

A LITTLE TOWN CALLED HUDSON

If you have the time and the inclination, one of the great things to do while visiting New York City is to, well, get out of New York City. Heading north is a good place to start

Words and photographs:
Frances Janisch

Fish and Game

Finch





Harvey's Counter



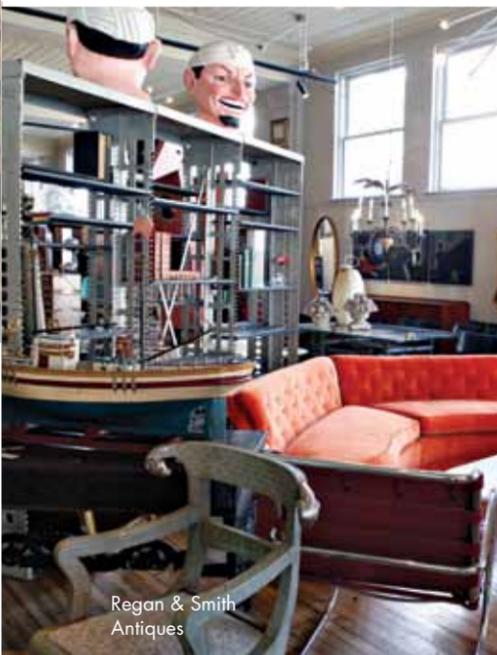
One of the quiet, quaint streets of Hudson.



Hudson Merchant House

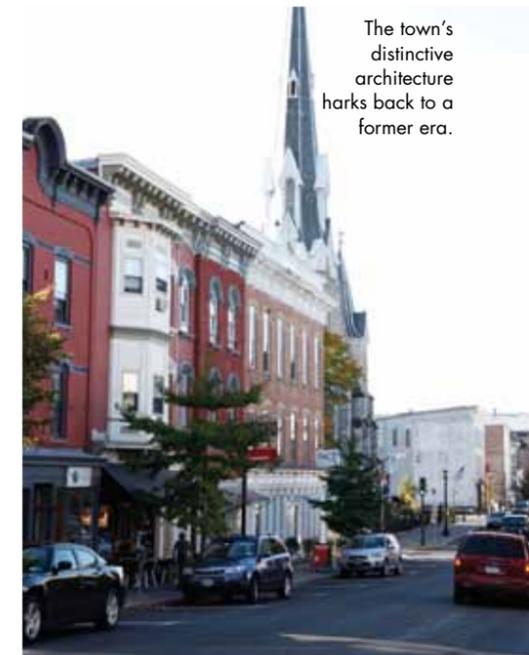


Ecosystem



Regan & Smith Antiques

YOUNG CREATIVES AND DESIGN-LOVERS HAVE BEEN FLOCKING TO THIS MICROCOSM OF COOL OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.



The town's distinctive architecture harks back to a former era.

On your journey, you might start humming Billy Joel's *New York State of Mind* to yourself – and, indeed, you should, as one of the things he mentions is taking a Greyhound bus up the Hudson River Line. You could take a bus and probably a boat, but travelling by rail is easiest, and if you time it right (from the end of September to mid-October), you'll experience an astounding kaleidoscope of reds, oranges and yellows on the banks of the Hudson River, known simply as "the fall foliage".

This is the best time to visit the north-eastern corridor, when the air is crisp and farmers' markets are piled high with crunchy apples and large orange pumpkins. If you're wondering where to go, any of the small towns in the Hudson River Valley are worth the trip, but it's Hudson that seems to be the new, cool kid on the block.

This town is about 6km² in size. It was purchased from the Mohican tribe by Dutch settlers in 1662 and because of the deep waters of the eponymous river, it had become a profitable whaling station a century later. The town went through a tumultuous time during the 19th and early 20th centuries, when it became notorious as a "centre of vice", particularly regarding gambling and prostitution. The Sixties and Seventies saw it

going into a steep decline, with crack-houses opening in abandoned buildings. However, it's recently experienced a rejuvenation of sorts, with high-end antique stores popping up, a vibrant art scene unfolding and a burgeoning food Mecca. Hudson is surrounded by bucolic farmland and the local produce features very prominently and proudly on the menus of many fine eateries in this area.

Young creatives and design-lovers have been flocking to this microcosm of cool over the past few years. It's become a hub for those seeking an alternative to New York City – a place with cheaper rents, but also a cosmopolitan atmosphere, where country and city blend together in perfect harmony.

Strolling around Hudson, you'll see the hip, the trendy, the moustachioed and the tattooed. Girls dressed in vintage overalls, handmade shoes and ruby-red lipstick pepper the streets and avenues. Architect Rem Koolhaas has been commissioned by artist Marina Abramović to design her new performance institute here; this is also where Etsy, the wildly successful online market for handmade and vintage goods, has established its headquarters.

A CREATIVE FIX

Since most establishments are closed from Monday to Wednesday, it's best to plan your trip over a weekend. The station's a stone's throw away from Hudson's main artery,

Warren St, and if browsing and shopping are your thing, any of the stores here will delight.

