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Five favorites on autumn visit to New York's Hudson Valley



Tauck's "The Hudson Valley" tours feature several notable lodgings, including two nights at Mohonk Mountain House. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

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Posted 8/2/2019 6:00 AM

An Adirondack chair proved a perfect perch for viewing fall colors reflected in aptly named Mirror Lake. Red, gold, orange and bronze leaves stood out against evergreens surrounding a lake so calm its surface was broken only by the wake of a passing canoe.

This upstate beauty spot became one highlight on a trip my husband and I made in and around New York's Hudson Valley. We had timed it well. Traveling in mid-October put us near the peak of autumn foliage for most of our 10-day journey from Montreal to New York City.

But leaf peeping was just a bonus to a history-rich itinerary with stops at FDR's Hyde Park, West Point, the 9/11 Memorial in Manhattan and the site of the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid. We were traveling with [Tauck](#), an award-winning tour operator in business since the 1920s. Its Hudson Valley itinerary is one of Tauck's partnerships with filmmaker Ken Burns featuring 7- to 10-minute vignettes by Burns and his collaborators shown on our motor coach between stops. We saw films on the Roosevelt family, the Adirondack Mountains, the building of the Brooklyn Bridge and activity on the U.S. border with Canada during Prohibition.



A pair of Adirondack chairs beckon at Mirror Lake just a short distance from Mirror Lake Inn Resort & Spa. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

And Tauck put us up in some legendary resorts: the Sagamore Hotel on Lake George, Mohonk Mountain House overlooking the Catskills and Mirror Lake Inn Resort & Spa in the heart of the Adirondacks. My one regret? I wish we could have stayed a week at each one.

But we pushed on. Looking back, these stops especially stand out in our memory:

Roosevelt's Hyde Park

A U.S. National Park ranger gave us the lowdown when we arrived at the Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park before turning us loose to tour two must-see sites.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born at Springwood, his mother's home and Eleanor's home, too, after the couple moved in with mama after their marriage. A family mansion modeled after an English country estate, it overlooks the Hudson River and became the summer White House during FDR's presidency. A guided tour includes separate bedrooms for Franklin and Eleanor, a music room, living room and library. I poked my head into a small space containing a pulley used by FDR to move between floors in his wheelchair. No elevator in those days. Both FDR and Eleanor are buried in the rose garden next to the home.

The FDR and Presidential Library & Museum, first presidential library in the U.S., contains an overwhelming number of artifacts, more than we could see in the few hours we had for a self-guided tour. Exhibits address the Depression, the New Deal, World War II, Roosevelt's childhood and the separate branches of the Roosevelt family tree on which FDR and Teddy Roosevelt perched. There's FDR's hobby horse, the leg braces he wore after stricken with polio, photos of his dog Fala and the 1936

Ford Phaeton he loved to drive with cigarette holder clenched in his teeth. Among the artifacts devoted to Eleanor are her engagement ring, a necklace adorned with tiger claws given to her by her father and the typewriter she used to write books and her magazine column.



One of the final stops on Tauck's "The Hudson Valley" tour takes guests on a walk around the National September 11 Memorial in New York City. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Manhattan highlights

Two nights in Manhattan gave us time to explore on our own, including snagging last-minute tickets to a Broadway show and a long walk through Central Park just beginning to display fall colors.

A guided tour took us to the Top of the Rock where we viewed the skyline from 70 floors up in Rockefeller Center. Our motor coach proceeded down to Lower Manhattan for a walk around the National September 11 Memorial. Tauck arranged for a former New York Police Department detective who was on duty when terrorists struck the World Trade Center to lead us. She talked about the chaos and horror of that day from her perspective and the challenges of the recovery effort. A gripping narrative.



The Protestant chapel at West Point is included in a tour of the military academy during Tauck's "The Hudson Valley" tour. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Military history at West Point

The U.S. Military Academy spreading above the Hudson at West Point goes back to the Revolutionary War as the oldest garrisoned army post in the United States. In his inauguration speech in 1801, Thomas Jefferson directed that it become a military academy to train soldiers and engineers. Our guide told us about men who left their mark here -- Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Jefferson Davis, Edgar Allan Poe, Douglas MacArthur, George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower and Buzz Aldrin, one of 18 astronauts trained here -- and the daily life of today's cadets, 20 percent of them women. After entertaining us with anecdotes of West Point traditions and athletics, he led us to the Gothic-styled Protestant chapel, one of several chapels on the grounds, for a look at the pews and pipe organ inside. We were on our own at the West Point Museum, dividing our time between the gift shop and exhibits displaying Napoleon's sword and Adolf Hitler's gold-plated pistol.

Olympic glory

At the Lake Placid Olympic Center, site of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Games, we toured the year-round training facility, shuddered at the acrophobic view from the top of the ski jump and mugged for the camera on the medal stand. Tauck arranged a ski-jumping demonstration by a local teenage athlete-in-training. He joined us at lunch as we peppered him with questions about the sport and the parents who taught him to ski shortly after he learned to walk. A Lake Placid resident has competed in every Winter Olympic Games, not bad for a town with a population of around 2,500. Motoring down Main Street, our guide pointed to the ice arena built for the 1980 Games where the U.S. hockey team beat the Soviets 4-3 in the "Miracle on Ice" before a crowd of 8,500 spectators and a TV audience of millions.



The view of Blue Mountain Lake from the Adirondack Experience is one of the beauty spots on Tauck's "The Hudson Valley" tour, especially in October when fall colors emerge. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Adirondacks ablaze

Just south of the Canadian border lies the largest protected nature area in the lower 48 states. Adirondack Park sprawls over more than six million acres of the Adirondack Mountains, some owned by the state of New York, the rest privately owned and protected as "The Forever Wild." We got our first taste at Ausable Chasm, a two-mile-long sandstone gorge in the Ausable River where waterfalls roared

over cliffs framed in fall colors. This "Grand Canyon of the East" has been a tourist draw since the 19th century.

We dug deeper into history and reveled in more autumn glory at the Adirondack Experience, an outdoor museum on one of the park's 10,000 lakes. We poked inside historic buildings -- a 1907 one-room schoolhouse, the cottage of a local landscape painter, a fire tower and a gazebo -- and took in exhibits on logging, boating, hunting camps and Adirondack art. But it was the terrace overlooking Blue Mountain Lake that kept drawing me back for another look. Autumn colors seemed to set the forest ablaze with trees tumbling down a hillside and framing the blue water. It was Oct. 14, the museum's last day of the season, and we counted ourselves lucky to be there with good weather and peak fall foliage.

- *Information for this article was gathered on a research trip sponsored by Tauck.*

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The Hudson Valley, a Tauck World Discovery tour

Tauck: (800) 788-7885 or tauck.com/

Dates: 10-day tours depart Montreal from Aug. 24 to Oct. 12, 2019, and Aug. 22 to Oct. 15, 2020

Price: In 2019, from \$5,290 to \$6,390 depending on date and group size; airfare additional

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