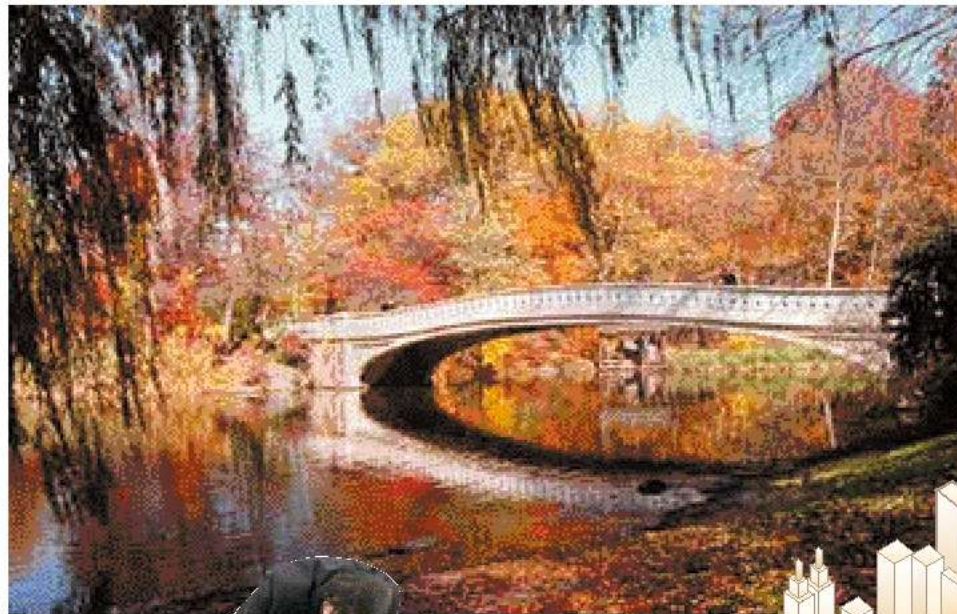


# FALLIN' INSIDE NEW YORK'S Central Park

Imagine New York City in the mid-1800s: a city sky blackened with soot. Housing so overcrowded that people escaped to cemeteries for the only green space they could find. Then, in 1853, city officials started buying the land for the nation's first public park. After 16 years and 10 million cartloads of topsoil, the city transformed 843 barren, rocky acres into a midtown paradise. At the ripe old age of 150, Central Park attracts 25 million visitors a year. One of the best times to visit is in the fall, when the air is crisp and the park is overflowing with color instead of crawling with tourists.

## BOW BRIDGE

This bridge, one of the most photographed places in the park, is one of the park's seven original cast-iron bridges. Its graceful arch spans 60 feet and connects The Ramble to Cherry Hill.



## STRAWBERRY FIELDS

Leave flowers or light a candle at this memorial for John Lennon, which is visible from the apartment in the Dakota where Yoko Ono still lives.



**CARRIAGES:** A fun way to see the park. An hour ride costs about \$60.

**THE DAIRY:** In the 1850s, cows grazed in the park and children enjoyed their fresh milk. Today this Victorian Gothic building houses a main visitor center and the park's official gift store.

**THE POND:** Recently restored to the original style and garden architecture of the mid-1800s, including a 40-foot waterfall.

