

# The Best of New York State

Visitors to New York State who venture both downstate and upstate have an array of options unequaled elsewhere in the country. Besides the urban allure, culture, and shopping of Manhattan, much of New York State is still, in many ways, waiting to be discovered on a grand scale. The state is endowed with outstanding beauty and diversity of scenery from one end to the other. Although New Yorkers have long vacationed in the Catskill and Adirondack mountains, and at Long Island beaches, most have seen too little of the state between its tourist bookends, New York City and Niagara Falls. The historic Hudson Valley, a majestic river lined with elegant estates, is finally positioning itself as a destination, not just a day trip from the city. The great wilderness of the Adirondack and Catskill mountains is magnificent for outdoors and sporting vacations, but those spots are also home to the easygoing charms of small towns. The pristine glacial-lake beauty and outstanding wineries of the Finger Lakes make it one of the state's most spectacular, yet lesser-known destinations. And Long Island is home to splendid sandy Atlantic Ocean beaches, but also the gulf of New York economic extremes, ranging from blue-collar immigrant enclaves to palatial summer homes in the Hamptons.

Planning a trip to a state as large and diverse as New York involves a lot of decision making, so in this chapter we've tried to give some direction. Below we've chosen what we feel is the very best the state has to offer—the places and experiences you won't want to miss. Although sites and activities listed here are written up in more detail elsewhere in this book, this chapter should give you an overview of New York State's highlights and get you started planning your trip.

—Neil Edward Schlecht

---

## 1 THE BEST HOTELS

---

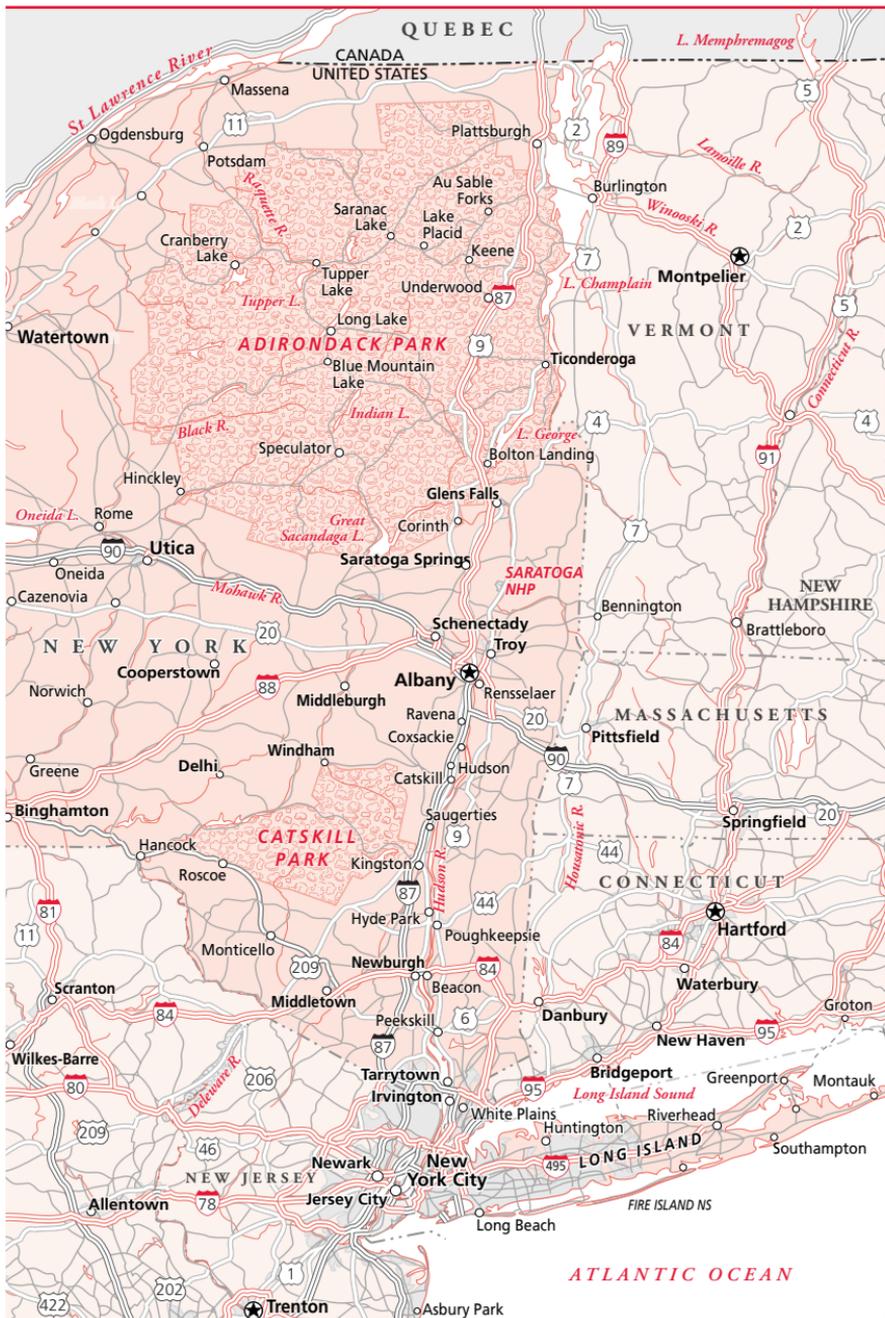
- The **Ritz-Carlton New York, Central Park**, 50 Central Park South (☎ 212/308-9100): The combination of a great location across from Central Park, large well-outfitted rooms, and excellent Ritz-Carlton service is as good as it gets. See p. 100.
- **Casablanca Hotel**, 147 W. 43rd St. (☎ 888/922-7225): In the Theater District, the Casablanca not only offers clean, well-outfitted rooms at value rates, but also includes extras like complimentary breakfast, bottled water, free high-speed Internet access, and a lovely roof deck perfect for a cocktail on a balmy evening. See p. 103.
- **Mohonk Mountain House** (Lake Mohonk; ☎ 800/772-6646): A legendary Victorian castle perched on a ridge overlooking the Catskill region's Shawangunk Mountains, the Mohonk Mountain House is more than a hotel; it's a destination unto itself. Still in the hands of the original family, the whimsical lodge lives up to its exalted reputation, earned over the past 130 years. In

## 2 New York State

THE BEST OF NEW YORK STATE

1 THE BEST HOTELS





the midst of the 6,400-acre Mohonk Forest Preserve, its setting is beyond compare and outdoor activities include something for everyone. Rooms are decorated in Edwardian, Victorian, or Arts and Crafts style, and the massive place is loaded with fireplaces and pretty nooks. See p. 247.