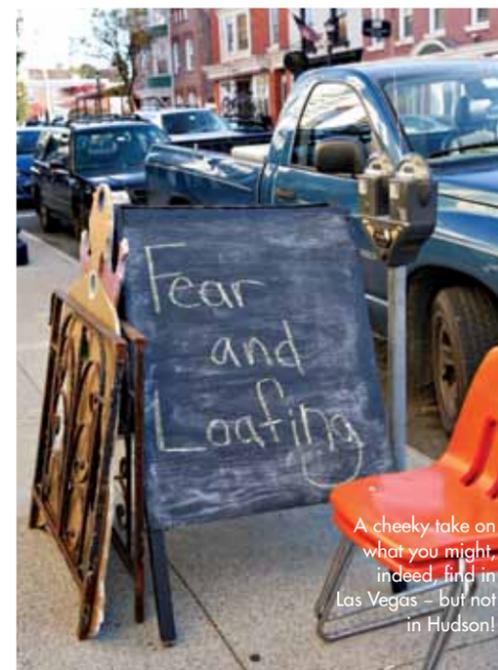
WHERE TO SHOP

Finch (613 Warren St, open Thursday-Monday from 11am-6pm) offers an eclectic mix of perfectly curated home goods.

At **Harvey's Counter** (443 Warren St, open Thursday-Sunday from 11am-5pm) you'll find textiles, jewellery and home decor made by local artisans. Owner Alexandra Dewez has a discerning eye and is passionate about finding limited editions and one-off pieces by young designers. If you're looking for larger-scale furniture and vintage pieces, visit **Regan & Smith Antiques** (601 Warren St, open Thursday-Monday from 12-5pm), where you can find items from the 1850s and earlier, right through to the 1950s. For a whimsical mix of antiques, books, bedding, glassware, wallpaper and paint, visit the delightful **Rural Residence** (316 Warren St, open seven days a week from 11am-5pm). For shibori dresses, jewellery and housewares, pop into **Ecosystem** (445 Warren St, open seven days a week from 11am-6pm). Owned by two designers from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, the store features their own creations, as well as selected items from other designers. The focus is on sustainable eco-fashion and all things handmade. ➤



Olde Hudson



A cheeky take on what you might, indeed, find in Las Vegas – but not in Hudson!



Hudson Merchant House



Swoon



Swallow Coffee



Fish and Game



Rural Residence

WHERE TO EAT

Of course, you'll have to nourish yourself at some point – and Hudson doesn't disappoint. Lured by the valley's ingredients, chefs are migrating from New York City and Brooklyn and opening up praiseworthy restaurants. For an early-morning pick-me-up, **Swallow Coffee** (433 Warren St, open seven days a week from 7am-6pm) sells artisanal brews, pastries and sandwiches. Local artists are showcased here on a weekly basis.

For lunch or dinner, head to **Swoon** (340 Warren St, open for dinner Thursday-Monday and lunch on weekends only). Owned by a James Beard-nominated husband-and-wife team, it's particularly famous for its meatless Monday and Thursday burger creations. For lunch try the Cuban sandwich, or sample the corn risotto for dinner. You won't be sorry.

If grabbing a wedge of local cheese with freshly baked bread and watching the passing crowds from a bench is more your

speed, head to **Olde Hudson** (421 Warren St, open seven days a week). This quaint, deli-style store sells Hudson Valley produce, charcuterie, baked goods and pantry items.

If you're staying in Hudson overnight, an absolute must are cocktails and dinner at **Fish and Game** (13 South 3rd St, open for dinner from 5pm Thursday-Sunday and lunch on weekends only). Housed in a former blacksmith's shop in the heart of Hudson, the restaurant has a set menu that changes weekly, featuring the freshest ingredients the valley has to offer. The cocktails, wine list and service are also excellent.

WHAT TO SEE AND HEAR

For a dose of culture, walk to the **Hudson Opera House** (327 Warren St, open daily). It offers regular art exhibitions, readings, lectures, concerts and community events such as the annual Winter Walk.

Basilica Hudson (110 South Front St) is another venue dedicated to the performing

arts. Opened in 2010, it's housed in a restored 1880s train-wheel factory and hosts art exhibitions, food and film festivals, as well as providing a venue for independent music and theatre.

WHERE TO STAY

Not far from the Basilica Hudson is the **Hudson Merchant House** (10 South Front St, with room rates from \$225 pp per night), a boutique inn featuring four beautifully appointed rooms. Built in the 1700s, the house has been painstakingly restored by the owners. None of that country floral chintz here – instead, expect chic brown leather couches and a grand piano in the corner for spontaneous performing.

Further uptown is **The Inn at Hudson**, (317 Allen, with room rates from \$200 pp per night), owned by two charming men who'll welcome you warmly and probably have you doubled over in laughter before you've put your bag down. The rooms are large, each with its own en-suite bathroom. Breakfast in the wood-panelled dining room is cooked to order.

One block north of Warren St is **Westcott House B&B** (24 North Fifth St, with rates from \$200 pp per night). Relax in one of three lovely bedrooms, each with a queen bed, smart TV, fresh flowers and new en-suite bathroom with hair-dryer and complimentary toiletries. Wi-Fi is available throughout the house. The public rooms feature American and Italian antiques, contemporary art and collectables from 35 years of world travels. Full breakfasts are cooked to order.

GETTING THERE

- Hudson is a two-hour drive from New York City.
- Amtrak trains run daily from Penn Station to Hudson Station. Tickets cost \$35-68, depending on the time of day. www.amtrak.com
- Plan your trip around the peak fall foliage. www.weather.com/fallfoliage

LOG ON

Basilica Hudson: www.basilicahudson.com

Fish and Game: www.fishandgame.com

Hudson Merchant House:

www.hudsonmerchanthouse.com

Hudson Opera House:

www.hudsonoperahouse.com

The Inn at Hudson:

www.theinnathudson.com

Olde Hudson: www.oldehudson.com

Swoon: www.swoonkitchenbar.com

Westcott House B&B:

www.westcotthousebandb.com