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# Fall from a great height



PHOTOS BY GENIA WICKWIRE

The view (above) from the fire tower (right) at Ferncliff Forest in Rhinebeck.

## *Nine thrilling ways to soar above the Hudson Valley's autumn foliage*

by Zac Shaw

**A**UTUMN IN THE Hudson Valley isn't just a season, it's a spectacle. As the leaves turn from green to a fiery tapestry of reds, oranges, and yellows, the landscape transforms into a living canvas that begs to be explored.

But why limit yourself to ground level when the most breathtaking views are waiting up high? If heights don't make your knees wobble, we suggest you ascend to the top fall foliage experience of witnessing the breathtaking landscape from on high.

### **Climb a fire tower**

Standing high above the treetops, the Hudson Valley's fire towers offer one of the most exhilarating ways to immerse yourself in the region's spectacular fall foliage. These towering structures elevate you to a vantage point where the landscape below transforms into







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a vibrant tapestry of color stretching to the horizon.

Don't be surprised if there's a bit of a line to go up during peak leaf-peeping times. There's a reason people flock

from all over to see these incomparable views. The exhilaration of the climb, the wonderful fall air, and the unmatched vistas from the top combine to create an experience both thrilling and serene.

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Begin your ascent with the **Overlook Mountain Fire Tower** near Woodstock. This moderate five-mile round-trip hike isn't just about the destination. The journey itself is peppered with intrigue as you pass the haunting ruins of the old Overlook Mountain House.

When you finally scale the tower at the summit, you're rewarded with 360-degree panoramas of the Catskills and the Hudson River Valley. It's as though nature unfurled a canvas of autumn splendor just for you.

The **Hunter Mountain Fire Tower** in Hunter is one of the highest fire towers in the state, standing tall at 4040 feet. You have options here: challenge yourself with a rigorous hike or take the scenic chairlift partway up before tackling the rest on foot. Either way, the climb culminates in a view that seems to stretch into infinity — a skyline painted with the hues of fall.

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### Hunter Mountain's Scenic Skyride.

Don't miss the **Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower** in Hardenburgh. The 5.9-mile hike meanders through serene woodlands, building anticipation with each step. Reaching the tower, you'll find sweeping vistas of rolling hills awash in autumn colors. It's a peaceful reward that makes every mile worthwhile.

For those looking to expand their

tower tour, the **Red Hill Fire Tower** in Denning offers a less crowded but equally captivating experience. The hike is relatively short, and the summit provides stunning views of the surrounding forests and distant peaks.

And let's not forget the **Stissing Mountain Fire Tower** in Pine Plains. A steep but quick hike brings you to this tower,

where you're greeted with a 360-degree view that includes the Catskills, the Berkshires, and the Hudson Highlands. It's a hidden gem that offers big rewards for a small effort.

Last but certainly not least, the **Ferncliff Forest Fire Tower** in Rhinebeck is a must-visit. This easily accessible tower requires only a short hike, making







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it perfect for families or those looking for a quick adventure. Climb to the top, and you'll be treated to breathtaking views of the Hudson River and the patchwork of fall foliage that blankets the countryside.

### Dramatic bridge walks

Bridges aren't just for getting from point A to point B. They're also perfect vantage points for soaking in the scenery. The Hudson Valley boasts several bridges that offer pedestrian access and stunning views.

The **Walkway Over the Hudson** in Poughkeepsie is like walking on air through a canvas painted with the richest hues of autumn. As the world's longest elevated pedestrian-only bridge at 1.28 miles, it offers unobstructed views of the Hudson River and the surrounding kaleidoscope of fall foliage. It's a flat, easy walk suitable for all ages.

The **Mid-Hudson Bridge** connects Highland to Poughkeepsie and provides a shorter stroll with impressive views. For a longer, more dramatic trek, the pedestrian walkway on the **Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge** is a relatively new



GENIA WICKWIRE

### See fall foliage from above on the Rosendale trestle.

addition to leaf-peeping options, offering panoramic river views and the feeling you're one among the sky.

For a bit of history and charm, visit the **Rosendale Trestle**, part of the Wallkill Valley Rail-trail. This former railroad trestle stands 150 feet above Rondout Creek, offering a unique perspective of

the vibrant treetops.

### Soar in a hot-air balloon

If you've ever dreamed of floating among the clouds and above the trees, fall in the Hudson Valley is as popular a time as any to replicate that experience.

Companies like **Hudson Valley Bal-**

## Hudson Valley Explore

*Fall in the Valley*

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For a more intimate experience, **Adventure Balloon Flights** in New Paltz provides personalized tours. And if you're near Lagrangeville, **Above the Clouds, Inc.** offers flights that often include a post-landing celebration with a tradi-

tional champagne toast.

### Helicopter and plane tours

Craving a bit more speed and adrenaline? Helicopter and small plane tours offer a thrilling way to cover a lot of ground—and sky—in a short amount of time.

**Independent Helicopters** in New Windsor provides customized helicopter tours departing from Stewart International Airport. Fly over landmarks like Bannerman's Castle, the Shawangunk Ridge, and the expansive forests

ablaze with color.

In White Plains, Westchester County Airport is home to several companies offering fixed-wing aircraft tours. **Wings Air Helicopters** can whisk you over the Hudson Valley and even down to the New York City skyline, blending urban and natural beauty in one flight.

For a vintage twist, check out **Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome** in Red Hook. They offer biplane rides that let you experience the thrill of early aviation while taking in the stunning landscape below.

### Hike peaks and cliffsides

You can't go wrong picking a place to hike in the Hudson Valley during the peak fall season.

A few peaks famous for drawing people peeping leaves include the following: **Breakneck Ridge** in Cold Spring is famed for its challenging trails and rewarding vistas. The steep ascent includes rock scrambling, but each lookout point offers a better view than the last. You'll see the Hudson River winding through mountains painted in fall's finest colors.

