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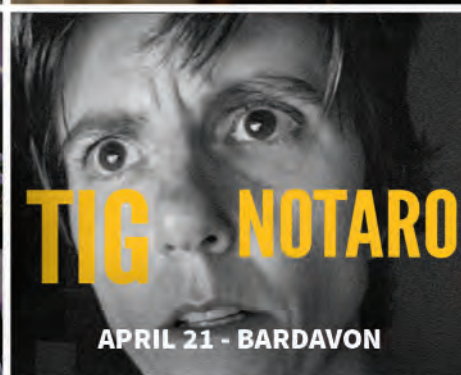
# Hudson Valley **Explore**

*Fall in the Valley 2022*





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GENIA WICKWIRE

A view from Kingston Point.

# All 17 parks in Kingston, ranked

*Our green-space cadet is fearless in his judgments*

by Zac Shaw

**T**HE GREAT OUTDOORS just feels a little greater in Kingston, a true accomplishment for an urban environment. Depending on how you define “park,” there are at least 17 of them in and around the city, more if you count nearby Esopus. Nobody believes me when I tell them this. To spite these doubters, I recently visited all of King-

ston’s 17 parks over the course of two days, and ranked them from least to most impressive.

Some Kingston parks are smaller than the yard of a single-family home, while others span miles of trails. Some are almost always empty. Others have hundreds and sometimes thousands of daily visitors. On the whole, the quality, quantity and diversity of Kingston’s park operations are impressive. There’s something for everyone.

## #17 — Kingman Park

Hidden drive off Moore Street

We start with a park I’m not even sure I was supposed to be in.

You’ll only find Kingman Park if you’re really looking, and even then it’s pretty hidden. GPS directions won’t get you there. You need to find what looks like a secret driveway with a Little League sign off of Moore Street, and then drive up a winding, single-lane path to a wide pasture with two baseball fields and no



parking areas.

The only thing still maintained here are the lawns of the baseball field. The dug-outs are covered in graffiti, weeds have overgrown the bleachers and there's trash littered throughout. The boarded-up announcer's tower and discarded signage are evidence there was once a thriving Little League scene here, but today it appears largely abandoned. Made me want to play some rogue baseball, but I also felt like I would be arrested for trespassing if I overstayed my visit.

### #16 — Van Buren Street Park

Corner of Van Buren Street and Delmont Place

This tiny square isn't so much a park as it is a city playground, and it's not much of a playground, either. I drive by this park frequently on visits to the Kingston Library, and I have never seen a single adult or child in it.

There's a scuffed-up gazebo and a few things for kids to play on, but that's about it.

This "park" feels like an afterthought by the city, to provide the kids of the neighborhood with something to escape the surrounding homes, many of which are visibly falling apart. They don't seem to be returning the favor, but who knows, maybe it fills up when school gets out.

If I ever see someone here, I'll ask them if my appraisal was too harsh, but almost any park on this list is a better option.

### #15 — Kingston Peace Park

Corner of North Front and Crown streets

This is probably the weirdest park in Kingston, and also the smallest. It takes up one corner of a block in Uptown, and the best way to describe its layout and features is "incoherent."

Ringed by small flowers and a light dusting of garbage, the park's most dominant feature is a giant double-sided display plastered by random flyers, abandoned by the city and the Kingston Uptown Business Association (despite a sign proudly proclaiming their stewardship). One can only imagine how many confused tourists looked at this for exactly two seconds before moving on.

When I arrived, there were two dudes smoking a joint at the end of the park's diminutive central path, which abruptly ends in a barricade of bushes in the back corner. Tall trees on its far side block what once was the most striking feature of the

park — local artist Matt Pleva's multi-story masterpiece of a mural inspired by Kingston's history, now shrouded in overgrown foliage.

Most of the park is exposed to the sun and uncomfortable to sit in. There is no escape from the city at all. With all the wealth and luxury saturating the area, this park is extremely confusing in context. Perhaps when The Kingstonian moves in, residents of the luxury apartment complex will be embarrassed enough to demand a much-needed upgrade.

I honestly don't know what the city is expecting people to do in this park. It's a hard pass.

### #14 — Kingston Midtown Linear Park

Near the Catskill Railroad train in the Kingston Plaza

There's nothing wrong with Kingston Midtown Linear Park. It's a nice, wooded walk through the backyards of Uptown and Midtown residents. But it's a paved walking path, and putting 'linear' behind 'park' doesn't make it so. Nonetheless, this is one of the city's newest parks, if you want to call it that, and should be experienced at least once. The various greenline trails that are slowly connecting together are a great feature of our area, but there are so many more interesting places to hang out.

I'm not sure if the adjacent baseball diamond where the carnival sets up is supposed to be part of this in the grand scheme of things, but nothing much happens there anyway.

### #13 — Cornell Park

Within Spring, Wurts, Hunter and Post streets

This park puzzles me. On the one hand, it's quite aesthetically pleasing, with its dramatically sloping hills and paths. On the other hand, it seems like the worst place to develop a park — you either have to hike up to it from the Rondout where all the action is, or somehow descend into it from the small neighborhood that surrounds it. Despite the elevated positioning there isn't even much in the way of views.

Perhaps there are grand plans for the future, but there's nothing to do here except take a short walk or sit on a bench. Most of it is out in the open, with only a few surrounding trees providing shade.

I hardly ever see anyone here, and can't think of any reason to visit except for nearby residents walking dogs, or maybe reading a book in peace, because no one else wants to come here.

### #12 — Senate House State Historic Site

296 Fair Street

Another park on this list that's not technically a park, the Senate House State Historic Site is nonetheless the best place to eat a packed or to-go lunch outside if you're Uptown. It's also a great place to meet friends or clients for a discussion in the fresh air, to chill with a book, or, on increasingly rare occasions, to hang out with Revolutionary War reenactors.

History hounds will love checking out the Senate House itself, where guides will enthusiastically transport you back several hundred years to the founding of the city.

Seating has been added, but there could be more. I get the sense the staff here are trying to keep this a quiet, respectful place. There's nothing for kids to do, and nothing for adults to do but hang out and maybe appreciate history. But it's the only patch of green in Uptown where one can get a break from the uber-hip comings and goings of the surrounding area.

