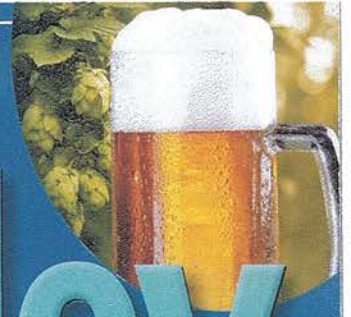


**The Great Swamp**

Discover our *other* major waterway

**Beer Gardens**

Suds in the sun



# Hudson Valley

*The*

# CATSKILLS

*Are Back!*

Hip Boutique  
**Hotels**

**Hiking**  
Hot Spots

World-Class  
**Theater**

And  
**More!**

August 2014  
hvmag.com \$4.99



0 74851 65962 5





# The CATSBI Are





# WALLS Back!

This summer, Peter Diaz started the “Wall of Fame” at his yearling restaurant, Tavern 214, in Phoenicia. The first member? Helena Christensen. “She comes in all the time; she’s a big supporter,” says Diaz, who proudly posted a photo of himself and the supermodel on the restaurant’s Facebook page.

Celebrities aren’t the only ones showing up in the Catskills: The region is enjoying a resurgence in popularity, with visitors from throughout the tristate and beyond heading to these storied mountains for outdoor fun, relaxation — and to experience the area’s newfound status as a hip destination. Case in point: In 2011, *Budget Travel* named Phoenicia one of the 10 Coolest Small Towns in America, writing: “Phoenicia may look like a one-

With the mountains as a backdrop, the pool at Graham & Co. offers peace and privacy



street river town sandwiched between hills in New York's Catskills... but it's got a bookish, cosmopolitan vibe in its soul." Although the wrath of Hurricane Irene rained down later that year, Phoenicia (along with many of the region's badly affected areas) bounced right back. Now, the town is — according to pretty much everyone on the planet — better than ever.

"Phoenicia just has all the right elements," says Diaz. "It's in a beautiful area ringed by mountains, and it is pretty much 15 minutes from everywhere: 15 minutes from skiing, 15 minutes from Woodstock. But it's important to note that Phoenicia is *not* Woodstock. They're peace and love,

but we have a quirky little cool vibe of our own."

The Trailways bus stops in the center of town (three hours from Manhattan) and for decades, New Yorkers and other adventure seekers have been flocking here to rent tubes to float down the Esopus Creek, which magically seems to appear around every corner in the area. (Town Tinker Tube Rentals used to be the only game in town, but a few years ago F&S Adventures joined the mix.)

Of course, the hipness factor went into overdrive when the **Graham & Co.**, a 19-room boutique hotel, opened in July 2013. The brainchild of four Brooklyn-based designers, the industrial-chic lodging is all about minimalist pleasures. "Who likes it here? Well, anyone who is design-

mindful, who is interested in something that is not traditional, something that is authentically cool," says general manager James Anthony, noting that the clientele comes from Brooklyn — and all around the world. "We focus on some of the primitive luxuries in life — laying by the pool, mountain views, relaxation, eating good food. We purposely don't put TVs in the rooms, and there is no air conditioning." Badminton and other lawn games, nightly bonfires, and a weekly outside movie pump up the fun factor.

Still, the primitive pleasures come with a more modern price-tag: Rooms range from \$155-\$230. This summer, the site opened a new bunkhouse — six bedrooms with bunks and two shared baths, which is "perfect for skiers or girls groups," says Anthony. On a recent visit, we lounged by the unheated pool, which somehow manages to convey an old Hollywood vibe (I half-expected Frank Sinatra to show up at any moment); we loved riding their free bicycles into town — where we checked out shops like the Nest Egg, which has a nice mix of souvenirs, clothes, and legendary fudge. We parked the bikes in a nearby park and started up the Tanbark Trail, a two-mile loop hike which provides spectacular views and signs about the area's interesting quarrying history.

