

Travel – It's a New York State of mind

For a getaway this winter you could do no worse than go to New York State. It is easy to get to from Edinburgh, and if you turn the typical New York break on its head then it could be relatively cheap, leaving you more cash for fun and shopping.

My suggestion to you is to fly with Norwegian Airlines on one of their flights to Stewart International, an upstate military base. The flights are four times a week until 28 October when they begin a daily schedule until end March 2019.

If you plan ahead just a little, then you could fly from Edinburgh Airport on Halloween returning on 4 November for £254.30 per person. This includes taxes of £140.70, and it is this continuing tax which may yet pull the plug on some of our long haul routes. At present Norwegian only undertake to fly from here for the next six months, but we do hope they find a way to continue long after that as this is a really attractive part of the US. (And if not then they will continue to fly from Dublin to the east coast.)

My suggestion is to stay in a hotel upstate in one of the charming towns you will find there and then either have a day trip, or indeed an overnight trip, into Manhattan for sightseeing.



TAKE FLIGHT

Setting off from Edinburgh at teatime and arriving in the USA in time for dinner is a great way to start your holiday. You can opt to eat or not on board, but do take a wrap or extra layer with you as there are no in-flight blankets available – and you need your own entertainment on a tablet or phone too. (Take a battery pack or make sure all your electronic devices are fully charged or you may need to find someone to talk to!). Refreshments of all kinds are available, some served along with meals and some to purchase, and the meals may look small but are deceptively filling and really rather tasty.

The aircraft used on this route is a Boeing 737-800 MAX with two rows of three seats. Exit row seats are really spacious, and well worth putting up with the temporary inconvenience of putting your bags overhead during take off and landing. The flight takes seven and a half hours on the way to Stewart, but the flight was much shorter on the way back with a 140mph jetstream bringing us home in about six hours.

On landing at Stewart it will take you far less time to get through customs and immigration than at any of the larger US airports. Once outside there is a bus which would take you to

the Port Authority in downtown Manhattan in about 90 minutes, but you could simply stay upstate for a day or two. In a week or so the fall colours will be really lovely, and at any time of the year this is a beautiful area to explore.



In the garden outside the Franklin D Roosevelt Home, Library and Museum

UPSTATE NEW YORK

The [I Love New York](#) tourism initiative began in wider New York state, and continues to offer loads of information about your options for travel, dining and accommodation. They have inspirational ideas about ways to see the autumn colours across the whole state [here](#).



Homewood Suites by Hilton

ACCOMMODATION

We stayed first at Homewood Suites by Hilton which is the closest hotel to the airport and so a good place to start your holiday. The suites themselves are spacious, fastidiously clean and very comfortable, and, as I found out from Kathy Russo the Manager of Homewood Suites, about to be given an even more modern look over the next while.



Homewood Suites where the rooms are suites

Kathy explained who her guests are. She said : “There is so much to do in the Hudson Valley and especially in Orange County. Our guests come for business or pleasure, sometimes for extended periods of time if they are on military assignment or even relocating. We love seeing the reaction of international guests to our area which is quite beautiful.

“This is an all-suite hotel, so we have no rooms! All have fully-equipped kitchens, some are studios and one bedrooms and two bedrooms. We include a daily breakfast and Monday to Thursday we offer complimentary evening fare. This is a light meal with beer and wine included. We have a gorgeous indoor pool and a patio area outside, a fitness room and business centre. It is really like home!”

Winter rates are discounted at Homewood Suites, and do vary. They depend on the length of stay and which type of suite you take. As an example Kathy told us that the average price ranges from \$129-159, and you could have 6-8 people in a two bedroom suite. Every suite has a pull out sofa and some can be inter-connected making them a good option for extended families too.

Ignoring the option to cook in the suite’s kitchen we went out to dinner at Cosimo’s which is an Italian family restaurant chain. (and where you can charge your Tesla outside). An entrée here costs under \$20 and the food is delicious and service friendly. This is a chain of three restaurants, but don’t be put off by that. It still retains its family management and feel. The food was delicious, and pasta is a good option anytime but especially on arrival in the US where by now it was way past my bedtime.



