

Scenic Hudson – Parks & Preserves: *Burger Hill (Drayton Grant Park)*

Burger Hill provides the most extensive view of the Catskill Mountains range in all the Hudson River valley. And it demarcates the dramatically different topography of each side of the Hudson River: to the west, the Catskill Mountains with 35 peaks over 3,500 feet; to the east, the rolling hills of the neighboring New England states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, whose highest peaks are lower than these Catskill 35 elite.

The half-mile trail up Burger Hill, a 200 foot elevation gain, provides views the entire way, and the undulating, grass covered slope makes for a superb toboggan run. The 600-foot summit is topped by a U.S. Geological Survey marker and three stone slabs to sit in silence and absorb the vista. This viewpoint combines all the elements of the Hudson River



Burroughs Range view from Burger Hill

School of art: the grandeur of nature, the divinity of creation, and our belonging in the outdoors. Like Asher Durand's painting, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)*, this viewpoint combines all the styles of the Hudson River School: the *sublime* wild forest to the south, the *picturesque* pastures and mountains to the west, and the *beautiful* landscape of the country farm to the north. This day, a thermal inversion at 3,000 feet has created a blanket of billows hovering high above the Ashokan Reservoir. Testimony of the lofty heights of the Burroughs Range, the peaks of Cornell, Wittenburg, and Slide at 4,180 feet protrude through that dense cloud.

For lunch, the village crossroads of Rhinebeck – the intersection of King's Highway and an ancient Indian path (now routes 9 and 308) – offer a score of dining opportunities. And the nearby Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome offers an air show of early 1900's aircraft every weekend June through October (2 to 5 p.m.).

Burger Hill is worthwhile for a return sunset walk. Here is visible the entire Catskill high mountain section of the 350-mile Long Path which I have walked end-to-end this very month just a few years ago. As a flock of migrating fowl flies southward into the ruby red embers of this autumn sunset, they pass each of these Long Path hike peaks: the Blackhead Range, North Mountain, High Peak and Round Top, Indian Head and the Devil's Path, Tobias with Mount Tremper, the Burroughs Range, Peekamoose and Table, and the elongated Shawangunk Ridge. Beckoning in the distant night, a lone red lamp pulses atop Woodstock's Overlook Mountain and fire tower.

Maps of Burger Hill and all the Scenic Hudson parks are available at ScenicHudson.org. Now owned and maintained by the Winnakee Land Trust, additional information about Burger Hill is available at WinnakeeLandTrust.org. This park coupled with a tour of Rhinebeck and visit to the aerodrome make for an ideal day trip.



Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome



Beekman Arms Inn – Rhinebeck



Burger Hill



Burger Hill – farm house