Our stay didn't leave us enough time to explore everything in town (although we *made* time for a gigantic plate of peach pancakes at **Sweet Sue's**). We'd love to go back for the first annual "Phoenicia Flea," a gathering of top-notch local artisans, on July 26-27. But finding great reasons to return to this unique corner of the Catskills won't be difficult to do. — *Jennifer Leba*



★  
EDITOR  
PICK



Outdoor film screenings — one of Graham & Co.'s unique amenities

## Fancy Digs

It should come as no surprise that there are dozens of campgrounds in the Catskills. For those who prefer to rough it in style, the region is also home to two "glamping" sites, both in Sullivan County. (In case you haven't heard, glamping — or "glamorous camping" — allows you to experience the great outdoors without forsaking a soft bed, hot showers, and other comforts of home.) In Narrowsburg, guests at **Blue Hills Farm Tent and Breakfast** slumber in a queen-sized bed in a custom-made canvas tent outfitted with armchairs and electric lamps; the attached bathroom boasts a two-person



shower with spa jets. Owner Jane Luchsinger serves a four-course breakfast in a sturdy treehouse decorated with antiques (845-252-3864, [www.bluehillfarm.com](http://www.bluehillfarm.com)). Located on 150 acres in the Catskill Forest Preserve in Livingston Manor, the **Willowemoc Wild Forest Yurt** — a large, circular tent with a wooden floor (photo above) — is decked out with solar lighting, a composting toilet, an indoor shower, and grilling facilities. Up to eight guests get their shut-eye in rustic bunk beds — with real mattresses, sheets, and pillows — fashioned from tree limbs (845-439-4367, [www.willowemocwildforestyurt.com](http://www.willowemocwildforestyurt.com)).





★  
EDITOR  
PICK

## Nehapwa: Resplendent Refuge

Nestled in the northeastern Catskills, about 75 minutes by car from Poughkeepsie, is the village of Tannersville. Like other towns in the region, it has had its share of ups and downs over the years. As the name implies — and thanks to thousands of hemlock trees, which supplied the tannin used to soften the hides — Tannersville was the epicenter of the area's booming tanning industry in the early 1800s. The industry died off mid-century, but Tannersville was able to reinvent itself as a resort town. Anxious to escape the stifling heat of the city, well-heeled New Yorkers headed to the mountains by train (the rail line arrived in the 1880s), where they built clusters of elaborate summer homes in private "parks."

Perhaps the best-known of these enclaves is Onteora Park, which was the gathering place for artists, actors, and writers; Mark Twain is known to have stayed there. One of the most picturesque of the park's dwellings is **Nehapwa**, an Arts and Crafts-style manse built in 1892 by architect George Agnew Reid for the heir to an iron-works fortune. Constructed of fieldstone and wood, with a steeply pitched gabled roof, a wraparound porch, and balconies off each of the upstairs rooms, Nehapwa (the name comes from the Iroquois words meaning "to find again") is today a delightful bed and breakfast run by partners Jeff Summer and Tom Uberuaga.

We visited this mountain oasis on a chilly, wet day in late spring. The affable Uberuaga greeted us at the front door, ushered us inside, and immediately offered us a glass of wine, which we sipped in front of one of the two massive stone fireplaces that bookend the gigantic main room. This unique space is quietly breathtaking: The dark wooden floors and ceiling beams are counterbalanced by a wall of windows overlooking the mountains; the simple

but elegant furnishings are a mix of antiques and modern finds, and include Summer's extensive collection of Hudson River School paintings. An elaborate wrought-iron chandelier descends dramatically from the second floor ceiling through an upstairs gallery, which offers views of the space from above.

Like the main downstairs area, each of Nehapwa's four guest rooms is tastefully decorated with antiques and artwork; our comfy sleigh bed provided the kind of dead-to-the-world sleep that one looks forward to on a getaway. And although the nasty weather precluded us from making the most of it, we had no trouble imagining an afternoon spent admiring the site's extensive gardens and grounds from our room's private balcony.