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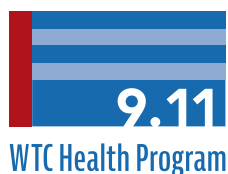
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**Mount Beacon.** The trailhead is near the City of Beacon, known for its vibrant arts scene. The hike leads to a former incline railway and a summit with panoramic views. Climb the restored fire tower for an even higher perspective.

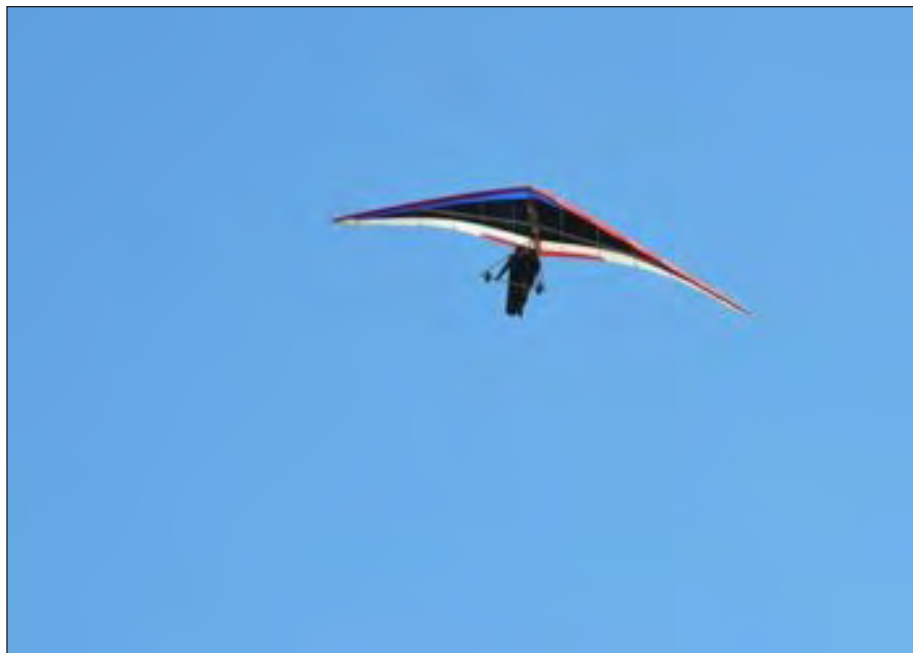
The **Shawangunk Ridge**, affectionately known by locals as The Gunks, offers multiple trails with varying difficulty levels. Sam's Point Preserve in Cragmoor features unique landscapes like ice caves and a rare dwarf pitch-pine barren, all set against a backdrop of autumn foliage.

Other notable hikes include **Storm King Mountain** in Cornwall, **Mohonk Preserve** in New Paltz and **Minnewaska State Park Preserve** in Kerhonkson, where you can traverse miles of trails through forests, over cliffs, and around serene lakes.

### Ziplining

Who says you can't fly? Ziplining offers the thrill of flight without the need for wings—or an airplane.

At **New York Zipline Adventure Tours** at Hunter Mountain, you can experience one of the longest, highest, and fastest zipline canopy tours in North



Fly like a bird over the autumnal landscapes.

America. This adrenaline-pumping adventure lets you soar above the treetops at speeds up to 50 m.p.h., offering expansive mountain views draped in autumn colors.

For a family-friendly aerial escapade, visit **Catamount Aerial Adventure**

**Park** in Hillsdale. With over a dozen courses of varying difficulty, you can spend hours navigating through tree-top obstacles, ziplines, suspension bridges, and more. It's an adventure park that caters to both novices and seasoned

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thrill-seekers.

Another option is **Mountain Ridge Adventure** in Schenectady. Though a bit farther from the heart of the Hudson Valley, this park offers a thrilling zipline canopy tour and a treetop challenge course suitable for adventurers of all ages. The courses weave through the forest canopy, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in the vibrant autumn scenery.

### Chairlifts and gondola rides

Prefer to sit back and let the machinery do the work? Chairlift and gondola rides provide effortless access to high elevations and the stunning views that come with them.

**Hunter Mountain's Scenic Skyride** is a six-passenger chairlift that takes you to the 3200-foot summit. At the top, enjoy hiking trails, picnic spots, and views that

extend across the Hudson Valley to the Berkshires.

Over at **Belleayre Mountain**, the gondola ride offers a comfortable enclosed ascent to the summit. From there, you can explore walking trails or simply relax and take in the panoramic views from the observation deck.

**Windham Mountain** also offers a skyride that provides access to hiking trails and mountaintop yoga sessions. It's a peaceful way to immerse yourself in the natural beauty of the season.

### Paragliding and hang gliding

For the ultimate airborne adventure, try paragliding or hang gliding. It's as close as you'll get to flying like a bird over the autumnal landscapes.

**Ellenville Flight Park** is renowned as one of the best free-flying sites on the East Coast. It offers tandem hang-gliding flights with experienced pilots. Launch from the Shawangunk Mountains and glide silently over forests and fields.

If paragliding is more your style, **Paragliding Instruction of the Northeast** in Accord provides lessons and tandem flights. Feel the rush of the wind as you navigate the skies, with the stunning backdrop of the Hudson Valley below.

### Mountain climbing

Climbing up a rock face to enjoy fall foliage is obviously not for everyone. If you're a newcomer to climbing, you're probably going to want to start indoors. That said, there's nothing quite like immersing yourself physically and mentally in nature by tackling some of the region's superb rock-climbing spots.

The Shawangunk Ridge (the Gunks) is a world-class climbing destination. With over 1200 established routes, climbers of all levels can find a suitable challenge. The cliffs provide not only technical climbs but also sweeping views of the valley.

At **Peterskill Climbing Area** within Minnewaska State Park Preserve, you'll find a variety of climbing routes amid a tranquil setting. After your climb, explore the park's trails leading to waterfalls and lakes.

For guided climbing experiences, **Alpine Endeavors** in New Paltz offers instruction and tours tailored to your skill level, ensuring a safe and exhilarating adventure.

See you at the top!

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# A citizen of the world of food

*The Hudson Valley is chef Zach Berger's home base*



PHOTOS BY JASON BOVER

Chef Zach Berger.

