

Whitewater Tubes by Day, Brewery Pours by Night — A 3-Day Catskills Road Trip

I-Journey Travel Itinerary

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

**Late September –
mid-October**

peak fall foliage across the Catskill high
peaks

FROM

\$520 USD / person

for 2 people — lodging, gear rentals &
activities on a self-drive from NYC

Two hours north of Manhattan, the Catskill Mountains pack a waterfall hike, a chairlift ride over peak foliage, and a whitewater tubing run down the Esopus Creek into an easy long-weekend loop. This self-drive route bases out of the Route 28 corridor between Woodstock and Hunter — just a rental car, a few trailheads, and a tank of gas.

Day 1

Into Woodstock

Leave the city mid-morning for the roughly two-hour drive up the New York State Thruway and Route 28 into the Catskills, with an afternoon built around Woodstock's galleries and a mountainside check-in.

Self-Drive — NYC to the Catskills

~2 hr drive via I-87 & NY-28 · rental car recommended

This is a drive-yourself trip: pick up a rental car in the city (or bring your own) and take I-87 north to Exit 19 at Kingston, then follow Route 28 west into the mountains. Traffic is lightest if you leave before 10am on a weekday.

Woodstock Village

~2 hrs · free to browse

The town that lent its name to the 1969 festival (actually held 60 miles away in Bethel) is now a walkable strip of galleries, record shops, and music venues. The Village Green is the spot for people-watching, and the town's tie-dye-and-crystals reputation is still very much intact.

Check-In — Scribner's Catskill Lodge

Check-in 4pm · rooms from around \$300/night

This renovated 1960s motor lodge at the base of Hunter Mountain leans into a modern-rustic look — wood-paneled rooms, an outdoor pool with mountain views, and a lobby bar that gets busy after dark. It's the most design-forward base camp in this part of the Catskills.

Scribner's Catskill Lodge · scribnerslodge.com

Dinner — Silvia

Dinner · \$35–55 per person

This Woodstock spot turns out wood-fired, produce-driven plates from a rotating seasonal menu in a converted historic building downtown — reserve ahead on weekends, since it's one of the most talked-about tables in town.

Day 2 Falls, Skyride & a Brewery

The Catskills' two biggest views come back to back today: a hike to one of New York's tallest waterfalls, then a chairlift ride up Hunter Mountain for the fall-color panorama, with a brewery stop to close out the afternoon.

Kaaterskill Falls

~1.5 hr round trip hike · free, roadside lot on NY-23A

At 260 feet, this is one of the tallest waterfalls in New York State and a favorite subject of the 19th-century Hudson River School painters. The main viewing platform is a moderate 0.4-mile hike from the lot on Route 23A — scrambling closer requires more caution and isn't necessary for the classic view.

Hunter Mountain Scenic Skyride

Weekends, Sept 12 – Oct 18 · check current-season pricing

A chairlift ride to Hunter's 3,200-foot summit trades a strenuous climb for a 15-minute ride, with a viewing deck up top looking out over the full spread of Catskill peaks — especially dramatic once the foliage turns in late September and October.

Hunter Mountain · +1 (518) 263-4223 · huntermtn.com

West Kill Brewing

Taproom stop ~1 hr · pours from \$7

A small-batch farmhouse brewery on Spruceton Road with a taproom looking straight up at the West Kill Wilderness — a low-key, locals-favorite way to close out an active day before dinner.

West Kill Brewing · +1 (518) 989-6001 · westkillbrewing.com

Day 3 Whitewater & the Road Home

Save the trip's most active morning for last: a whitewater tubing float down the Esopus Creek, then a scenic drive back toward the city with one more stop along the way.

Esopus Creek Tubing — Town Tinker Tube Rental

Half-day · gear packages from \$40/person, open through Sept 30

Phoenicia's Esopus Creek is the Catskills' classic tubing run — a mix of flat pools and Class I–II riffles through a wooded gorge, with a shuttle bus included in the rental price to get you back to your car. Bring water shoes or rent creek sneakers on-site; the water stays cold even in summer.

Town Tinker Tube Rental · +1 (845) 688-5553 · towntinker.com

Lunch — Phoenicia Diner

Lunch · \$14–22 per person

This retro roadside diner on Route 28 has built a following well beyond the Catskills for its farm-sourced spin on classic diner food — buttermilk pancakes and an all-day griddled breakfast sandwich, in a dining room that fills up fast on weekends.

Phoenicia Diner · +1 (845) 688-9957 · phoeniciadiner.com

Scenic Drive Home via the Ashokan Reservoir

~2.5 hr drive back to NYC

Route 28 east hugs the edge of the Ashokan Reservoir — pull off at the Ashokan Rail Trail parking area for one last mountain-and-water view — before the road drops back down to the Thruway at Kingston for the return drive to the city.