Nehapwa, which as been open for just a year, attracts mostly New York City residents who hear about the place through word of mouth. Most visitors are primarily interested in hiking, although "the towns themselves are becoming destinations," Uberuaga says. "Windham is a cute little town, and Tannersville is becoming a great little town. You can take day trips to Woodstock and Saugerties; some people even go towards Cooperstown. I think that's part of the appeal: People say, 'Let's go for a quick hike, then drive around and see what else there is to see.'"

Using Nehapwa as a jumping-off point for exploring the Catskills is one reason to book a room there (\$275 per night) — but Uberuaga says his clients often have a very different activity in mind. "This is a great place to relax and rejuvenate. I've watched people sitting on the lounge chairs, with a magazine falling out of their hands — they've fallen asleep in the middle of the day. Who really gets the chance to do *that* anymore?" — *Polly Sparling*

## What to do in Tannersville

### Deer Mountain Inn

Designed by Nehapwa architect George Reid, this newly refurbished 1880s building sports stone fireplaces, wood paneling, and diamond pane windows. The 60-seat farm-to-table restaurant opened in October, and features a New American menu; the six-room inn was due to open as we went to press. County Rd. 25, 518-589-6268, [www.deermountaininn.com](http://www.deermountaininn.com)

### All Souls Church

This circa-1894 Gothic Revival stone chapel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Those who attend Sunday services can admire the building's impressive stone and wood interior and stained glass windows. County Rd. 25.

### Mountain Top Arboretum

Founded in 1977, this "living museum" highlights native and exotic trees and shrubs that have adapted to life 2,400 feet above sea level. In the West Meadow, see 375 million-year-old bedrock as well as dawn redwood trees — a species that has been in existence since the dinosaur age. County Rd. 23C, 518-589-3903, [www.mtarboretum.org](http://www.mtarboretum.org)

### Huckleberry Multi-Use Trail

Close to three miles long, this graded dirt path follows the bed of the old Huckleberry Railroad. Enter at Clum Hill Rd. 518-589-5850.

### Main Street Historic District

Village businesses are housed in renovated buildings that are cheerfully painted in pastel colors. The brainchild of a local artist, the "Paint Project" has attracted tourists, been featured on the *Today* show, and helped Main Street land its historic district designation in 2008.

### Twin Peaks

Looking for a quick breakfast or a snack after hiking? This eatery makes your donut to order: Watch while they fry it, then request your toppings. Coffee is roasted in-house, too. 5950 Main St., 518-589-6262.



# Catskill Forest Preserve

Those of us who look at today's looming environmental disasters with a sense of dread can, perhaps, take heart from the Catskills. The magical landscape that enchanted and inspired authors, artists, and tourists in the 19th century was denuded and largely abandoned by century's end. Nearly all the great hemlocks had been felled, their bark used to tan hides into leather, the wood left to rot where it dropped. The remaining hardwood trees were turned into lumber, charcoal, furniture, even ladles. Deer were so rare people gawked at the few that were left, penned in as an attraction at local hotels. Farmers picked up the deforested land for 50 cents an acre, but the boulder-studded soil provided a hardscrabble existence at best.

Out of that unpromising start came the **Catskill Forest Preserve** — nearly 300,000 magnificent state-owned acres protected as "forever wild" in Ulster, Sullivan, Delaware, and Greene counties. Another 160,000 acres around the reservoirs are owned by New York City, moving the number close to the half-million acre mark. "That's bigger than some national parks," says Alan White, executive director of the nonprofit Catskills Center for Conservation and Development.

Considered by scholars to be the birthplace of the American environmental movement due to the influence of naturalist John Burroughs, today's Catskills are richly forested, studded with reservoirs and streams, and laced with 300 miles of hiking trails. The pleasures offered range from a gentle stroll along the **Ashokan Reservoir** to climbing all 35 mountains with an elevation above 3,500 feet, which earns you a place in the 3500 Club. The reservoirs that supply New York City with pristine water are also available for sailing, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing. Devoted fly fishermen wade into world-renowned trout streams, and everyone from beginners to back-country hikers can find something to inspire them along the trails.