By Jason Bover

*"We may interpret the term 'food habits' merely as the restatement in individual terms of the dietary pattern characteristic of a group of the population."*

— Margaret Mead, 1943

CHEF ZACH BERGER is currently focusing on his love of culinary adventure with private-chef services and high-end catering in the Hudson Val-

ley. His career path has been varied. Before becoming a chef he worked as a social worker with high-risk teens for almost ten years in Ulster County. He's also been a world-touring musi-

cian. He developed a love for travel and food while touring with his band in venues across the world. He was greatly influenced by the cultures he encountered in the 25 countries to which he has traveled.

He has owned and operated Cultura Paraiso in Cusco, Peru. He plans to return to Southeast Asia in January, where he'll be sure to find new flavor palates to influence his cooking.



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Born in Peekskill, Zach gradually made his way north to Dutchess and Ulster counties. He presently rents in the Woodstock hamlet of Lake Hill. "I'd like to buy," he says, "but real estate is so damned expensive."

Zach intends to keep his Hudson Valley roots. "It's my home base," says this world traveler.

Using fresh, local and foraged ingredients, he has created relationships with local farms and local makers to use the best produce available. Though he consults with restaurants and occasionally fills in to help friends out, Zach says most of his local work is as a private chef catering for occasions and events.

Here are some excerpts from a conversation Jason Bover recently had with him. To top the occasion off, Zach shares his take on Massaman curry glazed delicata squash, a spicy curry that's a fusion of Indian, Malay, and Thai ingredients. .



Slice the delicata squash into rings and clean out the center of the seeds.



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**Jason:** How did you get started cooking?

**Zach:** I've always loved food and travel. My family was big on new experiences,

new foods, and sharing culture. As a fat Jewish dude who loves food, I have always been one to cook in the kitchen, whether it was with family, friends or myself. My parents would always make dishes from all different regions of the world. It was awesome.

**Jason:** Sounds a lot like my childhood, lol.

**Zach:** As I got older and started to work, I randomly had a few restaurant jobs here and there, but nothing super-fancy. I wasn't very good, to be honest. After high school I started to tour more with my bands and had the pleasure of really seeing the world through that life traveling to South Africa, Europe, Central America, and more.

Restaurant work and working with children with disabilities were two jobs that were always needed because of the



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turnaround. I needed a job where I was able to work, but knew I needed to be able to still tour with my band.

**Jason:** What was the name of your band?

**Zach:** I've toured with quite a few, actually. Signs of Hope, Through this Defiance, and Manu -- to name a few. I sing and play bass. As I traveled, so did my passion for food. These experiences taught me so much about food and

culture in the world. While my band was out partying, I'd be eating, talking to chefs and others all around to continue learning. Don't get me wrong, I partied, too! But really those times for me were about the experience of truly learning from different cultures. That opened my eyes to what I love and the chef I am today. The rest is history.

**Jason:** How do seasonal ingredients

influence the dishes you are currently working on?

**Zach:** Seasonal Ingredients are key. We live in a region where freshness is all around us. Local farms, fresh foraged ingredients from our forests, and amazingly talented people all around constantly working together to share the amazing local flavors we have here in the Hudson Valley-Catskills region.

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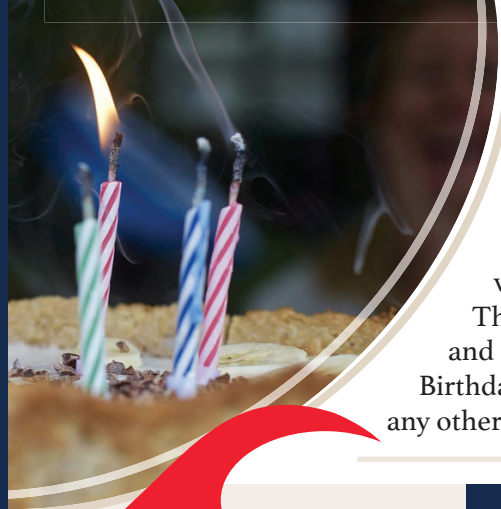
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within the season, although I don't forget about those ingredients from past seasons, either. Those ingredients can be turned into syrups, pickling, dehydrating, curing, and fermenting so that I can use them year-round. Generally speaking, though, I build my menus based on the season and what I can get locally for my clients.

**Jason:** How does the selection of fruits and produce from the Hudson Valley add to your creativity?

**Zach:** Just like I mentioned before, it's a huge aspect to my creativity. Ingredients are constantly changing. I need to be able to adapt my flavors to what is ripe right now. Orchard apples and pears in the fall, root vegetables in the winter, fresh greens and berries in the spring and summer, I love stone fruits in the summer.

They all have their place. They all add different flavors to my dishes, and I adapt within the seasons to make beautiful dishes with what we have available.

**Jason:** How would you define Hudson Valley cuisine, and what sets the Hudson Valley apart from other areas of the country?

**Zach:** I don't think the Hudson Valley has its own cuisine by definition, but I do feel that it benefits from the bountiful farmland and forests we get our food from.



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**Jason:** Where do you source your local meats/produce from?

**Zach:** The list goes on and on! I try to support as many local farms and stores as I can throughout the year. The farmers'



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markets are key. For me the ones I go to most are the Phoenicia, Woodstock and Kingston ones, but I do try to get to others throughout the weeks, too. I use Windfall Farm, Migliorelli Farm, Back Home Farm, Deadhead Farm, Sustainable Sorcerers -- he's my mushroom man, Hepworth Farms, Adams, Catskill Wagyu, Meat Things, Maynard, Wright's, Solid Ground, and so many more.

**Jason:** Here's a fun one. Favorite and least favorite fall seasonal ingredient?

**Zach:** I guess if I had to pick a favorite fall vegetable I'd say brussel sprouts. There's nothing quite like getting a big stalk fresh from the farm and roasting them with some pork belly and shagbark hickory syrup, sweet mustard all over, with confit red onion! Hmmm. My least favorite would probably be beets -- though I do like them! I just had to pick a least favorite, and they are a mess to

cook with! Black walnuts are a great fall ingredient as well!