- **Emerson Resort & Spa** (Mt. Tremper; ☎ 877/688-2828): Rebuilt after a devastating fire, this chic inn and spa hotel lost some of its exoticism but none of its sleek elegance, which remains a rarity in the Catskill Mountains. Its sybaritic spa and restaurant are unequaled in the region, making this a perfect place for big-city types who want to be in the country, but not in rustic lodgings. See p. 247.
- **The Saratoga Hotel & Conference Center** (Saratoga Springs; ☎ 866/937-7746): Saratoga is loaded with charming Victorian B&Bs, but until recently it didn't have anything approaching a modern luxury hotel. This large, chic business hotel, right on the main drag, fills that niche nicely, and it has one of upstate's best restaurants to boot: the relocated Chez Sophie bistro.
- **The Otesaga** (Cooperstown; ☎ 800/348-6222): The grande dame of central New York, which celebrated its centennial anniversary in 2009, sprawls majestically along the shores of Lake Otsego. While renovations have brought the bathrooms and air-conditioning into the 21st century, the hotel is firmly rooted in the past, maintaining its historic feel with high ceilings, heavy wooden doors, and formal furniture. Still, with a plethora of patios and balconies—along with a renowned golf course and plenty of watersports—this seasonal hotel is focused on the equally gorgeous outdoors that surround it. See p. 307.
- **Aurora Inn** (Aurora; ☎ 866/364-8808): A mid-19th-century inn saved from demolition and given a glorious new life, this small boutique hotel is the centerpiece of a sweet little town on the east bank of Cayuga Lake. Although small, the inn has the superb service and style of a luxury hotel, as well as stunning water views, rooms that are models of graceful interior design, and one of the most elegant restaurants in the Finger Lakes. See p. 332.
- **Sherwood Inn** (Skaneateles; ☎ 800/3-SHERWOOD): Occupying a prime position in the most delightful town in the Finger Lakes, this longtime small hotel—a stagecoach stop from the early 19th century—looks out onto Skaneateles Lake and exudes a relaxed, genteel feel. The old staircase, wide-plank floorboards, and colorfully designed rooms may seem old-world and old-money, but travelers can stay for moderate prices. It also features a very nice restaurant and tavern, both of which look out onto the lake. See p. 378.
- **The Point** (Saranac Lake; ☎ 800/255-3530): A former Rockefeller Great Camp, this exclusive, secluded retreat overlooking Saranac Lake is today the ultimate in wilderness indulgence. Huge rooms are fitted with touches like enormous stone fireplaces, but it's the all-inclusive, satisfy-any-request character of this 11-room camp that really makes it a special experience. Have a gourmet lunch aboard their boat or at a remote cabin, go water-skiing, watch the chefs at work, enjoy the open bar, trade tales around the nightly bonfire, or just hide out in the rustic ambience of your room. See p. 401.
- **Lake Placid Lodge** (Lake Placid; ☎ 877/523-2700): Awash in rustic luxury, the lodge is the quintessential Adirondacks experience. Sitting on the shores of secluded Lake Placid, this exclusive getaway features meticulous and personalized service, along with rooms filled with one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture, many built by local artists.

With lots of quiet nooks and a gorgeous stone patio, you can grab your own corner of the 'dacks and feel like you have the place to yourself. See p. 401.

- **The Mansion on Delaware** (Buffalo; ☎ 716/886-3300): This renovated mansion on Millionaire's Row blends in so well with the gorgeous private homes

around it that you'd never even guess it was a hotel. Inside, you'll find ultra-modern (but comfy) furniture, enormous, luxurious bathrooms, and ultra-personalized service. Rooms have been styled around the existing mansion, creating unique spaces in the city's most unique property. See p. 427.

---

## 2 THE BEST INNS & B&BS

---

- **Buttermilk Falls Inn & Spa** (Milton-on-Hudson; ☎ 877/746-6772): Secluded among 70 acres along the Hudson River, this soothing boutique hotel is an excellent choice to get away from it all or to use as a base for exploring the Hudson Valley or the eastern edges of the Catskills. Part historic inn (the main house is a 1764 Colonial), part posh day spa, and part rustic retreat—with wooded trails, waterfalls and ponds, gardens, and separate cottage houses—there's something for almost everyone. Rooms are elegant without being fussy. See p. 224.
- **The Inn at Lake Joseph** (Forestburgh; ☎ 845/791-9506): A first-class country estate in the southeastern quadrant of the Catskill region, this secluded Victorian inn is elegant and peaceful. It has manor house rooms in a 19th-century summer getaway, as well as splurge-friendly carriage and cottage houses that are more like princely private apartments. See p. 269.
- **Hillcrest Manor** (Corning; ☎ 607/936-4548): A refined B&B in a gateway town to the Finger Lakes, this gorgeous 1890 Greek Revival mansion is just minutes from the world-renowned Corning Museum of Glass in a peaceful residential neighborhood. The opulent inn, owned by two art collectors, has tasteful parlors and very spacious bedrooms. Few inns can match this level of sophistication and luxury, and fewer

still match the relatively affordable prices you'll find here. See p. 345.

