



We were on this exact spot,' said the 60-something-year-old man to his travelling companions. 'The stage was over that

way, and this is where we watched Jimi Hendrix, when he headlined at 9am on that Monday morning. Do you remember how great that was? And the rain...!' They all laughed as they stared wistfully off into the distance, seemingly lost in their memories.

I was standing amid the rolling fields of Yasgur's Farm in Bethel, a town in Upstate New York best known as the site of the world-famous Woodstock music festival – which, contrary to popular opinion, didn't take place in the village of Woodstock, 45 miles to the east, at all. The group of friends I'd got talking to were on a pilgrimage to celebrate the festival's 46th anniversary.

'There were certainly plenty who found the whole experience nothing but a muddy, disorganised debacle,' said John, one of the group, 'but for others, it was an adventure that changed their whole lives.'

It all sounded so inspiring that I wanted to be transported back in time to that summer of 1969, although hearing these first-hand stories seemed like the next best thing. If you don't happen to run into a group of Woodstock veteran storytellers, you can find out more at the Woodstock exhibit

inside the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts (bethelwoodscenter.org), built in 2002 to rejuvenate the area and celebrate the event.

My visit to Bethel was part of a two-week road trip along the majestic Hudson Valley, a vast and varied region in Upstate New York that skirts the Hudson River for 150 miles, from Yonkers on the northern tip of Manhattan to the town of Albany.

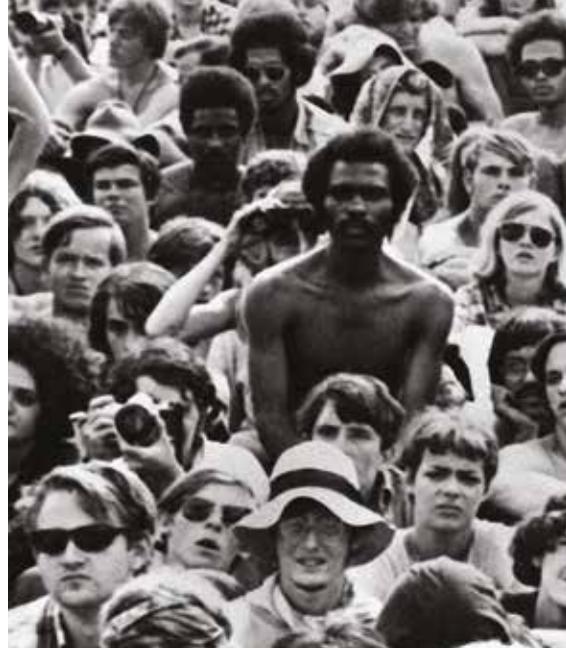
Our route would zig-zag from one side of the river to the other, taking in bohemian towns, historic estates, roadside diners, farm-to-table restaurants and hiking trails.

Driving north out of Manhattan on Route 9, just over a week earlier, it was barely 30 minutes before the city's skyscraper-crammed avenues and streets made way for a landscape that looked as though it had been plucked from a French hillside. It's not surprising that Washington Irving, the American author best known for the gothic tale *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, chose the rolling hills of Tarrytown as the setting for his home, Sunnyside. 'A beautiful spot,' Irving once said, 'capable of being made a little paradise.' A guided tour was the order of the day, before an obligatory trip to the Old Dutch Cemetery of Sleepy Hollow, said to be the haunt of a headless ghost – the inspiration for his famous short story and the Tim Burton movie starring Johnny Depp.

Irving isn't the only the only famous name ▶

TO THE VALLEY BELOW

Forty six years after the Woodstock festival, Ellie Seymour heads north from Manhattan on a two-week road trip along the Hudson Valley in Upstate New York, taking in bohemian towns, roadside diners, hiking trails – and dropping in on Yasgur's Farm



WE FILLED
UP ON
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SYRUP



associated with this place. Not far from Sunnyside, I stumbled upon the Union Church at Pocantico Hills – an unassuming village chapel along an ordinary suburban road, drawing the crowds for its beautiful stained-glass, designed by none other than two of the world’s most notable modern artists: Marc Chagall and Henri Matisse.

Prominent NYC restaurateur, Dan Barber, also fell for Pocantico Hills’ charms, choosing it as the location for the upstate outpost of his NYC restaurant, Blue Hill. Opened in 2004, Blue Hill at Stone Barns (bluehillfarm.com) consists of a restaurant, working farm and education centre set in 80 acres. It’s still going strong, attracting New Yorkers eager to escape the city and curious to try its \$218 grazing menu.

There’s also a great café serving up healthy salads made with produce grown onsite – it’s the perfect lunch stop.

Onwards, after a short stop at the fantastic Peekskill Brewery (peekskillbrewery.com), purveyors of beers with intriguing names – Jiggahops and Wakeup Call among them – we headed for Dia: Beacon (diaart.org). It’s almost impossible to convey the sheer scale of the place. Part of the Dia Art Foundation, this contemporary gallery occupies a gigantic 300,000 sq ft space in a former Nabisco box-printing factory on the banks of the Hudson. It’s enormous; a striking example of modernist architecture remodelled to house a mind-blowing collection of art from the 1960s. You could easily spend the best part of a day gazing at the exhibits, mooching around the gardens and bookshop, before enjoying a picnic by the river.

The Hudson Valley is also the setting for some of the country’s most fascinating historic homes, including Kykuit (pronounced ‘kigh-cut’), the crown jewel of historic mansions (hudsonvalley.org). This magnificent estate near Beacon was home to four generations of the Rockefeller family. A tour takes you through the

main rooms of the six-storey house, around the terraced gardens and their collection of 20th-century sculpture – including work by Henry Moore and Alexander Calder – down into the underground art galleries decorated with Picasso tapestries, and the coach barn with its collections of classic cars and horse-drawn carriages.