**Jason:** Any tips or tricks for our at home chefs looking to incorporate fresh local ingredients into their at home cooking?

**Zach:** Don't be afraid to try ingredients you don't know about. Push yourself to try that weird-looking celeriac or rutabaga. Go to the farmers' markets and ask questions. Learn, learn, learn! That's the most important part. We all can continue learning. Also check out my Instagram and check out some of my cooking videos on YouTube.

**Jason:** So what are you preparing for us today?

**Zach:** Massaman curry glazed delicata

squash. This is a fun fall dish. Rich bold warm flavors with my favorite squash! This Massaman curry paste was taught to me by Chef Leez during my time in Thailand.

The glaze just seemed right for a fun twist on classic miso glazed squash.



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### Thai Massaman Curry Paste

- 4 large red spur chili
- 6 shallots roasted
- 10 garlic cloves roasted
- 2 tsp coriander seed ground roasted
- 2 tsp cumin ground roasted
- 2 tsp pepper black
- 1 tsp mace
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp fennel seed roasted

Pound chili in a mortar with pestle and salt thoroughly. Add each ingredient one at a time and pound well between ingredients, garlic, shallots, coriander seeds, cumin, pepper, cloves. Then add the balance of ingredients and pound until it's a fine paste.

### Glaze:

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 cup of water
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons massaman curry paste

Heat a small sauce pot to medium-high heat and add chili paste and cinnamon stick. Next, add water and whisk until thin. Bring to a boil and add sugar, whisking again. Reduce until glaze.



The chef and the author.

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### Squash:

- 2 medium delicata squash washed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Olive oil

Heat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

Slice the delicata squash into rings and clean out the center of the seeds. Add olive oil, salt and pepper, and toss in a mixing bowl. Put rings on an oven safe sheet tray (use parchment paper) and bake for 12 to 15 minutes on each side (25 to 30 minutes in total), flipping the squash halfway through the baking process and brushing with glaze.

Once golden brown and cooked all the way through, you can plate and drizzle extra glaze on top.

### Zach Berger

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# Three happy trails

*Ulster County recreation sites that belong to you*

by Susan DeMark

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Of one of his walks in the woods, Henry David Thoreau wrote in his journal in 1858 of the uplifting sight of a grove of pine trees shining in the clear sunlight: “My spirit is like a lit tree.”

These pathways running through and connecting our communities are, places for experiencing physical activities; nature's beauty and splendor,



PHOTOS BY SUSAN DEMARK

The bridge over the Wallkill River on the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.



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quiet and contemplation, and the ease of traveling in traffic-free areas.

Another Thoreau walk in the forest in 1851 similarly renewed him, “My heart leaps into my mouth at the sound of

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the wind in the woods. I whose life but yesterday was so desultory and shallow suddenly recover my spirits.”

Walking under a canopy of trees on a trail provides what Thoreau experienced. Slow down, take a breath, look up at the trees as you walk on a trail, and you are sure to feel a restorative tonic.

For this trail exploration, here's a sampling of three appealing, beautiful trails for pick-your-own recreation.

### Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail

The connectedness of the trails in Ulster County and New York State is inspiring, and this one is part of the connection. The sign near the Wallkill River in New Paltz shows a map of the Empire State Trail, the 750-mile linear pathway that travels from New York City through the Hudson River Valley, west to Buffalo along the Erie Canal, and north to the Adirondacks and the Champlain Valley.

The Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail is a part of this statewide trail. Its 22+ miles showcase a variety of iconic landscapes, splendid views of the Shawangunk Ridge in places, serene settings amidst the woods, rolling fields that border the



The view northward of the Hudson River from the River Pavilion Trail at Sojourner Truth State Park.



Purple asters along a trail at Sojourner Truth State Park.

  
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pathway, and local history. The trail snakes through Gardiner, New Paltz, Rosendale, and Ulster to Kingston. One

of its high points, literally, is the 940-foot long Rosendale Trestle, a continuous truss bridge and former railroad trestle





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some 150 feet above the Rondout Creek.

On the land where the Wallkill Valley Railroad once transported passengers, produce and milk, the trail now sees walkers, parents with strollers, joggers on long runs, from bicyclists doing jaunts of various lengths to those who pedal many miles, and in winter even cross-country skiers.

Walking south of New Paltz, I feel cradled by the rolling farm fields and savor the views of the Shawangunk Ridge. Northward into and through New Paltz, I can hear the low sounds of traffic in the distance.

An interpretive sign invites a pause to tune in to the surroundings, with its encouragement to "open one's senses." Breathing deeply in and out, I catch the earthy smells of leaves in the wetland. I see the shapes, colors, and textures of the wetlands, from smooth, vibrant bright greens to thin, sword-like plants with yellow wildflowers atop them.

A half-mile north, the traffic noises recede. There is silence and solitude along the trail. Passersby cycling, walking, or jogging are far fewer. The trail in the distance appears as a triangular hole that lets in light through a green wall. It's meditative.

### Sojourner Truth State Park

The trails of Sojourner Truth State Park offer an intersection of riverfront, sky,

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and water within the first state park to be established in the City of Kingston. The park's a successful and ongoing rejuvenation of a once-industrial landscape along the Hudson River known for

manufacturing.

This new life has come following Scenic Hudson's acquisition with state collaboration of the property in 2019. Scenic Hudson now manages the park,

a 508-acre gem, a dramatic landscape of ecological regeneration from abandoned quarry and industrial sites.

The trails afford opportunities to take in a scenic overlook and a natural green

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The view of water, mountains and sky is striking from the Ashokan Rail Trail.

space with a panoramic view of the Hudson River. Savor nature in unique habitats of woods, wetlands, and steep

cliffs. Check out remnants of Kingston's brick manufacturing and quarrying history. Gather at the extant mule barn's

community green space near the trail.

The park is one of the few places where the Empire State Trail connects directly with the Hudson River. This network includes the paved Hudson River brickyard and Kingston Greenline trails. Ongoing work is making more of the park publicly accessible in the future.

