The Big Apple Greeter Guide to Astoria & Long Island City

Astoria and Long Island City are distinctive neighborhoods that offer a culturally diverse ethnic mix, a view of industrial New York, rich historical sites and spectacular views. Geographically close to Manhattan, Astoria and Long Island City offer a respite from busy city streets and an opportunity to see something unique.
Where is Astoria and Long Island City?
Located in Northwestern Queens, Astoria and Long Island City are bordered on the south by Newtown Creek, on the north and west by the East River, and on the east by Sunnyside and Woodside.

About Astoria and Long Island City
Settled in 1659 and named Hallet’s Cove, Astoria was renamed after mogul John Jacob Astor in an effort to solicit an investment of $2,000 in the neighborhood. Astor only made a contribution of $500, but the name remained. Astor did maintain a summer home in Hell’s Gate in Manhattan just across the East River from the neighborhood that was named in his honor. Once home to numerous factories and bakeries, Long Island City is now a venue for the filming of major motion pictures and television shows. It is also the home to some major artistic venues and luxury lofts.

It’s Easy to Get to Astoria and Long Island City

BY SUBWAY: 7 train to stations at 23rd Street/Ely Avenue, Queens Plaza, 36th Street and Steinway Street. F train to the station at 21st Street/Queensbridge. V trains to stations at 23rd Street/Ely Avenue, Queens Plaza, 36th Street and Steinway Street. R trains to stations at Queensboro Plaza, 36th Street and Steinway Street. N or W trains to stations at Queensboro Plaza, 39th Avenue, 36th Avenue, Broadway, 30th Avenue, Astoria Boulevard and Ditmars Boulevard.

BY BUS: The Q101 runs from Manhattan to Astoria along Steinway Street. Other bus lines within Queens that service Astoria and Long Island City include the Q18, Q19, Q19A, Q102, Q103, Q104 and B61.

BY WATER TAXI: Water Taxis run from the East River and 35th Street in Manhattan to the Hunter’s Point Ferry stop. To learn more, see their website at http://www.nywatertaxi.com.

Things to See and Do in Astoria and Long Island City

1 WATER TAXI BEACH on the East River at Borden Avenue boasts 1,002 tons of sand spread over 44,000 square feet and spectacular views of the midtown Manhattan skyline. In season, the beach is fun in the sun by day and a playground for the 21+ crowd at night. Catch some shade under the tent, play a game of beach volleyball or wiggle your toes in the sand and it is all just a 4-minute Water Taxi ride from midtown Manhattan. To learn more, see the website at http://www.watertaxibeach.com/long_island_city.

2 GANTRY PLAZA STATE PARK at 50-50 Second Street and the East River has an award-winning design that has transformed former industrial space into a flourishing public park with tremendous views of Manhattan. The park follows the shoreline and is landscaped with native grasses. Curved steps lead down to a plaza and then out to four distinct piers that stretch into the East River. Wooden chaise lounges and seats offer a relaxing view of Midtown Manhattan. Two gantries, old shipping lifts, loom overhead, a reminder of the area’s industrial history. Find out more at http://nysparks.state.ny.us/parks/149/details.aspx.
3 Socrates Sculpture Park at 31-34 Vernon Boulevard at Broadway and the East River is a unique outdoor exhibition space. Once an illegal dumping site, the reclaimed area is the only place in the city dedicated to large-scale sculptures. To learn more, see the website at http://www.socratessculpturepark.org.

4 Astoria Park and Pool at Hoyt Avenue and the East River is renowned for its swimming pool which was host to the 1936 Olympic swim trials. In addition to its beautiful pool, Astoria Park offers outdoor tennis courts, a track, a bandstand, multiple trails, basketball courts, and playgrounds that lure visitors from all over. And the views are spectacular. Sitting on the edge of the East River and resting between the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge and Hell Gate Bridge, the park offers shoreline sights and sounds that make the benches along its perimeter popular spots year-round. To learn more, see http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/AstoriaPark.