Corridors at Homewood Suites are long since the suites themselves are very spacious.

Back to base the king-sized bed was very inviting for a good night's sleep, and the bathroom stocked with essentials to use in the spacious walk-in shower.

It is a case of all mod cons at Homewood Suites with USB ports to charge your phone, but probably a good idea to travel with at least one travel adapter anyway.

Breakfast is taken buffet style in the dining room just off reception, and everything you could ask for was included from porridge to a full cooked breakfast. Coffee in the States is more often filter coffee, but it hit the spot.



Hyatt House – a suite hotel

On the second night we stayed at Hyatt House in Fishkill, which was similar to Homewood Suites as it offers suites too. Its main ethos is to offer you a space which reminds you of home. I had a two bedroom suite which was a bit too big with its three TVs, but again it was clean and most comfortable with a terrific shower. These are just like an apartment, with areas to work in and to relax. There is again a fully equipped kitchen with large US style fridge and a welcome coffee maker.

There is a pool and exercise room, an outdoor grill area, and again the overnight stay includes a free breakfast at the dining area downstairs which doubles up as a bar area in the evenings. You have free printing on offer in the business centre. There is a 24 hour guest market where you can get some essentials too. With the option to do your own laundry, and same day dry cleaning on offer here this really does feel like home!

TRANSPORT

We had a driver called Jim Ferraro from NJoyTheRide who was a bit of a legend, but that would really only be worthwhile if you are a bigger group. He arrived with doughnuts and cookies for us each day! Otherwise it can be quite reasonable to hire

a car and there are some courtesy buses as well as public transport.

Certainly from Stewart International you can go to New York City on a bus or catch a train at Beacon. And you can also take a courtesy bus from the airport to the shopping outlet, or they suggest you make this your last day, buy a new suitcase and then go to the airport direct from the Woodbury Common shopping outlet.

SHOPPING

You just have to make time to explore the nearby [Simon shopping outlet at Woodbury Common.](#)

We were welcomed to the VIP lounge by Kaitlyn Loughran, the marketing and tourism coordinator of Simon, the company behind the concept of the outdoor shopping mall. She made us very welcome and explained that the idea is to make Woodbury Common a destination in itself.

Top Tip – go early. We were there first thing in the morning and it was noticeable how much busier it got by lunchtime.

A new theme park for 2-12 year olds LEGOLAND® New York will be built soon just up the road from Woodbury Common. It will be the largest Lego theme park in the US, and will offer a 'go to' children's destination as another day out. Scheduled to hold its grand opening in spring 2020, the Park will be open seasonally from spring to fall.

From the outset, the Resort will feature a LEGOLAND Hotel, which will be open year-round. Each of the Hotel's 250 rooms will be themed to a popular LEGO toy to be announced at a later date. ShortLine Coach USA has announced its intention to provide a one-seat ride from Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City to LEGOLAND New York. The Resort also expects to welcome international visitors via nearby Stewart International Airport.

Dave Mistretta, General Manager at Simon Property Group, explained the concept of the outlet mall to us. He said : “Simon have properties all over the US. In California they have a property called Desert Hills which also has a number of luxury brands but no-one has the collection that we have here. If somebody wants to start in the outlet business, then they come here for a look. Many of the stores here at Woodbury Common are the only outlet stores maybe in the US, maybe in the whole world. You will see different brands offering amazing value.”

The redevelopment of the mall includes the provision of free wifi with many different amenities such as great places to eat and is regarded as a huge improvement on what the development looked like five years ago with its artwork and water features. It is now an experience, not just a shopping destination, which was built in 1985.



Woodbury Common – 910,000 square feet of shopping

This is a beautiful place for those of you who want to snap up a bargain, but it is also a good place to take the reluctant shopper who might want to just sit outside in the fresh air or enjoy the coffee shops and restaurants in the Market Hall.

