

# The Shawangunk Mountains Region of New York State



...it's beautiful here.





## A new and beautiful region.

We live in a region of mountains, forests, farms, rivers and streams, small hamlets and rolling, still-unspoiled countryside, alive with nature and, yes, it is beautiful here.

Pronounced SHON-gum, the region is outlined by the Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway, officially designated a New York State Scenic Byway by the state legislature and the governor in the fall of 2006. An alternate route through Gardiner was added in the fall of 2009.

The now 88-mile byway encircles the northern Shawangunk Mountains and travels through the Rondout and Wallkill valleys, linking communities that have a common relationship to the northern Shawangunks and forming a distinct region of the state with its own special character.

The state awarded designation based on the significance of the scenic, natural, historic and recreational resources in the region and the merit of the corridor management plan we developed (available at [www.mtnscenicbyway.org](http://www.mtnscenicbyway.org)).

The route of the byway, the outline of the region and key places of interest are shown on the map

on pages 12-13. In 2010 we'll have signs identifying the route and destination markers.

During the six years of planning the byway, our nine towns and two villages came to realize that we have a lot in common and that much can be achieved by working together. So we created an intermunicipal partnership to implement our corridor management plan, to help improve our transportation systems, and to advance our mutual goal of gaining economic growth through tourism while helping to preserve the important resources of our region.

We invite you and your family to explore beyond your home grounds, to get to know the "other" valley and to experience the richness and character of the entire Shawangunk Mountains Region.

You'll find that it is not only beautiful here, it is beautiful all over here.

*The Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership of the towns of Crawford, Gardiner, Marbletown, Montgomery, New Paltz, Rochester, Rosendale, Shawangunk, Wawarsing and the villages of Ellenville and New Paltz is the management organization for the Shawangunk Mountain Scenic Byway*  
*Al Wegener, Executive Director, [alabyway@gmail.com](mailto:alabyway@gmail.com)*







Minnewaska State Park Preserve provides 5,000 visitors a weekend on average with access to more than 21,000 acres for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and for some of the most dramatic views in all of the State.



The Mohonk Preserve is the largest non-profit nature preserve in the State, with 6,000 acres in the mountains. The preserve hosts over 150,000 visitors a year and follows a land management program based on supporting natural processes.



Photo provided by Cara Lee, Nature Conservancy

Sam’s Point Preserve is home to one of the world’s best examples of ridgetop dwarf pine barrens. Info is available at their new visitor center.



Mohonk Mountain House celebrates its 140th anniversary this year and is one of America’s oldest family-owned resorts. With 2,200 acres, the Mountain House offers visitors access to 85 miles of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and horseback riding.

# The northern Shawangunk Mountains

The mountains we love stretch 21 miles across the region, with stark white, sharp-edged cliffs visible for miles around, a major chestnut-oak forest, five clear, glacier-formed lakes and many clean and healthy streams, some plunging off the edge of cliffs as powerful waterfalls.

Shaped by a geologic history dating back 465 million years, the Shawangunks are part of the Appalachian foldbelt and feature more dramatic cliffs than the younger Catskills and more vistas. So you’re able to enjoy many clear views, even on a short hike, and to look out for miles across the still-beautiful countryside all around the mountains.

The northern Shawangunks are “one of the highest priority areas for biodiversity conservation in the northeastern United States,” says the NYS Open Space Plan.

That’s because here in some 60,000 acres are 35 natural communities, of which several are globally rare. Over 50 species of mammals, more than 200 species of birds and over 900 species of flowering plants.

It’s an area that’s alive with nature.

And it’s accessible. With over 250 miles of trails and carriage roads, our preserves and the Mountain House make it possible for people to experience the beauty of the mountains.

So, well over 600,000 visitors annually come here for hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, horseback riding, nature study and just to be out in nature and breathe in clean healthy air.

For all the reasons above, the northern Shawangunks are the centerpiece of the byway and the region.





