A Weekend Upstate: My Trip to Albany & Troy Was an Unexpected Delight

Maybe it's time to take a trip up to New York State's capital?

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Before last week, if someone said to me, “You really need to check out Troy,” I would have asked for his Instagram handle. Even though I went to college in upstate New York, I had no idea that Troy was a city right next to Albany. I also didn’t expect it to be so damn charming — an unexpected respite from the hubbub of what we love to simply call “The City.”

If you haven’t taken an Amtrak upstate during fall, you must. While I’m definitely a city boy — a Los Angeles native and New York transplant — I still love the leaves changing. Everyone does. You’d be a monster not to. The view as you train alongside the Hudson River truly is breathtaking, and somehow, it never gets old. I used to take the same train when I went to college up in Poughkeepsie (same line, just got off a few stops earlier). This time up, I told myself I was going to actually work on the train since I’d seen the views before, but nope! I found myself staring out the window for a solid hour.

After the train ride, I headed to the B&B at Gardner Farm Inn. In the era of airBnB, I’ve actually never stayed in a proper BnB, and let me tell you something, I get why people like them. The Gardner Farm Inn was owned and operated by John, a gay man who was possibly the kindest host in the entire world. Both nights I stayed there, we finished a bottle of wine, as he told me stories about guests and the delights of Troy. Both mornings, I woke up to a decadent breakfast: blueberry waffles, frittatas, and banna bread muffins.

After putting down my things at the B&B, I started my trip in Albany, which as you may remember from 5th grade, actually is the capital of New York State. The Capitol Building was a sight to behold, and being fall, I did a “spooky” ghost tour of the
Then, I headed to the crematorium, morbid yes, but gorgeous? Also yes. It’s inside of a church and the property of a beautiful Oakwood Cemetery. You can actually see where Uncle Sam was buried there. He is, in fact, a real person, which is something I did not know. And just like me during Fleet Week, Uncle Sam was a meat packer who supplied beef to the United States military during the War of 1812. If you head down to the Rensselaer County Historical Society (https://www.rchsonline.org/) (which is in downtown Troy) they actually have a permanent exhibit on the man, and how he became the immortal figure synonymous with U.S. patriotism.
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Then of course you have to head to the Troy Farmer's Market, which happens every Saturday. This is a must. During the summer, it's outside in the heart of downtown Troy. The market is huge, with all different types of vendors ranging from alcohol distributors, hand-carved pens, and candle makers. You can actually see the Hudson River from where the Farmer's Market is outside. During the colder months, they move it inside, so you don’t freeze to death out there, which is quite kind of the city.

That evening, I ate at the Hill at Muza (https://www.thehillatmuza.com/menu/), which is European fusion food. The "potato pancake disco balls" were fried heaven. If you go, it's a must. And the ambiance is super cute. Even though it was chilly out, they had heat lamps, so I was able to sit outside in the wine garden.

The next morning, I headed to apple picking, and I mean, for the love of God, if you’re upstate in the fall, it would be criminal to skip the opportunity. (Although the season is actually winding down, typically ending after Halloween.)

Prior to heading to Indian Ladder Farms (http://www.indianladderfarms.com/), I didn’t realize that “going apple picking” is a lot more than simply picking apples. I thought you go, snap a cute adorable Instagram photos, and you’re in and out within 30 minutes. Bada bing bada boom!
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No, it’s like a goddamn amusement park there. The properties at Indian Ladder Farm is huge. Today, the orchard consists of about 65 acres producing over 40 varieties of apples. You can also pick berries and pumpkins too, in case you’re allergic to apples (which apparently is a thing). Then they brew their own beer and cider on site and even smoke goddamn pigs. They have a farm you can check out with some of the friendliest sheep and goats ever in existence, trails in the back to go hiking, and of course, a restaurant and gift shop. Easily, you can spend half a day there, and really live out your fall fantasy.

So in the end, I have to say upstate was surprisingly good. And while you may not necessarily think to yourself, shit, I really gotta check out Albany and Troy, maybe it’s time you should.

Tags: TRAVEL & NIGHTLIFE (/TRAVEL-NIGHTLIFE)