And in a display of the regenerative power of nature, the trees are back. "It's 60-70 percent forested again," White claims. Without much help — except to leave it alone — the lands are regaining the characteristics of an old-growth forest. "It takes 150 years to develop, and the forest preserve is getting to that stage," says White. That means the trees are larger, and the understory is healthier, more diverse — and capable of supporting a thriving array of wildlife in a more complex ecosystem.

Have you ever walked into a forest that feels like a cathedral — hushed, magnificent, awe-inspiring? That is what is happening in parts of the Catskill Forest Preserve right now.

We can enjoy this beauty today due to some crafty political wrangling by 19th-century Ulster County legislators, who were left with massive unpaid taxes after the land was ruined and abandoned. In the 1880s, the

state legislature was considering the bill that created a forest preserve in the Adirondacks, to keep soil run-off from silting up the Erie Canal and Hudson River. Ulster County interests managed to get the Catskills slipped in as part of the plan — with the state picking up the tab.

Since then, the Catskills have been through a number of permutations. In the 19th century, wealthy travelers came by steamboat, stagecoach, or railroad to stay at the Catskill Mountain House, an 1824 Greek Revival hotel perched at the edge of the mountain's eastern flank that offered a magnificent view of Massachusetts, Vermont, and Connecticut. Witnessing dawn break over the Berkshires was de rigueur, as was a trip to **Kaaterskill Falls** (see page 38), making the region the nation's first great tourist attraction.

"The Catskills were the original American frontier," explains Michael Drillinger, a licensed guide and owner of Catskill Country Walks. "In colonial times, this was the wilderness." But the Catskills' lofty reputation began a downward drift once the wilderness was mostly gone and inexpensive farm-based boarding houses popped up along the rail lines. Later it revived as a destination with the Borscht Belt resorts of the southern Catskills, but fell out of favor with the rise of air travel in the 1960s.

Now, however, the Catskills are becoming a destination of choice. Tourists are visiting in ever-greater numbers — even the Dutch, who originally settled these parts. Drillinger took a group from the Netherlands to see Kaaterskill Falls, still one of the most popular places to visit. "They're putting together tours for Dutch people who will come to the U.S. to explore Dutch history in the Hudson Valley," he says. A group of young men from New York City chose the Catskills for an unusual bachelor party — a backwoods experience making fires without matches, using camp knives, and chopping wood. "If you follow the rules, you can camp anywhere you want," says Drillinger, who led the group. (State law prohibits any camping within 150 feet of a trail, road or any body of water, and never over 3,500 feet.)

Another sign that the Catskills are coming on strong is the ground-breaking this summer of the **Maurice D. Hinchey Catskill Interpretive Center**, located on a 62-acre site on Route 28 in Mount Tremper. The site will offer comprehensive information on the Catskills' outdoor activities, cultural riches, and natural history, says White. "We will make it easier to learn what is here. If you want to visit 18 waterfalls, we will have maps and downloadable information for your phone."

With its unparalleled natural beauty restored — and strong measures in place to keep it that way — the allure of the Catskills Forest Preserve is once again on the rise. "We're close by, unique, and unexploited," says White. "And people are coming back." — *Anitra Brown*



Technically, the Catskills aren't mountains. They are an eroded plateau, the uplifted remains of what was once a shallow inland sea covering most of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois



## Comes with the Territory

Wildlife numbers are up, as previously scarce species come roaring back to life. That's great news — except when it comes to coexisting peacefully with humans.

Get the 411 on Catskills casinos, events, outdoor activities — and our readers' favorite memories — at [www.hvmag.com/catskillsguide](http://www.hvmag.com/catskillsguide)





### Coyotes

With their distinctive howls, these wily wild animals (they only look like German Shepherds) are increasing in number and will happily go after your cat or small dog.



### Cougars

Also known as mountain lions, these large, long-tailed cats, which emit a long scream, are officially extinct in the state. Still, sightings are often reported, and conspiracy theories abound.