Adult Turkey Vulture perched.

*Photo by Jake Dingle*

## Of hawks, falcons, eagles and vultures.

Tens of thousands of migrating raptors hitch a ride over the Shawangunk Mountains every fall as they journey to winter habitats in Central and South America.

These birds of prey glide almost effortlessly, riding the deflective updraft and thermals, soaring upwards until they reach the top and then gliding off to the next one, conserving energy along the same route their ancestors took thousands of years ago.

The route links the Shawangunks with the Kittatinny Mountains in New Jersey and the Blue Ridge Mountains, stretching 250 miles from Rosendale in our region to Harrisburg, Pa. Our section is part of the larger northern Appalachian raptor migration flyway.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar is presently considering a petition by over 200 individuals and organizations to recognize the migration route by official designation as the Kittatinny-Shawangunk National Raptor Migration Corridor. More information is available at [www.raptorcorridor.org](http://www.raptorcorridor.org).



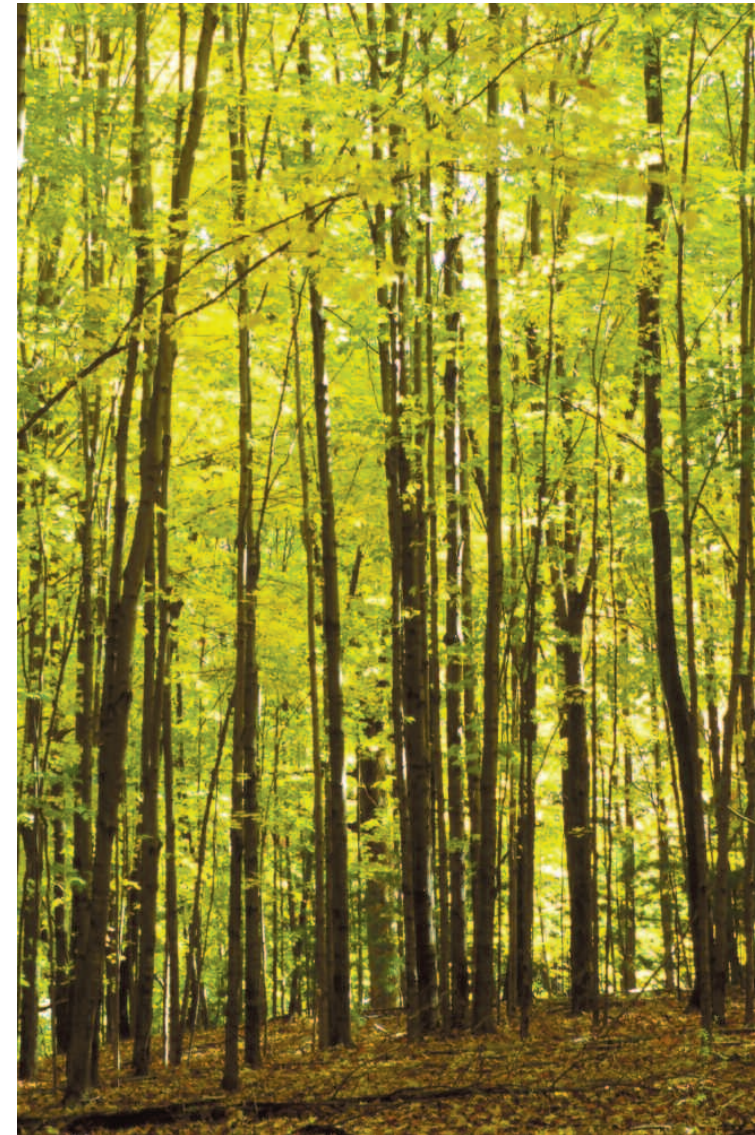
Red-tailed Hawk soaring on deflective updraft.

*Photo courtesy Raptor Corridor Project*



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) migrates during the daytime, has a wingspan of up to eight feet and may live for 30 years.