There are plenty of places to do just that.

It is one of the top tourist destinations in New York State with more visitors each year than all the sports teams playing in the New York area and the US Open put together!



Woodbury Common is more of an experience with water features and seating to allow you to relax during your visit

Woodbury Common is the largest shopping outlet in the world with 910,000 square feet and 240 stores when the current expansion is complete. At this point you are only 50 miles north of New York City, but it is a world away from Manhattan, and the prices are very different too. There are many discounts and reward points to enhance your shopping trip, and if you need another suitcase there are several shops for that too.

You can catch a Shortline/Coach bus from Stewart with a twice daily return service at the end of each day all for \$30.

Alternatives are to hire a car for your few days in New York State or take a taxi from the airport. It is only 22 miles. If you want to spend the last day of your holiday at Woodbury Common, then you can store your luggage and have access to a

VIP lounge with light refreshments and snacks before heading back to Stewart to take your plane home across the Atlantic.

Visitors are encouraged to stay for the whole day here before moving on to other attractions in Orange County like the US Military Academy at West Point, walking routes, art destinations and of course the wine trail (which will need a whole article to itself!)



Lunch at Applebee's is now one of my firm US travel recommendations. I had never tried it before, rather avoiding the chain, but the food is excellent and the service slick. The menu offers steaks and ribs, sides of mac and cheese or garlic mashed potatoes, chicken tenders and seafood. The Fiesta Lime Chicken served with rice was just delicious. The portions are big however, so I can't tell you anything about the puddings!

Applebee's is a big chain in the US with booth style seating,

but don't be put off by that. It is a good place to sit down and refuel when you've been shopping fit to drop.



Applebee's – a firm recommendation

Five things to see and do in Orange County

Goshen Historic Track – a living museum with training facilities for harness racing. 1500 seat grandstand and racing in June and July. www.goshenhistorictrack.com

West Point Tours Inc – enjoy a guided tour of the military academy. There are spectacular views of the Hudson here. www.westpointtours.com

Storm King Art Centre – a 500 acre outdoor sculpture park where you can hire bikes, walk or be driven around in an electric golf buggy to admire the artwork. The Storm King Wavefield (literally waves made from the earth) is a Maya Lin piece. She is the architect, designer and artist who created the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. www.stormking.org

Birdwatching – I was reliably informed by Roberta our ILNY guide that this is a birdwatchers' paradise where you might see a bald eagle one moment and many migratory birds too.

Motorcyclopedia Museum – this is one of the largest in the US and has over 500 motorbikes to show you, including over 100 Indians. www.motorcyclopedia.com



Storm King Art Centre – a sculpture park set in 500 acres named after Storm King Mountain overlooking the Hudson River. Founded in 1960 by Ralph E Ogden and H. Peter Stern.

Dutchess County Attractions

The state is made up of 62 counties, although our trip only took us to a couple of those, Orange and Dutchess County. orangetourism.org is a good place to start to look for some information on your visit and so is www.dutchesstourism.com which will make recommendations on what to see in one of the original counties of New York from 1683. It is halfway between the city and the state capital of Albany in the Hudson River Valley.

There is a train service on the Metro-North Railroad and there is a bus service which combines with historic sites. The Roosevelt Ride Shuttle will pick you up at Poughkeepsie train station and take you to three Roosevelt site. Details at NPS.gov/HOFR



We visited Rhinebeck which is picture postcard perfect America with its lovely main street. The Beekman Arms and Delamater Inn is the oldest inn in America, made a little famous by Chelsea Clinton having some of her wedding celebrations there. The rooms are spread out 'campus style' over two and a half blocks.

The shopping in Rhinebeck is lovely, varied and individual with a particular favourite at Hammertown and Oblong Books and Music. (they sell CDs...)



