



SAVE ELLIS ISLAND

EDUCATION PROGRAMS



More than one million immigrants were treated on Ellis Island for failing the cursory medical inspection required by federal immigration legislation in the early 20th century. Of these, 250,000 immigrants spent time, from one day to several months, in one of the Ellis Island Hospital buildings that opened between 1902 and 1911. The hospital was built on landfill opposite the main immigration building. In all, 12 million immigrants came through Ellis Island during its years as an immigration station, more than any other U.S. port of entry.

Federal legislation in 1891 excluded any immigrant who arrived with a “loathsome or contagious disease.” Health – or lack of it – became a criterion for admission to the United States. As a result, doctors of the U.S. Marine Hospital Service, later the U.S. Public Health Service, were given the responsibility to examine every arriving immigrant. With overcrowded hospital in New York, the Ellis Island Hospitals were built out of necessity. Consequently, the first American an arriving immigrant met was not an immigration official, but a uniformed doctor of the U. S. Public Health Service.





Those who arrived as third class or steerage passengers were inspected on Ellis Island. The first and second-class passengers were inspected aboard ship. When the health inspection was complete, those who failed this short examination and those who arrived sick were sent to the hospitals on Ellis Island for further evaluation and treatment.

This is the story of The Forgotten Ellis Island – a story that powerfully resonates today as once again we confront global health issues and the massive migrations of people around the world.

Save Ellis Island is the preferred partner of the National park Service for the restoration and beneficial reuse of the Ellis Island Hospital Complex, covering over 14 acres on the south side of Ellis Island. The buildings are being rehabilitated as a venue for civic discussion of issues that define our humanity – the constant movement of people around the globe and the impact of this travel on mutual respect, cultural tolerance and global health and wellbeing.



The power of Ellis Island, the empty spaces, the dark corners all speak a historic narrative of a forgotten piece of history. These are unique and moving experiences, you, your students and every visitor to Ellis Island will not forget.

Hard Hat Tour – This is a 90-minute educator guided tour of select buildings at the Ellis Island Hospital on the south side of Ellis Island. This general topic program covers the history of the Ellis Island Hospitals from their use as the largest and most modern medical facility built in the early 20th century, where 1.2 million immigrants were treated there after arriving at Ellis Island. It was also used as a detention center for enemy aliens and deportees during World Wars I and II. The program ends with stories of the 4,500 Coast Guard troops stationed there until the hospitals shut down in 1954. Group tours are also available upon request.

Special Topic Tours – Ellis Island is a great place to learn about a critical piece of our American History – immigration to the U.S. However, Ellis Island also provides a place for students to learn about architecture, preservation, medical discoveries, and many other topics. Special Topic Tours provide an in-depth look into these topics led by experts in the various fields. Duration is 60-minutes.

Educational Programs for grades 4 to 12 – Using historic photos, documents and artifacts, students follow the stories of immigrant children and families when treated at the Ellis Island Hospital. Programs are individually developed for Grade 4 and Grade 5, and Grades 6 to 8 and 9 to 12 and may be modified to meet a current curriculum. Materials for pre visit and post visit are also provided in advance.

School Partner Program – Save Ellis Island works with high schools and universities throughout the United States. Educators are invited to work with SEI staff and experts to create a specific curriculum for their students using the facility as a learning tool. From global health issues to building arts and craftsmanship, the Ellis Island Hospitals provide a safe and supportive environment for students to learn.

Arts and Humanities Programs – The program focus in on the themes of the hospital and immigration through the use of art, literature, photography, and cooking and are based on grade level and current school curriculum. Work produced by students may be showcased on the Save Ellis Island website and social media resources.

Virtual Tour – The 90-minute Hard Hat Tour is available as a virtual experience. Travel through the hospitals with a guest host while sitting at home. This virtual tour is an opportunity for all people across the US and around the globe to visit Ellis Island. The virtual tour allows Save Ellis Island to take visitors through exclusive locations within the hospitals that are not part of the onsite tours.

Author Series – Connect with authors online. Save Ellis Island brings you an incredible line up of authors for an Author Series for adults. Our goal is to bring communities together through reading the same books and hosting author events that spark conversations, curiosity, and learning. Zoom is the virtual platform. Pre-scheduled and FREE, these are an inspiration for everyone.



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Interested in learning more about our programs,
please call us at 201-332-8485 or 973-383-1080.
You can write for information to Save Ellis Island, Inc.,
31 U.S. Highway 206, Suite 3E, Augusta, NJ 07822



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SAVE ELLIS ISLAND

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