*Photo by Lynda Keyes*



Sugar maples along Lundy Road show off their fall colors.

## The Vernoooy Kill State Forest

This is a beautiful 3,688-acre new state forest that is the largest parcel of an important natural corridor linking the Shawangunks to the Catskills and providing the connections vital for the movement of wide-ranging species.

The forest will be managed by NYSDEC concurrently with the adjoining Sundown Wild Forest of the Catskill Forest Preserve. The management plan is expected to be completed shortly.

For hikers, Vernoooy has the potential to accommodate a reroute of the Long Path (perhaps adjacent to the Vernoooy Kill) that would eliminate miles of road hiking.

In addition to hiking, the plan will provide for mountain biking, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, trapping, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and camping. This expands the choice of outdoor activities available in the Shawangunk Mountains Region. But, as on other State lands, ATV and off-road vehicles will not be permitted.

Access to Vernoooy is from the Byway along Route 209 at Lundy Road in the hamlet of Wawarsing.



The Vernoooy Kill is the largest undammed tributary of the Rondout Creek.





The Rondout Valley and Catskills from a scenic overlook on Route 52 in Wawarsing.



Farmland along Rt 209 in Kerhonkson offers awesome views of the Shawangunks.



Stone Ridge Library (1770) Main Street Historic District in Stone Ridge.



Corn along Lucas Turnpike growing in the Rondout floodplain.



Old barn in the Rest Plaus Historic District in Marbletown.



First cutting hay along Route 209 in Kerhonkson.

# The Rondout Valley

Farmland dominates the Rondout Valley, with sweet corn and other vegetables growing in the rich floodplain soils where the Esopus people planted maize hundreds of years ago.

On the side hills, pastureland and hayfields cleared in colonial times continue to sustain our beef, dairy and horses.

Beyond, the Shawangunks and foothills of the Catskills dominate the landscape with dense forests that, not too long ago, provided the forest products and millstones taken by the D&H Canal to the Hudson River and then to New York City markets.

History like this is easy to experience in the Rondout Valley. With our six historic districts and 10 historic sites with public access that are listed on the National Register, visitors can get a good feeling for what it was like to be here years ago.

And you can read the history of the entire Shawangunk Mountains Region written by our historian Wendy Harris at [www.mtnscenicbyway.org](http://www.mtnscenicbyway.org) on the “Partnership” tab.

Or you can simply enjoy reading the clues to this history that you’ll see in the countryside as you travel throughout the Rondout Valley.



Historic D&H Canal lock in High Falls.





The Kiernan Farm off Bruynswick Road in Gardiner is a leader in grass-fed beef.



The Wallkill River has a greater diversity of fish than any other Hudson River tributary.



East of Pine Bush along Rt 52 in Orange County.



Horses are the key to agriculture in our southern towns.



Peach blossoms off Rt 208 with Shawangunks in background.

# The Wallkill Valley

Some folks are surprised that the byway and the region reach south to the towns of Crawford and Montgomery. But some great views of the Shawangunks are seen looking beyond the horse farms along Route 302 going north into Pine Bush and then east along Route 52, past the dairy farms.

That’s because the views of the mountains depend greatly on the entire viewshed. When the foreground is open land that stretches out for miles, that is beautiful. And this is what you see all through the Wallkill Valley.

Where we don’t have these views we have character, shaped by the distinctiveness of each of our communities.

New Paltz, with the influence of the Thruway exit, SUNY New Paltz, Historic Huguenot Street, and its many stores, shops, restaurants. Pine Bush in Crawford, one of the fastest-growing places in Orange County. Wallkill, with its shops and stores amid victorian-style homes, still reflects its Borden dairy heritage. Gardiner, closest to the ridge, now adding sidewalks and revitalizing the hamlet while expanding the grass-fed beef belt in the town.

