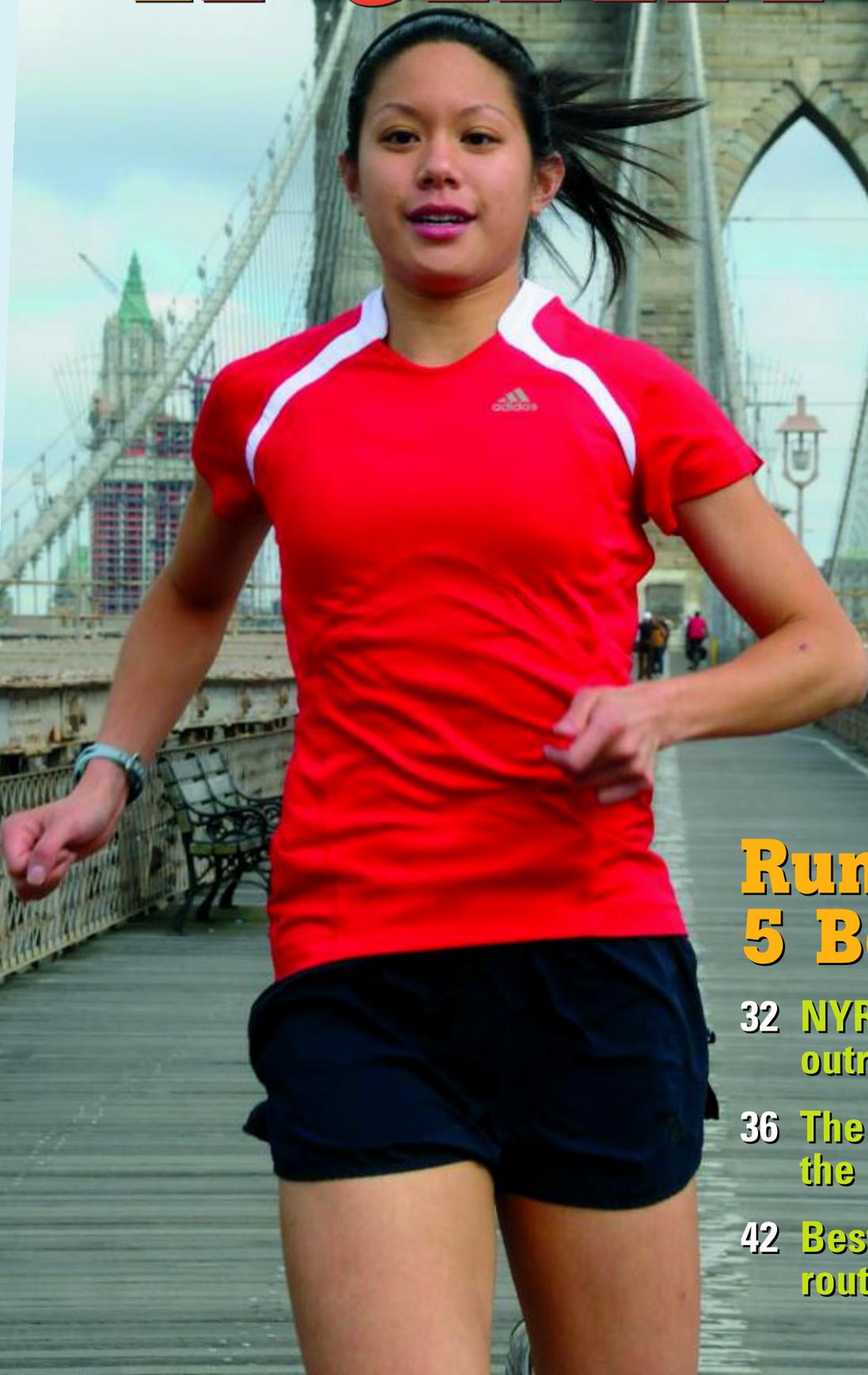


# New York runner



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# The BxM Run

## 18 miles, 12 bridges, 1 big adventure

by Jack Crager

**T**o many New Yorkers, running in the city's beautiful parks is the essence of urban training.

Although park running offers a respite from the city's chaos, it can become routine. If you're searching for a break from the norm and are willing to step outside your comfort zone, and if you aren't turned off by construction detours, street fairs, and traffic—in short, if you're adaptable and curious and you have some grit—then we've got the run for you!

The BxM Run is named after the Bronx-Manhattan Express bus line that connects the two boroughs. Starting at Gracie Mansion on Manhattan's East Side and ending at the George Washington Bridge, it covers roughly 18 miles—plenty for a pre-marathon long training run—and a dozen bridge crossings (depending on how you count). Of course, you can take or leave parts of this run for a shorter trek—or continue down the West Side Greenway for a longer one.