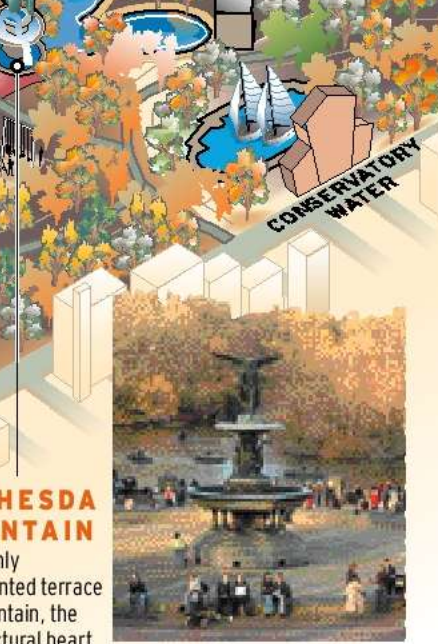
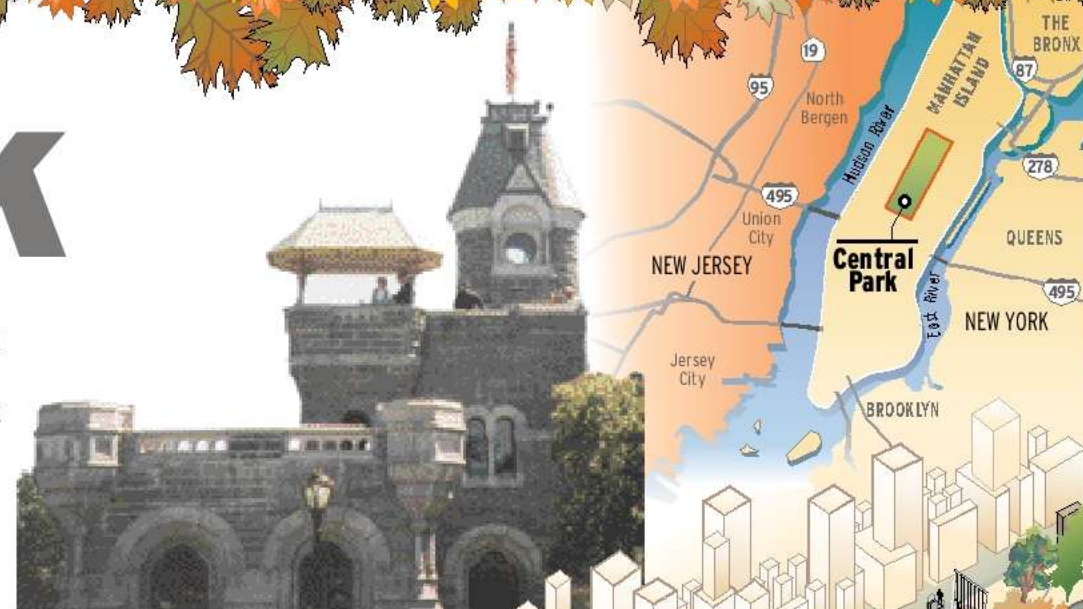
Sources: New York City Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Central Park Conservancy, Eyewitness Guide to New York and Secrets of Central Park, individual parks, and World Book Encyclopedia

Photo credits: The Associated Press, travel staff photographers, Central Park Conservancy

## BELVEDERE CASTLE

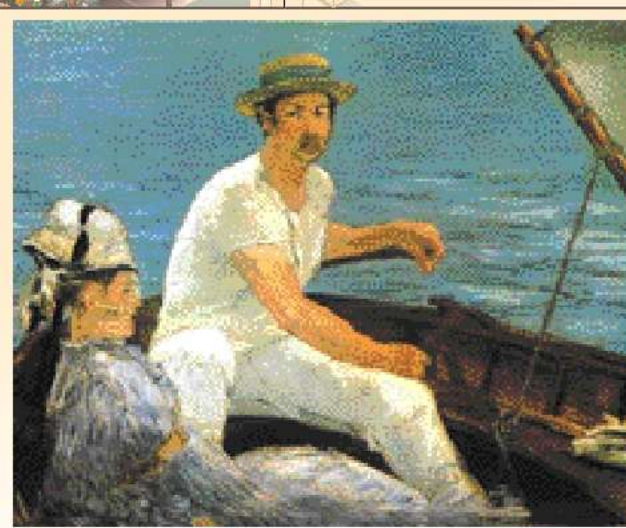
The castle is a Victorian folly, a visual joke popular in 19th-century architecture. It provides great views of the park from atop its stone turrets and houses a learning center for kids. It overlooks Delacorte Theater, home of Shakespeare in the Park.

**THE RAMBLE:** Stroll through Olmsted's 38-acre "wild garden," which looks natural but was completely fabricated in the 1850s. It includes a stream that can be shut off.



## BETHESDA FOUNTAIN

This richly ornamented terrace and fountain, the architectural heart of the park, was one of its first elements. It overlooks the Lake and The Ramble and is a favorite meeting place.

