusion, was designed by Mai Coe in 1916 as an homage to Italian villa oases.

INFO 1395 Planting Fields Rd., Oyster Bay, 516-922-9210, plantingfields.org

Nature Preserves

Cushman Woods features a hilly, 28-acre forest with an intricate trail system that was once a fox-hunting route for the Meadowbrook Hunt. Stroll the trails while identifying many bird species and glimpsing fox and other mammals.

INFO Still Rd., Matinecock, 516-922-1028, northshorelandalliance.org

The **Shore Road Sanctuary** in Cold Spring Harbor was once an ExxonMobil fueling site. The eight acre parcel has been transformed by the North Shore Land Alliance into a grassland preserve with salt marsh and wet meadow. You can walk on the beach at low tide or walk through the blooming meadow, spotting horseshoe crabs and monarch butterflies as you go.

INFO 95 Shore Rd., Cold Spring Harbor, 516-922-1028, northshorelandalliance.org



Ian Ochs and Ariel Mitnick, of Mattituck, were among the hikers walking along the scenic trails of Avalon Park and Preserve in Stony Brook. Credit: Newsday/John Paraskevas

There are 140 acres at the **Avalon Nature Preserve** in Stony Brook open to the public, providing 5 miles of dog-friendly trails. The preserve has four distinct areas: The most developed, Mill Pond, features two freshwater ponds filled with waterfowl and frogs and a stone labyrinth for quiet contemplation. The Coastal Corridor offers a walk over undulating hills with glimpses of the Long Island Sound. Hilltop Meadow is a series of five former agricultural fields, now seeded with wildflowers and native grasses. And the Forest Sanctuary includes spicebush and viburnum-lined trails through oak, hickory, and beech trees.

INFO 200 Harbor Rd., Stony Brook, 631-689-0619, avalonnaturepreserve.org

Flower Farms



Smiles of acres of sunflowers at the North Fork Sunflower Maze in Mattituck. Credit: Randee Daddona

Beginning in early August (call before you go, because Mother Nature schedules the first bloom) the 17-acre **North Fork Sunflower Maze** opens to the public daily, from 9 a.m. to sunset. A path through the fields provides many views of the flowers, and plenty of opportunities for spectacular photographs. Cut flowers as well as T-shirts, hats, and North Fork Potato Chips (the maze is owned by the Sidor family, who have been growing potatoes in Mattituck since 1910) are available at the farm stand.

INFO 8623 Wickham Ave., Mattituck, 631-644-2200, northforkchips.com



Waterdrinker Farm on Wading River Road in Manorville. Credit: James Carbone

If you want a hands-on sunflower experience, check out **Waterdrinker Family Farm**, where u-pick flowers are \$2/stem. Shears are available, but you can bring your own if you are more comfortable with that. The u-pick option, plus barnyard animals, mini-golf, and more make it a kid-friendly sunflower destination.

INFO 663 Wading River Rd., Manorville, 631-878-8653, water-drinker.com



Window boxes made for the fall season at Peconic River Herb Farm in Calverton.
Credit: Newsday Staff/Ken Spencer

If you like to grow flowers as well as pick them, visit the **Peconic River Herb Farm**, a 14-acre plant paradise picturesque enough to be a popular pre-Covid wedding venue. Browse dozens of varieties of flowering plants arranged in large outdoor sales areas, get free advice from knowledgeable salespeople, and take home plants or seeds for your own garden.

INFO 2749 River Rd., Calverton, 631-369-0058, prherbfarm.com

In addition to natural beauty, Long Island is rich in kitschy roadside attractions that make fun viewing and good social media material.

Start out east in Montauk, where you'll find **Ronjo**, the giant copper-painted tiki statue guarding the entrance to the Montauk Beach House.

Proceed to Riverhead, to view and photograph Long Island's most famous novelty building, the **Big Duck**.

At Atlantic Seafood in Center Moriches, the entrance is shaded by enormous **Shark Jaws**.

Not quite as massive but impressive nonetheless is the **Giant Rooster** spouting water outside the Bello Poultry Farm in Holbrook.

The colorful **Figurehead of Hercules**, which formerly adorned the USS Ohio, now sits on a pedestal in the Hercules Pavilion on Main Street in Stony Brook. It is said that if you kiss the brow of Hercules you'll be married within the year — easier said than done because the massive bust sits behind a low but spiky wrought-iron fence.

Bayport's **Cement Sphinx** was originally built in the early 1900s to attract guests to the Anchorage Inn, which burned down in the 1920s. Brothers Lou and John Fontana rescued and restored the sphinx and it now sits in front of their business, Fontana Concrete Products.

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