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## Summer in the City

Many of my fondest memories are of vacations enjoying America's natural wonders. I'm partial to some of the national parks out west — Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Arches, Bryce, Zion. I could sit for hours next to an ocean, a waterfall or a babbling brook. I love being outdoors — feeling the sun, breathing fresh air, watching the clouds drift across the sky ...

That might make you wonder why I live in New York City. I grew up in a rural area of southwestern Pennsylvania and lived in the slow-paced South for two years before moving to the Big Apple. For a long time, I considered myself a country girl. Recently, though, I've accepted the fact that, like roughly 80% of the U.S. population, I'm truly a city dweller.

I still love being outdoors — although it's not the same in a city as it is at the beach or in the backcountry. But several recent initiatives are making it easier for us to enjoy nature — city style.

In May, two sections of Broadway — in Times Square and Herald Square — were closed to traffic and turned into pedestrian malls. Chairs are filled with tourists, shoppers and commuters taking a break in the shade of table-top umbrellas. Cyclists glide by in the bike lanes around the edges of the open spaces. Concrete pots filled with greenery help separate the pedestrians from the traffic (as do a few orange-and-white construction barrels). One part of Herald Square has been designated for chess and backgammon games, courtesy of Chess NYC, which among the boards it provides is a floor model with knights and bishops that measure about 2 ft tall.

On three Saturdays in August, the Dept. of Transportation closes a 7-mile stretch of Park Avenue to traffic, and New Yorkers are invited to “come out and play” in the street, from near the Brooklyn Bridge to Central Park. The masses take over — young and old; on foot and on bikes, rollerblades and skateboards; pushing strollers and walking dogs; in groups and alone. I stopped in my office one Saturday, and it was refreshing to watch the stream of people, whose voices were undetectable as they passed far beneath my cubicle window, instead of the hundreds of loud vehicles I see and hear on a typical workday.

My latest foray into the city wilderness was a stroll along the High Line — an elevated steel structure built in the 1930s to carry freight trains above the streets of Manhattan that has been transformed into a public park. The (concrete) trail is lined with plantings, including many of the original species that sprang up through the out-of-use tracks after the trains stopped running. Park-goers can rest on benches along the walkway, or sit in what looks like a glass-fronted amphitheater and watch the traffic below. The first eight-block section, which runs approximately above 10th Avenue between 12th and 20th Streets, opened in June, and already it draws thousands of visitors each week-day, and many more on the weekends.

Those are just a few of the ways we could answer the question posed by the article title on page 30, “What Does It Mean To Be Green?” So even though it may no longer be summer by the time you read this, if you're a nature-lover, consider checking out what's green in New York City next summer!

Cynthia F. Mascone  
Editor-in-Chief

