Follow the Hudson River School Art Trail to the places that stimulated a distinctly American artistic identity.

The Hudson River School Art Trail is a network of historic sites, museums, and galleries that commemorate the Hudson River School, a group of American artists who were inspired by the natural beauty of the Hudson River Valley. The trail includes stops at sites where the artists worked and lived, and it highlights their contributions to the development of American landscape painting.

The trail begins at The Thomas Cole National Historic Site, which is the birthplace of the Hudson River School and the place where the movement was born. From there, the trail leads to other significant sites, including Olana, the home and studio of Frederic Church, and the Kaaterskill Clove, where the artist Thomas Cole painted some of his most iconic works.

The trail map and directions will enable you to take your own self-guided tour of the Trail and to compare the painted scenes from the 1800s with the same vistas today.

See Art History Come to Life on the Hudson River School Art Trail

The Hudson River School Art Trail takes you to the sites that inspired America’s first great landscape artists. This brochure reproduces some of the magnificent paintings they created and provides a map leading you to the views depicted in the paintings.

The map and directions will enable you to take your own self-guided tour of the Trail and to compare the painted scenes from the 1800s with the same vistas today.
Hudson River School Art Trail

The artist Thomas Cole made his first trip up the Hudson River to Catskill in 1825. The resulting paintings created a sensation in the nascent New York art world and launched the Hudson River School of art. These influential first paintings included a rendition of Kaaterskill Falls as well as South Lake, both of which are included in this Trail. Thomas Cole’s home is now a National Historic Landmark and today provides an orientation for your exploration of the Hudson River School Art Trail. Additional information and images can be found at www.thomascole.org/trail.

**Trail Site 1**
**Cedar Grove, The Thomas Cole National Historic Site**
The Federal-style home and studio of Thomas Cole offers wonderful views, original paintings, period furnishings and numerous Cole artifacts and memorabilia.

**Trail Site 2**
The Olana State Historic Site
The home and workplace of Frederic Edwin Church, a former student of Thomas Cole and a leading Hudson River School artist.

**Trail Site 3**
View on the Catskill Creek
Just a few miles from his home, this scene inspired Thomas Cole so much, he painted it more than any other.

*"the painter of American scenery has indeed privileges superior to any other; all nature here is new to Art."*

**Trail Site 4**
Katterskill Clove
The Clove, a beautifully preserved area of the Catskills, was one of the places most painted by the Hudson River School artists.

*"the peculiar fidelity and sentiment of nature with which Durand always depicts trees, is distinctly marked. The aerial perspective, the gradation of light, the tones of foliage, the slope of the mountains – in a word, the whole scenic expression is harmonious, grand, tender and true."*

**Trail Site 5**
Sunset Rock (also known as Bear’s Den)
A prized location for its magnificent scenic views of the Hudson Valley and North-South Lake.

*...the view takes in both lakes, the Mountain House, South Mountain, High Peak and Round Top, the grand bays formed by the curve of North Mountain and the distant valley of the Hudson... By many this is thought to be the grandest combination of mountain scenery to be met with here or elsewhere."

**Trail Site 6**
North-South Lake
The extraordinary beauty of this site was the inspiration for many paintings by artists of the Hudson River School.

*"most distinctive, perhaps the most impressive characteristic of American scenery is its wildness."

**Trail Site 7**
Catskill Mountain House
Although the majestic hotel no longer stands, the view that attracted visitors still remains as one of the most breathtaking panoramas in the region.

*"Creation...all creation...all that God had done; or man could do..."*

-Natty Bumppo in James Fenimore Cooper's novel The Pioneers (published in 1823, the same year the Catskill Mountain House opened), when asked, "What are you when you get there?"

**Trail Site Directions**

**Trail Site 1**
From Route 9G South, proceed 1.3 miles to where Route 9G turns sharply left. Leave Route 9G and proceed straight ahead onto Route 23A. Continue eight miles to Palenville. Continue another 0.5 miles on Route 23A, climbing through historic Katterskill Clove, just past Butternut Falls to the trail access parking area on the left side of the road. A view of the Clove is available through a clearing in the trees on the south side of the road.

**Trail Site 2**
Katterskill Falls: Leave your car at the parking area for the previous stop (Trail Site 1). Proceed cautiously back along the highway downhill to the bridge at Butternut Falls. Cross the bridge, turn left to exit the road and follow the trail to the right of the falls, which climbs up 1/2 mile to the base of Katterskill Falls. Then return to the parking lot. NOTE: There is no maintained trail under the falls or to the top attempts to climb them are dangerous and cause erosion.

**Mountain Top Historical Society**
The Historical Society’s campus includes an "Art Trail Interpretive Center" in the Visitor Center with an exhibition and a pamphlet about the artists and locations on the trail. From Trail Site 3, turn left out of parking lot and proceed one mile. The Historical Society’s campus will be on the right as you enter the village of Haines Falls.

The next two stops are in North-South Lake Public Campground. A brochure is required, and the campground is open May–October only. (For exact dates please visit www.dec.ny.gov.)

**Trail Site 1**
North-South Lake: From the Mountain Top Historical Society, turn right out of the driveway and proceed 1/5 of a mile up Route 23A. Turn right onto North Lake Road (Country Route 18) and continue 2 miles to the campground at North-South Lake Public Campground. Pay the entrance fee and request Campground and Trail Maps. Enter the campground and bear left toward the North Lake Beach.

At the stop sign turn right, drive down the hill and park in the small parking area near the Recreation Center. Follow the short level path directly across from the Recreation Center. Cole did his sketch for Lake with Dead Trees from the bank of South Lake, which is on the right about 250 feet down this path.

**Trail Site 2**
Sunset Rock: Park yourself about two hours to enjoy this foot trail that climbs a rocky incline, passes open views of the Hudson Valley, and ends at one of the most beautifully painted views of the Hudson River School. From Trail Site 2, drive back to North Lake Road, turn right and drive to the North Lake Beach parking area. The beach is to the west, a picnic area to the east. Walk east across the picnic area, and when you get to the bench, go left. You should soon see the blue trail markers of the Encampment Trail. Sign the register, continue another north 500 feet and begin a climb, which is the most difficult stretch of the hike. Go 1/4 mile to "Aurora’s Rock," which gives a sweeping view of the Hudson Valley. The trail then leaves the lodges, and in less than a half mile along the blue trail it meets a junction with a yellow trail toward "Sunset Rock." In Cole’s day, this location was referred to as "Bear’s Den." The two lakes and the site of the former Catskill Mountain House are part of this breathtaking view. Return by retracing your steps.

**Trail Site 3**
Catskill Mountain House: From the North Lake Beach parking area, walk down the short roadway at the far end of the parking lot toward the picnic pavilion and boat launch area. Turn left and walk away from the lake. The gated road on the right leads up a hill. Signs will direct you to the Mountain House. About 1/5 of a mile.