Everyone in your party (pets too!) does so as well. 

Encounters by staying on designated trails, and ensuring poison ivy, tick bites, thorns, and other unpleasantness can be avoided with proper caution. Reduce your risk and like any adventure there are natural hazards that you are invited to see a variety of habitats supporting a diverse array of plants and wildlife, along widespread hiking trails (nine are featured in this guide).

The purpose of this guide is to introduce visitors to several popular destinations in the Greenbelt, provide recommendations about hiking to these sites, and highlight some of the plants and animals found along the way. Explore and enjoy your Greenbelt!

Tips to make your hiking experience enjoyable and safe:

Stay on the trail: Hiking outdoors is a great adventure, and like any adventure there are natural hazards that can be avoided with proper caution. Reduce your risk of poison ivy, tick bites, thorns, and other unpleasant encounters by staying on designated trails, and ensuring everyone in your party (pets too!) does so as well.

Poison Ivy
“Leaves of three, let it be.” This plant is native to New York City. Oil on its leaves, stems, and roots can cause a skin rash if touched. It’s berries are eaten by wildlife, who are not affected by.

Ticks
Both deer ticks and dog ticks live in the Greenbelt, and thrive in humid areas like leaf litter, dense grass, and overgrown areas. Both types can transmit tick-borne illnesses, including Lyme disease.
The mature forest of Willowbrook Park, accessible via the White Trail, is home to large tulip poplar, red oak, American beech, and red maple trees. The small lake supports Canada geese, various ducks, dragonflies, and little brown bats above the surface, while pumpkinseed sunfish and catfish swim below. Around the lake, notice the willows and the baldcypress trees with needles that turn a unique coppery-bronze color before shedding each fall.

A slight diversion from the Red Trail in the Buck’s Hollow section of the Greenbelt will bring you to the ruins of the old Heyerdahl Family House – evidence of the Staten Island’s pastoral past. Here, the Heyerdahls ran a family farm that comprised of oaks and red maple trees. The small lake supports Canada geese, various ducks, dragonflies, and red maple trees. The small lake supports Canada geese, various ducks, dragonflies, and red maple trees. The small lake supports Canada geese, various ducks, dragonflies, and red maple trees. The small lake supports Canada geese, various ducks, dragonflies, and red maple trees.

Use the Red/Blue Trails to get to the LaTourette Golf House, a restored Federal style brick structure built in 1870. Once a family mansion, today it is on the U.S. Register of Historic Places. Buy a snack and take a bathroom break here on the way to Historic Richmondtown, a 19th century living history village, or while heading further into Southwest LaTourette Park. There, see the naturally-occurring Hessian Spring, remnants of Ketcham’s Mill, and the tidal wetlands of Richmond Creek.

Buttonbush Swamp is a wetland in the central Greenbelt, accessible by the White, Blue, Red, and Yellow Trails. Home to green frogs, bullfrogs, spring peepers, and gray treefrogs (successfully reintroduced here in the 1990’s through a NYC Parks initiative), the swamp teems with aquatic life. Adjacent to the swamp is a persimmon grove, a rare species for Staten Island generally found in the South.

In the early 1960s, there were plans to construct a highway through the Greenbelt. Many concerned citizens protested the highway and won their battle. A large pile of construction debris from this project remained and was named Moses Mountain as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the notorious urban planner, Robert Moses. This 260-foot-high vista offers up to 15 miles of visibility on a clear day. Visit via the Yellow Trail for a vista of the Greenbelt and views of fall foliage and migrating birds.

For many years, High Rock Park was a Girl Scout camp visited by children from all across New York City. When the Girl Scouts tried to sell the property, local citizens rallied to preserve this land as public parkland. The leader of this movement was Gretta Moulton, a scout leader for which the entrance gate to the park is named. High Rock Park contains five ponds and various wetlands, and is often referred to as the most tranquil place in New York City.