From a parking lot, a trail winds first level and then downward in a curve toward the river. It traverses through an area on each side of late September colors – plentiful goldenrod, punctuated by purple asters. Sprinkled in is echinacea withering to browns and rust. As the trail winds downwards, it slowly reveals a 180-degree view of the Hudson River, framed by a verdant landscape and an open blue sky above. The setting is spectacular.

The trail culminates in the community green space, which features lush plants, minimalist-but-comfortable benches, a resurfaced fishing platform, and a sleek covered 2000-square-foot pavilion with a gorgeous view of the Hudson. The paved pavilion trail is ADA-compliant.

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Walking the trail, Kingston resident Sara Eckel appreciates the scenic beauty and calls the pavilion "stunning." She especially relishes coming to the park in the wintertime, when it is full of "remarkable sunlight."

The pavilion is indeed a gathering place. On this day, Rita Shaheen, Scenic Hudson's director of parks and community engagement, is enjoying a celebration of her birthday in the pavilion. "One of these days," she divulges, "I'm going to come here not for work but for fun."

The riverfront area offers the feeling of safety in being among others and yet places to find solitude. It shows how the best trails and public spaces allow us to tailor our experiences.

### Ashokan Rail-Trail

At the top of the website for the Ashokan Rail-Trail are the words, "It belongs to you."

After the many years that it existed as the abandoned corridor of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad, the proof that it is a welcoming place for all comes from watching the folks who on a late summer day are bicycling, running, strolling, walking with their children in strollers, or relaxing along it to enjoy its spectacular views. It has places where the forest canopy makes the trail feel cozy and others where it opens to views of the Ashokan Reservoir and the surrounding mountaintops.

Running for 11.5 miles between West Hurley and Boiceville, the trail can be used for excellent heart-enhancing exercise as well as for peaceful, mindful contemplation of the seasons.

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During my time there, I found only one trail visitor talking loudly on a cell phone. It's unusual these days, such quiet in a public space.

This trail is accessible, with easy-to-find starting points. It can be accessed from three public trailheads: the Woodstock Dike, Ashokan, and the Boiceville Bridge. Surrounded by New York City-owned reservoir land, the flat trail's surface consists of compacted, finely crushed stone, making it amenable to long stretches of biking, walking your dog on a leash (provided you clean up after your pet), or jogging. It is ADA-compliant and accessible.

In the winter, it's open for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking. The trailheads are plowed but not the trail itself.

Even on a late-summer Sunday with lots of visitors, the rail-trail did not have a feeling of being swamped. Walking it truly invites noticing the light and shadow on the mosses and ferns and through the red maples, eastern white pines, and other trees or on the steep stone sides that frame it elsewhere.

The views of the Ashokan Reservoir

are breathtaking, the kind that if you are stopping to explore will dispel all the busy thoughts that can crowd one's mind. Even though the trail is not elevated, at times I had a sense of being atop a viewpoint observing the striking ways that water, mountains, and sky come together on the horizon.

### More miles to come

One important way that new trails and parks improve on what governments and various entities opened decades ago is the history, science, geography, and other lessons imparted through the interpretive signs along them.

The Ashokan Rail-Trail has eleven interpretive signs. One describes how the Esopus people lived on these ancestral lands before European settlement, which brought conflict, towns and villages, industries, and trains, and illuminates where the Esopus descendants are today. Another tells of the communities, farms, and industries obliterated and lost when powerful and far-sighted New York City-based interests of the early 20th century cleared some 10,000 acres to construct the Ashokan Reservoir as a drinking-

water source for the thirsty city.

Another describes the steps that those designing and establishing the Ashokan Rail-Trail took. The work to restore wetlands, natural water flow, and plant and wildlife habitats continues.

Such teaching moments are found on the waterfront trail at Sojourner Truth State Park as well. Its interpretive signage focuses on the Hudson River's history, including its role and related activities in the lives of indigenous peoples of the Hudson Valley, the passenger steamboats on the river, and the acceleration of sea-level rise along the river, which is a tidal estuary.

If a lot seems to have enhanced the network of Ulster County trails in recent years, it's because it has – and this trend is very likely to continue. In its 2020 report, "State of the Trails: 2020," an Ulster County trails advisory committee set six important goals, including to connect and to complete the county's unified trail network, to promote and to coordinate trail use countywide, and to promote sustainable trail use.

As the committee put it in the report, "We are poised to complete a unified network of trails that will benefit many more Ulster County residents for generations to come."

For this trail-lover, that is a very happy, gratitude-generating thought!





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# Fire camps

*The best fall camping in Ulster County,  
from roughing it to luxury*

by Zac Shaw

**T**HE MOUNTAINS BECKON with promises of adventure and tranquility. It's time to immerse yourself in Ulster County's great outdoors – and not just for a moment, but for all day and all night.

Let's go camping. The air is crisp. Leaves are morphing into a kaleidoscope of fiery hues.

## Freestyle camping: Embrace the wild

For the purists and survivalist types who believe that true communion with

nature comes without reservations or amenities, freestyle camping in Ulster County is the way to go. The Catskill Forest Preserve allows for primitive camping below 3500 feet elevation, giving you the freedom to set up camp away from the crowds. Imagine finding that perfect spot beside a babbling brook or under a canopy of golden leaves, with the stars as your nightlight.

Just remember to camp at least 150 feet away from trails and water sources, adhere to group size limits of ten people, and follow leave-no-trace principles. Fires are generally permitted but must be small and fully extinguished.

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piners, and perhaps a curious deer wandering by (along with its ticks).

### State campgrounds: Nature with a dash of comfort

If you appreciate the serenity of the wild but wouldn't mind a restroom nearby, Ulster County's state campgrounds strike the perfect balance. The Woodland Valley Campground in Phoenicia is cradled by mountains and offers access to some of the Catskills' most beloved trails, including the trek up Slide Mountain, the highest peak in the range. Then there's the

Kenneth L. Wilson Campground near Woodstock, where you can pitch your tent or park your camper amidst rolling hills and serene lakes. These campgrounds provide basic amenities like restrooms and picnic tables, ensuring a comfortable stay without stealing the spotlight from Mother Nature.