Franklin D Roosevelt Home, Library and Museum

is full of memorabilia

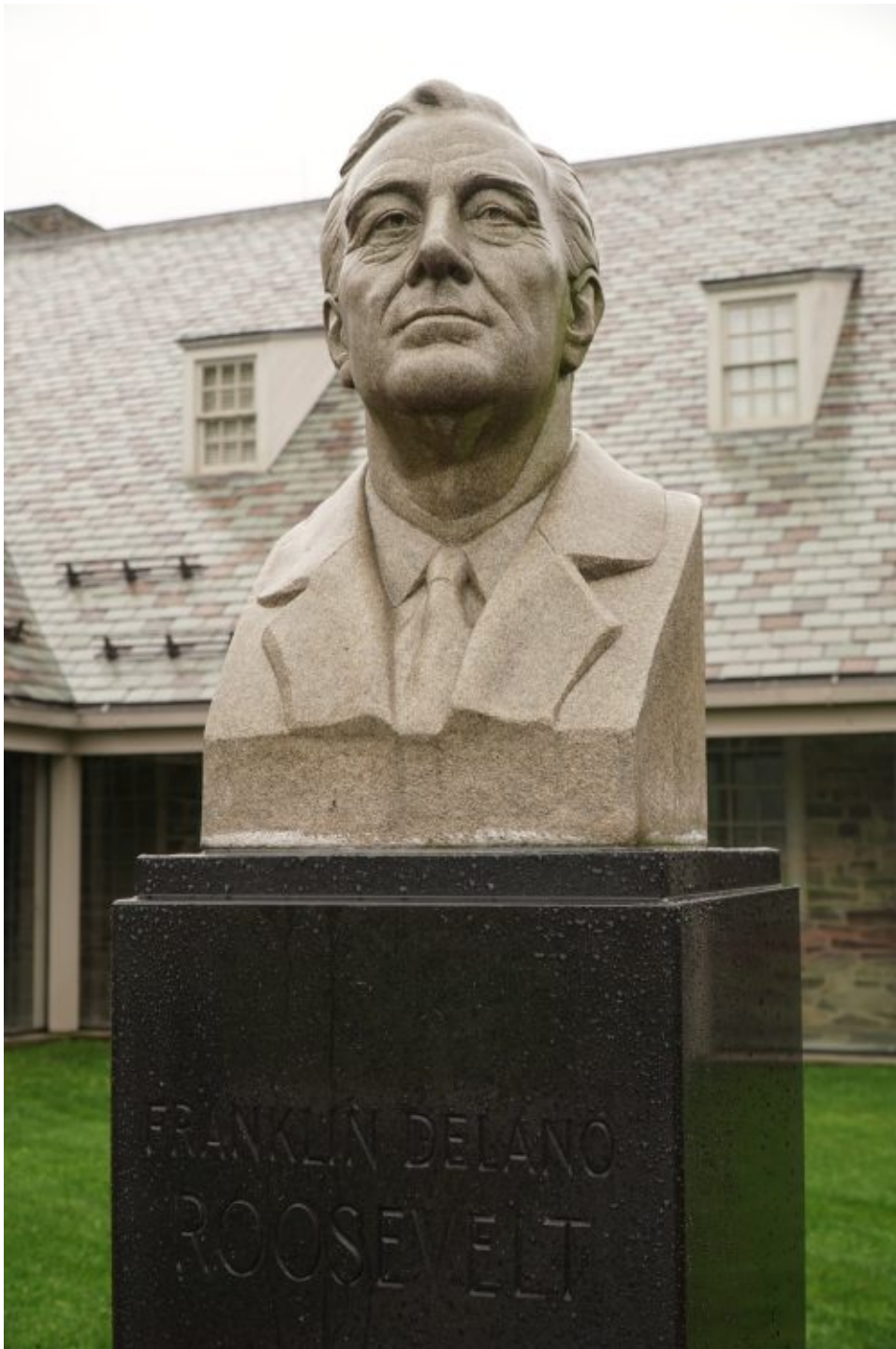
We stopped by the Franklin D Roosevelt Library and Museum, which is really a building to house the archive of a president who served for four terms at such a crucial time in history. This is situated in his former family home Hyde Park, and is a well spent morning. Bought by James Roosevelt for \$40,000 the 200 acres offered a training track for horses as well as a home to replace a previous one destroyed by fire.