### #11 — Barmann Park

Within Greenkill, South Clinton, and Barmann avenues

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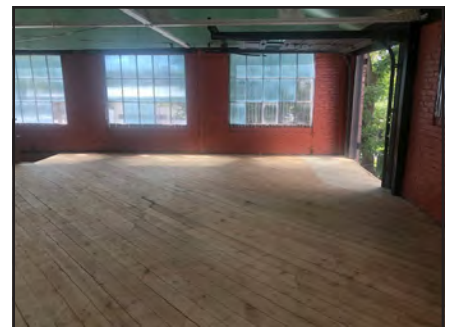
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The best part of Barmann Park is the squishy surface that underlies the playground. The play equipment there is basic and unremarkable, but the ground is so much fun to jump on for kids and adults alike. It's like bouncing on a giant, firm marshmallow.

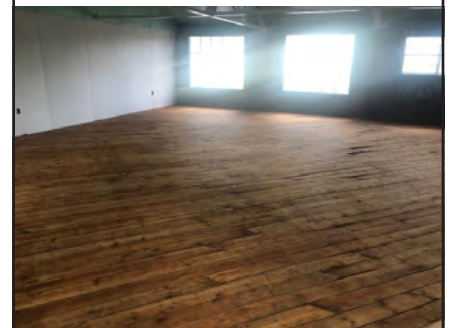
Otherwise, it's a bit too exposed to the surrounding neighborhood, roads and nearby construction to feel serene. The central wooded area is miniscule. The baseball diamond seems okay, but there just isn't a whole lot to do here. There's a cool garden you can't enter, and signs that future amenities are planned. As it stands, it's a convenient option for folks in the area, but not much of a destination



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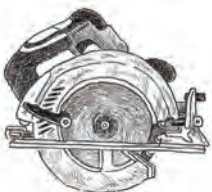
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for anyone else. It's got potential, though.

## #10 — Academy Green

Within Albany and Clinton avenues and Maiden Lane

Some locals might be wondering why I put Academy Green so high up the list. After all, there's no playground, no sporting fields, and usually nothing to do except sit or stand around.

Additionally, this park can be kind of sketchy sometimes, depending on your definition of sketchy. In the ten minutes I dropped by one afternoon, I saw two people drinking beer, an open-air drug deal next to a trash can constructed from a 'corrosive liquid' barrel, a man smoking a joint and arguing loudly on a cell phone, and a woman talking to herself at the bus stop. I personally feel at home amongst this kind of chaos, and I feel you should as well. It's not like the atmosphere is threatening. These people are just hanging out and largely want to be left alone. We need a park for that.

While Academy Green may not be family-friendly, it is the people's park. What do I mean by that? Most of the events held here are parades, protests or foot races, as it's the perfect place for people to coalesce before moving down Broadway en masse. It's also a site of community outreach and gathering for what little is left of non-bougie Kingston. The people own this park, and it exists

as a commons for anyone to meet, even if their business is not your idea of fun.

And despite its relatively small size, this park is as majestic as it is historic. It's a perfect rectangle of a grand lawn buffeted by tall trees and three towering, detailed, and weather-worn statues. They look cool, but I don't really care who they are, and neither do most visitors. Some streets were named after them, and they seem prime candidates to be torn down in the future by a group vindictively applying today's moral standards to people who died hundreds of years ago.

If you sit in this park and squint just right, you can see Kingston as it was in the decades between IBM leaving and NYC transplants turning it into a sixth borough. Don't ever change, Academy Green.

## #9 — Block Park

Corner of Abeel and Dock streets

If you're the kind of parent and/or child that enjoys being the only people on the playground, Block Park is the spot. You're not likely to be sharing the space with many others, and the playground, while not spectacular, does have some unique features that feel like throwbacks to a less safety-obsessed time. There's also a tiny circular wooded area that feels like an organic sculpture one can hang out inside.

Block Park is also a great place to hold

a gathering, with a nice pavilion, ample parking, and little competition for the space. A big baseball diamond making up half the park is almost always empty, so if you're looking to practice you can often take the whole thing over. There's a nice, large field between the diamond and the playground that's canopied by a few ancient trees.

Nearby, there's a strange paved circle perfect for learning how to ride a bike (at least until it fully deteriorates). Standing near it is a handball court with some awesome peacock artwork, mostly defaced by graffiti.

It's not the most exciting park in Kingston, but its mere adequacy is transcended by the feeling of exclusivity and calm. The families in the neighborhood are lucky to have it, and park-loving visitors from outside the neighborhood will be lucky to find it.

## #8 — Loughran Park

50 Charlotte Street

One of Kingston's older recreation oases, Loughran Park dates back to the mid-1930s, and was upgraded in the Nineties. This is a sports-lover's park, but also a family-friendly retreat away from the dense neighborhood that surrounds it.

Kingston's youth and adult baseball leagues do battle on the diamond here, replete with concrete dugouts. There's

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The pavilion/playground area is welcoming for families, feeling shaded and secluded, with safe, modern hardware for kids to climb. Nature-lovers should look elsewhere for scenery and greenery, but

as a neighborhood park for sports, kids and casual hangs, it checks all the boxes.

Loughran Park won't knock your socks off, but it's a solid workhouse for a community united in their pursuit of recreational activities.

#### #7 — Hutton Park

2-50 Sherman Street

Nestled in a neighborhood you've probably never set foot in unless you live there, Hutton Park is not an ordinary park despite initial appearances. What gets it this high in the ranking is its unique landscape and exclusive location.

This park is exclusive because, frankly, hardly anyone knows it exists, except for its surrounding residents. You'll rarely find a crowd here, and if you do, it's because there's a shindig going on in the pavilion. And while the pavilion

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itself is fairly unremarkable save for an odd Game Of Thrones-length picnic table, it sits atop a wooded rock ledge that bisects the park. This provides an elevated perch from which to enjoy one's hamburger or hot dog while surveying the environs with 360 degrees of freedom. The angular, sloping rock faces are perfect for kids to climb up and fall down as parents lord over the majesty of city planning gone right.

