

LOCAL

Haverstraw-Ossining commuter ferry use on weekends sees uptick: Where riders are going



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The Haverstraw-Ossining ferry is typically used for weekday commuting. But this summer, some area residents have been using it for much more.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority launched a pilot program in May that includes deep discounts for riders along with a variety of expanded services, including Haverstraw-Ossining ferry rides on Saturdays and Sundays, a program that has expanded the options for those traveling to and from weekend activities.

“It’s exciting to see rider enthusiasm for this fantastic new weekend service that gets folks out of their cars and on to the scenic Hudson River,” Metro-North president, Catherine Rinaldi, said in the MTA’s recent update on the program.

The pilot, which runs through Veterans Day, has gained traction since it launched. According to the MTA, the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry averaged 240 trips per day on the weekend when the program started in the spring. It reached a record high of 822 trips on Sunday, July 21, with an average of about 312 trips a day on weekends so far this August.

The upward trend suggests a growing interest in the ferry among community members. So, curious about how people have been taking advantage of the new weekend service, I packed my sunscreen, water bottle and best cat eye sunglasses to see what the weekend ferry was all about.

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From weekday commutes to weekend fun on the Hudson

“This is my ‘Titanic’ moment,” I thought to myself.

I considered stepping up onto the bars of the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry and holding my arms out like Rose did in that iconic scene, wondering how quickly my clumsiness would cause me to fall off the boat and into the Hudson.

Only a few minutes prior, the ferry pulled off from the Ossining deck, where it boarded families, couples and a group of cyclists for the ride to Haverstraw. Some passengers headed for the enclosed seating, where they watched through windows as we sped across the river. Others, like me, were drawn to the deck, where we could view the picturesque hills of Hook Mountain State Park and feel the wind in our wings. (Or in my case, my dress.)

Luckily, a couple from Colombia beat me to the idea. They, too, likened the ride to “Titanic,” and quickly arranged themselves on the deck like Jack and Rose.

The couple — Karol Castillo and Jorge Buritica of Colombia — said they chose to ride the ferry to visit their family in Haverstraw. It was their first time on a ferry, they said.

“This is a different medium of transportation,” Castillo said. “This is something (where) you can be over the Hudson River,” noting how nice it was to be out on the river instead of cooped up in the car.

Biking from Sleepy Hollow to Haverstraw to Nyack and back

When I boarded the Peter R. Weiss ferry boat, scheduled to depart at 11:42 a.m., fellow passengers boarded with large items like strollers and bicycles. Dozens of people had bicycles with them that day; members of the group Bike Tarrytown had gathered in Sleepy Hollow to bike to Haverstraw and back, incorporating the ferry into their near 20-mile route.

“I figured this would be fun,” said Daniel Convissor, the director of Bike Tarrytown. “We get to ride the ferry and make a loop and have some friends along and have a nice day.”

Convissor told me his ferry ride was “marvelous.”

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How, where to get tickets

Adventure from Rockland to find 'the best Thai restaurant in the city'

The ferry docked in Haverstraw, dropping off the bikers and welcoming a new set of passengers. These folks were a bit more subdued; no one stood on the deck and pretended to be in "Titanic," for instance. Still, passengers utilized the ferry for fun activities.

“We’re going to explore Bryant Park,” said Ayo Johnson, a resident of Rockland County. “And then we’re going to find our way to the best Thai restaurant in the city.”

Johnson and her friends took the ferry from Haverstraw to catch Metro-North to Grand Central Terminal, much like a commuter might. But for Johnson, the ferry provided a “good alternative,” she said, for the “stressful” drive into New York City.

The ferry has long provided an efficient, budget-friendly alternative to driving into the city on workdays, with discounted monthly tickets available for area residents who might otherwise have to pay tolls and parking fees in the city that vary in price.

Taking the I-87 highway from Haverstraw into the city, for instance, would cost a driver with a New York state E-ZPass \$7.50 per trip, or \$13.13 for those without a New York state E-ZPass, plus New York City parking fees. With congestion pricing, that cost to commuters would have increased by \$15 per trip into the city. (The congestion pricing program was paused in early June.)

In comparison, the cost for an adult taking the ferry from Haverstraw, combined with the Metro-North ride to Grand Central Terminal, totals \$15.75 per trip at off-peak times, \$19.75 for peak times.

All in all, the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry seemed to be ideal for people looking to indulge in weekend fun without the stress and complications of driving. Like Convisor said, it seems like a “marvelous” alternative.

Everything else you need to know to try the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry

Locations: To catch the ferry in Haverstraw, use the Haverstraw Ferry Terminal, located at 30-34 Dr. Girling Drive off of US Route 9W. To board the ferry in Ossining, use the Ossining Dock, located at 1 Main Street and Westerly Road, just west of the Ossining Metro-North train station.

Schedules: Weekend services for the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry operate between 9:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. Ferries from Haverstraw depart approximately once per hour at 9:21 a.m., 10:21 a.m. and so on. Ferries from Ossining also depart approximately once per hour at 9:42 a.m., 10:42 a.m. and so on. Check the detailed weekend schedule at new.mta.info/document/140246 for exact times.

Tickets: A one-way fare is \$4.50 for adults; \$2.25 for seniors (62 or older), people with disabilities and Medicare recipients with appropriate ID; \$2.25 for children ages 6 to 11; and free for children ages 5 and under. Tickets can be purchased at the NY Waterway ticket booth in Haverstraw or using the NY Waterway app.

Discounted monthly tickets are available through the pilot program.

To learn more about the Haverstraw-Ossining ferry's weekend pilot service: Check out the MTA's website at bit.ly/3Ahyr03.

Lohud's Nancy Cutler and John Meore contributed to this story.

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