### Private campgrounds: Community and convenience

For those who enjoy the camaraderie of fellow campers and a few extra perks, private campgrounds in Ulster County offer a welcoming embrace. Yogi Bear's



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Jellystone Park at Lazy River in Gardiner is a family-friendly haven where kids can splash in the pools, play mini-golf, and even meet Yogi Bear himself. It's camping with a delightful twist of nostalgia and fun.

Over in Saugerties, the Rip Van Winkle Campgrounds provide spacious sites along the Plattekill Creek. Here you can fish, tube, or simply relax by the water's edge, all the while enjoying amenities like wi-fi and a camp store.

And let's not forget Blue Mountain Campground, also in Saugerties, which offers a peaceful wooded setting perfect for both tents and RVs.

### Glamping: Luxury under the stars

Elevating camping to an indulgent experience – glamping – continues its ascent as a nationwide trend. Each year, more and more structures are built in the legal gray area between rental unit and enhanced campsite. Our area is something of a poster child for the trend, though several recent proposed glamping developments have met fierce Nimby resistance.

Those that are already built are pretty sweet and swanky, with lots of Catskills charm.

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equipped with chic furnishings and spa-like bathrooms. Imagine sipping your morning coffee on a private deck as the mist rolls off the mountains.

Treetopia in nearby Catskill offers a variety of glamping options, including luxury cottages, Airstreams, treehouses, and canvas tents, all set within a well-equipped campground featuring a pool, vegetable garden, and event pavilions.

Top-rated Woodstock Meadows offers a luxurious glamping experience with fully equipped tents, an outdoor shower, fire pit, and amenities like bathrobes and toiletries, nestled near a farm, a pond, and several trails.

You can also check out glampinghub.com for more options. It's sort of like the Airbnb of glamping.

### RV Camping: Home on Wheels

For the nomads who prefer their own mobile sanctuary, Ulster County welcomes RV enthusiasts with open arms. Rip Van Winkle Campgrounds and Blue Mountain Campground both offer full hook-up sites nestled among the trees, providing the perfect base for exploring the region. With amenities like laundry facilities, playgrounds, and easy access to hiking and fishing spots, you can enjoy all the comforts of home while being steps away from nature's playground.

Rondout Valley RV Campground in Accord features full-hookup sites and



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
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Clockwise from above: Treetopia in Catskill offers a variety of glamping options, including luxury cottages, Airstreams, treehouses, and canvas tents; camping in the Hudson Valley; Yogi Bear is a family-friendly haven where kids can splash in the pools, play mini-golf, and even meet Yogi Bear himself.

waterfront options, along with daily activities and resort-style amenities such as a pool, playground, and sports courts.

Skyway Camping Resort in Greenfield Park offers resort-style amenities, including a solar-heated pool, hot tub, and sports courts. It caters to both seasonal and short-term RV stays.

### Retreats: Rejuvenate mind and body

For those looking to nourish the soul as well as the body, Ulster County's retreats



DIANE CONGELLO BRANDES

provide sanctuaries of wellness and introspection. The Menla Retreat & Spa in Phoenicia offers a Tibetan-inspired oasis where you can participate in yoga classes, healing workshops, and spa treatments



CAROL WICKWIRE

that melt away the stresses of modern life. Surrounded by the Catskill

Mountains, Menla provides a serene environment fostering a deep connection with nature and self.



Similarly, the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mount Tremper invites guests to engage in meditation retreats and explore the teachings of Zen Buddhism. It's a place where the quiet of the mountains complements the quieting of the mind.

Wildflower Farms in Gardiner is a luxurious retreat set on 140 acres of wildflower meadows and woodlands. It offers bespoke accommodations, a farm-to-table dining experience, a spa, and miles of hiking trails.

Lundy Farm in Wawarsing offers a secluded, 62-acre retreat surrounded by 30,000 acres of state forest. With regenerative farming, a spring-fed pond, and wellness-focused accommodations, it's ideal for personal and group retreats.

Full Moon Resort in Big Indian provides a rustic yet sophisticated retreat experience in the Catskills. It offers various accommodations and dining options. It hosts retreats year-round. Sometimes bears even attend, but not to worry, the staff are experts at dealing with them.

If you don't want to retreat too far from civilization but still want to feel secluded, Hutton Brickyards in Kingston blends luxury with nature along the Hudson River, offering wellness retreats that include yoga, sound baths, guided nature walks, and farm-to-table dining. It's all within a few minutes' drive to everything else Kingston has to offer.

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Sat 10/5, 8pm • Marilyn Crispell & Harvey Sorgen  
Sun 10/6, 5pm • Kavita Shah's Cape Verdean Blues  
Fri 10/11, 7pm • John St. Jam  
Fri 10/18, 8pm • Afro-futurist Pop: Lollise  
Sun 10/20, 5pm • Transylvanian Dance: Lucian Ban & Mat Maneri  
Tue 10/29, 7pm • Consider This: Fertility Facts and Myth

### NOVEMBER

Fri 11/1, 8pm • Ambient Country: SUSS  
Sat 11/2, 8pm • Doom Jazz: Bobby Previte, Jamie Saft, Knox Chandler  
Sat 11/9, 8pm • The Golden Eras of Jamaican Music: NYC Ska Orchestra  
Sun 11/10, 5pm • Gospel: Mt. Olive Men's Chorus & Innervations  
Thu 11/14, 7pm • Flamenco, Spanish & Latin American Songs: Alba Carmona  
Fri 11/15, 8pm • Steve Kroon's Latin Dance Party  
Sat 11/16, 8pm • Turntables on the Hudson Dance Party  
Thu 11/21, 7pm • Wake Up Call: The David Weiss Sextet

### DECEMBER

Fri 12/6, 8pm • Cumbia and Psychedelic Surf: La Banda Chuska  
Sat 12/7, 8pm • The Harpweaver: Maeve Gilchrist  
Sat 12/14, 8pm • Matt Wilson Christmas Tree-O



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# Eyeing autumn

*Your eyesight improves in the crystalline air.*

by Sparrow

**“Y**OU CAN OBSERVE a lot by just watching,” Yogi Berra famously decreed. And autumn is the best time to use your eyes. The atmosphere is a lens, which we look at with the two lenses in our eyes. In late September, the lens of the sky takes on a pure transparency.