Greeter's Secret: Western Queens has become a magnet for the film and television industries. The Kaufman-Astoria Studios, once Paramount’s east coast production facility, now act as a stage for TV shows, including Nurse Jackie and Law & Order. Also in the area is Silvercup Studios. Once a bread factory, it is now the largest film and television production facility in the city and counts among its productions Sex and the City and The Sopranos.

5 The Noguchi Museum at 32-37 Vernon Boulevard near 10th Street was designed to preserve and display the works of Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi. The museum boasts 12 galleries and an outdoor sculpture garden. For hours and exhibit information, see http://www.noguchi.org.

6 The Museum of the Moving Image at 35th Avenue at 37th Street is a treasure of film history with interactive displays. Hands-on activities and classic film screenings are available. For hours and activities, see http://www.movingimage.us/site/site.php.

7 SculptureCenter at 44-19 Purves Street near Jackson Avenue is dedicated to experimental and innovative developments in contemporary sculpture. SculptureCenter commissions new work and presents exhibits by emerging and established, national and international artists. For hours and exhibits, see http://sculpture-center.org.

8 P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center at 22-25 Jackson Ave at 46th Avenue is one of the oldest and largest non-profit contemporary art institutions in the United States. An exhibition space rather than a collecting institution, P.S.1 devotes its energy and resources to displaying the most experimental art in the world. For hours and exhibits, see http://ps1.org. Make sure to check out the graffiti on the building across the street at 22-42 Jackson Avenue.

Shopping

9 Slovak-Czech Varieties at 10-59 Jackson Avenue near Vernon Boulevard carries gift items originating in Slovakia and the Czech Republic running the gamut from Prague glassware to food and Czech and Slovak folk music. Walls are stocked high with puzzles, marionettes and wooden toys that make great gifts.

10 Titan Foods at 25-56 31st Street at Astoria Boulevard claims to be the largest Greek market in the United States. Offering a wide variety of olives and feta cheeses, make sure to check out their bakery for a selection of wonderful baked goods and their prepared dishes.
STEINWAY STREET is the main shopping area in Astoria and is perfect for a leisurely stroll among high fashion boutiques interspersed with one-of-a-kind shops. The section between Astoria Boulevard and 27th Avenue is known as “LITTLE CAIRO” and is home to Arab coffee shops and restaurants.

When It’s Time to Eat

CAFÉ HENRI at 10-10 50th Avenue near Vernon Boulevard is known for its lovely weekend brunches, authentic French cuisine and rich desserts. Live jazz is offered on Thursday and Saturday nights.

SHI at 4720 Center Boulevard near 47th Road is an Asian fusion restaurant that offers fine dining, skyline views, white wooden swings on the patio and dancing on weekends.

AGNANTI RESTAURANT at 19-06 Ditmars Boulevard at 19th Street is conveniently located across the street from Astoria Park. Offering outdoor seating, traditional Greek cuisine and wines, diners feel like they are on the Aegean.

About the Global Greeter Network

Big Apple Greeter is proud to be part of the Global Greeter Network, a voluntary association of welcoming programs around the world, all based on the Big Apple Greeter model: free and open to all visitors; offer greeter services as an individual or very small group experience (no more than 6 visitors); and are characterized by enthusiastic, local residents who love their home city, love to meet people from around the world and volunteer to conduct these visits. The Global Greeter Network currently spans seven countries on four continents and includes the following members: Cicerones de Buenos Aires in Argentina; Adelaide Greeters and Melbourne Greeter Service in Australia; Tap in TO! (Toronto) in Canada; VisitBrighton Greeters and Kent Greeters in England; Paris Greeter, Les Greeters de Nantes, Greeters62 (Pas-de-Calais), Lyon City Greeters and Marseille Provence Greeters in France; Den Haag Greeters in the Netherlands; Big Apple Greeter (New York City), Chicago Greeter, and Houston Greeters in the United States.

You may learn more about Big Apple Greeter and its many services on our website: www.bigapplegreeter.org or by emailing us at information@bigapplegreeter.org.