

TRAVELING:

Explore West Point and the Mid-Hudson Valley

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NICOLE PENSIERO

It had been years since I had visited the **United States Military Academy** at West Point, NY — and my traveling companion had never been. It seemed like a great getaway, not too far from home.

Since opening its doors as the site of the U.S. Military Academy in 1802, the location has operated as the nation's oldest continuously occupied regular army post — and a highly competitive four-year college that prepares its graduates for leadership careers in the U.S. Army.

Located in **Orange County, NY**, just above the top of New Jersey, we knew we'd have plenty to see and do in West Point and its surrounding attractions. We stayed at the famed **Thayer Hotel**, the only property located on the grounds of West Point. Built in 1926, and extensively renovated in the past 20 years, this 151-room hotel overlooks the academy's campus.

Our two-night trip started actually on the Hudson River, in the town of Newburgh, where we arrived after an easy 2.5-hour drive to enjoy a relaxing and educational boat ride on the **Pride of the Hudson**.

From there, we enjoyed a visit to **Jones Farm** in nearby Cornwall. This is a special place, offering delicious baked goods (best cookies ever!), a café for breakfast or lunch, and a gift shop.



Cadets march on the grounds of the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY

We closed out our busy day at the Thayer Hotel, which is not only elegant but also offers a lesson — or should I say several lessons — in West Point's history, with historical plaques and photos throughout the building. We enjoyed a buffet breakfast at the hotel's charming, spacious **MacArthur's Riverview Restaurant**.



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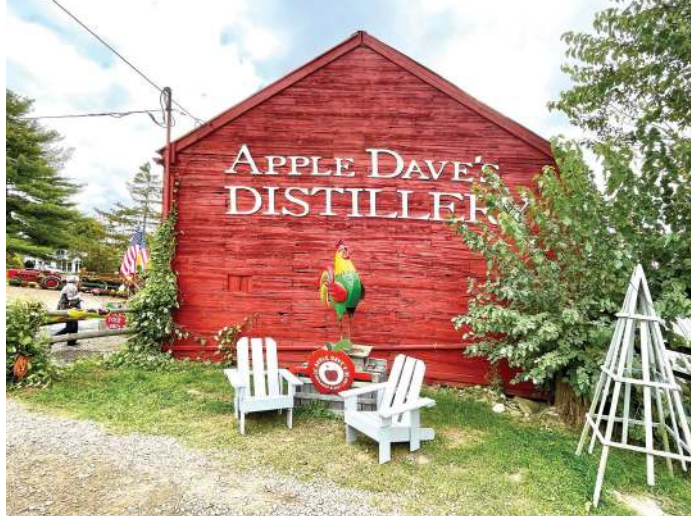
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Here are some ideas if you visit this wonderful part of New York State:

- **Tour West Point.** We had a great guide for our bus tour, and we loved being able to get off the bus and explore things at eye level. And we learned so much! For instance, did you know the college campus of West Point is nearly the same size as Manhattan? Or that Edgar Allan Poe flunked out after one year? (Don't miss the excellent, free West Point Museum after your tour).
- Enjoy art and nature at the **Storm King Art Center.** This popular open-air museum in New Windsor, NY, contains what is likely the largest collection of contemporary outdoor sculptures in the country.
- Bring the kids and pick apples at **Apple Dave's Orchards.** This pick-your-own apples site in Warwick, NY, also features a distillery and a gift shop with seasonal treats.
- Savor some pie at **Noble Pies Bakery and Café,** also in Warwick. Offering both sweet and savory pies in two sizes, this family-owned business is a big favorite with locals and visitors alike.
- **Take a drive.** The scenery in the Hudson Valley is nothing short of spectacular, and you can find beauty around every curve of every winding road. We spent some time just wandering, ending up in the famous town of **Woodstock,** about 40 minutes north of West Point, where we enjoyed the boutiques and had a nice meal.

For more information about the West Point region, visit www.pickocny.com.



Apple Dave's is a family-friendly family place for apple picking in Warwick, NY.



There is magnificent scenery throughout the Mid-Hudson Valley.

Nicole Pensiero is a South Jersey resident and a member of the North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA).

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