There's a bunch of stuff to do here. The tennis court isn't the biggest or best in Kingston, but it might be the least crowded. There's a baseball diamond and adjacent basketball court, and the playground is a notch above average.

On paper, this park is pretty standard-issue. In person, there's just something special and unique about the density of features amidst a dramatic landscape.

#### #6 — Hasbrouck Park

Hasbrouck Park Road off Delaware Avenue

Hasbrouck Park is literally a hidden gem. Google Maps is your friend here –

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there's but a small sign on a traffic pole standing opposite the entrance, which looks like a driveway for one of the homes next to it. Entering for the first time, you'll think, "This can't be right."

Any doubt disappears once you've ascended a steep hill to see the lush greenery of the park suddenly filling your field of view. Climbing further, you'll reach a huge, hilly field with a nearby pavilion, next to some of the most gorgeous river views any Kingston park can offer.

The best way to describe this park is that it will make you feel like you're standing on top of Kingston.

By design, there's not a whole lot to do here. Part of its appeal is its dearth of distracting features, allowing one to fully soak in the surroundings. With little recreational support, this is the park to visit when you've got a mission. Having a large gathering but want it to feel private? This is the spot. Want to fly a kite, have a romantic picnic, walk a dog with no other dogs around, sled at top speed, make out in a car or throw objects great distances? Hasbrouck's rolling hills and hidden splendor make it ideal. Just make sure to bring your own entertainment.

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### #5 — Wiltwyck Cemetery

145 Pine Grove Avenue

Wiltwyck Cemetery isn't technically a park, but it is by far the most park-like graveyard in the city, and more like a park than some of the official parks on this list.

Don't let the thought of all the dead bodies bum you out. This is a sprawling, maze-like walk through the history of Kingston, going back hundreds of years. The place is packed with small, weather-worn gravestones of American Revolution soldiers, towering monuments and obelisks, lovingly maintained sculptures, mausoleums hidden in the tree line or majestically standing atop hills overlooking vast lawns.

Be aware that the cemetery is a privately owned business that continues to offer burial services in the graveyards that extend beyond the vast historic section. You'll often run into their friendly maintenance team keeping the grounds, but you're not likely to interrupt a funeral by sticking to the main historic area.

Tours are often available and highly recommended. There's simply so many things to look at here. Having an expert guide the way is immensely rewarding for history buffs and anyone curious about the history of Kingston's most influential families.

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Please JOIN US for our 14th Robbie Burns Supper, Fri Jan 27th, Tix on Eventbrite!



As it's not technically a park, you won't find any amenities or anything to do besides walk around. This is not a park for a barbecue or baseball game, it's for walking and quiet contemplation. But the experience is so entrancing, you may find yourself returning again and again to get lost in the slightly spooky beauty of one of the most impressive and historic graveyards you'll ever visit.

#### #4 — TR Gallo Waterfront Park

30 Rondout Landing

When I visited TR Gallo Waterfront Park (known to locals as "The Rondout" or "The Strand"), JK Rowling's \$19-million yacht was pulling up while a homeless person sat a few hundred yards away nursing a Coors beer. You just can't get that kind of irony in any other Kingston park. This place is where all of Kingston comes to clash together, and yet somehow coexist in merriment.

This long, skinny waterfront park is perfect for a brief stroll, feeding the ducks, and ogling boats you probably can't afford. The real attraction isn't the park itself but the businesses that surround it, which include some of the city's best establishments catering to tourists and locals alike. The eateries are mouth-watering and numerous, there are some great museums nearby, and boat tours launch from here. It's isolated from the rest of Kingston because nobody wants to walk or bike up that long, steep hill once they've come down it.

This is where the Kingston Waterfront Farmers Market happens on Sundays, and where the city's many cultural festivals explode with mirth for all ages, classes, and creeds. It's truly Kingston's melting pot, and you'll see every kind of person in each visit. That's a solid indicator that a park is succeeding in its mission, even if on most days it's a very basic landscape with few things to do within but have a picnic and people-watch.

Downtown Kingston is now arguably the city's most fun neighborhood, now that Uptown has been transformed into a high-end retail, tourism and wedding sector. As a central public square that anchors all the action, TR Gallo Waterfront Park overcomes its meager stature as a mediocre park by the sheer number of fantastic things to do in the vicinity.

#### #3 — Forsyth Park Playground & Nature Center

125 Lucas Avenue Extension

Forsyth Park is Kingston's best children's park, and one of the best children's parks in Ulster County.

Near the entrance is the city's coolest playground, a sprawling mini-city of metal, wood and plastic. It's a psychedelic mash-up of styles, where themes from Kingston's history juxtapose with Willy Wonka and an alligator one can play

music on by hitting it with mallets (which are usually missing). Toddlers have their own playground-within-a-playground, elementary-school-age kids will love the maze of slides, poles, steps and swings. Middle schoolers can be found chasing each other frantically around the whole complex, or climbing up structures in ways they weren't designed to be climbed.

At the other end of the park is the zoo/nature center. It's hard to put into words



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how cool this place is. The density and diversity of animals contained within is truly a feat of zoo construction and maintenance. Few look unhappy to be imprisoned for our education and amusement – they are truly well-cared for, which is a must. Visitors are encouraged to feed most of the critters, and many of them

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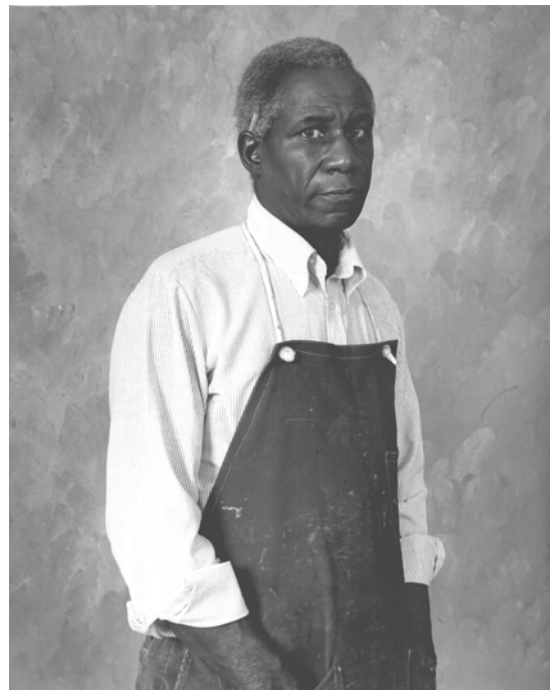
The welcome sign at Kingston Point Beach.

have names, which makes repeated visits rewarding as you establish a long-term relationship with characters like Franklin the cow. There are all sorts of educational signs and activity areas, and the zoo hosts regular events that are well-attended by youngsters.