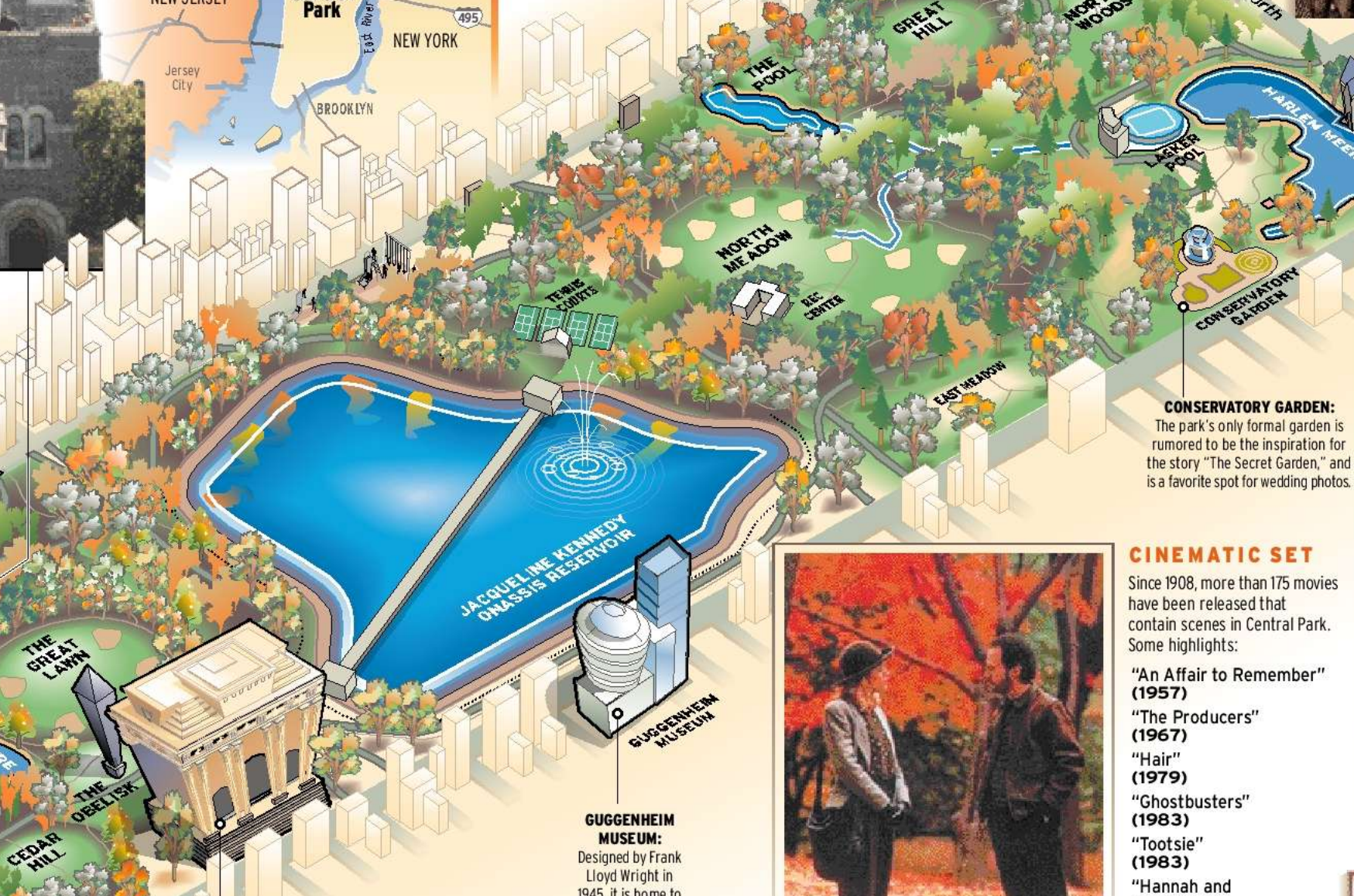


## METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Established in 1870, it consists of 270 galleries with more than 1 million works of art (including Edouard Manet's 1874 oil painting "Boating," above). Daunting? Yes. But start at the Visitor Information Center so you can find where your favorite artists' works are hiding.