- **Hobbit Hollow Farm B&B** (Skaneateles; ☎ 315/685-2791): Overlooking graceful Skaneateles Lake, this sumptuous and intimate small inn gives you a chance to pretend you're a privileged country gentleman or -woman relaxing on your horse farm. The century-old Colonial Revival, ensconced on 400 acres with panoramic lake views, is as luxurious and attentive to detail as they come. Rooms are charmingly elegant; for those on a budget, the smaller rooms are a decent value and you can still imagine yourself the prince of Skaneateles. See p. 377.
- **Seatuck Cove House** (Eastport; ☎ 631/325-3300): On the edge of the Hamptons, this enormous, beautiful home sits right out on the water with gorgeous views. Because the inn has only five rooms, you'll feel like you own the place. The rooms are painted white and decorated with an appropriately beachy aesthetic. Four of the five are also large enough to comfortably accommodate a separate sitting area. Take a walk along the waterfront or a dip in the pool, then grab one of the best B&B breakfasts on Long Island. See p. 186.
- **The Mansion Inn of Saratoga** (Rock City Falls/Saratoga Springs; ☎ 888/996-9977): This sophisticated 1866 Victorian inn sits on 4 acres just outside

- Saratoga Springs and is replete with luxurious details, both in common rooms and in the spacious accommodations. The owners are serious about high-end pampering, making it an ideal weekend getaway. See p. 287.
- **Black Sheep Inn** (Hammondspoint; ☎ 607/569-3767): A new arrival to the Finger Lakes is this inn occupying a rare 1859 octagon house, immaculately restored and converted by the young owners, one of whom is a chef devoted to organic cooking and the other an interior

designer. The house is lavishly outfitted, but not at all fussy. The location—in a pretty, small town near beautiful Keuka Lake—is a bonus. See p. 351.

- **The Chalet of Canandaigua** (Canandaigua; ☎ 585/394-9080): This tiny luxury inn has enormous rooms of immense style, a surprise within the walls of a log cabin. Equipped to the nines, it's a perfect blend of rusticity and stylish warmth, with no detail overlooked. Whatever the season, this chalet makes a dignified retreat. See p. 357.

---

### 3 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

---

- **Aquavit** (New York City; ☎ 212/307-7311): The Scandinavian seafood dishes here will frequent your daydreams. The restaurant moved from its intimate town house setting, but the food and service are just as spectacular, if not better. Enjoy the herring plate with a glass of Aquavit (distilled liquor not unlike vodka, flavored with fruit and spices) and a frosty Carlsberg beer. See p. 120.
- **Ouest** (Manhattan; ☎ 212/580-8700): Plush red banquettes and an intimate balcony area give this Upper West Side spot a cozy and clubby feel. Service is personable but also professional, but what really draws the crowds is chef Tom Valenti's mastery in the kitchen, especially with meats such as his signature melt-in-your-mouth braised beef short ribs. See p. 121.
- **Peter Luger** (Great Neck; ☎ 516/487-8800): Hands down, this is one of the best steakhouses in the country. People flock here for one thing and one thing only: porterhouse. In fact, if you try to order anything else (or even ask for a menu), you'll likely get a quizzical stare from your waiter. The dry-aged meat comes brushed with a tasty glaze and is

tender enough to make vegetarians reconsider. See p. 163.

- **Culinary Institute of America (CIA)** (Hyde Park; ☎ 845/471-6608): The most elite training ground in the country for chefs has not one, but four on-campus restaurants run by students—but they're a far cry from what college students typically eat. Choose the sophisticated Escoffier Restaurant (French), Ristorante Caterina de Medici (Italian), American Bounty Restaurant (regional American), or St. Andrew's Café (casual). You'll be impressed, and unsurprised, that so many of America's finest restaurants have CIA chefs at the helm. Plan ahead, though, because reservations are about as tough to come by as admission to the school. See p. 218.
- **Valley Restaurant at The Garrison** (Garrison; ☎ 845/424-2339): Ensnared within the gently rolling grounds of a golf course high above the Hudson Valley, this understated but quietly creative restaurant has quickly become one of the finest in the valley. Its seasonal American menu features the best from local Hudson Valley farms, and its wine cellar is peerless in the region. While golfers munch on simple fare next door

- at World's End Bar, the dining room draws foodies from New York City and around the region who are anxious to check out this buzz restaurant. See p. 210.
- **Terrapin Restaurant** (Rhinebeck; ☎ 845/876-3330): Chef/owner Josh Kroner ambitiously adds creative Mexican and Asian accents to American cuisine in this popular restaurant that inhabits a 19th-century church in the quaint village of Rhinebeck. There's fine dining in the evenings on one side, and a casual bistro on the other, and the well-thought-out wine list is as good as they come in the Hudson Valley. See p. 225.
  - **Depuy Canal House** (High Falls; ☎ 845/687-7700): A fabulously creative restaurant in a lovely, rambling 200-year-old stone tavern in the Catskills, Depuy Canal House is the longtime standard-bearer in this part of upstate New York. It draws foodies from New York City and around the state for elegant and surprising selections served in a perfectly elegant but rustic setting. If you've brought an empty stomach and full wallet, check out the four- or seven-course prix-fixe dinners; otherwise, drop in to the more casual downstairs bistro in the wine cellar. See p. 252.
  - **Alex & Ika** (Cooperstown; ☎ 607/547-4070): Formerly located in tiny Cherry Valley, this house of culinary masterpieces is now right in the heart of Cooperstown. Fortunately, the food has lost none of its punch—it's still packed with so many flavor combinations that you'll be talking about the meal long after you leave. With a menu that changes weekly, it's hard to believe they can hit a home run with every dish, but somehow they do. See p. 309.
  - **Suzanne Fine Regional Cuisine** (Hector; ☎ 607/582-7545): Suzanne's looks like a harbinger of the future in the Finger Lakes—fine dining to accompany the region's swiftly improving wines. Meticulously crafted American food, using the finest local ingredients, is the calling card at this sophisticated but relaxed country-elegant spot, in an old farmhouse with swoon-worthy views of Seneca Lake. Locals consider it *the* place for a special dinner. See p. 340.
  - **Savor (Mirbeau's)** (Skaneateles; ☎ 877/MIRBEAU): Though part of a stylish and swanky spa boutique hotel in Skaneateles, this restaurant manages to shine in its own right. The romantic grounds evoke the Provence countryside, and the dining room wouldn't be out of place in that region of sophisticated eaters. The prix-fixe menus are calibrated to show off the young chef's creativity and artfully prepared dishes. See p. 379.
  - **The Bistro at Red Newt Cellars** (Hector; ☎ 607/546-4100): At the forefront of the movement to focus on the bounty of local farms, this terrific and creative bistro restaurant is also keen on matching food with local wines. And why not, since the restaurant is intrinsically connected to one of the Finger Lakes' better wineries (which is run by the chef's husband). Try a wine flight and some imaginative dishes from Debra: Red Newt is the perfect place to explore all that's great about Finger Lakes gastronomy. See p. 340.
  - **Dano's Heuriger** (Lodi; ☎ 607/582-7555): A radical departure from what one might expect to find along the shore of one of the Finger Lakes, this Austrian restaurant, a modern version of a Viennese wine garden, is nonetheless perfectly at home. The menu encourages diners to sample small plates and unique tastes, which pair perfectly with the local wines (or Austrian varietals, such as Grüner Veltliner). See p. 341.
  - **North Fork Table & Inn** (Southold; ☎ 631/765-0177): This outstanding restaurant is a standard bearer in Long

