

New York State



It comes as a surprise to many visitors that New York State is so many things: a historically rich hub of river transportation, a bucolic enclave of farms and antiques, and a treasure trove of natural beauty. With the iconic Hudson River Valley as its original life source, New York City presided at the helm of America's greatest revolution: the Industrial Age. And the city's pulsing cultural energy has rubbed off on the entire state: you can't throw an apple and not hit an interesting cinema, theatre, art gallery or bookstore. Now that industry has largely moved on, it's the state's environment, tourism, arts, agriculture that shine.

Beyond the borders of NYC is a living canvas of lush forests, sapphire lakes and brooding hills. This harmony of form and color has inspired generations of artists – from the Hudson River School of painters to Jackson Pollock, whose creations can be found in the state's museums and Gilded Age mansions. This inspiration is best enjoyed outside: in a Hudson Valley apple orchard, atop the High Peaks of the Adirondacks, or beside the roar of Niagara Falls.

When George Washington viewed these scenes in the 18th century, he predicted that New York State would be the seat of the empire. But would he have predicted the wineries of the Finger Lakes, the Lake Placid Olympic village or the great Saratoga racetrack? Probably not. After all, New York State may be well known, but she's got plenty of tricks up her sleeves.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watching 40 million gallons of water hurtling down at **Niagara Falls** (p204)
- Wowing your taste buds at the **Culinary Institute of America** (p137) in Hyde Park
- Living out your Great Gatsby-esque fantasies on Long Island's **Gold Coast** (p117)
- Screaming at the top of your lungs down the bobsled ride at Lake Placid's **Olympic Sports Complex** (p172)
- Betting the farm on horses at the **Saratoga Race Course** (p164) in Saratoga Springs
- Perfecting the art of poolside lounging at **Victoria Pool** (p161) in Saratoga Springs, the nation's oldest heated swimming pool
- Cruising the **wine trails** (p192) on the shores of Seneca, Keuka, and Cayuga Lakes
- Cooling off in the Finger Lakes with a double decker cone at **Not My Dad's Ice Cream** (p190) or the **Cayuga Creamery** (p193)



■ POPULATION: 19,541,500

■ AREA: 3,537,438 sq miles

HISTORY

From a riverbank along the Hudson, it's easy to imagine a New York of another era; when Amsterdam was the world financial center. When Manhattan itself was (by today's measure) a relatively small port and the skyline was dotted with tall buildings, some even reaching four or five stories. Picture masted ships sailing the wide river, which reminded German immigrants of their beloved Rhine, and muddy lanes cutting through small villages with stone fences, dairy farms and Victorian cottages. As the Dutch settled up the river, what was once farmland and the outskirts of civilization became the land of opulence, and extravagant mansions sprouted up – a reminder that fortunes could be made in this young nation. From then on, the rest of the state profited from New York City's burgeoning wealth, bringing factories to Syracuse, Buffalo and Rochester and government to Albany, while farming and smaller industries reigned elsewhere. Today, the industrial regions struggle to revitalize, while the bucolic Adirondacks, Finger Lakes and Thousand Islands area capitalize on their beauty by luring travelers from all over the world – and even New Yorkers out of their beloved city.

In the central part of the state, Civil Rights history and women's suffrage runs deep – Seneca Falls is the birthplace of the American women's rights movement. The area also played an important literary role – Mark Twain wrote some of his most infamous works in the region. Along the Hudson River Valley, the legacies of Gilded Age industrial tycoons like the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers exist alongside the gentler ghosts of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The Catskills will be forever changed by a certain music festival in 1969 that made the word 'Woodstock' synonymous with free love and rock 'n' roll. In the same way, Lake Placid will be forever associated with Winter Olympics pride. Looking at New York's history, a common theme emerges: this is one state that knows how to learn from the past while constantly reinventing itself.

LAND & CLIMATE

Rolling hills, verdant valleys, fertile soil, dramatic cliffs, vineyards, high peaks, low valleys, apple orchards and endless miles of lake, river, and ocean coastline. And with 20 million people, you'd think there wouldn't be room for

wildlife (think again). Whew. New York really does have it all.

While the Adirondacks' Lake Tear of the Clouds feeds the upper Hudson, the lower part of the river is actually a tidal estuary – so it contains more salt water than fresh water.

The entire state experiences four distinct seasons. Summers in the region are warm and muggy with temperatures soaring above 90°F, even in mountainous areas. Fall and spring are good times to visit, when humidity drops and temperatures are moderate. Autumn is particularly splendid when the myriad of trees put on a magnificent color show.

Winters are cold and snowy, especially in the mountains, although the snow does not fall there in as great a volume as it does in cities such as Buffalo and Syracuse, which are famous for a phenomenon known as 'lake effect snow.' And if you think those areas are cold, remember that the Adirondacks have nearly seven months of winter (just perfect for those winter sports competitors in Lake Placid.)

NATIONAL & STATE PARKS

For resources on national and state parks, contact the **New York State Parks office** (☎ 845-889-4100; www.nysparks.com). For \$65, the Empire Passport gives unlimited day-use vehicle entry into most of the parks.

The Hudson River Valley is home to several spectacular parks. The **Hudson Highlands State Park** (☎ 845-225-7207; Rte 9D, Beacon; ☼ dawn-dusk; Ⓟ \$8 for beach, free for hiking), a huge undeveloped preserve, has 25 miles of hiking trails, kayaking, fishing, a swimming beach and spectacular Hudson River views. Near Millbrook, **James Baird State Park** (☎ 845-452-1489; 122 Freedom Rd, Pleasant Valley; ☼ dawn-dusk) is a great day-use park that features an 18-hole golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones. **Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park** (☎ 845-225-7207; Rte 301, Carmel; ☼ dawn-dusk) has lake swimming, fishing, and camping. Nature trails include a portion of the Appalachian Trail.

The **Catskills region** (p143) includes the 1094-sq-mile **Catskill Park**, 40% of which is publicly owned and protected. The park includes the Catskill Forest Preserve where more than 200 miles of hiking trails meander. The **Catskill Mountains**, which are part of the Appalachian Range, are tallest are in the north – this area is home to downhill and cross-country skiing (p152). Both the Catskill Mountains and the older **Shawangunk Mountains**