



The view over the Trapps Cliffs and Clove Valley of Mohonk Preserve.

The Hudson's Left Coast

Good food, lovely drives, the requisite antiques—and a lot more mellow than Vermont or the Berkshires. BY SARI BOTTON

THE RUSTICALLY beautiful western Hudson Valley (loosely defined as the section that runs along Rondout Creek) is one of the last perfectly pastoral settings within a short drive of the city that isn't bumper-to-bumper with city escapees every weekend. This largely agricultural area, with tiny towns separated by rolling hills, streams, and swimming holes, is only two hours by car from Manhattan, but it has been slower to catch on as a getaway than nearby towns like Woodstock, Rhinebeck, or Hudson. Some parts—downtown Kerhonkson and stretches of Accord—are visibly depressed, but with real-estate prices starting to climb and the Williams Lake Resort rumored to be converting to a luxury spa, gentrification is inevitable.

For now, you can find an inviting room at a cozy inn for a great deal, without booking in advance. And unlike in the Berkshires and Vermont, which are swarming with skiers and outlet shoppers this time of year, you'll find a true respite from the holiday crowds. Along Rondout Creek, rooms

generally run less than \$200 a night. One of the best is the sweet, simple **Bakers Bed and Breakfast** in Stone Ridge, a 1780 stone house overlooking the Shawangunk Mountains and decorated with country treasures like Federal bureaus from the late eighteenth century (845-687-9795; from \$98). That's about half what you'd pay at New Paltz's tony Mohonk Mountain House.

You'll also eat very well. With the **Culinary Institute** across the river, and more and more Manhattan transplants quietly moving in, sophisticated menus and good wine lists are increasingly common.

Regulars leave their phone numbers at **Friends and Family II Hillside Restaurant** in Accord (845-626-7777), a little gingerbread house of a place, to be called when chef Salah Alygad will be making his braised oxtail. The cash-only **Country Inn of Krumville** (845-657-8956; closed for the month of January), once a burgers-and-wings dive, still offers more than 500 beers, a pool table,

and a casual, unpretentious vibe. But under new ownership, it has a great menu as well. Get the pan-roasted trout or the "Duck Two Ways" (breast and leg confit). In Kerhonkson, **Oscar** (845-626-9838), housed in a 100-year-old Ukrainian lodge (and former German beer hall), serves contemporary country cooking. You'll want to soak up the white wine and herb broth bathing the plump steamed PEI mussels with the crusty homemade garlic focaccia. The braised short ribs in a tangy sauce are so tender they fall right off the bone. Sunday brunch is good here, too. Where else does a lumberjack breakfast include braised Swiss chard?

Work off breakfast with a brisk walk through the woods on the **Marbletown Rail Trail**, about twelve miles north. Or go for a moderate-to-challenging hike on one of the many trails at nearby **Mohonk Preserve** in Gardiner (845-255-0919; \$9). You'll also be near Accord, where **Downtown**, an antiques shop on Main Street that's open only on Sunday, has great prices on shabby "country primitive" pieces, like a milk-painted eighteenth-century jelly cupboard, worth about \$550, priced at \$375. There's also a nice day spa, **One Body Spa** (845-626-2377), where the aromatherapy massages are divine.

Reserve part of an afternoon and an evening to spend in Rosendale, perpetually on the verge of becoming the Next Hot Town. Check out the hand-carved wooden bowls, unusual ceramics, and other house gifts and jewelry by local craftspeople at **Sapphire** (845-658-3315). First-time customers get 25 percent off on over 100 varieties of cheeses, from cave-aged Gruyère to local Cyprus Grove chèvre, at **The Big Cheese** (845-658-7175), which also serves ice cream and snacks—panini, blue cheese-stuffed dates—and doubles as a secondhand store with some chic surprises (like a Nanette Lepore sweater for \$15). As evening falls, catch a current indie film for just \$5 at the old-school **Rosendale Theatre** (845-658-8989). Or listen to music by veteran singer-songwriters like Graham Parker at the crunchy vegetarian **Rosendale Cafe** (845-658-9048), where hearty soups such as silky southwestern corn chowder and spicy African peanut are the best offerings. Across the street at the **Bywater Bistro** (845-658-3210), the Kobe burger pairs perfectly with the local jazz crooners. Whatever you do, you won't leave the area hungry.

HOURS FROM
NEW YORK

2

MODE



DAYTIME
TEMP.

30°



ROMANCE