Island's East End for the meticulous preparation of creative, locally sourced meals. The bright space has a romantic country inn feel, with wood plank floors and ceiling beams, but the food—from a kitchen led by Gerard Hayden, formerly of NYC's Aureole—is the reason to come here. Using only the freshest seasonal ingredients, dishes are given a simple, yet artful presentation with a perfect melding of flavors. Desserts, too, are out of this world. See p. 172.

- **The View** (Mirror Lake Inn, Lake Placid; ☎ 518/523-2544): This top-notch inn has always served up some of the best dishes in the Adirondacks, and

with its change from black tie to casually clad servers, it fits in better with the area's laid-back atmosphere. Meals are consistently excellent, so whether you order meat or fish, you won't be disappointed. Best of all, they come with a gorgeous view out over Mirror Lake. See p. 404.

- **Tempo** (Buffalo; ☎ 716/885-1594): With a creative Italian menu and a modern, romantic setting, this restaurant has been at the top of the city's dining scene since it opened. The inventive food is dramatically presented; dig in and you'll see why Western New Yorkers keep coming back for more. See p. 429.

---

## 4 THE BEST PLACES FOR ANTIQUES HOUNDS

---

- **Greenport:** This bustling hub out on Long Island's North Fork has one of the best selections of antiques reflecting the old seafaring world on the North Fork. See chapter 7.
- **Southold:** While it may play second fiddle to neighboring Greenport, just-as-cute-but-quieter Southold is a great place to browse antiques with less company. There are a number of treasure-filled shops, including an antique doll hospital. See chapter 7.
- **Locust Valley:** Most antiques hunters head to Port Jefferson, farther east on Long Island's north shore. And that's exactly why you should hit this tiny town that's not even on many maps—the goods are less picked over and the antiques are of excellent quality. See chapter 7.

- **Hudson:** This formerly run-down town along the Upper Hudson has exploded with high-end and eclectic antiques shops, making it *the* antiquing destination of the Hudson River Valley (indeed of any place in the state north of Manhattan). Almost all the dealers are confined to the long stretch of Warren Street, making it ideal for window-shopping. See chapter 8.
- **Bloomfield Antique Country Mile:** Just west of Canandaigua, this mile-long cluster of antiques dealers along routes 5 and 20 in Bloomfield is one of the best concentrations for antiquing in the Finger Lakes, with several multi-dealer shops lined up back-to-back. See p. 356.

---

## 5 THE BEST HIKES

---

- **Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island:** With more than 2,000 pristine acres in the southeastern part of the island, this preserve, run by the Nature Conservancy, is about as remote as you can get on Long

Island. There are 11 miles of easy hiking trails that run through the oak woodlands, marshes, ponds, and creeks. Keep an eye out for osprey, ibis, foxes, harbor seals, and terrapins. See chapter 7.

- **Hudson River Valley:** Though the Hudson Valley is more hilly than mountainous, tucked in the southern highlands are several excellent spots for day hikes. Hudson Highlands State Park near Cold Spring has a number of great day trails, as do Bear Mountain and Harriman state parks, some following a section of the Appalachian Trail. Many are surprisingly challenging. See chapter 8.
- **Catskill Region:** Some of the most scenic hiking in New York State is through the dense forests and along the stony ridges lacing the Catskills, where there are nearly three dozen peaks above 3,500 feet. The 6,000-acre Mohonk Preserve, part of the Shawangunk Mountains, has 60 miles of trails. Nearby Minnewaska State Park Preserve offers another 12,000 acres perfect for hiking and mountain biking, with 30 miles of footpaths and carriage-ways. See chapter 9.
- **Southern Adirondacks:** How adventuresome are you feeling? If the answer is “very,” head to Lake George for a crazy steep climb up Black Mountain, an 8.5-mile round-trip with a 1,100-foot vertical rise and some amazing views of the lake and mountains. If you want a great view without so much work, Bald Mountain, east of Old Forge, is also steep but much shorter (2 miles round-trip). For a hike back in the woods, check out Cascade Lake, just north of Eagle Bay. It’s an easy 5-mile walk to the lake that takes you past a gorgeous waterfall. See chapter 13.
- **Northern Adirondacks:** New York State’s highest peak is Mount Marcy, at 5,344 feet. It’s not the easiest climb, but for anyone with aspirations to nab the state’s highest spot, it’s a must. Just watch out for crowds: Most people hike to the peak from the north, but take the Range Trail and you’ll find fewer hikers and better views along the way. For an easier hike, check out High Falls Gorge, which offers a great and easy stroll along the Ausable River and past waterfalls. See chapter 13.
- **Letchworth State Park:** This western New York park is home to a stunning 400-foot-deep gorge, with all sorts of hiking trails taking you past views of the deep chasm that’s cut by the Genesee River. Trails go either deep into the forest or along the rim of the canyon; the Gorge Trail hits the most scenic spots. It’s a 7-mile trail one-way, and moderately difficult, but, of course, you can turn around at any time. Take the kids along the Pond Trail, an easy .75-mile walk that leads you to a small pond stocked with fish. See p. 438.