Here is a valley with places that are interesting to explore while, all around you, you’re able to enjoy a countryside that is simply beautiful.



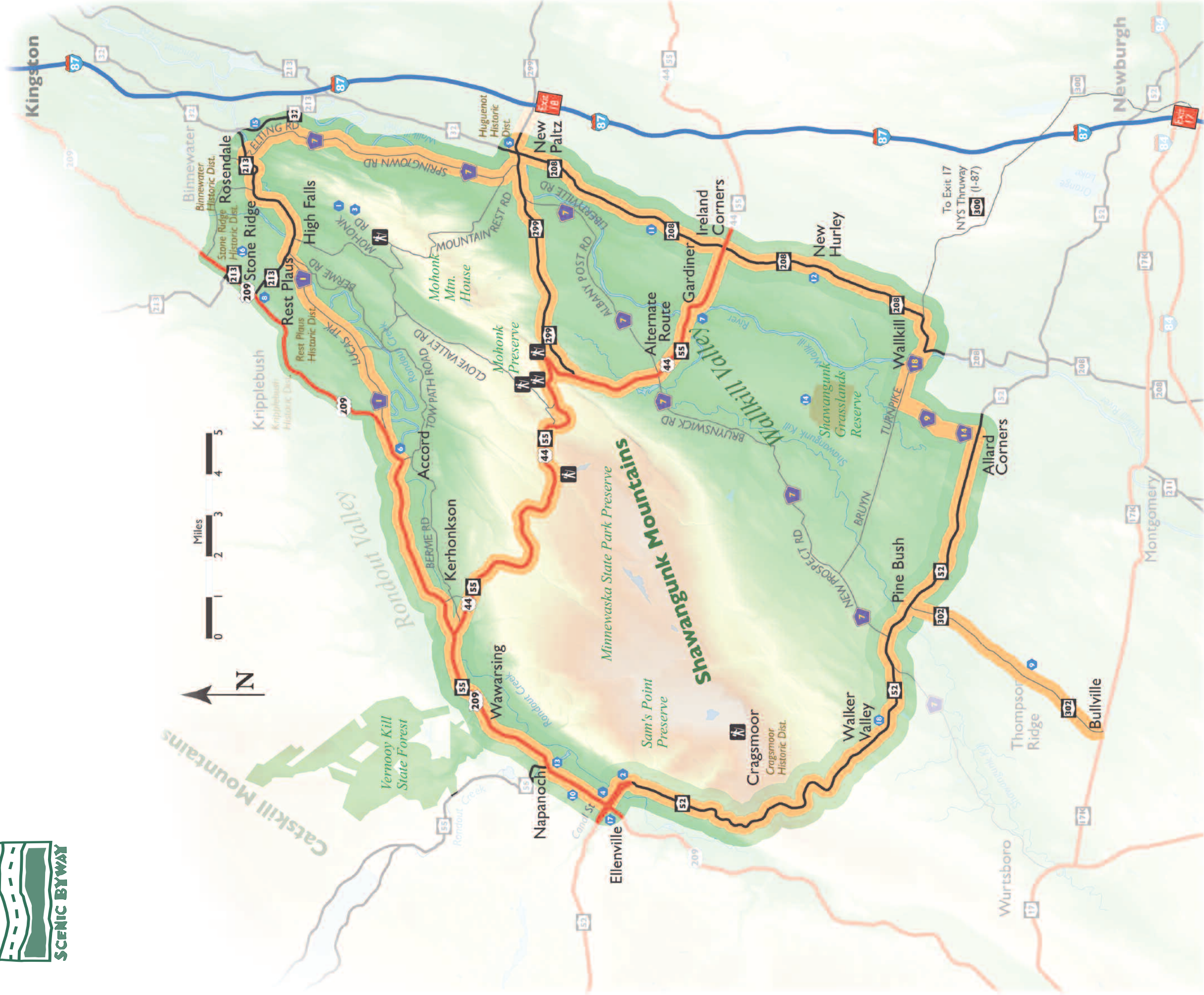
Our shops offer good old-fashioned, helpful personal service.