Due to periodic construction and seasonal closings, the route described below is subject to change. For updates—and a detailed, printable list of instructions as well as a Google map of the journey—visit [nyrr.org/TKTK](http://nyrr.org/TKTK).

### The Bridges of New York County

In 1693, Manhattan's first footbridge, King's Bridge, was built to connect the island to the mainland of southern Westchester County, spanning the Spuyten Duyvil (Dutch for "to spite the devil") Creek. That historic structure and the section of creek it crossed were long ago buried. But over the centuries,

bridges have remained key passageways between the upper tip of the island and what has become the Bronx.

Today, 15 bridges lead from northern Manhattan across the East River and the Harlem River; most of these have open pedestrian walkways. A notable exception is the city's oldest surviving bridge—High Bridge—completed in 1848 as part of the Croton Aqueduct, but closed to foot traffic in the 1960s. With spectacular stone-masonry arches, High Bridge has become a focal point for preservationists who have pushed to have it renovated and reopened; it is projected to open to foot traffic in 2011.

**If you're adaptable, curious, and have some grit, then this is the run for you.**

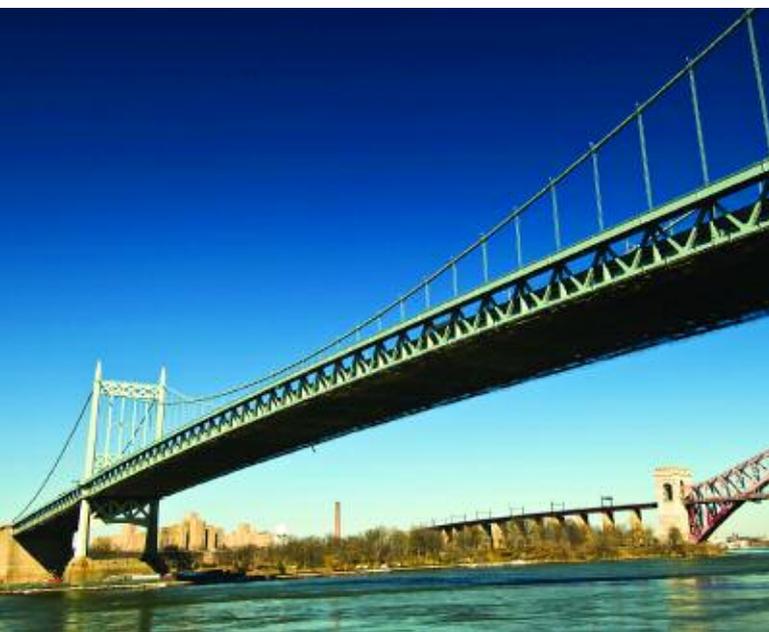
The Alexander Hamilton Bridge is open only to vehicular traffic, while the Park Avenue and Spuyten Duyvil bridges are used only by rail. The Henry Hudson Bridge, which connects Riverdale in the Bronx to Inwood Hill Park in Manhattan, is under construction and closed to foot traffic until sometime in 2010. This fact led to the discovery of an excellent alternate route, which omits this bridge and the Washington Bridge (not to be confused with the George Washington Bridge), so the loop remains continuous between the two boroughs.

### Why Do This Run?

Douglas DaSilva, who resides on the Upper East Side, devised the BxM run after he got bored running loops around the Central Park Reservoir. In 2004, DaSilva caught the marathon bug and upped his mileage. "As I progressed and started covering greater distances, I developed a need to experience new things," he says. "I decided it was time to get out of Central Park and see New York!"

This led him to try the greenway along the East River and to venture across the Queensboro Bridge, then the Williamsburg, Manhattan, and Brooklyn bridges. "Although I always felt a sense of accomplishment once I conquered another bridge, there were always crowds of people on these routes," he recalls. "So I turned my attention north to bridges linked to Ward's Island, Randall's Island, and the Bronx. Here I encountered fewer crowds and plenty of new things to see. This gave me the thought, 'I'm going to run all the bridges in Manhattan!'"

With help from the Internet, DaSilva mapped out the bridges he still needed to conquer. "I decided to tackle all of them in one day," he says. "It's a tough course, which seems to be uphill for much of the second half, but as it gets more difficult, there are less car traffic and fewer pedestrians, so it gets easier to navigate. It's a very satisfying course in which you get to see parts of New York City that few runners experience."



Robert F. Kennedy (formerly Triboro) Bridge



145th Street Bridge

**The Course**

Start at Gracie Mansion, a splendid landmark on the East River at 88th Street, and head uptown along the greenway with the river to the right. “The river is the primary landmark,” DaSilva points out. “If you’re running uptown, keep the river to your right when in Manhattan and to your left when in the Bronx.”

At 102nd Street, cross the **Ward’s Island Bridge**, a bluish-green footbridge linking Manhattan to Ward’s Island (politically part of Manhattan). Once across, turn left and run on the lower path next to the river. Cross an **unnamed wood-planked bridge** over scenic marshlands, and stay left by the river.

