

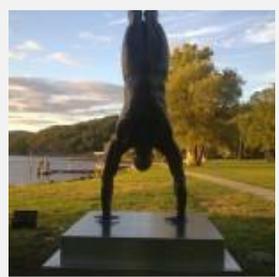


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THINGS TO DO IN PEEKSKILL, NY

BY JACLYN EINIS



You want views. Nature. Culture. History. Some good eats and a bit of shopping wouldn't hurt, either. And you'd rather not travel more than an hour from the city. Some may call your getaway ambitions high maintenance. You call them discerning. And with Peekskill sitting pretty just over 40 miles from Grand Central on Metro North's Hudson line, you can also call them realistic.

A once-booming hub for iron stove and plow production, Peekskill is back on the rise from its post-industrial slump. Home to the original CRAYOLA factory, the Hudson Riverside town is now home to a growing artist population. And today, residents see warmth generated by more modern means: Indian Point, a nuclear power plant station that produces up to 30 percent of the electricity used in New York City and Westchester County.

While Indian Point is technically just south of Peekskill, in Buchanan, its looming presence is hard to ignore from across the water. That said, it's far from a sticking point—and makes for a striking man-to-nature view for the photographers in the group. And from the right angle, you can convince yourself—or at least your Instagram followers—it's not there at all.

With an intriguing mix of rural, small-town and not-completely-polished urban charm, Peekskill's the 5.5 square miles you never knew had it all. Spend a weekend—or even a day—around town, and you can have your homemade (cheese)cake, and eat like a post-hike champ, too.

Arts

Peekskill has been actively vying for the hearts, and homes, of artists since the late 1980's, building coop [Peekskill Art Lofts](#) in 2002 to encourage this revitalization. They haven't gotten all of Bushwick to migrate just yet, but the town's art scene is nothing short of flourishing.

The [Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art](#) curates noteworthy exhibitions of international works. The museum—an open space with a second floor mezzanine—is at the center of the fifth [Peekskill Project](#). Running through July 2013, the festival features an impressive array of works from over 120 emerging and established artists currently living and working in Peekskill, the Hudson Valley and the Greater New York City region. HVCCA is also host to free, family-friendly workshops once a month, often hosted by an artist on display (check the site's event listings for upcoming programs).

The Peekskill Project extends throughout the towns green spaces, the [Field Library](#), and other [art venues](#), including the top floor of the [Paramount Center for the Arts](#). Originally built as a 1500-seat movie palace by Publix Pictures, a subsidiary of Paramount Pictures, the Peekskill Paramount Theatre first opened in 1930. More recently operating as a multidisciplinary center for the arts, the performance venue has been on hiatus since last fall, but will soon reopen its doors under [new management](#).

The few blocks around the Paramount, in the Downtown Historic District, are packed with art for those willing to pop, or ask, around: the



Images, clockwise from top left:

- Carole A. Feuerman, "The Golden Mean," 2012
- Ken Vallario, "Knight of Resignation," 2013 & "The Singularity," 2010
- Geoff Feder, "Harlem River Wolfpack," 2011
- Greg Haberny, "In Case of Emergency, Break Everything," 2012
- Leon Reid IV, "Pedestrian Shuffle," 2011

artists [Brown Street Studios](#) are open by appointment, the [BeanRunner Café](#) and [The Peekskill Coffee House](#) hosts rotating exhibits of local artists, the [Flat Iron Gallery](#) represents over 100 artists across fine art, jewelry, and gifts. You can tour all of the above and more during [Open Studios Weekend](#) (June 1-2, 2013).

And while the days of Binney and Smith Company's CRAYOLA factory may be gone (the building is now Peekskill Chemical Works), a local hat factory remains a center of craft. [The Hat Factory](#) is a frequent host of art exhibitions, and the home to a diverse group of artist tenants and [Peekskill Clay Studios](#), a center for clay education and membership-based workspace.

History

Peekskill is [rich in history](#), from its role in the Revolutionary War, right down to its name. In the mid-17th century, Dutch trader Jan Peeck made the first recorded contact with the Lenape of the area's native tribal people, then known as the "Sachoes." Europeans began settling present-day Peekskill—a combination of Peeck and "kil" or "kill," Dutch for "stream"—in the early 1700s.

Dig into the local history, at the [Peekskill Museum](#), the former home of the Herrick family. Seven large rooms house local relics, from reminders of manufacturers like [Fleischmann's Yeast](#), to old maps and a 1936 soapbox racer.

Look out for the [Lincoln Depot Museum](#), slated to open Labor Day, 2013. The museum will explore and commemorate President Abraham Lincoln's relationship to New York, focusing on his stop in Peekskill on his inaugural train ride in 1861.