That's already a lot of park, but



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Ben Wigfall, 1993, by Nancy Donskoj

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there's more. The center of the landscape is a huge open field perfect for kiting, playing catch or frisbee, or just running around screaming at the top of your lungs as kids are wont to do. There's a baseball diamond perfect for softball and kickball, and the nicest public tennis courts in town behind the playground.

Further, there's a fun, short set of trails that wind through the woods that buffer the park from Dietz Stadium and the Edson and Watson schools. Elevation changes make it a great spot for walkers looking to get in some quality steps.

While all ages can find a little something here, Forsyth is for the kids, exceeding many expectations of what a children's park can be.



ZAC SHAW

Hasbrouck Park.

## #2 — Sojourner Truth State Park

100 Sojourner Truth Way

Kingston's newest park is also its biggest, with over 500 acres of widely varying landscape to explore. Sojourner Truth State Park is a choose-your-own-adventure wonderland of impressive views, winding trails, and the remnants of defunct Kingston industries that are gone but not forgotten.

Local urban ruin explorers have long known this is one of the coolest spots in the county to sneak around abandoned

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industrial buildings. Though Hutton Brickyards was largely lost to luxury glamping and schmoozing, it's amazing to see the city and state take stewardship of the rest of the ruins. Even the graffiti-laden "Kingston Cement Graveyard" (which I may or may not have illegally played paintball in decades ago) has been left somewhat intact for folks to wander around in. It's pretty wild to find these relics of history in a state park.

More traditional park-goers – especially runners, walkers and bikers – will get blissfully lost in the long and winding trails of asphalt, dirt and stone. If you want to see the whole park in one visit, it's going to be a workout. The river views are pretty spectacular at points, and due to the sheer size, the environs are serene, particularly the trails.

Parts of the park are still under construction and unfinished, but the bones are there, and that's really all you need when the outdoors are the star. Kingstoners are truly blessed to have such an incredible expanse of park land in their backyards.

### #1 — Kingston Point Beach & Rotary Park

Delaware Avenue east of North Street

It sounds like hyperbole, but Kingston Point really does have almost everything one could want in a city park.

First up: A beach in the city!

Yes, it is patrolled by a pack of overly friendly seagulls (thanks, bread-tossers). Yes, this is where you'll find some of the weirdest people in Kingston, sprawled half-naked and blasting music at top volume. Will there be oil runoff from

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passing boats and riverside storage facilities? Perhaps. But these charms are easy to embrace when you take in the formidable versatility of Kingston's best park.

The beach is more sandy and beach-like than you'd expect for the Hudson River, and the swimming ain't half bad (just don't open your mouth and accidentally swallow a PCB-laden fish). You'll find people here working on their tan from



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the moment it's hot enough to the first frost. It isn't the ocean, but as city beaches go, this one's pretty impressive.

Dog owner? The Kingston Point Dog Park is giant, with a large fenced-in area for dogs to go nuts. A separate yet still-spacious pen is provided for smaller pups to avoid conflict with bigger ones.

Feeling sporty? There's a surprisingly decent nine-hole disc golf course, a big BMX track with spectator seats and out-buildings, a full-size baseball diamond, and beach volleyball nets.

Time to party? There are several large pavilions scattered throughout the property, and they're very often full of revelers. If you had a more intimate kind of party in mind, several smaller covered areas and gazebos are hidden amongst the Point's maze-like wooded trails.

Looking for family fun? The playground is brand new, and there are numerous areas to run wild and explore.

Time-strapped tourist? Walk the Kingston Point rail-trail, or even ride a vintage train down it, enjoying spectacular riverside views. It's also a prime picnic spot, with dozens of attractive areas to choose from.

Kingston Point is the city's Swiss Army Knife of parks. Depending on the specific park activities you're after, there may be a more suitable destination. The Point, however, has it all, and takes the top spot in this ranked list for consistently bringing our community together more than any other patch of green in the city.

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# Adventures in darkness

*Our reporter explores the local underworld*

by Rokosz Most

*Ancient earthwork fort and barrow  
Discreetly hide their secret abodes  
The most fearful hide deep inside  
And venture not there upon Yuletide  
For invasion of their hollow hills  
That music hold and Oberon fill  
Is surely recommended not  
For fear of death, in fear of rot  
Hollow hills  
Hollow hills  
Hollow hills  
Hollow hills*

— “Hollow Hills,” Bauhaus, 1981

**T**HERE IS NO wind underneath the ground. There are no birds to sing.

Beneath dirt, worms and roots, water table, bones and rocks, no fields of flowers, no moonlight to lie under.

These things are understood in a top-side sort of way, digging into the earth with a spade, able to get up and walk away.

But there is also descending as an option, through some dark opening formed in a jumble of rocks.

Immediately, the temperature drops. In an hour or in a hundred years, the pile of may shift and close the entrance. Or



ROKOSZ MOST

Water in the cave.

never. Rock time is inscrutable.

Sunlight grows feeble inside the entrance to the underground, and weaker still with each step deeper inside. The twilight dims and is finally gone, left in

the overworld above. Karst, scarpland and speleothem, dark and dank.

We know the dead go down below.

“But when the earth shall bloom with the fragrant flowers of springtime, then

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from the realm of darkness and gloom you will come up once more from the misty reams of darkness, to the astonishment of gods and mortal men."

So wrote Homer in a hymn which tells of Persephone, she who wandered too near a dark grove to gather narcissus flowers. Hades, lord of the underworld who receives many guests, was impatiently waiting with horse and chariot. He seized her and took her with him back below. The earth closed behind them, and only the narcissus remained.