Every leaf on every tree is as precise as a corporate logo. You can count each bract scale on a pine cone twelve feet away.

The proud, bulging cumulus clouds of July have departed. Looking up right now, the sky is cloudless except for two wispy shapes in the west that resemble a three-year-old's scribble.

I hate the term “mindfulness.” It sounds so joyless. In fact, my friend Peter Lam-born Wilson and I were planning to offer a class in “mindlessness” at the Omega Institute, but were too lazy to submit a proposal. (Our workshop would teach

When I was a child comic books ran advertisements for “x-ray spex” (which was later the name of a New Wave band) glasses that allowed one to see through clothes.

New Agers how to goof off and forget about “being in the moment.”) Now Peter’s moved on to the next world, where most likely he’s still lazy.

But autumn demands your attention. Your eyesight improves in the crystalline air. It’s like being inside an HDTV screen, where every detail is indestructibly vivid.

It’s also the best time for drying towels and sheets and underwear on the clothesline. The lucid air conveys the sun’s rays swiftly. It’s a season of happy evaporation.

## Clean-seeming eyeglasses

In summer, the air is full of fireflies, houseflies, mosquitoes, dragonflies, ladybugs, June bugs, bees, wasps, hornets, moths, butterflies. And the air itself is thick with hazy water vapor.

Summer is like looking through smudgy eyeglasses. Fall is like wiping your eyeglasses with that little pink cloth you get from your optometrist.

When I was a child, comic books ran advertisements for “x-ray spex” (later

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Fall is a good time to observe the dramas of birds.

the name of a New-Wave band), glasses that allowed one to see through clothes! Even if you weren't a sexually precocious eleven-year-old, the idea of super-vision (which you knew from Superman comics) was tickling. (Of course, the glasses were a scam – they created a double image through diffraction, which distantly



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Dahn Gim, *Erin* (from the series "Names I Had You Call Me"), 2018, courtesy of the artist

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resembled an x-ray.)

Have you ever seen the movie *Citizen Kane*? Gregg Toland, the gifted director of photography, used high-speed film, broadside arc lamps, and small camera apertures to allow the audience to see deeply into the world of Charles Foster Kane. In this (black-and-white) movie, the camera could look through a doorway into a house, down the hallway, into the kitchen, and out the back window



In *Citizen Kane* the camera could look through a doorway, down the hallway — all with absolute clarity.

– all with absolute clarity. It was the cinematic version of late October.

Try this seeing exercise:

Sit outdoors in a meadow or atop a mountain.

Look with both eyes.

Cover your left eye with your right hand.

Now look with one eye.

Now cover your right eye with your left hand.

Look with no eyes.

Remove your right hand from your left eye.

Look with one eye.

Remove your left hand from your right eye.

Look again with both eyes.

Do this four times.

### Look at what your eyes see

Now is the time to put away your cell phone and visit your friends. See what they look like in the frictionless air. Observe the curve of their noses, the length of their arms. Memorize their torsos.

Only a few wildflowers survive into autumn – and they are tough customers. With its tall ungainly yellow head, a goldenrod blossom looks a bit like Big Bird from *Sesame Street*. The radiating petals of the purple aster are gently explosive, like an after-dinner burp. The black-eyed Susans in my front yard seem to be made of shiny metal. But my favorite is chicory, whose celestial blue flowers remind me of the resplendent cloak the Virgin Mary wears in the paintings of Pietro Perugino. All these uncultivated blooms reach your eye directly in the autumnal air.

Last night, walking home from watching the Trump-Harris debate at Tommy and Janet's house – I don't own a TV set – I looked up at the sky above High Street (my street). The stars were precise as integers.

They didn't look close, but they looked naked. Last week, as I sat beside Esopus Creek flossing my teeth, I saw something plummet into the water: a blur of brown and white. Then it emerged – a bald eagle – clutching a fish in its claws. Slowly, the raptor ascended from the creek, flapping its wet wings, arcing towards the east.

Was it displaying the fish for me to admire?

Anyway, fall is a good time to observe the dramas of birds.



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# Eight great fall fests

*Enjoy the Hudson Valley's many seasonal attractions*

by Cloey Callahan

**T**HE FALL MAY even be the best time of the year in the Hudson Valley. Picturesque mountains shine with shades of yellows, reds, and browns with peak fall foliage. Local farms open their gates to apple picking and fresh cider donuts. Pumpkins line the roads. The air is crisp.

It's also a time when the Hudson Valley boasts some of its very best fairs and festivals that attract locals and tourists alike.

We compiled a list of our top ten fall fests in the area. Several of them have already happened by the time of this publication, so remember them for next year. Don't miss the rest!

Here's what you need to know.

## 1. Hudson Valley Garlic Festival 9/28-9/29; Cantine Memorial Complex, Saugerties

This is the biggest garlic feasible in the Northeast, and possibly in the entire U.S. That's why it's topping our list.

"The festival has been a Saugerties tradition since 1989 when Pat Reppert started it at Shale Hill Farm," said organizer Patricia Praetorius.

In 1990, over 425 garlic lovers attended the event in Reppert's herb gardens, quadrupling the previous year's attendance and stretching the facilities at the farm to their limits. In 1991, tickets were pre-sold to control the crowds, and Reppert had over 1500 phone calls. Ever since then,

The event has only continued to grow in success.

There will be over 200 booths of garlic farmers, food vendors, packaged food vendors, and crafters. Special for this year will be a beer garden featuring NYS craft beers. There will also be live entertainment each day, all day.

"If you love garlic the place to be on the last weekend in September is the Hudson Valley Garlic Festival," said Praetorius.