---

## 6 THE BEST FAMILY VACATION SPOTS

---

- **Shelter Island:** Hardly the raging party scene that exists in the nearby Hamptons, Shelter Island makes for a quiet family retreat on the eastern end of Long Island. Hike, boat, or just relax. And since it’s an island, there are very few ways to escape, meaning that—for better or worse—on this family vacation, you’ll always be together. See chapter 7.
- **Mount Tremper & Phoenicia:** This spot in the southeastern Catskills—two small towns bunched together off the main road—serves up a surprising roster of activities for families. In Mount Tremper, at Catskill Corners, the Kaatskill Kaleidoscope Theatre is the world’s largest kaleidoscope, occupying an old barn silo. In Phoenicia, just a couple of miles up the road, families can rent inner tubes and float down

Esopus Creek, which slices the valley between towering mountains. The Catskill Mountain Railroad runs along Esopus Creek from the Mount Pleasant depot to Phoenicia's 1910 station. See chapter 9.

- **Delaware & Ulster Railride:** In Arkville, the Delaware & Ulster Railride transports visitors through the Catskill Mountains in a historic train that departs from the old depot. Kids will especially love the special "Great Train Robbery" train, where costumed actors playfully hijack and "rob" the train. See p. 260.
- **Saratoga Springs:** This genteel resort town welcomes families with its plentitude of parks, the Saratoga Children's Museum, and Saratoga Spa State Park, a huge and lovely urban park with miles of hiking trails, swimming pools, and a skating rink. But surely the most entertaining feature for kids is the Saratoga Race Course and the opportunity to attend a thoroughbred horse race. Kids can take a walking tour of the stables, learn how horses and jockeys prepare for races, and even dress up like a jockey. See chapter 10.
- **Rochester:** As the northeastern gateway to the Finger Lakes, this amiable upstate city overflows with great family activities. With Lake Ontario beaches, a 96-foot urban waterfall in the High Falls Historic District, and proximity to watersports at any of the Finger Lakes, it has plenty of good outdoor pastimes. But it also has three indoor spots with huge appeal to families, including the Strong Museum, one of the top children's museums in the country; the George Eastman House, a museum of photography in the home belonging to the founder of Kodak; and Genesee

Country Village & Museum, a re-creation of a 19th-century village staffed by interpreters in period costume. See chapter 12.

- **Skaneateles:** This charming village at the north shore of the Finger Lake of the same name has tons of shops, restaurants, and inns that parents will love, but also plenty of activities for the entire family. In summer, children are sure to love the nostalgic long pier that extends over the water, as well as swimming and boating in one of the state's most beautiful lakes. But best of all are the winter holidays, when Skaneateles comes alive with a Dickens Christmas celebration, with costumed Dickens characters taking over the streets, singing Christmas carols. A good excursion from Skaneateles is the easy drive into Syracuse to visit the Museum of Science & Technology (MOST), whose excellent interactive exhibits and IMAX theater are huge hits with kids. See chapter 12.
- **Lake George:** This southern Adirondacks town is hardly a calm getaway in the summer, but it boasts distractions galore for families, including amusement parks, haunted houses, family restaurants, and all the lake swimming you can handle. See chapter 13.
- **Niagara Falls:** It isn't just for honeymooners anymore—it's also jammed with families. The famous cascading water appeals to people of all ages, and you can see it from high above, behind, or way down below on the ever-popular *Maid of the Mist*. But over on the Canadian side in the Clifton Hill area is where your kids will really want to go: There you'll find haunted houses, theme rides, and fun museums. See chapter 14.

## 7 THE BEST PLACES FOR WATERSPORTS

- North Fork:** The protected waters of Long Island Sound (to the north of the fork) and Peconic Bay (to the south) make for the perfect place to head out with a boat. Whether it's a canoe, kayak, jet ski, or powerboat, you'll cruise around on relatively calm waters while keeping an eye out for herons, osprey, hawks, fish, and turtles. See chapter 7.
- Hudson River:** One of the best ways to see the Hudson River, America's first highway and one of the great rivers in the nation, is from the middle of it: on a boat. You can board a sightseeing cruise at Rondout Landing in Kingston on the *Rip Van Winkle*, or in Newburgh on *The Pride of the Hudson*, or take a sunset cruise aboard *Doxie*, a 31-foot sloop, or a traditional-style yacht. See chapter 8.
- Delaware River:** The western Catskills are one of North America's top fishing destinations, drawing serious anglers from around the world. Fly-fishing is legendary along the Delaware River and nearby Beaverkill and Willowemoc trout streams. The junction pool at Hancock, where the east and west branches join to form the main stem of the Delaware River, has long been celebrated for its preponderance of massive brown and rainbow trout. Pepacton Reservoir, also in the western Catskills, is perfect for open-water brown trout fishing. See chapter 9.
- Finger Lakes & Erie Canal:** The gorgeous Finger Lakes are incredibly scenic spots for boating, water-skiing, and sailing. Seneca Lake has a picture-perfect port where you can hire a yacht or sailboat, including a vintage 1930 schooner yacht. At Keuka Lake, considered by many locals to be the prettiest of the Finger Lakes, there are boat cruises aboard the *Keuka Maid*. At several Finger Lakes, you can also rent kayaks and canoes if you're looking for an even more intimate experience on the water. Skaneateles Lake has one of the longest cruise boat traditions in the region, and the lake is perfect for relaxed sightseeing and dinner cruises. See chapter 12.
- Alexandria Bay, Thousand Islands:** The miles-wide St. Lawrence River, dotted with somewhere between 1,000 and 1,800 islands, comes tailor-made for watersports. Tool around in a powerboat, canoe, or kayak and check out the castles and mansions that some of America's wealthiest families have built. Just watch out for tankers and other big ships—this is one of America's busiest shipping lanes! See chapter 13.
- Lake George:** Peppered with islands small and large, 32-mile-long Lake George offers endless exploration, whether you're in a canoe, kayak, powerboat, or paddle-wheel tour boat. Get out and experience the thrill of water-skiing, or just kick back and paddle quietly along the shores. Rent boats in the town of Lake George or in Bolton Landing. See chapter 13.
- Mirror Lake, Lake Placid:** Surrounded by the gorgeous peaks of the Adirondacks, this lake comes to life in the summer with all kinds of boats plying the waters. The only drawback is that while it's super convenient (Lake Placid sits right above it), it can get a little too crowded. See chapter 13.