MOVING DEEPER INTO A CAVE IS A monochromatic affair. There is no need for color if there is no light to reflect it. At first, waiting for vision to adjust, reaching out farther than the eyes, the ears overcompensate.

Imagination is not far behind. Bears hibernate in caves in the autumn.

A headlamp is now important, not just



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The lake room.

a game. And two more flashlights as well. Follow the rule of threes. One light could break, smashed against a rock. The battery could go dead in another.

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#### 67 Emerick Street, Kingston, NY \$274,999



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#### 7 Brittany Drive, West Hurley, NY \$579,000



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#### 75 Twin Ponds Drive, Kingston, NY \$379,900

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#### 7 Sheeley Drive, Rosendale, NY \$330,000



Come take a look at this tranquil piece of privacy tucked right off the beaten path but only minutes to Rosendale, Kingston and New Paltz. Quaint 2-bedroom cabin sits on the edge of almost

14 acres and close to local swimming holes and hiking. There are bike trails and snowmobile trails throughout the back yard and woods. There is a nice gently sloped front yard with a large shed with a car port. Relax on your patio with a good book and hear the sounds of nature and birds chirping among the trees. Quick getaway from the city. Come check this charming property. Listing by Siobhan Scanlan, Cell: (845) 399-1432



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Wear a helmet, or your head may crack open like an egg.

Crawling is painful enough when the ceiling lowers. This is what kneepads are for, the kind with Velcro straps that roofers prefer. And gloves to keep the jagged sharp angles from injuring soft palms. For wallowing along in the mud, a boilersuit or mechanic's jumper over layered underclothing will suffice. The same philosophy which guides dressing for winter in New York City.

From frozen outdoors to heated indoors, layers are the secret.

TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED YEARS LATER, the harvest goddess Demeter, still distraught at having lost her daughter, stubbornly grieves. A third of each year, no plants will grow. When Persephone gets up above ground the rest of the year, her mother is consoled. Humanity can grow food and lie about in the sunlight in shorts and no shirt. We can call it hot.

It was a close call. Demeter could have wiped us out.

WHILE CLOUDS DO NOT FORM UNDERGROUND, thunder can still be heard

booming along the rock passageways.

"If you hear thunder, that's your signal to proceed to your nearest exit," says caver Marcus Showalter. "A sudden cloudburst, and the resulting downpour could mean a flash flood in the caves. Springtime snowmelt is also dicey. It would be bad to be trapped down here."

A taciturn man given to long stretches of silence, Showalter seems content underground. He does the outfit of a potboiler one better, and wears a wetsuit.

"In the place where I grew up was a lot of tract-housing construction," says Showalter. "I was ten or so, and there was this culvert built. This new concrete tunnel built into a hill where the storm drains emptied out after a rain -- which is basically what this cave is, by the way. The opening was just about as tall as I was, and I was obsessed with getting inside. I would lie awake at night thinking about what was in there. I had a best friend, and between the both of us we packed sandwiches, snagged compasses and our parents' flashlights."

Remembering, he laughs. "Maybe we made it 20 feet. Didn't count on the spiderwebs. And the rats."

Showalter says he has made friends with his fear. He brags that he knows a dozen cave systems in the Hudson Valley, but refuses to share their locations. Showalter has a low opinion of journalists.

"You're going to write about this, and then come the crowds tagging the walls with graffiti," he says. "Drinking and drugs. They'll be getting lost and injured in the caves and giving real cavers a bad name."

So here, easily inspired cave enthusiasts, heed this excerpt from the NSS (National Speleological Society) guide to responsible caving titled: *Tolerating Misery*: "Be aware that caving tends to be cold and muddy, and exhausts muscles you didn't know you had. Caves vary in difficulty, however: tight passages, cold water, challenging climbs, and long crawls are not uncommon. Dangers may include falling off ledges, being crushed by rocks, drowning, and developing a dangerously low body temperature."

And here is a similar offering from the Northeastern Cave Conservatory, a nonprofit which owns and maintains caves in nine preserves in the Albany area: "Cave exploration and hiking on karst terrain may involve risk or injury, even death from various hazards, both obvious and obscure, including, but not limited to, slippery and uneven ground, open pits, injury by acts of other people, falling, being struck by falling objects, becoming lost, the presence or sudden appearance of water, and hypothermia."

A PORTION OF HUMANITY LIVED IN caves some 50,000 years ago, Show-

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ROKOSZ MOST

### Looking out.

alter explains. There is evidence that humanoid creatures lived there even 100,000 years ago. Superstitious over comets, frightened by lightning, hiding from frequent meteorite showers, these humans huddled together in the darkness waiting for Prometheus to come with electric heating and Vinton Cerf

and Bob Kahn to invent the Internet.

These early humans were called troglodytes. Humans with dark skin leached white by the absence of sunlight. You could see their blue blood under their skin. Generations followed generations. Their dark hair turned red or blonde. Their dark eyes went first green and then

blue. They were hideous baby-eaters invented to scare children.

Now go to sleep, child, and no more complaining or I will call the pale-faced ones! Those who would come for your land and subdivide it!

"Joking," says Showalter. "Some of my best friends have blue eyes."

WATER DRIPS FROM THE CEILING IN these caves beneath the Clarksville Preserve. A stream flows along the rock floor. When the ceiling dips, if crawling becomes claustrophobic, mucking about through the water becomes an option. The temperature reads 44 degrees, cold enough to see one's own breath. The water is warmer.

The light from the headlamp shines through the clear water down to the smooth, rounded stones and pebbles below. Reflected rings ripple across the curved ceiling. The water has been carving the Devonian rock here longer than humans have existed.

The bowels of the earth, in places, are covered with their own softer flesh, a sluggish muddy covering formed across centuries. Some rock glitters with gold



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flecks in the light of the headlamp. Underdeveloped speleothem form everywhere. Think stalactites hanging from the ceiling. But these are no bigger than a cigarette lighter. Minerals seep down through cracks in the rock over thousands of years old to create these formations.

"A single careless touch or malicious gesture can destroy what may have taken hundreds or thousands of years to form." So cautions the NSS guidebook.