Scott Rector Chief
Interpretation at FDR Home

We were lucky to have the services of one of their top guides Scott Rector who illustrated the president's life story to us on a fascinating tour around his boyhood and adult home.

He sketched out for us the relationship between FDR and Eleanor his wife and how that became strained as a result of FDR's infidelity. She offers him a divorce but it would have destroyed his political career. His mother Sarah was a constant figure too, and she told him that if he divorced Eleanor she would cut him off from any inheritance.



Franklin D Roosevelt architect of the New Deal

Lunch en route to our afternoon attractions was at a the [Hyde Park Brewing Company](#) which is just across the street from the FDR library. Who knew you could taste a flight of beer in the same way as you might champagne or wine? With names like Big Easy Blonde and Rough Rider Red this is a place that takes beer seriously even if they don't take themselves too seriously. Their food is a good lunchtime selection of sandwiches and salads, and again beware the huge portions!

Five things to see and do in Dutchess County

Poughkeepsie is a centre for breweries, restaurants and the **Walkway over the Hudson State Historic Park**. We saw this elevated bridge several times, but sadly did not have time to do the walk. It is the longest elevated pedestrian bridge in the world more than 200 feet above the valley and the river below.

Vassar College is one of the best known colleges in the US, and you can visit the campus. It is a co-ed college and was the first to grant degrees to women. It is situated in sprawling grounds and has many buildings of architectural interest.

The Vanderbilt Mansion is near the FDR Home at Hyde Park and you could easily combine a visit to both in one day. This is free to enter if you only want to walk or play on the lawns. It is a National Historic Site.

Use the Harlem Valley Rail Trail to snake your way up Route 22 if you choose not to hire a car. It starts in Wassaic and runs 11 miles north to Millerton. This is a place to walk or cycle. Of course if you really want a challenge then you could go a la Bill Bryson on the **Appalachian Trail**, 30 miles of which are in this county.

Experience the US phenomenon of the Drive In. You would need a car to enjoy **The Hyde Park Drive in Theatre** opened by Ira and Sydney Cohen in 1950. It is the oldest but they also opened the **Overlook Theatre** in Poughkeepsie where the screen is six storeys high. You can expect two films at a low price although both are seasonal. The newest drive in us the **Four Brothers Drive in Theatre** at Amenia. It features electric vehicle charging and burgers and ice cream delivered to you in your car.

All of this can be found in one easy to get to destination, and the result is a holiday that would take a little planning,

but then you might find you have to go back again.



Shopping in Rhinebeck has to include a trip to Oliver Kita Chocolate

Air Departure Tax

The Scottish Government passed legislation to introduce Air Departure Tax (ADT) which would be managed by Revenue Scotland, Scotland's Tax Authority, but it has not yet implemented the legislation. It claims that issues around exemptions for flights to the Highlands and Islands must be resolved first.

Previously the government set out a determined policy to reduce the burden of APD in Scotland by half, but it has since delayed take off on that policy.



Norwegian use Boeing 737-800 aircraft on the transatlantic routes

- *I was a guest of Norwegian, New York State Tourism, Homewood Suites by Hilton (<https://homewoodsuites3.hilton.com>) and Hyatt House Hotel (www.hyatt.com). Norwegian offers direct flights from Edinburgh to New York Stewart Intl. Airport, a gateway to discounted shopping at Woodbury Common Premium Outlets (<https://uk.simon.travel>) and New York City. Flights go daily from 28 October and fares start from £159 one-way in brand-new Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. Book now for travel up to 29 March 2019 at www.norwegian.com/uk or dial [0330 8280854](tel:03308280854) (opt. 1)*

For more information on New York State, Orange County, Dutchess County and the experiences available, visit www.iloveny.com www.orangetourism.org and www.dutchesstourism.com