## 8 THE BEST ONE-OF-A-KIND EXPERIENCES

- **Walking the Brooklyn Bridge:** One of the great New York activities of all time. The skyline view heading toward Manhattan from Brooklyn is unparalleled. The walk takes 20 to 40 minutes, depending on your pace, and every minute on this 19th-century architectural marvel is exhilarating. See p. 125.
- **Sleeping in a Historic Lighthouse:** Several hotels tout their proximity to the Hudson River, but in the Upper Hudson Valley, you can sleep at the 1869 Saugerties Lighthouse (☎ 845/247-0656), which functions as a B&B and is perched at water's edge. The only way to get to it is by walking a mile-long trail through woods and wetlands. See p. 249.
- **Reliving America's Glory Days:** Vintage "base ball," a nostalgic game played by old-school traditionalists partial to the 19th-century rules and uniforms of America's classic sport, is played in several parts of New York. In Roxbury, in the northwest Catskill region, locals take it especially seriously. The best time to see a game is on Labor Day, when the Roxbury Nine hosts a home game and the town celebrates "Turn of the Century Day." Locals turn out in period costume, and the opposing team arrives by vintage train. See p. 260.
- **Attending a Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony:** Every July, a new generation of players is transformed from mortal to legendary as inductees take their place alongside Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and the other greats in Cooperstown's Hall of Fame. See p. 304.
- **Gorging on Grape Pie in Naples, Finger Lakes Region:** There's a reason why grape pie hasn't earned a spot alongside apple, cherry, and peach in the pie pantheon: Peeling grapes is just too laborious. But every year on the last weekend in September, the attractive little village of Naples near Canandaigua Lake becomes the grape-pie capital of the world; nearly everyone seems to be selling, buying, and eating them. Grape fanatics and pie pilgrims come from all over to attend the Naples Grape Festival and stuff themselves silly with grape pie. See p. 358.
- **Soaring the Friendly Skies:** The Finger Lakes are gorgeous from any angle, but a bird's-eye perspective—in a vintage warplane or a silent glider plane—is one of the most unique experiences to be had in New York State. At the National Warplane Museum, near Elmira, you can take to the sky in a PT-17 or even a B-17 bomber. And at the nearby National Soaring Museum, visitors can climb aboard sailplanes for peaceful, quiet rides that soar above the valleys around Corning. See chapter 12.
- **Ice-Skating on the Olympic Rink, Lake Placid:** Slip on your silver skates and take to the same rink where Eric Heiden won his gold medals in the 1980 Olympics. It's a public rink, so there's no pressure to race, just glide at your leisure while taking in the majesty of the surrounding Adirondacks. See p. 399.
- **Eating Beef On Weck in Buffalo:** We like wings well enough, but you can get decent wings anywhere—including at Buffalo's Anchor Bar, where they were invented. But Beef on Weck—sliced roast beef on kummelweck, a German kaiser roll sprinkled with pretzel salt and caraway seeds—is a whole other story. For a true, only-in-Buffalo culinary event, head to Schwabl's (technically in the hamlet of West Seneca), to taste this zesty, delicious sockdologer of a sandwich. See p. 437.
- **Watching Fireworks over Niagara Falls:** On the Canadian side of the falls

every Friday and Sunday from May to September, there's a concert from 8 to 10pm, followed by an amazing show as the sky lights up with fireworks and colored lights shine on the cascading

water. Not going during the summer? No worries: You can see the falls lit up every night of the year. Walk along the railing of the Canadian side for the best view. See chapter 14.

## 9 THE BEST HISTORIC PLACES

- **Grand Central Terminal.** Despite all the steel-and-glass skyscrapers in New York, there are still many historic marvels standing, and the best is this Beaux Arts gem. This railroad station, built in 1913, was restored in the 1990s to recapture its brilliance. Even if you don't have to catch a train, make sure you visit. See p. 127.
- **Sagamore Hill, Oyster Bay:** Theodore Roosevelt's summer White House still stands out on his beloved stretch of earth overlooking Long Island Sound. The decor of this 23-room Victorian estate reflects the president's travels with the Rough Riders; it's jammed with animal skins, heads, and exotic treasures from East Africa to the Amazon. See p. 159.
- **Hudson Valley's Great Estates:** American history was made up and down the Hudson River, and not just at Revolutionary War battle sites. The grand estates of important literary figures, railroad magnates, and finance barons—including Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow, the Lyndhurst Estate, the Rockefeller Family's Kykuit Estate, and the Vanderbilt Mansion—are lasting portraits of a young country's great expansion and riches at the height of the Industrial Age. History lessons that go to the core of the country's development are sensitively presented at the Philipsburg Manor, an 18th-century farm that serves as a living-history museum about slavery in the North, while the FDR Presidential Library and Home and Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill Cottage in Hyde Park document another crucial period in the country's more recent history. See chapter 8.
- **Huguenot Street Stone Houses, New Paltz:** Founded in 1678, New Paltz is built around one of the oldest streets of surviving stone houses in North America. Along Huguenot Street are a half-dozen original Colonial-era stone houses built by French religious refugees, the Protestant Huguenots. The earliest was built in 1692, and all have been restored with period furnishings and heirlooms and operate as house museums (but guided tours of the houses are conducted in summer months only). See p. 241.
- **Seneca Falls:** The small town of Seneca Falls is where the women's and civil rights movements got their start in the mid-19th century. The first Women's Rights Convention was held here in 1848, and today the Women's Rights National Historical Park has a museum erected next to the chapel where brave activists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Frederick Douglass formalized the women's rights and abolitionist movements that would ultimately redefine the concept of individual liberty. Other important historic sites in the area, such as the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House, are part of a "Women's Rights Trail." See chapter 12.
- **Great Camp Sagamore:** Back when wealthy industrialists were exploring the concept of leisure travel, they discovered the Adirondacks. Of course, "roughing it" to the Vanderbilts wasn't exactly sleeping in a lean-to. This camp,

4 miles south of Raquette Lake, is a 27-building “Great Camp” filled with rustic luxury—there’s even a bowling alley. Today, you can check out what this camp in the woods was all about. See p. 388.

