

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

—T.S. Eliot



In Esopus, we explore our place in nature, our place in history, and we discover ourselves. Whether you come to town wearing a suit, slacks, jeans, shorts or spandex – exploration with all the senses awaits.

In Esopus, nature abounds in many forms. As an agricultural town, wineries sell locally produced wine, and farm stands offer freshly picked fruits and vegetables, baked goods and hot cider, and local crafts. For those who prefer to go one step fresher, you can pick-your-own apples, pumpkins, cherries and strawberries. Native Americans called this area “esepu” meaning “high banks.” This gently sloped land with banks high above the season-moderating Hudson River, and a tall ridgeline stunting the prevailing westerly winds, is ideal for a variety of produce. High on that ridge is *Slabsides*, the cabin of John Burroughs – famed naturalist and journalist of John Muir’s era... and celery farmer.

Looking south from the Esopus Meadows Lighthouse, the Hudson River shoreline has not changed in a hundred years. Scenic Hudson and other preservation organizations have protected our precious rustic land and have provided accessible trails ranging from Sunday strolls to rigorous hikes. Nature preserves include the Black Creek Preserve and Environmental Center, Esopus Meadow Forest Preserve, and Shaupeneak Ridge featuring Louisa Pond. The Esopus shoreline, whether viewed via the 2-mile drive along scenic River Road, or a 3-hour narrated cruise on the Rip Van Winkle sailing out of Rondout Creek, or a visit to the Esopus Lighthouse itself, you are immersed in the revitalizing atmosphere of the Hudson. And there are traditional town parks: Freer Park includes a pavilion, a playground, and overlooks the Hudson River; Ross Park offers a pavilion, a playground, and ball fields.

Esopus is mostly bordered by water: the Hudson River to the east, the Rondout Creek to the north, and the Wallkill River to the west. At Sleightsburg Park on the Rondout, dock fishing is available as well as a public boat launch. Following the creek westward through quiet Creek Locks are historic Dutch houses from the very century Henry Hudson first discovered this river valley, and remnants of the Delaware & Hudson Canal – quiet testimony to the early industrial development of this region. The Rondout Creek is the terminus of the Wallkill River whose source is a hundred miles away in New Jersey. Spanning the Wallkill River is the famed

Perrine's Bridge: a wooden covered bridge built in 1835 – the oldest in New York. In the hamlet of Rifton, the solitude of the Wallkill provides a country day of fishing. A packed-dirt rail trail along the Wallkill offers 25 miles of flat bicycling through the woods without automobile traffic. And the gentle current of the Wallkill River offers leisurely canoeing and kayaking – except after heavy rains. Rifton, too, was home to Isabella Baumfree – the abolitionist and suffragist known as Sojourner Truth.

Founded in 1811, Esopus is historically a port town. The town center, which boasts the environmentally designed town hall, is the village of Port Ewen. That marine heritage is captured in the Klyne Esopus Museum, the historic Rondout Creek area of downtown Kingston, and the many active marinas with moorings in the hamlet of Connelly. Hudson River heritage is also evident in religious expression: the Shrine of Our Lady of the Hudson hosts the bluestone statue sculpted by Thomas Penning in 1952 with funds raised by local boatmen and towing companies. It is the sole Madonna statue cradling a tugboat.

Religious institutions line the shores of the Hudson River – guardians of our earth and our souls. Mount Saint Alphonsus, a retreat center, offers nature and spiritual programs to the public and houses a bookstore; its Romanesque chapel holds the Pieta from the 1939 World's Fair and many other life-sized religious sculptures dating from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution; its halls are lined with replicas of Hudson River School art. Holy Cross Monastery has a bookstore open to the public as well as evening vespers and retreats. The Marist Brothers have an active summer program for youth which includes a team-building rope course. Ascension Church has prayerful images in Tiffany stained glass. The Broderhof, originally religious refugees of WW II Germany, is a self-sustaining Christian community. And the Saint Cabrini Home (our very own Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini was the very first American citizen to be canonized) has offered more than a century of service to thousands of orphans, the elderly, and special services for youth.

Just off Route 9W (also known as Broadway) – the main thoroughfare through Esopus – is the Esopus Library which offers a variety of programs including the Ulster County Photo Club, lectures such as The Hudson River School, and exhibits artwork of local artists. Along this main route are many fine restaurants. The south end of 9W offers excellent, affordable lodging. Traveling north, through Port Ewen with vistas of the Catskill Mountains looming in the distance, is the bridge over the Rondout Creek – one of nine sites in Esopus on the National Register of Historic Places – leading to Kingston's downtown maritime center.

In all seasons, Esopus offers a welcome visit to all ages.

For more information:

Civic: Esopus.com
Business: EsopusBusinessAlliance.org
Nature & historic: EsopusHeritage.org