### Fishers

Part of the weasel family, the elusive fisher weighs in at about 10 to 16 pounds, runs fast, hangs out in trees, and is the only North American mammal that kills and consumes porcupines.



### Bobcat

Aww, a big, soft, fluffy orange kitty! Look again: These nocturnal carnivores, who avoid human contact, are twice the size of a housecat (with a short tail) and even chow down on deer.



### Snakes

There are two poisonous snake species here: the timber rattlesnake and the northern copperhead. Most of them are found in Ulster County, with a large den of rattlers on Overlook Mountain.



### Black Bears

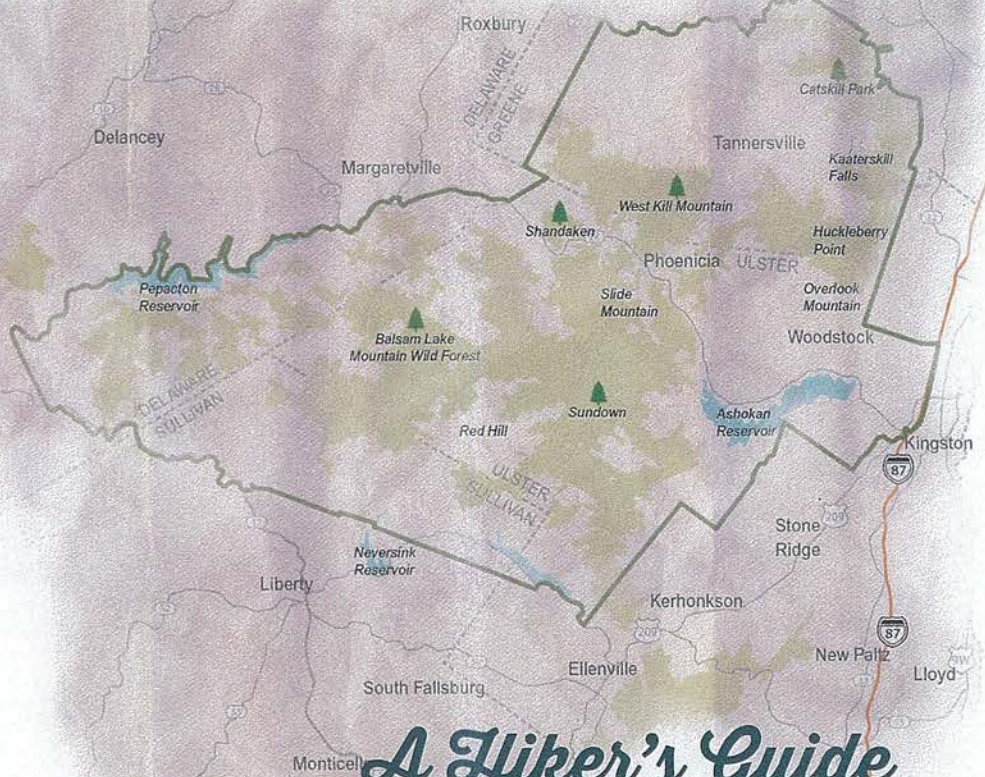
A third of the state's population lives here — and the number is growing (despite legal bear hunting for 16 days in September). You're most likely to spot them near a blueberry bush.



### Feral Hogs

Aggressive, free-ranging Eurasian boars in western Delaware and Sullivan create havoc by consuming crops and livestock. Still, the DEC has made progress in managing these intelligent beasts.





## A Hiker's Guide to the Catskills

Exploring the Catskills on foot is a perfect way to experience the region's flora and fauna. But choosing the right path can be a challenge: many have steep inclines, a lack of parking, and more fellow hikers than you might expect (or want). So we asked Michael Drillinger of Catskill Country Walks and Alan White of the Catskill Interpretive Center to share their favorite places.



Step onto the top of Balsam Mountain and it smells like Christmas trees.

So it's not surprising that the Catskills was the birthplace of the Christmas tree business. In 1851, an enterprising Catskills farmer named Mark Carr cut down fir and spruce trees that grew in abundance, took them to New York City by boat, rented space in Washington market, and quickly sold out. His family stayed in the Christmas tree business until 1898.

