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What to Do in the Bronx: 3 Itineraries for NYC's Boogie Down Borough



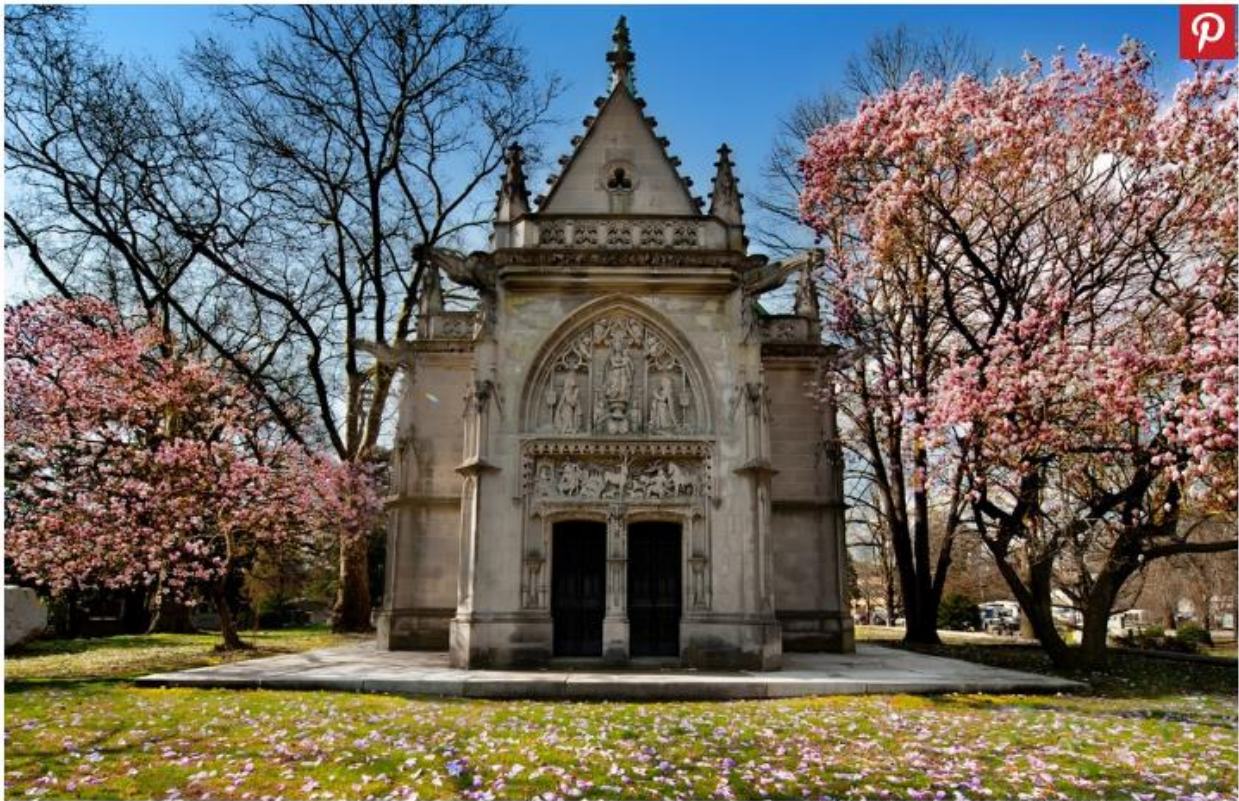
[Zac Thompson](#)

Itinerary #3: A Star-Studded Cemetery and Irish Pubs in Woodlawn

Good for: history buffs, tree huggers, pub crawlers

Time needed: half a day

Our final Bronx adventure takes you to the northern end of the borough. **Woodlawn** may feel far from the action, but it has arguably the city's highest concentration of famous permanent residents, thanks to **Woodlawn Cemetery**. Since its establishment in 1863, this parklike 400-acre National Historic Landmark has been the preferred resting place for a who's who of important U.S. business moguls, politicians, activists, musicians, writers, and national heroes such as Pepperidge Farm founder Margaret Rudkin, who helped bring Milano cookies to North America yet somehow never got a Nobel Prize. Today, a largely Irish-American community is wedged between the cemetery and the 1,100-acre **Van Cortlandt Park**. What better place to toast the departed than at an Irish pub?



[The Woodlawn Cemetery & Conservancy](#)

Woodlawn Cemetery

To get here from Midtown Manhattan: Take a Bronx-bound 4 subway train to the Woodlawn stop. The cemetery is just across Jerome Ave. from the station.

Woodlawn's most visited gravesites, according to staffers, belong to salsa queen Celia Cruz, *Moby-Dick* author Herman Melville, and the music greats (Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, et al.) buried in Jazz Corner. But for all the stargazing you can do here, the cemetery has a democratic, we're-all-in-this-together spirit that feels very New York. Woodlawn is unaffiliated with any particular religious tradition, was never segregated, and has always reserved space for the less well-to-do. Encompassing neoclassical mausoleums for millionaires as well as simple stones for German, Italian, and Irish immigrants, it's a city of the dead where forgotten socialites, hard-working middle-class folks, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and J.C. Penney all share space.

And the space they share is tailor-made for contemplation. Winding paths weave through a heavily wooded, lake-dotted landscape that harmonizes with columned tombs, stone angels, Celtic crosses, statues of lions and sphinxes standing guard, and domed chapels with Tiffany stained-glass windows. Combine Woodlawn's natural, architectural, and historical significance, and you get a cemetery that ranks up there with *Père Lachaise* in Paris and *La Recoleta* in Buenos Aires.

Take a self-guided tour of Woodlawn with the help of a map from the visitor office, or [register for a guided trolley excursion](#). Concerts, nature walks, a nighttime illuminated tour, and events organized around historical themes with a Woodlawn connection (the *Titanic*, Black History Month, Irish heritage) take place on the grounds as well.