Nineteen Waterfalls by Day, a Vineyard Sunset by Night — A 2-Day Finger Lakes Road Trip

Finger Lakes · 2-Day Road Trip

DURATION
2 Days

BEST TIME TO GO
Late May–October
Warm 20–27°C days, green vineyard rows through summer, and full fall color on the hillsides by early October

FROM
$275 USD / person
for 2 people, incl. a lakefront hotel, wine tastings & gas

A 2-day loop through New York's Finger Lakes wine country, built around one overnight in the lakefront village of Watkins Glen. Expect a gorge trail with nineteen waterfalls stacked into two miles, working vineyard tasting rooms on Seneca Lake's shores, a farm-to-table dinner overlooking the water, and a Sunday-morning stop in Ithaca before the drive home — with real wineries, a lakefront hotel, and 2026 prices for every stop.

Day 1 Seneca Lake — Gorges and Vineyards

Drive up into Watkins Glen, hike the gorge before the midday crowds arrive, then spend the afternoon working your way up Seneca Lake's wine trail.

Watkins Glen State Park Gorge Trail

~2 hours · $20 parking (seasonal)

A 1.5-mile gorge trail climbs past 19 waterfalls, stone bridges, and tunnels carved straight into the rock — genuinely one of the best short hikes in the Northeast. Go early on summer weekends; the entrance line can back up by mid-morning.

Watkins Glen State Park · parks.ny.gov/parks/142

Check-In & Dinner: Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel

1 night · from $239/night

A lakefront boutique hotel right on Seneca Lake's southern tip, a five-minute walk from the gorge entrance — ask for a lake-view room for sunset from the balcony. For dinner, drive 15 minutes up the eastern shore to Stonecat Cafe for locally sourced farm-to-table cooking on a screened porch over the vineyards.

Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel · www.watkinsglenharborhotel.com

Day 2 Ithaca & the Drive Home

A short drive south to Ithaca for a waterfall in the middle of a college town and a walk through Cornell's botanic gardens before heading home.

Ithaca Falls

~30 minutes · Free

A 150-foot waterfall a five-minute walk from downtown Ithaca — one of the highest-volume falls in the Finger Lakes and easy enough for a quick stop with coffee in hand.

Cornell Botanic Gardens

~1 hour · Free (donations welcome)

Winding trails through native plant collections, a stone arch bridge, and Beebe Lake on Cornell University's edge — a peaceful last stop before the drive home.

Cornell Botanic Gardens · cornellbotanicgardens.org

Lunch: Ithaca Bakery

~$18/person · no reservations

A local institution for bagels, sandwiches, and strong coffee — grab something to go and eat it lakeside at Stewart Park before pointing the car home.

Ithaca Bakery · www.ithacabakery.com