STICKING WITH THE EAST WALL through the procession of twistings and turnings through rock chambers and tunnels, the conceit of being sure of one's bearings begins to flow. Confidence growing, one speeds up, checks the compass less. Takes less notice of any identifying shapes and features. A fork in the river, a scramble down a pile of rocks, the choice to hunch down and crawl along an inclined ledge versus wading through a pool.

This confidence can be a mistake. Having no idea where the end goal may be, when one will have to turn back, time down in the darkness is hard to measure. The features will start to blend together in short-term cave memory.

The body feels stress when hunched over or crawling. The heart beats faster. The panic response grows closer. One ceases to think clearly. Turning around to get out, one finds nothing looks familiar. The perspective has changed. The cave is now seen in reverse from the wrong side of the mirror.



ROKOSZ MOST

The entrance.

## Immigrants' Song

America is a nation of immigrants. And for every immigrant who came here, there's a story to tell. I'd like to hear that story. Your story. Our story.

Your story might be one of courage. Or maybe just good luck. It could be humorous, outrageous or tragic. But as different as they may be, immigrants' stories of struggle can remind us of the common ground we all stand on.

I'm not looking for historical accuracy here. I'm talking about family lore — the bed-rock legends on which you or your family have built a life in America.

If you're interested, send a brief outline of your story to [jeremiahhorrigan@gmail.com](mailto:jeremiahhorrigan@gmail.com). I'll get back to you. Together we can flesh out your story and find that common ground that's made America the country it is.



Reaching a split in the path, going a short way down both branches to be sure, one becomes doubly unsure. Thinking the entrance to the cave is close, one tries to climb up too early, only to find no exit. One goes back down, ever more lost in the darkness.

When one is lost in a cave for extended periods, hypothermia is a real possibility. If one is caught in this situation, wearing a trash bag will delay the onset.

Dropping glow sticks behind like phosphorescent bread crumbs has become a popular way to retrace steps. When not retrieved, these markers create a litter problem. Not considering the toxic nature of the chemicals inside, unwitting troglobites and troglloxenes (creatures that can't leave the cave and those that live in a cave, but eat out above in the overworld respectively) can mistake the



glow sticks for food. It may remain best practice to stack little rockpiles in key locations instead.

Or just unwind a long golden thread. The real trick though is mentally to

embrace all that rock overhead, to ac-custom oneself to that silent weight, to imagine the plate tectonics that shift the slab and the earthquake that tumbles it all, and give up on the idea of ever

coming back out. A sort of Grotto Zen Buddhism. Let go of the thread, eat the pomegranate seeds, and meditate in the Spelaeon stillness.

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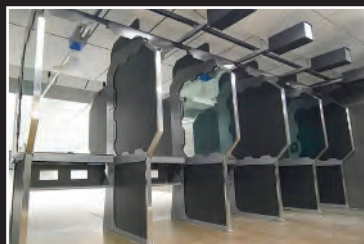




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CAVES ARE THE FIRST CHURCHES. If the bats aren't hibernating, the acoustics are haunting, an endless reverberation perfect for singing a lonely song. How far has one come in? How far will it be to get out? Forget these questions. Chemical labyrinths of our own making easier to get lost in. The Internet is a mist. Slow down the breathing. Surrender to patient self-sufficiency.

Now imagine the stars. And the wind and the sun. The grass and trees and blue sky. Turn off the headlamp and open your eyes.

People pay good money for this sort of face-to-face time with the soul, and it's waiting for free, like a bear lurking in the darkness at the bottom of the descent.

For the best chances to find enlightenment in the bowels of the earth and come back alive the National Speleological Society's guide to responsible caving, available for free on the Internet,

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gives experienced, responsible advice and instruction to would-be cavers such as “When you might be tempted to cut corners on gear, preparation, or training, ask yourself how much your life is worth.”

The guide is a repository jammed to the gills with useful information.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT VISITING caves locally also contact the Northeast Cave Conservatory. The NCC has placed many caves under its august protection, some of which require permits or the leadership of a cave steward to guide groups along their dark paths. Crossbone caves for instance, requires all members of a group to be proficient in vertical caving techniques, to sign a date-specific release form (in case of death or injury), and to obtain a permit. Otherwise, one will be considered to be trespassing and subject to arrest.

The Clarksville caves will be off-limits beginning October 1 until May 1, owing to the need for Northern Longeared bats to get some rest.

Currently a fungal disease called White Nose Syndrome is decimating cave dwelling bat populations, making it essential to wash all clothing and equipment worn in one cave before going to another.

In 2020 an 8.2-acre parcel of land containing the Salamander Cave in Kingston was donated to the NCC by Valerie Connors on behalf of her late husband. With any luck, intrepid Ulster County cavers will have will have access for next summer.

Speleum, scarpland and karst, into to the darkness lovely, dark and deep!

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# My Saugerties favorites

*A great town for family fun and entertainment*

by Theo Sassano

**T**HERE IS ALWAYS more to discover within the vastness that is Saugerties. The historic industrial and agricultural town in the northeast part of Ulster County contains all the family fun that one could ask for. Moreover, many of its attractions can be enjoyed year-round.

Families return time and time again to revisit their favorites. With so many places to explore, however, deciding where first to stop can be a challenge. Let me assist. Below are a few worthwhile Saugerties spots to lead the way.

The first must-visit on this list is Puttin Plus, a (cash-only) center filled with a variety of games and activities to entertain people of all ages. Featuring a go-karts course, a miniature golf course, batting cages, water tag, an arcade, and more, Puttin Plus provides endless excitement. I would personally recommend giving the go-karts a try first. At the very least, you will find the adrenaline rush that comes with driving boundlessly through the windy track truly unmatched.

For families visiting with children younger than eight, however, miniature golf is a great alternative to last the afternoon. Plus, children under the age of five are free. It's a real hotspot for entertainment. Families visiting the center for the first time are sure to get hooked.

The well-known and justifiably celebrated Saugerties Lighthouse serves as only a part of the experience. The half-mile-long nature trail that leads up to the historic lighthouse features beautiful views well worth the trek. The 18 acres of vibrant greenery on the way provides visitors bird and boat watching in a tidal environment. Even those not planning to observe the lighthouse for long will derive gratification from



Puttin Plus.