Indian Point may actually take on a majestic, Emerald City-like air, once you realize you're in Oz. So the story goes, when a 12-year-old Frank Baum commenced his two years at Peekskill Military Academy, he arrived by steamboat on the Hudson. He asked for directions by the dock and was told to "Follow the yellow brick road." That yellow brick road, the alleged inspiration for Dorothy's path, still stands by the water. Skip down what little remains of the bricks to find your way to [Dylan's Wine Cellar](#).

Shopping

You'll also find history lining the shelves of many Peekskill shops. [Ford Piano](#) has been rebuilding and restoring pianos for 116 years. Stop by the company's factory/showroom to see their work in progress. [Coop](#) stocks a sweet mix of charming gifts and antiques. Get lost in an eclectic collection of used books and vinyl at [Bruised Apple](#) (Bargain Bonus: There's a bookshelf of \$1 books, boxes of \$1 records, and 50-cent postcards fashioned from raunchy paperback covers). Thrifters may want to time their visit between April and November, when the [Attic Treasures Flea Market](#) takes place every Sunday.

Food & Drink

Bring your appetite. With a solid and growing list of seasonal-minded restaurants showcasing the region's bounty, Peekskill is one of those places that makes you wish there were more meals in a day (or more [Restaurant Weeks](#) in a year).

Start the day off with a cuppa in what's known as the town's "living room." [Peekskill Coffee House](#) is homey but spacious, with plenty of mismatched seats for social butterflies and worker bees alike. Find eclectic, "global soul food" and noteworthy pie in a 19th-century mill building with a charming garden at [Zeph's Restaurant](#). Located within the Inn on the Hudson, the former Henry's on the Hudson is now the WaterStone Grille. While the riverview restaurant is still finding its identity, the fresh crab cakes indicate it's moving in the right direction. Down by the waterfront, [Homestyle Desserts Bakery](#) offers an array of cakes (it all started with cheesecake) and pastries, including its signature "Cannoli Chips and Dip," crispy pastry triangles and a whole lot of chocolate-chipped cannoli filling dip.

There's always a "brew of the moment" and "brew of the week" on the menu, but order a latte for a unique work of art. Down by the waterfront, just steps away from the train station (what better way is there to kill waiting time?), [Peekskill Brewery](#) elevates pub food to new locavore-friendly heights. Enjoy snacks like a pot of pickles with rye bread and butter and grab a sampler of house brews, including a cask-style stout, in the brewery-side taproom. You can also dig into a full meal, say poutine and the house burger, by the bar, or make your way to the second floor dining room, where a second bar and full brunch-to-dinner menu awaits.

Find a more petite blend of bar and restaurant at [The Birdsell House](#), where a craft beer-centric bar meets delicious cuisine with a distinctly local bent. The



crowds go wild for Birdsall's burger, but if the tasty whole trout we tried is any indication, pescetarians have a lot to look forward to. Check out the restaurant's site to time your visit with live music or a special beer dinner, and to learn more about weekend gardening workshops and other events. Wander down the block to [The Quiet Man Public House](#) for an all-ages (well, over 21) sort of local scene and more live music. Or skip the restaurant scene altogether and pack-your-own, with a visit to the town [Farmer's Market](#) (Saturdays, June to November), one of the oldest in the Hudson Valley.

Outdoor Activities

With all that eating—not to mention a striking view of the Bear Mountain Range—your body will be begging for the great outdoors. Enjoy a stroll along the Riverfront Green Park, or get on the water with [Annsville Creek Paddlesport Center](#). The kayak pros offer river tours and instruction, taking off from their center a couple miles (or \$5 taxi ride) outside of town. While Bear Mountain is an easy day ride away, the breathtaking, 1538-acre [Blue Mountain Reservation](#) is right in town, with miles of fresh air for hikers and bikers, including the unpaved, 12-mile Briarcliff-Peekskill Trailway, and challenging hikes to the top of peaks Mt. Spitzenberg and Blue Mountain. For the half pipe-addicted, or those looking to try something new, [2nd Nature](#) offers beginners skateboard lessons at their skate park at 9am on Saturdays.

Where to Stay

A small, friendly staff and clean, comfortable rooms welcome you at [Inn on the Hudson](#). While a continental breakfast leaves something to be desired (but it's also complimentary), the on-site bar and grille and proximity to both the train station and town center keep things wonderfully convenient. The inn offers guests sweeping views of the Hudson. While you're situated across from the highway, the hotel's perch a little ways uphill keeps this from being deterrence.

Getting There & Around

Take the Metro North Hudson line to Peekskill (learn more about riding the MTA with two wheels [here](#)). Most attractions are walking distance, or a short cab ride, but you may find the [Bee Line](#) buses helpful, especially for visiting the Blue Mountain Reservation (bus lines 17 and 14 will drop you off right by the park entrance).

Photos: Jaclyn Einis, [joseph a. Hourman](#), Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Inn on the Hudson