**“It’s a very satisfying course in which you get to see parts of New York City that few runners experience.”**

—Douglas DaSilva

This leads to the **Robert F. Kennedy Bridge**, formerly known as the Triboro Bridge. It was built as part of FDR’s New Deal in the 1930s and is three bridges in one, with each leg joined by Randall’s Island to Queens, Manhattan,

and the Bronx. Run under the Manhattan section, pass the baseball fields, and mount a long ramp to the Bronx leg.

In the Bronx, turn left at 133rd Street, then left again at Willis Avenue to access the **Willis Avenue Bridge**, which puts you back in Harlem, running in the reverse direction of the ING New York City Marathon route. This swing bridge, built in 1901, is slated to be replaced, and construction complicates the approach ramps. “A helpful tip is to run on the uptown side of each bridge when possible,” DaSilva says. “This will give you a view of your next bridge and help you navigate.”

Next are four more bridges built near the turn of the 20th century. In Manhattan, continue straight to Third Avenue and turn right. At 128th Street take the access ramp to the **Third Avenue Bridge**, which brings you back into the Bronx. Proceed straight on Third Avenue, turn left onto 138th Street, and run onto the **Madison Avenue Bridge** (familiar to marathoners) and back into Harlem. Once across, make a right on Lennox Avenue and another right on 145th Street to access the **145th Street Bridge** back to the Bronx.

Don’t pass the opportunity to see the new Yankee Stadium: Proceed to River Road and turn left. Make another

left at 161st Street, where the new stadium is on the right and the old one is on the left. Follow 161st Street to the end, make a left on Macombs Avenue, and take the **Macombs Dam Bridge** back into Manhattan.

**“The greatest lesson to learn from this run is how to run and think like a true New Yorker.”**

—Douglas DaSilva

At this bridge’s end take the first right turn, which becomes a long ramp leading to the Harlem River Speedway section of Manhattan’s greenway. Proceed north next to the river. Pass under High Bridge and the Alexander Hamilton Bridge as well as the Washington Bridge, and exit the greenway where it ends at the intersection of Dyckman Street and 10th Avenue.

Turn right on 10th Avenue and right again at 207th Street, which becomes the **University Heights Bridge**. Cross it into the Bronx and take the first left, Sedgwick Avenue, then veer left again on Bailey Avenue up to 225th Street. Turn left onto a footbridge that crosses above the Major Deegan Expressway, and pass a new shopping center with a huge Target store. Turn left at Broadway

Photography by NYC Department of Transportation (this page, right, and opposite page, left)



**Madison Avenue Bridge**



**George Washington Bridge**

and take the short but scenic **Broadway Bridge** back into Manhattan.

Here, at about mile 12, there is a 1-train subway station at 215th Street that looks quite inviting, but you can keep going by turning right at 218th Street and entering Inwood Hill Park, proceeding around the tip of Manhattan and under the closed Henry Hudson Bridge. Pass through the Dyckman Fields, take a greenway detour onto the sidewalk of the West Side Highway at Dyckman Street, and proceed to 181st

Street to consider (for the truly bridge-obsessed!) ascending the south walkway of the **George Washington Bridge**, which links Manhattan to New Jersey.

At this point, you will have run about 15 miles and crossed 10 bridges. By adding a trip across and back on the GWB—which has one of the most beautiful views of all, encompassing nearly the whole of Manhattan—you can extend the run to 18 miles and 12 bridge crossings. If necessary, you can then catch the A-train at 181st

Street and Fort Washington Avenue for a much-deserved ride toward home!

Again, this route is adjustable. “The greatest lesson to learn from this run is how to run and think like a true New Yorker,” says DaSilva. “Once you do, then all of New York City will be your training ground—not just loops around your favorite park.” ■

## BRIDGE SAFETY FOR RUNNERS

The many bridges that connect the island of Manhattan to the other four boroughs and New Jersey remain as quintessential, storied, and attractive as any of the city’s other landmarks. Running across these bridges provides athletes with the freedom to roam while gazing at spectacular views; however, runners should be mindful that walkers, bikers, inline skaters, and others can populate the pedestrian paths, too.

Here are some tips that can ensure your safety:

- Keep your pace slow enough so you can react quickly to something crossing your path. Don’t race up or down access ramps, either—save the speedwork for the track.
- Stay to your right (or whichever way arrows or signs indicate), and as close to the barrier as possible. Run single file if you’re with buddies—it’s safer and more considerate to others.
- Stash headphones in your pocket, or better yet, leave your iPod at home. You can’t possibly hear a cyclist shout, “On your left!” if you’re rocking out.
- Pass cautiously—look over your shoulder before moving around someone and try to announce that you’re passing; “On your left” (or right) suffices.
- Watch out for mirrors—if they’re available—when rounding corners. They’ll help you navigate more safely.