Saugerties Kiwanis Ice Arena.

PHOTOS BY THEO SASSANO





PHOTOS BY THEO SASSANO

The Saugerties Lighthouse (left) and the trail leading to it.

the environmental experience of the walk itself.

It may be advisable to pack a lunch for the hike. Along the way is a path leading to a tranquil beachside picnic ground. At the end of the trail, hikers are rewarded with a sight of the historic landmark on a riverside dock.

For those who can't bear to leave, the lighthouse offers overnight stays featuring gorgeous views through each and every window.

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winter's most prized attractions, ice skating. A familiar name within Saugerties, the Kiwanis Ice Arena is already back and running for the season. Even those stepping onto the rink for the first time

are sure to enjoy the experience. The vast arena welcomes folks with a wide range of skill levels for its affordable public sessions and is accommodating of all visitors.

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Lessons are available for those looking to begin learning or to hone up on their skills. As someone who first began ice skating at the Kiwanis Ice Arena and has not stopped since, I can confidently affirm that the hobby never grows old.

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Even to those unfamiliar with horseback riding, the mesmerizing sport can truly be a spectacle, and is certainly worth a watch. For more information on the

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event and its schedules, see its website: <http://www.hitsshow.com/>.

Opus 40, an extraordinary collection of the workings of pioneering sculptor Harvey Fite, is sure to amaze all who walk its grounds. The infamous museum on the west of the town, open Thursday to Monday, contains 6.5 acres filled with the passion and grit that Fite maintained over the course of the 38 years he spent on its creation. In addition to a museum, the site features special events including concerts, fairs, workshops, nature walks, and more. For its uniqueness and artistic creativity, Opus 40 has become a widely acclaimed location.

One can never go wrong by taking a trip to the Village of Saugerties, which consists of a myriad of businesses ranging from diners and wineries to antiques and thrift shops. Families looking for a reliable dining option will certainly find one in the area, a great spot to go out for lunch. I would suggest dining at Miss Lucy's Kitchen for its child-friendly environment and delicious assortment of classic foods. The village is very welcoming, and families will not be disappointed with its small-town vibe.

Saugerties is home to innumerable attractions not limited to those found on this list. While these are great starting points, there exists considerably more. Talk to the people who live there. Exploring the charming town for the things you are interested in is all part of the fun.

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# Shawangunk grit

*November 5 gravel-biking event couldn't ask for a better location*



JOHN MIZEL

Cycling at Mohonk Preserve.

by Erin Quinn

**G**RAVEL BIKING IS all the rage. The Mohonk Preserve has designed a 50.4-mile epic ride that will take adventure-seeking cyclists through the historic system of carriage roads lacing through the historic 8000-acre preserve in the Shawangunks. The Inaugural Shawangunk Grit Ride is named to represent the unique bedrock geology of the ridge, which is made of Shawangunk Conglomerate, or “Grit,” -- beloved by rock-climbers for its sturdiness. The material was also used

to make millstones at the turn of the twentieth century — some of which can be still found on the land today.

Slated to begin at 8 a.m. on November 5, this fundraising ride will allow cyclists to choose from two distances, 23.3 and 50.4 miles. The riders have to be done by the time the sun sets.

The staging area for the gravel ride (with all proceeds going to benefit the host not-for-profit land conservation organization) will be the Ulster County fairgrounds. There'll be more than enough parking spaces. It'll also be a fine setting for the celebratory after-party.

“We’ve been talking about doing this for

four or five years,” said events coordinator Tom Leader. “We’ve always known that there’s been an interest in our local bike community for us to do a big ride on the ridge, and now seemed like the right time.”

Leader noted that gravel races are popping up all over the country. “Most of these races or events are not totally on gravel or trails,” he said. “Fifty percent or less of most of the existing ‘gravel bike’ rides are on roads or other paved surfaces. Ours is 99 percent dirt carriage roads and some single-track trails.”

The remaining one percent in this case is the ride from the fairgrounds on



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Libertyville Road in New Paltz to the Testimonial Gatehouse -- a little over a mile. The riders are off-road the rest of the way.

Mountain bikes, gravel bikes and cross-bikes are all welcome. This event is not a race. There will be no prizes, but those who want to post the fastest segments on Strava can. It's also an event for those who simply want to bike with friends and enjoy the natural beauty of the Shawangunk Ridge.

Do not bring a road bike.

The longer option allows riders to make their way up to the Skytop Tower at the Mohonk Mountain House, a rare treat because cycling along that specific carriage road to the top of the ridge is typically prohibited. If the skies are clear, participants who make it up to Skytop will have a million-dollar view of the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill Mountains, along with the magical mountain house and resort itself. Maybe the far-away Adirondacks,

The rest of the ride will pass through

the century-old-plus stone gatehouse, through meadows and farmland, past ponds and streams, through pine forests and oak forests, and along the ridge itself. It is a challenging enough ride, no matter what distance you pick, with upwards of 4000 feet of climbing.

There is a 300-person limit. Two weeks after the event was posted, more than half of the spots are filled.

There will be fully stocked aid stations along the ride and "a big party afterwards with food and beer and a band," said Leader. The party will take place at the Field of Dreams pavilion directly across the road from the fairgrounds.

If you're not sure how your bike may fare on this course, or you need an upgrade, there are plenty of local bike shops, including The Bicycle Rack and The Bike Depot, both in the Village of New Paltz, as well as Revolution Bikes in Kingston, TRT Bikes in Rosendale, and Overlook Bikes in Woodstock.

Registration is \$100 for the 23.3-mile loop and \$125 for the 50.4-mile loop. For

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*Geddy Sveikauskas*

Geddy Sveikauskas, Publisher



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details on registration, pickup times and all other Shawangunk Grit info, go to <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/grit/> and sign up for this first annual event. You will be able to say you were there back in 2022 when gravel biking was in its infancy. "We rode real bikes then," you will be able to say, "not these solar-powered wind-streamed shenanigans you kids call bikes now."