## 2. Barton Orchard's Harvest Festival Weekend

10/12-10/14; Barton Orchards, Poughquag

Apple picking season is officially here. Everything is opening with a bang dur-

ing the fall festival weekend at one of the area's favorite farms.

For the little ones, there is a corn maze, a fun park, hayrides, a wooden ship playground, farm games and activities, a petting zoo, and more.





Adults can enjoy the tap room that boasts a wide variety of beer and more. Food on site can be enjoyed at one of the many picnic tables.

The star of the show is the pick-your-own apples and pumpkins. A ticket to this fall festival gets you access to each of the activities.

If you can't make it Barton Orchards hosts many events during peak season, including BBQs and Brews on October 5 and 6.

### 3. The NYS Sheep & Wool Festival 10/19-10/20; Dutchess County Fairgrounds, Rhinebeck

Over two days of fiber-filled fun, visitors can find 300 vendors, 90 workshops, fiber competitions, sheep and goat shows, and a lot more.

This year in particular, they are expanding their educational offerings. "You'll see a few more slots added to our Shepherd's

Talks, which are geared toward aspiring shepherds and casual enthusiasts alike, and the Northeast Regional Fibershed will be back to share all the ways that wool producers and textile manufacturers interact in our area," said Nena Johnson, festival manager.

When you're there, expect to also find a fleece sale, book signings, barns full of fiber animals to meet close up: leaping llamas, a used equipment auction, demonstrations, and a daily livestock parade.

"The NYS Sheep & Wool Festival is the perfect Hudson Valley outing to celebrate fall," said Johnson. "It really kicks off one of our most beautiful and recognizable seasons up here."

### 4. Apples and Wine Fest at Weed Orchards & Winery 9/28-9/29, 10/5-10/6; Marlboro

Heading into the fall, Weed Orchards & Winery is likely to be packed on most

weekends. Special programming includes an Apples and Wine Fest, where visitors can enjoy face painting, hayrides, live music, apple cider donuts, ice cream, and apple picking. It's family- and dog-friendly, so bring everyone along.

Come back later in the fall on October 12 and 13 for the fall festival that offers all that and more, including fall-themed food and drinks, seasonal beers and sangria, pumpkin picking and painting, and caramel apples.

### 5. Windham's 30th Anniversary of the Annual Autumn Affair 10/12-10/13; Main Street, Windham

This free outdoor street festival showcases this quintessential Hudson Valley's downtown.

"It is centered around our beautiful downtown, promoting our unique shops and restaurants, and highlighting abundant recreational opportunities that help make Windham so special," said Lisa Jaeger, Windham Chamber of Commerce board president.

For two days, Main Street is filled with live music, entertainment, food trucks, wildlife demonstrations, and haywagon and pony rides. Visitors can find over 65 arts and crafts vendors, baked goods, special tastings, and more.

New this year, they will have axe throwing and a baking contest. The Windham Mt. Club Sky Ride, a fan favorite for the best views, will be open. There is free parking when using the town shuttle.

"Come visit Windham during the prettiest time of year," said Jaeger.

### 6. Handcrafted Octoberfest at Rhinebeck 10/5-10/6; Dutchess County Fairgrounds, Rhinebeck

An artfully reimagined Octoberfest will return to Rhinebeck for its fifth anniversary. Produced by Quail Hollow Events, the festival is centered around the concept of handmade. It's infused with harvest energy and Oktoberfest staples like beer drinking and polka dancing.

You can find everything from one-of-a-kind goods by the finest makers and artisans to the Hudson Valley's best wine and spirits. There will be seasonal grub, a beer garden, live musical performances, horse-drawn carriage rides, and even master pumpkin carving.

Kids will enjoy a family arts and crafts area with creative free play and a pet-

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ting zoo.

"Handcrafted Octoberfest champions the craft, training and story behind each object and attraction," said Ola Rubinstein, director of Quail Hollow Events, in a press release. "Featuring works of art and craft, but also gourmet specialty foods, local wine and spirits, and agricultural marvels, this celebration highlights the idea of small-batch and hand-spun, with lots of harvest fun for all ages on the side."

### 7. Warwick Applefest

10/6; Warwick

With over 150 craft vendors, over 75 food vendors, four stages of live music, and apple pie baking and eating contests, this is a fall festival you don't want to miss.

It's been running since 1989, when it started out as just a simple harvest celebration. Today, it brings in over 30,000 visitors to the one-day event, traveling from neighboring states to experience the variety of Warwick's apples, culture, and entertainment.

It's produced by the Warwick Valley Chamber of Commerce, with festival proceeds benefiting them and some 50 local non-profits, for whom the event is their biggest annual fundraiser.

Admission is free. Inside there are farmers' markets, a children's carnival, nearby shops, restaurants, and more.

### 8. Walktoberfest Farmers' and Makers' Market

10/26-27; Poughkeepsie

The Walkway Over the Hudson hosts some of the most grand events in the region throughout the year. In October, its Walktoberfest Farmers' and Makers' Market brings a curated selection of Hudson Valley's producers to the Hudson Valley Rail-Trail and west approach to Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park.

Visitors can find more than 150 vendors, including farms, distilleries, breweries, wineries, restaurants, artists, artisans, and more. Walktoberfest features not only farm-fresh products, food from local restaurants, and beer, wine, and spirits samples in a designated tasting area, but also art installations, locally made goods, a special area for children's activities, and more.

All proceeds from Walktoberfest benefit the Friends of the Walkway and Hudson Valley Rail-Trail, who have partnered to present this farmers' market.



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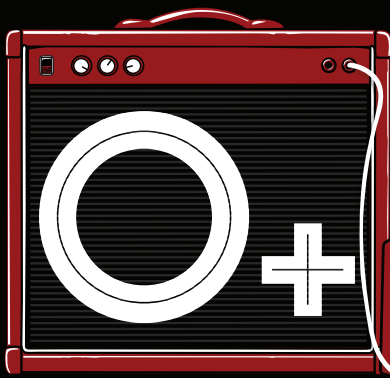
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