

Hyde Park Trail – Part I: *In the Footsteps of Eleanor Roosevelt*



Roosevelt Farm Lane



Val-Kill



Top Cottage

No walking trail in the Hudson River valley is so heaped in history as the Hyde Park Trail. The Roosevelt Farm Lane segment of this trail begins at Route 9 adjacent to the Hyde Park Drive-in. A wide, gravel path, it is an easy two-mile walk eastward to Route 9G and Val-Kill – residence of Eleanor Roosevelt. Historical tours are offered at Val-Kill describing her countless humanitarian endeavors as first lady, United Nations ambassador, newspaper columnist, sponsor of manufactured-local, and citizen of the world. Also, there are exhibits and a small gift shop.

My favorite image of Eleanor Roosevelt is from a home movie filmed at the sesquicentennial of Esopus in 1961. In it, Eleanor drives up to the celebration alone in her modest station wagon – no Secret Service escort nor any passenger for that matter – and with that assuring smile, engages her neighbors in civic commemoration. Then after a brief visit, returns without fanfare to Val-Kill.

One mile east of Val-Kill, and up 300 feet, is Top Cottage – retreat of Franklin Roosevelt. Historical tours are offered here as well describing this hushed abode overlooking the vast Hudson River valley from 1,500 acres of Roosevelt farmland to the distant Catskill Mountains.

For an additional rustic walk, the one-mile Eleanor Loop – with only 100 feet of elevation gain – passes along stone walls, a pond, and woodland. Here, on a winter day with crusty snow, were visible many animal tracks: the close-set, Tinker Bell sized feet of rabbits separated by four-foot leaps and bounds down the trail; the cloven hoofs of deer fossilized into the ice; and a parade of peace symbol stamps by wild turkey striding through the snowy fields.

To vary the return trip, the Bracken and Newbold trails which parallel the Roosevelt Farm Lane add a half-mile to the trek with a more remote experience of narrow, little-traveled paths through the woods.

For dining, the iconic Eveready Diner offers an extensive, reasonably priced menu. A full scale Italian dinner is available at Coppola's. And for dessert, nothing exceeds the world-class Culinary Institute of America.

For more information about these destinations see the websites for the Hyde Park Trail (www.hydeparkny.us/Recreation/Trails/), Val-Kill (www.nps.gov/elro/), and Scenic Hudson (ScenicHudson.org/Parks/RooseveltFarmLane). With this collection of trails ranging between 4 and 8 miles, and nearby dining, this section of the Hyde Park Trail makes for an ideal day trip.