# The Shawangunk Mountains Region

of the towns of Crawford, Gardiner, Marletown, Montgomery, New Paltz, Rochester, Rosendale, Shawangunk, Wawarsing and the villages of Ellenville and New Paltz.



## Legend

- Scenic Byway
- Scenic Byway Region
- Trail Heads

## Historic Sites with Public Access

- |   |                                |                                   |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 D&H Canal Museum                                    | 7 Gardiner School              | 14 Reformed Church of Shawangunk  |
| 2 D&H Canal Ticket Office                             | 8 Hasbrouck House              | 15 Rosendale Library              |
| 3 Depuy Canal House                                   | 9 Hopewell Presbyterian Church | 16 Stone Ridge Library            |
| 4 Ellenville Village Square & PO                      | 10 Hunt Memorial Building      | 17 Terwilliger House Museum       |
| 5 Elting Library                                      | 11 Kettleborough Schoolhouse   | 18 Walker Valley Methodist Church |
| 6 Friends of Historic Rochester Museum & Meeting Room | 12 New Hurley Reformed Church  |                                   |
|   | 13 O&W Railroad Station        |                                   |





Wallkill Valley Rail Trail passes shops of the Water Street Market in the village of New Paltz.



Accord-Kerhonkson Rail Trail parallels the old canal.

## 44.2 miles of rail and canal trails.

Our two systems of trails offer easy-going exercise and sightseeing across our rural countryside, bringing you right into our hamlets, just like riding the train or canalboat in the 1800s.

One system is along the old Wallkill Valley Railroad bed and “starts” in the south at the 3.5-mile newly-paved Wallkill-Walden Rail Trail.

A short way N is the 12.2-mile Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, running from the southern Gardiner town line to the New Paltz/Rosendale line.

The trail continues for about 3.5 miles as the Rosendale Rail Trail until it ends atop the Rosendale trestle over the Rondout Creek.

Plans are advancing to continue the trail another 3.1 miles in Rosendale across the trestle, past Joppenburgh Mountain, and into the Binnewater Lakes region.



Newly-paved Wallkill-Walden Rail Trail.



Enjoying a walk and a chat on the trail in Marbletown.



Steel trestle bridge 900 feet long and Joppenburgh Mountain in Rosendale.

The Rondout Valley system is made up of the old Delaware & Hudson Canal towpath and the Ontario & Western Railway bed.

The trail “starts” in the south at the old Canal Ticket Office on Berme Rd in Ellenville and goes N along the berm about 2 miles to Napanoch.

The town of Wawarsing now has funding for the next 4.2 miles of trail and expects to complete it in 2011.

From Kerhonkson the trail continues 4.7 miles in Rochester to Accord.

And then another 10 miles in Marbletown.

You can add to these systems the 1-mile out and back of the Five Locks Walk in High Falls. Follow that with a visit to the D&H Canal Museum and you’ll almost smell the mules ... almost.

Our sincere thanks to our volunteers who give their time to make all these trails so enjoyable and worthwhile for everyone.



and how about . . .



Gardiner's first Cupcake Festival was such a success, they'll have to bake a lot more next year.



Climbing Mountain Rest Road from High Falls is a long up.



The Ranch in Gardiner is one of the most popular and safest skydiving dropzones in the U.S.



Canoeing the Wallkill River at a leisurely pace.



*Photo by Chad Wildman*  
The mountain above Rt 52 is the "Hang Gliding Capital of the Northeast" with a duration record of 11-1/2 hours.



*Photo courtesy Mohonk Mountain House*

With seven golf courses in the region, parties can get on without a long wait.



The Rosendale Street Festival is a happy event and this year, with 74 bands, attracted about 20,000 people.