• **The Ashokan Reservoir.** Not into hiking? Just stop the car and stroll along the Catskills' largest reservoir, which is the very best place to watch the sunset.

• **North South Lake.** With mountains rising behind it, this beautiful lake was an inspiration for many Hudson Valley painters. Today there is swimming for kids, plenty of trails, and a quarter-mile climb to the site of the now-vanished Catskill Mountain House. Enjoy panoramic views of the Berkshires, once as high as the Alps. Another trail through pine forest and up a rock scramble takes you to Artist's Rock, where the view is even better.

• **Kaaterskill Falls.** People have clamored to see this magnificent 230-foot, two-tiered waterfall since the early 19th century, when it was mentioned in Washington Irving's tall

tale "Rip Van Winkle" and painted by Thomas Cole. It became a site of pilgrimage for authors, artists, and travelers, and today is just as breathtaking — though more crowded, especially on fine weekends. There is limited parking, and you'll get a \$100 ticket for parking on the road, so you're best off visiting on a weekday. The payoff comes after a mere half-mile hike that almost everyone can manage. Put your feet in the water, feel the cool mist against your face, and breathe.

• **Red Hill.** This is an easy 2.86 mile hike with a big payoff — one of five Catskills fire towers that are manned by volunteers on summer weekends is at the top. There's not much of a climb, which makes it good for beginners, though you do have to cross a stream near the beginning. Climb up the stairs and into the "cab" of the fire tower to best enjoy the 360-degree view.

• **Huckleberry Point.** This is another relatively easy hike (that's Catskills easy, which means you'll still have to climb) that delivers a lot of view for the effort — five miles round-trip. It starts on Platte Clove Road and takes you past a beautiful 80-foot waterfall before opening out onto one of the region's most spectacular views, where the Hudson Valley stretches out

before you while the Catskills loom on the other side.

• **Balsam Mountain.** This is a strenuous hike at 5.2 miles, but it's less traveled than many high peak hikes. It's also an ideal place to see the three ecosystems that make up the Catskills. The first stretch from Rider Hollow takes you along a Catskills stream and a classic hemlock ravine. Ascend through majestic stands of northern hardwood forest that include maple, beech, birch, and ash. As you reach the top, enjoy the alpine forest, a healthy mix of balsam fir and red spruce, where the fresh scent of wild Christmas trees wafts on the breeze.

• **Overlook Mountain — The Back Way.** With a trailhead right outside of Woodstock, Overlook Mountain is the most popular of the Catskills' five fire tower hikes. It's a hard slog that takes you straight up for two and a half miles along an old access road before you turn around and go back down. But if you start from the other side of the mountain at a trailhead off Platte Clove Road (County Route 16), it's a less-steep, more-rewarding hike past waterfalls and varied scenery. Highlights are Codfish Point (4.5 miles out-and-back), Echo Lake (8.8 miles out-and-back), or go all the way to Overlook Mountain (13 miles out-and-back). The most adventuresome can camp overnight (the lake has several official campsites), or you can make a 10-mile "shuttle hike" by leaving a car at the more-popular entrance on Meads Mountain Road.

• **Slide Mountain.** At 4,180 feet, Slide Mountain is the highest of the Catskills High Peaks, and hikers able to make the strenuous-but-doable 6.8 mile loop can see views of all the other mountains over 3,500 feet. It's also one of the most popular hikes, so try weekdays to avoid the crowds. Slide Mountain was made famous by Catskills native John Burroughs, who created the nature essay genre and authored more than 30 books. Burroughs made many treks up Slide, writing about the experience most famously in *The Heart of the Southern Catskills*. He slept many nights beneath a ledge near the summit, where a commemorative plaque now quotes his work: "Here the works of man dwindle." — A.B.

Find information about Catskill Country Walks at [www.catskillcountrywalks.com](http://www.catskillcountrywalks.com), and the Catskills Center at [www.catskillcenter.com](http://www.catskillcenter.com).