- **Downtown Buffalo:** It’s hard to believe that 100 years ago, this area was home to more millionaires per capita than

anywhere else in the U.S. Fortunately, those wealthy industrialists left behind a wonderful architectural legacy, and buildings designed by the likes of E. B. Green and H. H. Richardson still grace the city’s skyline. From City Hall to the amazing Ellicott Square building, it’s worth walking around downtown and checking out the sites. See chapter 14.

---

## 10 THE BEST PLACES TO COMMUNE WITH NATURE

---

- **Fire Island, Long Island:** This slender island protecting the mainland is replete with trees, wilderness, and one entire side of gorgeous golden-sand beach. Best of all, cars aren’t allowed, meaning bikes and little red wagons are the only things that can run you over. And because the island is 32 miles long but just a half-mile wide, you’re never more than a short walk from the ocean’s waves and beach. For a truly remote wilderness experience, head to the eastern end, where it’ll likely just be you and the deer in the gorgeous environment. See chapter 7.
- **Mashomack Preserve:** With more than 2,000 pristine acres in the southeastern part of Shelter Island, this preserve, run by the Nature Conservancy, is about as remote as you can get on Long Island. There are 11 miles of easy hiking trails that run through the oak woodlands, marshes, ponds, and creeks. Keep an eye out for osprey, ibis, foxes, harbor seals, and terrapins. See p. 191.
- **Kaaterskill Falls:** The Catskill Mountains are all about the great outdoors, providing lots of invitations to hike, bike, ski, boat, and fish. But one of those unique spots where everyone is sure to feel just a little closer to nature is Kaaterskill Falls, the highest waterfall in New York State. It’s not nearly as powerful and massive as Niagara Falls,

though it is indeed higher. An easy but beautiful walk, wending along a flowing creek, takes you to the bottom of the falls. See p. 254.

- **Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Finger Lakes Region:** Smack in the middle of the Atlantic Migratory Flyway, at the north end of Cayuga Lake, this 7,000-acre wetlands nature park, established in 1938, is superb for birding and a spectacular nature experience for families. The marshes draw thousands of Canada geese, blue herons, egrets, wood ducks, and other water birds on their sojourns from nesting areas in Canada, reaching temporary populations as great as two million birds during the fall and spring migrations. You can drive, cycle, or walk along a road that takes you up close and personal with birds and other creatures. See p. 372.
- **Watkins Glen State Park:** There are too many great nature spots in the Finger Lakes to even discuss or hope to visit on a single trip, starting with the sinewy lakes themselves, but this 776-acre park is surely at the top of any list. Its centerpiece is an amazing slate gorge carved out of the earth at the end of the last ice age, gradually shaped by the waters of Glen Creek. Along the beautiful walking trails are 19 waterfalls. See p. 342.

- **St. Regis Canoe Wilderness:** It's not easy these days to find a single body of water expressly reserved for nonmotorized boats, and it's even harder to find several bodies of water for the canoer/kayaker. But this remote area,

tucked deep in the heart of the Adirondacks, is just that. Take your boat out on these waters and it'll likely just be you and the birds as you cruise quietly through this amazing backcountry. See chapter 13.

---

## 11 THE BEST LEAF-PEEPING

---

- **Hudson River Valley:** Fall is one of the best times to visit the Hudson Valley. Temperatures are perfect and the great estates, many of them set among large old trees and gardens with gorgeous views of the Hudson, are splendid for aesthetic visits. The light is always great on the Hudson, but it's really special during the fall. See chapter 8.
- **Catskill Region:** Pick a county and go on a hike. Or kayak down the Delaware River. This extremely rural region is ideal for fall leaf-peeping. It's full of dairy farms and farmers' markets, emboldened by mountains and laced with lakes. The dense Catskill Forest Preserve is a kaleidoscope of color in autumn. See chapter 9.
- **Finger Lakes Region:** Autumn in the Finger Lakes region is impossibly scenic, with the golden hues of vineyards gracing the banks of deep-blue lakes, all set off against autumnal colors. It's a perfect time to visit the excellent

wineries, take a boat cruise, or bike around the lakes. See chapter 12.

- **Warrensburg to Indian Lake:** This drive north nets you some amazing scenery and even more amazing fall colors. From I-87, take Route 73 through Keene Valley and Keene and you'll head straight into the Adirondack High Peaks area, one of the most scenic in the state, even without fall colors. You'll see mountains ablaze with oranges and reds; once you hit Lake Placid, go north on Route 86 and you'll be driving along the west branch of the Ausable River, also bright with color. See chapter 13.
- **Letchworth State Park:** Long and slender, the park's central feature is a 400-foot-deep cavern; the water from the Genesee River feeds tons of deciduous trees that absolutely light up with color during the fall. Go on a hike deep in the woods or see it all from above in a balloon. See chapter 14.

---

## 12 THE BEST FOUR-SEASON TOWNS

---

- **Saratoga Springs:** Although summer is the star season in Saratoga, this small city is also an excellent year-round destination. In warm months, the one-time "Queen of the Spas" sees thoroughbred racing at the famed Race Course, where the season lasts from the end of July to Labor Day; open-air concerts in the park; the New York City Ballet and Philadelphia Orchestra in

residence; and boating and fishing on Saratoga Lake. However, Saratoga is eminently enjoyable in spring, fall, and even winter, when visitors can enjoy cross-country skiing and ice-skating. See chapter 10.

- **Ithaca:** This college town is a great place to visit no matter what season, with its varied menu of sports and culture available year-round. The great

hikes along Cayuga Lake and to nearby gorges are perfect ways to enjoy spring, summer, and fall. Cornell University's attractions, including the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art and Cornell Plantations' botanical garden, wildflower garden, and arboretum can easily be enjoyed at any time of year. The nearby wineries of the Cayuga Wine Trail make great visits in any season (though they're perhaps best in fall during harvest). In winter, there are nearby downhill skiing and lots of cross-country skiing. See chapter 12.

- **Lake Placid:** In the summer, go boating on Mirror Lake, hike the many trails just outside town, or canoe along your own quiet stretch of lake. In winter,

things really swing: The home of two Olympic Games, Lake Placid offers the opportunity to ski Whiteface Mountain, ice-skate, try the bobsled run, or go dog-sledding on Mirror Lake. See chapter 13.