*Photo courtesy Mohonk Mountain House*

Horseback riding, as here at the Mountain House, is popular throughout the region and provides a good market for hay.



Flyfishing the Rondout Creek but can't tell you where.





Photo by Marcus Guiliano



Photo courtesy MMH



## Adventures in dining.

Across the Hudson in Hyde Park is the world-famous Culinary Institute of America.

When some CIA students graduate they come here to the Shawangunks. Because this is a great place to live and work. Try something new. Maybe open a restaurant. As you'd expect, this has influenced the preparation of the food we serve here.

Another influence is the availability of a variety of fresh, locally-grown ingredients. Our chefs will tell you that this grown-here freshness adds greatly to the taste and nutrition of the dinners they prepare. And so menus are designed around the seasonal availability of these ingredients.

Sure, to get to some of these restaurants, you may need to travel a bit.

But, hey, it's beautiful here.





. . . and art is all over the place.







At the Lake Mohonk National Historic Landmark, the Mohonk Mountain House, built in 1869, is a grand 265-room Victorian Castle amid thousands of acres of forests and trails.



Huguenot Street National Historic Landmark District features seven unique stone houses dating to the early 1700's in their original village setting.



Mother's Tea at the Abraham Hasbrouck House (1694) on Huguenot Street.



*Photo courtesy Napanoch Railroad Museum*

The O&W depot in Napanoch, built in 1902, has been restored as a museum, representing the railroad and its relationship to the region.



D&H Canal Museum in High Falls presents the 108-mile man-made waterway parallel to the Rondout Creek used from 1828-98.

## Our history explains a lot about the region.

It goes back to when the Esopus people traveled back and forth over the ridge between the two rivers that give the Wallkill and Rondout Valleys their names.

In the mid-1600s Europeans moved down the rivers into both valleys from Kingston and you'll see evidence of this throughout the region in Dutch-style houses built of native stone.

By the early 18th century, the farms and villages had transformed the land and a diversified agriculture flourished here, helped by the many waterways that furnished hydropower for mills.

The Rondout Valley entered the industrializing world of the 19th century with the completion of the Delaware & Hudson Canal in 1828. Built to carry anthracite coal from Pennsylvania to NYC, the canal opened markets for forest- and mountain-related products, like lumber, charcoal, shingles, barrel-hoops and millstones.

Limestone beds discovered in the building of the canal gave rise to the hydraulic cement industry which in the mid-1800s accounted for nearly half of the natural cement produced in the U.S.

The railroads followed in the late 1800's, favoring dairying and fruit growing. Milk shipped in the afternoon was on kitchen tables in NYC the next morning.

Railroads also coincided with the early resorts for summer guests to enjoy the beauty of the Shawangunks and, in the Ellenville-Wawarsing area, also of the Catskills.

The development of good roads and the popularity of the automobile changed all this. From 1957, with the Thruway and cheap gas, folks were able to drive long distances for recreation and the enjoyment of nature.

Now that too is changing.

For more information, [www.mtntscenicbyway.org/history](http://www.mtntscenicbyway.org/history)





Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Gardiner.

. . .yes, it is beautiful here.

And this beauty is accessible. But, of course, you need more details than we've given you here about where to go ... when ... and how to get there.

That's why the companion piece to this brochure is our pride-and-joy website at [www.mtnscenicbyway.org](http://www.mtnscenicbyway.org).

There you'll find maps and descriptions of the loops that cut the 88-mile scenic byway into reasonable chunks. And details of our natural, historic and recreational resources as well as our guest regional artist gallery.

Since this is our first year, your comments and suggestions are especially important. And let us know if you'd like to help. Please e-mail Al Wegener, our executive director, at: [alabyway@gmail.com](mailto:alabyway@gmail.com)

Written by Al Wegener. Photos by Al and Linda Engler of Ad Essentials or as credited. Art direction by Ad Essentials in Gardiner at [www.adessentialsonline.com](http://www.adessentialsonline.com)

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