## Artistic Pursuits

A cultural revival is underway in the northern Catskills. From the kind of “high art” found in Manhattan to ethnic cultural festivals, there’s something for everyone here.

Hunter and Tannersville host to some of the most prestigious classical music concerts in upstate New York. **The Catskill Mountain Foundation (CMF)** operates a performance venue in each village. **The Orpheum Film and Performing Arts Center** in Tannersville is housed in a renovated movie theater built in the 1930s; Hunter’s **Doctorow Center for the Arts** offers performances coupled with educational talks by many of the musicians who frequent the area.

“There are more arts organizations coming and developing new programs in the Catskill region,” says CMF founder Peter Finn. “Visitors have the ability to experience our beautiful natural setting while also experiencing the arts.”

Playing at both the Doctorow and the Orpheum in August is the **Catskill High Peaks’ Grand Italian Tour**, with concerts and lectures that explore the influence of Italy on music around the world. The centerpiece of the program is Tchaikovsky’s *Souvenir de Florence*, with Michael Chertock on piano, Yehuda Hanani on cello, and the Catskill High Peaks Festival Chamber Orchestra.

West of Hunter is the **Grazhda**, an architectural landmark built in the traditional log style of Ukraine. Concert performances this month include an evening of arias and art songs, and a children’s concert of Ukrainian folk music.

At the **Windham Civic and Performing Arts Center**, Simone Dinnerstein gives a solo piano recital of compositions by Bach, Schumann, and Nico Muhly. Dinnerstein’s work has been described on NPR as “a journey of discovery filled with unscheduled detours.” Taking a detour from Windham back to Tannersville, one comes upon **All Souls Church** — where violinist Helena Baillie and her string trio play Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*.

Theater productions are also on tap this month. Playwright Alex Webb’s *Amelia* is a Civil War story of a woman’s journey to find her missing husband after the Battle of Gettysburg. **Horton by the Stream Outdoor Summer Theater** has been bringing the plays of Horton Foote to Elka Park for the past 20 years. The setting is relaxed, with free admission and homemade brownies and lemonade for all, but the productions are staffed by professionals. Foote’s *The Land of the Astronauts* — the story of a would-be astronaut who discovers that greatness can be achieved without going to the moon — is this season’s offering.

Speaking of outer space: View that breathtaking expanse in Prattsville, where “Skyman” Bob Berman leads an evening of stargazing on the village green. Across the street, at the **Zadock Pratt Museum**, you can view the paintings of 19th-century American impressionist (and Catskills native) D.F. Hasbrouck.

Hunter Mountain’s **German Alps Festival** features great brats, beer, and both traditional and cutting-edge musicians. Later in the month, Hunter hosts the **International Celtic Festival**, where the “massed march” of bagpipers down the mountain is a must-see.

One of the highlights of the inaugural **23Arts Initiative** — a lineup of events ranging from concerts to car shows — is the **Catskill Jazz Factory’s Joy of Jazz Week**. And headlining this five-day fest is pianist Marcus Roberts and the Modern Jazz Generation, a 12-piece ensemble of young musicians.

Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis has called Roberts “the greatest American musician most people have never heard of.” Blinded at age five, Roberts persevered to become “a fearsome and fearless player,” says Marsalis, who has toured with symphony orchestras and composed *Spirit of the Blues*, a piano concerto.

Roberts and company perform “The Spirit of Louis,” a tribute to Louis Armstrong, at the Orpheum. Armstrong was “our first great jazz soloist. Jazz kind of came from him, if you will,” the pianist says. The schedule also includes late-night jam sessions at Tannersville’s **Last Chance Tavern**.

“It’s very special to have something of this high quality happening in the village,” says 23Arts Initiative cofounder Piers Playfair. “And being able to go to a concert, walk 10 yards and go to a jam session following the concert, is really cool.” — *Garan Santicola*

Jazz pianist  
Marcus Roberts  
headlines Joy of  
Jazz Week