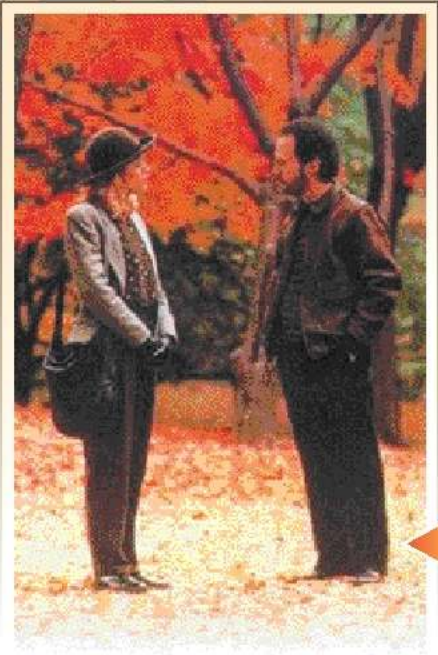
**TOUR ONLINE**  
A great virtual tour: [www.centralparknyc.org/virtualpark](http://www.centralparknyc.org/virtualpark)

**PARK FACTS**  
Number of trees: 26,000  
Number of benches: 8,968  
Total acres: 843



**CONSERVATORY GARDEN:** The park's only formal garden is rumored to be the inspiration for the story "The Secret Garden," and is a favorite spot for wedding photos.

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM:** Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1945, it is home to one of the world's great collections of modern art, but the building itself is also a masterpiece.



## CINEMATIC SET

Since 1908, more than 175 movies have been released that contain scenes in Central Park. Some highlights:

- "An Affair to Remember" (1957)
- "The Producers" (1967)
- "Hair" (1979)
- "Ghostbusters" (1983)
- "Tootsie" (1983)
- "Hannah and Her Sisters" (1986)
- "When Harry Met Sally" (1989)
- "The Fisher King" (1991)

## CENTRAL PARK DEVELOPMENT

**1853** City starts spending about \$5 million to buy land for a central park.

**1858** Fredrick Law Olmsted (left) and architect Calvert Vaux won a contest to design the park. Olmsted, considered the founder of landscape design, also created the grounds at Stanford University and at the U.S. Capitol. Olmsted exulted that Central Park "is of great importance as the first real park made in this century - a democratic development of the highest significance."



**1890s** Horses and carriages begin to give way to bicycles on park's pathways.

**1930s** Shanty towns nicknamed "Hoovervilles" appear in park.



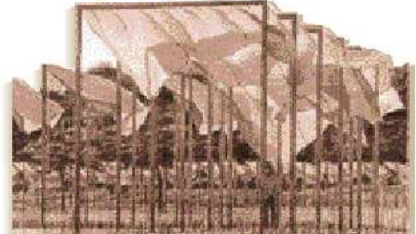
**1960s** Hippies, above, hold happenings and love-ins fill Sheep Meadow.

**1970s** Park becomes one of the most dangerous places in the city.

**1980s** Central Park Conservancy formed to raise funds to revitalize park.

**1990s** Conservancy funds dozens of large restoration projects in park.

**2005** The artist Christo will hang 7,532 fabric panels throughout the park to represent park gates.



## COMPARING CENTRAL PARKS AROUND THE WORLD

San Francisco	Los Angeles	San Diego	Austin	London	Paris	Berlin
Golden Gate Park 1870 FOUNDED	Griffith Park 1896 FOUNDED	Balboa Park 1868 FOUNDED	Barton Creek 1988 FOUNDED	Hyde Park 1536 FOUNDED	Bois du Boulogne 1848 FOUNDED	Tiergarten 1742 FOUNDED
Meditate in the Japanese Tea Garden; enjoy the museums.	Stargaze at the observatory or at the Greek Theatre.	It's all about the zoo - and a few museums too.	Take a chilly dip in Zilker Pool.	Speak out at Speaker's Corner.	Turns out you can canoe.	Great zoo. Brandenburg Gate, Reichstag near by.
1,013 ACRES	4,107* ACRES	1,400 ACRES	1,022 ACRES	630 ACRES	2,100 ACRES	412 ACRES

\*Largest urban park in U.S.

Reporting by APRIL JACKSON; graphic by SCOTT M. BROWN/Staff Artist