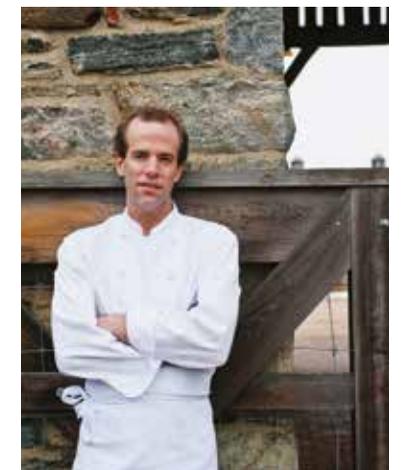
By contrast, the Springwood Estate (nps.gov) – the birthplace and lifelong home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, America’s 32nd president – looks positively humble, but is still stately by most people’s standards. Although what really makes this place special is the museum housed in the former presidential library, offering intricate detail on the life of FDR, his role in politics and the impact he had on modern-day America.

Impressive as these historic homes are, it’s important not to forget the centrepiece of this road trip: the river itself. The Walkway Over The Hudson is a 1.28-mile-long, 212ft-high elevated pedestrian bridge that crosses the river from Poughkeepsie to Highland. It offers the perfect opportunity to get a sense of the river’s size and ponder the journey made along it by English sea explorer Henry Hudson, as he went in search of the Northwest Passage.

All curious travellers need sustenance, which is why rural America is littered with roadside eateries, none better than the highly recommended Eveready Diner (theevereadydiner.com) in the town of Hyde Park, just north of Poughkeepsie, where we filled up on delicious home-made pancakes smothered in maple syrup. If you prefer a higher class of gastronomy, lunch at the vast red-brick Culinary Institute of America is a more lavish affair. Opened in 1946 as a college for Second World War veterans, students from around the world pay astronomical amounts of money to study classic French cookery, which visitors can sample at the well-respected Bocus Restaurant (bocuserestaurant.com).

In nearby Hudson, an artistic town and popular relocation option for New Yorkers looking for a more relaxed way of life, it’s easy to spend an enjoyable couple of hours ambling along Warren Street. This pretty road ►

Previous page The Walkway Over The Hudson, opened as a railway bridge in 1888 and restored as a pedestrian bridge in 2009 **This page, clockwise from top left** The 1969 Woodstock festival, ‘three days of peace & music’; pancakes and maple syrup; the Catskill State Park; co-owner of Blue Hill restaurants, Dan Barber; Phillipsburg Manor at Sleepy Hollow; an installation at the Dia: Beacon art gallery





I GAZED ACROSS THE FIELDS, IMAGINING IT WAS 1969



is lined with delightful Victorian architecture and dozens of fascinating antique showrooms selling mid-century furniture, and is also the location of the intriguing Hudson Opera House (hudsonoperahouse.org). Originally built in 1855 as the City Hall, it's now a lively cultural centre.

Across the river, Woodstock is a relaxed, laid-back town that, not surprisingly, retains the spirit of the festival. Framed by the Catskills, it's a hiker's paradise surrounded by trailheads, many of which are accessible from town. So, after breakfast at the popular Garden Café (thegardencafewoodstock.com), a 2.5-mile route up Overlook Mountain leads past a Buddhist monastery and a creepy derelict hotel up to a fire tower, which affords views across to the Catskills.

To really get into the heart of the Catskill State Park (stateparks.com), though, we drove 40 miles south-west to our final destination, Livingston Manor, perfectly located for some serious trekking. Here, the staff at Morgan Outdoors shop pointed us in the direction of one of their favourite spots in the Willowemoc Wild Forest, the Frick Pond trail, near Yasgur's Farm. I stood gazing across the rolling fields, reflecting on this sparsely populated region – so rich in history, natural beauty and culture – and imagining it was 1969 and Hendrix was about to start playing...

Ellie Seymour stayed at the Mount Beacon Bed & Breakfast (mtbeaconbedandbreakfast.com), The Roosevelt Inn of Hyde Park (rooseveltinnofhydepark.com), Woodstock Country Inn (woodstockcountryinn.com), The Arnold House, Livingston Manor (thearnoldhouse.com) and the Country Squire B&B (countryquireny.com).

From top The Kykuit Estate near Beacon, home to four generations of the Rockefeller family; the retro Eveready Diner on Route 9, just north of Poughkeepsie

VITAL STATISTICS

WHEN TO GO

Summers can be hot and bring a lot of people, keen to escape the city, to the Hudson Valley. The best times for fewer cars and cooler temperatures are April – mid-June, and then for the leaf-peeping season from mid-September to the end of October. Halloween is a major event, especially in Sleepy Hollow, which hosts a 5000-strong jack o'lantern procession, as well as celebrations of Washington Irving's short story. New York State boasts more ski areas than any other state, making it a popular winter sports destination.

FOOD AND DRINK

Agriculture is the driving force of a region that supports a surprisingly wide variety of crops,

many of which are grown organically.

There's also a strong focus on locally sourced produce and seasonal eating. Visitors have plenty of opportunity to enjoy the Hudson Valley's fresh produce and are invited to pick their own, buy it from farm stands, or visit a farmers' market. The region also encourages a farm-to-table philosophy, also promoted in many of the area's restaurants.

NEED TO KNOW

UK residents need a valid passport and must obtain an ESTA visa, which can be bought online for around \$14 (esta-registration.co.uk). The Hudson Valley is easily navigable by car along Interstate 87, west of the river, and Highway 9 to the east.

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