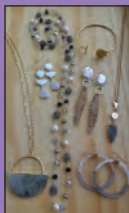
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# Halloween for the ages

*Each town holds its own holiday magic*

by Genia Wickwire

**H**ALLOWEEN IN THE Hudson Valley is something special. It is spectacular, spooky and outrageous! Each town is better than the next on some level. Perhaps if you live right in Woodstock, Saugerties, Kingston or New Paltz you feel there is no competition. Your town does it better than any other, and you won't hear otherwise. If you live in the smaller towns in between these destinations, you get to decide which place to go, and even have the luxury of changing destination each year if you so desire.

I grew up in Woodstock. Woodstock was it. I couldn't imagine a town doing Halloween the way we did. The main street gets shut down to vehicles and the crowds take over. All the stores literally buy garbage bags full of candy to hand out to the revelers.

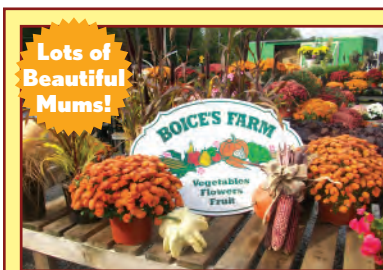


LAUREN THOMAS

The costumes are outrageous. The young folks look adorable clad as super-

heroes, princesses, clowns and creatures. Yet it is often the grownups' costumery that take the cake – inventive handmade costumes with fully painted faces in different shapes and sizes,

The costumes sometimes make sly political commentary, including thoughtfully designed couple costumes that are



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DAVID GORDON

The O'Neill family: Rose, in helmet; mom, Maggie; Remy; and Dennis, holding Alma the dog.



LAUREN THOMAS

a play on words or a cluster of people portraying a group from a movie or show, with every individual playing a role. These costumes have been planned down to the tee.

There is a certain glee in the eyes of the costume-wearer when someone shoots out, "Hey, you are (so and so)." Ha ha, someone has figured out an obscure costume choice.

Naturally, when I had my child and Halloween came, we headed to Woodstock, even though I now lived in Stone Ridge. When your kid is small, you can head to Woodstock early, and your kid can take their time toddling from store to store trick-or-treating. There was time to get distracted and wander about. It was fun

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to be first.

Then the streets would begin to fill and fill and fill. And right at that moment your child would be tired. She had had enough candy, and it was a good time to go home. You have seen just enough imaginative costumes to feel you got to appreciate Woodstock at its best!

Once my kid was school-aged, we attempted for a few years to get to Woodstock after school as quickly as possible. When we arrived, we saw that the

streets were already overrun. The candy had run out at half the stores. Fighting through the crowds became tiresome.

My kid wasn't interested in seeing the costumes and commotion. Candy was key, and it just could not be gotten at the necessary pace to satisfy the lust for this as the one day for free candy!

So we changed our routine. After school, we would get into our costumes at a slower pace. We would go get some pizza. Then we would head into the Kingston neighborhoods.

Our favorite spot was behind the McDonald's in the Armory neighborhood. The houses are spaced perfectly. There are blocks and blocks of houses, one after the other.

Kingston neighborhood trick-or-treating predictably starts at about 5:30 and runs until curfew. There is little to no traffic on these streets, so kids are free to dash from door to door. The faster they go, the more candy they get.



LAUREN THOMAS

Parents can walk leisurely on the streets while their kids run maniacally to both sides of the street and on and on and on. Usually slightly before curfew, my kid's energy would wane. The bag she was thrusting at the beginning of the night was dragging behind by the end.

I don't remember many costumes or a particular group vibe in these neighborhoods, but if candy is your game this is the place for you.

At the end of the evening we would get in our car while our child happily chattered in back seat about how much fun that was. At home candy was dumped in a giant pile, sorted and counted: 100... 101... 102... 103. Colorful piles and piles of Starburst, Smarties, Milky Ways, Laffy Taffy.

In other places, my kid would have possibly aged out of Halloween during the pandemic. High school in other areas declares kids too old for playtime. The

Hudson Valley will not hear of that! There are as many teens and adults out on the street enjoying Halloween as there are little ones. With Halloween returning last year, we again decided to try a new town. Maturing does perhaps take away the desire for hundreds of pieces of candy. But Halloween is something to behold.

Still wanting to wear costumes, we headed to New Paltz. New Paltz has a very long Main

Street, and we had heard that it had the biggest, most impressive parade. That sounded about right for a 15-year-old.

The parade indeed did go on and on. It started up at the high school and headed down the hill. The people kept coming, all ages from little kids to teenagers to college students to adults. Some had coordinated outfits, others had coordinated dances. There were costumes that lit up, there were handmade costumes of every variety.

We walked down the hill at the beginning of the parade, and we just sat and watched. The parade went on for what seemed like hours, but in reality was probably a good 45 minutes.

I have heard rumors of other places boasting of being the best. Perhaps they are all the best. Each place holds a special mood, a special scene.

Halloween is fun. You can't go wrong. My advice: Get on a costume on and just go, you can't go wrong.



# Fall harvest

*A photo essay at Jenkins and Lueken's Orchards  
by Lauren Thomas*

**T**HREE AND A half miles west of the village of New Paltz down Route 299 is one of the oldest and most beautiful orchards in Ulster County. The very first apple trees at Jenkins and Lueken's were planted in the 1920's. Owner Eric James is the grandson of original owner Margaret Lueken, whose family eventually bought out the Jenkins's. Eric grew up working in the orchards, and now runs the 200 acre farm with the support of his wife Kim and son Brandon. The place is situated on rolling hills on the western outskirts of New Paltz and features a breathtaking, unbeatable view of Millbrook Mountain and the Shawangunk Ridge. .

This year the farm has grown 23 varieties of apples as well as four kinds of



berries, several varieties of peaches and nectarines, plums, pears and pumpkins. They press their own cider, and a hard cider version is available. 'You Pick' is available all throughout the harvest season. The


farm stand is filled with farm grown produce, flowers, has an on site bakery and features local grass fed beef, local cheeses and preserves.

Jenkins-Lueken Orchards is located at 69 Yankee Folly Road in New Paltz. Hours open and more info is available at [www.jlorchards.com](http://www.jlorchards.com).









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