- **Buffalo:** Okay, it might be a little crazy to visit Buffalo in the depths of snowy winter, but things never shut down here. At any time of year, you can walk (or drive) downtown to check out the city's gorgeous architecture, stroll through its amazing Albright-Knox Art Gallery, take in a professional football or hockey game (in the right season, of course), and finish off the day with some of the city's famous wings in one of its many atmospheric old bars. See chapter 14.

---

## 13 THE MOST ADORABLE TOWNS

---

- **Greenport:** This is the cutest town on Long Island's North Fork. Filled with Colonial buildings, inns, homes, and shops, the town sits right on the protected waters of Peconic Bay. There's a strong sense of the town's history as a fishing village, with the smell of salt in the air, but there are also nice galleries and restaurants that line Main Street. See chapter 7.
- **Cold Spring:** Perhaps the most visitor-friendly small town on the Hudson, warm and inviting Cold Spring has something for everyone. The historic waterfront, equipped with a Victorian band shell and park benches, has unequalled views of the Hudson River; Main Street is packed with antiques shops, cafes, and restaurants; and the nearby mountains are perfect for surprisingly rigorous hikes. Cold Spring is within easy reach of lots of historic estates along the river, and the town's excellent handful of restaurants and inns could easily entice you to a much longer stay than you had planned. See chapter 8.
- **Aurora:** A tiny, picture-perfect village hugging the east shore of Cayuga Lake, Aurora, now in the throes of full-scale revitalization, could be a movie set. It pretty much consists of a main street, a village market, a pizza restaurant, an ice-cream parlor, a historic inn, a whimsical ceramics factory, and a women's college. The town owes its startling makeover to the efforts of the Aurora Foundation, set up by a single benefactor who made it big with American Girl dolls and set about overseeing the restoration of the village's historic buildings, including the beautiful 1833 Aurora Inn (like the town, on the National Register of Historic Places). Visiting the campus of ceramics maker MacKenzie-Childs is about as close to a Willy Wonka wonderland as you'll get. See chapter 12.
- **Cooperstown:** This chain-store-free town is best known for being home to the Baseball Hall of Fame. But sitting on the shores of Lake Otsego, it's also one of the state's cutest small towns. Tiny buildings and shops line the short Main Street, and you can walk its

length in just a few minutes. You'll find quaint inns, good restaurants, and plenty of baseball-card shops; then walk down to the water and have a picnic lunch overlooking the quiet, undeveloped lake. See chapter 11.

- **Skaneateles:** They don't come any cuter (or harder to pronounce) than this graceful town, which is more reminiscent of New England than upstate New York. The historic downtown, an attractive mix of 19th-century Greek Revival and Victorian homes and appetizing boutiques and antiques shops lining East Genesee Street, sits right on the

north shore of Skaneateles Lake. The beautiful and crystal-clear lake is one of the prettiest and cleanest in the state, and charming inns and restaurants back right up to it. In summer, bands play on the lakefront at a picturesque gazebo, and in winter, costumed actors create a Dickensian holiday. See chapter 12.

- **Saranac Lake:** Less hectic than its neighbor, Lake Placid, this town boasts a charm all its own. With tiny clapboard shops mixed in with cute brick structures, the town has a couple of good restaurants, along with a pretty inn and clean streets. See chapter 13.

---

## 14 THE BEST ODDBALL ATTRACTIONS

---

- **Big Duck, Long Island:** You knew Long Island was famous for its duck, but this statue on Route 24 at the Flanders/Hampton Bays border will likely surprise you—it's 20 feet tall. Even better, you can stop here and pick up tourist information. See p. 181.
- **Reviving the Borscht Belt:** The Catskill region has come a long way from the Borscht Belt vacationland where New York City families once retreated to day camps in the mountains. But there are still some of those old-school, all-in-one resorts, many of them ethnic enclaves of group entertainment and back-to-back activities like bowling, shuffleboard, and pale imitations of yesteryear game shows. They're nostalgic for some, high camp or cheese for others. Among the many resorts hanging onto old ways of summer fun in the mountains, one stands out: Scott's Oquaga Lake House, where generations of one family have been entertaining visitors, incredibly, since 1869. The resort is best known for the singing Scott family's nightly cabaret revues in which everyone from the costumed grandkids to the grandparents play a rousing part. See p. 263.
- **700 Mormons Interpreting the Bible in Full Technicolor:** The Mormon Church, also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, got its miraculous start in the Finger Lakes region before heading west. Every year in July, hundreds of thousands of the faithful and curious make pilgrimages to witness the Hill Cumorah Pageant, a giant spectacle that constitutes the largest outdoor theatrical production in the U.S. The show sports a costumed cast of 700, a nine-level stage, and music by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. It's a must-see event and even nonbelievers enjoy the over-the-top show. See p. 354.
- **The Winery Impersonating Hooters:** Wine tasting is all about protocol and pompous, highbrow terms like bouquet, nose, and body, right? Not at Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards, in the Finger Lakes, where a visit to the vineyard is occasionally more akin to something you'd stumble upon at a college frat house. To start, the winery's bestseller is the mass-market "Red Cat," a low-rent party wine that has earned a reputation as an everyman's aphrodisiac. The winery revels in party atmosphere, rock-'n'-roll music, and irreverence toward

traditional wine-tasting etiquette. Sometimes, wine tasting is accompanied by cheerful folks joining in chants laced with sexual innuendo; more than a few women have been known to doff their tops to demonstrate their preference for Hazlitt wines. See p. 336.

- **Kazoo Museum, Eden:** Who would go through the trouble of collecting wooden kazooes, gold kazooes, and liquor-bottle-shaped kazooes (celebrating the end of Prohibition)? People driven indoors by the brutal western New York winters,

that's who. This museum has the oddest collection of this peculiar little instrument and until recently was making even more. See p. 434.

- **Town of Mediums, Lily Dale:** This haven for those in touch with otherworldly spirits has been celebrating its odd collection of residents for nearly 130 years. You can stop by for a private reading any time of year, or come in the summer for daily events, along with meditation and healing services. See chapter 14.