



Places to visit for a weekend, a week, or more...

Upstate New York

English Now!

New York City is one of the best-known and most visited cities in the United States. It is exciting, vibrant, truly fantastic, and everyone should try to visit it while they are in the U.S. However, it is only a small corner of the equally fabulous, and much less visited “Upstate New York.” New York is the third most populated state in the country, and while almost half of its people live in or near New York City, the state itself is much bigger than Ireland and many other countries. Most importantly, New York is scenically spectacular, historically fascinating, a sports lover’s paradise, and well worth exploring.

History: When the French and Dutch traders first explored central New York State, they encountered **the Iroquois Nation**, a powerful coalition of Native American Indian tribes, which included the Mohawks, the Mohicans, the Senecas, and the Cayugas. They were well organized and non-welcoming, and they prevented the Europeans from settling in Upstate New York for nearly two centuries after their first contact, until they were decimated by disease and war. Today, Native Americans still live in the region, but now they live mostly on reservations. Many reservations, such as the **Seneca Iroquois National Museum** in Salamanca, NY, have excellent museums and welcome visitors.

Henry Hudson was the first European to explore the inland region of North America while looking for Asia. He sailed up what now is known as the Hudson River. In the early 1600’s, Dutch fur traders built several forts at the navigable end of the river. The forts became villages, then the first officially chartered English city in 1686, and eventually the capital of New York State in 1797 following the American Revolutionary War. **Albany** was a center of trade and transportation for the next two centuries. It was the original eastern terminal of the Erie Canal, a canal which connected the East Coast to the Great Lakes. It was also the home of some of the earliest railroad systems in the world. Both the Erie Canal and the railroads fostered the westward movement of settlers and trade into the Midwest.

There are many museums of early American history in Albany. Also on the Hudson River, 50 miles north of NYC, is the **Military Academy at West Point**. This institution was established by Thomas Jefferson in 1802 to prepare cadets to become US Army officers. It is now a highly competitive institution, in part because its tuition is fully funded by the Army, in exchange for active duty service in the military after graduating. West Point is a popular tourist destination with the oldest museum in the U.S. Army.

Western New York State: The Erie Canal was constructed mostly by Scotch and Irish immigrants over a period of nine years and was completed in 1825. It extends 363 miles across the state, from Albany to Buffalo and Lake Erie. When it was completed it enabled the movement of people and trade westward by large boats to Chicago and the Midwest, or towards the south across New York State via the Finger Lakes. **The Finger Lakes** are a series of long, narrow lakes that were gouged out by receding glaciers millions of years ago. The lakes are top tourist destinations, offering breath-taking scenery as well as multiple recreational opportunities such as skiing, sailing, swimming and rock climbing. Western New York is also rich in historic sites, particularly as the birthplaces of reform and utopian movements such as the **Underground Railway** which helped runaway slaves escape to Canada; **Seneca Falls**, the birthplace of the Women's Suffrage (right to vote) Movement; and **Palmyra**, where Joseph Smith discovered the stone tablets and founded the Mormon Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Ithaca, a city at the base of Cayuga Lake is a major educational center in central New York. Cornell University, the first coeducational Ivy League university, was founded in Ithaca in 1870, and Ithaca College, originally a Conservatory of Music was established in 1892. Before the movie industry moved to Hollywood, the earliest silent movies were produced in Ithaca, chosen by the filmmakers for its spectacular natural scenery.

Further to the west, **Chautauqua** is a summer resort for adults. The center sponsors performances and educational programs in the arts, education, religion, dance and music. It was founded in 1874 to spread culture beyond the east coast, and many sister institutions were subsequently established throughout the Midwest. With the introduction of television and the internet, most of these educational resorts are no longer functioning, but the New York State Chautauqua still attracts thousands of students and visitors every summer who train there and enjoy the cultural offerings. Former President Teddy Roosevelt reputedly said that Chautauqua is "the most American thing in America."

Northern New York State is separated from Canada by Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. **Niagara Falls** is the collective name for three waterfalls between the two lakes, on the U.S.-Canadian border near the city of **Buffalo**. Niagara Falls is a famous destination for travelers. This waterfall has the highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world. It is a favorite honeymoon destination, famous for its beauty and its valuable source of hydroelectric power.

The Thousand Islands, an archipelago of 1,864 islands, are located within a 50-mile stretch on the US-Canadian border. These became the sites of summer homes for wealthy families from New York City, Chicago, Pittsburgh and other cities in the U.S. and Canada, who built lavish homes and even castles on these islands in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Several are open to the public, notably Singer Castle, and the 120-room Boldt Castle on Heart Island. The Thousand Islands are also prime recreational areas for boating, beach and shipwreck diving.

The Adirondack State Park in the northeast of New York State is the largest protected natural area in the continental United States. Located in the Adirondack Mountains it comprises one quarter of the state. As well as being a paradise for campers, hikers, kayakers and nature lovers, it hosts world class winter sports with outstanding ski resorts and ice skating rinks, as well as opportunities to go tobogganing or dog-sledding.

There are so many other places that visitors enjoy in New York State, too many to include here. For sports fans, one final tourist visit might be to **Cooperstown**, the “birthplace of Baseball” and the home of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. It was also the home of James Fennimore Cooper, America’s first novelist, who is best known for “The Last of the Mohicans”. Located on Lake Otsego in the center of the state, Cooperstown is a one-stoplight town with good museums celebrating small town life in America.

In short, we love New York (State)! We hope you make time to visit it.

Getting There. Upstate New York is a half a day drive from the Washington, D.C. area. All of the above recommended cities and towns are accessible by car, or you can travel by Amtrak train or by bus (consider Albany as a destination). However, once you are in Upstate New York you will need to get around by car, so you should probably consider driving. You can also fly to Albany, Rochester, or Buffalo, but it would not save you much time. It’s expensive and you won’t be able to make stops along the way.

Where to Stay. If possible we recommend that you consider staying in “bed and breakfast” inns as you travel across Upstate New York. Small cities and small towns have many such inns, and you can meet local people as you travel in these types of establishments. To find “B&Bs”, search “B&B” and the city where you’d like to stay on the internet. Airbnb.com may be a good option for finding a place to stay as well, but most Airbnb accommodations don’t include breakfast with your “host”! If you want to stay in a hotel, one mid-priced favorite of travelers is Hampton Inn. Rooms with two double beds usually cost around \$125-150/night and include breakfast. These hotels have pools too.

For More Information. Many thanks go to Barbara Lewis, who loves Upstate New York, for these recommendations! Please feel free to talk to Barbara, Paul, or Kirstie if you’re considering a trip to the region. Also, please know if you travel there and how it goes. We would love to hear about special places you discover!