

Tourism News



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Contact: Nancy Lutz, 845-463-5446
Nancy@dutchesstourism.com



Tivoli, N.Y.: Authenticity on the Hudson

Twelve years ago, when Lisa Schwarzbaum was buying a second home, she could have picked the antithesis of her Upper West Side apartment: a rural spread, miles away from the nearest brioche. Instead, she chose a house in the center of Tivoli, a village of 1,100 in northwest Dutchess County.

The 1860s two-bedroom house, for which she paid about \$300,000, had a bright, tin-ceilinged kitchen, a front porch supported by Doric columns and a cheerful red front door.

"I didn't want it to be 'The Shining,'" she said.

Ms. Schwarzbaum, 64, is a former film critic for Entertainment Weekly magazine. She knew all the horror scenarios involving lonely houses, which is why she preferred to surround herself with neighbors like Emily Majer, a carpenter who specializes in preservation and is also Tivoli's deputy mayor. When Ms. Schwarzbaum's basement flooded — wet cellars are common afflictions in Tivoli, which sits on the eastern bank of the Hudson River — Ms. Majer summoned the fire department to pump it out.

Ms. Schwarzbaum was eager to dispel any misunderstandings about Tivoli. The village has a thriving arts community, as well as a bakery, a whiskey bar and students from nearby Bard College. But it is not Brooklyn on the Hudson, she said.

Nor does it resemble the Tivoli depicted in the sixth and last season of the HBO series "Girls." In the final episode, Lena Dunham's character, Hannah Horvath, moves with her newborn son to a college town of that name. To Ms. Schwarzbaum's eye, the setting looked more like the manicured suburb in the opening scene of the horror film "Get Out," from which a black character is abducted; the actual Tivoli has wood-trimmed Victorian houses and generous patches of undeveloped land.

Joel Griffith, Tivoli's mayor since 2015, described the village as "unpretentious" and "authentic." Having grown up there (his father was a philosophy professor at Bard) and having earned a master of fine arts degree from the college (he moonlights as a landscape painter), he is especially good at mediating town-gown relations. His administration increased penalties for noise violations and passed a nuisance gathering ordinance that makes it "difficult to have an 'Animal House' party," he said.

"There are many, many boons to living three miles away from Bard," said Mr. Griffith, singling out greater cultural and demographic diversity and a market for the businesses concentrated on Broadway, Tivoli's main street. These include several restaurants, a community theater, and the art-filled [Hotel Tivoli](#), owned by the painters Brice and Helen Marden.

But Bard is just a corner of his preoccupations. He is also working to develop the land along the Hudson where trains currently run. In 2010, the town bought three acres from CSX Transportation and has done preliminary designs for a riverfront park that would be reached by a pedestrian overpass above the tracks, offering a place to take in the dramatic Catskill Mountain views.

What You'll Find

Part of the town of Red Hook, Tivoli is 27 miles north of Poughkeepsie and 16 miles south of Hudson off Route 9G. The location is something of a dead end, observed Adelia Geiger, a broker with Gary DiMauro Real Estate. "People don't just drive up 9G, turn left, and go through Tivoli and out," she said, explaining why she believes that Tivoli feels more like a working village than a tourist pit stop.

Second-home residents like Ms. Schwarzbaum, who spends half her time in the village, tend to put down deep roots and even become permanent fixtures.

Diverse architectural styles are found in and around Tivoli's 1.8 square miles. Historic estates with river frontage and multiple outbuildings represent the grandest examples, even if they're but leftover crumbs from the original properties held by prominent Hudson Valley landowners, like the Livingston family.

In these houses live Tivoli's best-known part-time residents, including the Mardens, who own the 23-acre Rose Hill estate, built in 1843, and the publisher Jann Wenner; his is the 69-acre estate, called Teviot, built the same year. Such spreads rarely come on the market, Ms. Geiger said.

What You'll Pay

Because of Tivoli's high demand and small size (the 2010 census counted only 570 housing units), inventory is chronically tight. Five properties drawn from multiple listings were advertised for sale on Zillow's website as of Monday. These included a six-bedroom house used as a rental property for students, at [101 Montgomery Street](#), listed at \$245,000, and a three-bedroom Victorian at [18 Broadway](#), listed at \$695,000.

The median sales price of Tivoli houses as of June 5, according to Ms. Geiger, was about \$302,000, based on eight sales from multiple listings over the previous 12 months. The most expensive of those properties sold for \$710,000.

Eight homes advertised for rent on Trulia as of Monday included a one-bedroom apartment in a condo at [9 Elizabeth Drive](#), listed at \$895 per month, and a converted barn on an estate at [50 River Drive](#), listed at \$3,600 per month.

The Vibe

Tivoli residents are informal, nature-loving people. On a recent Saturday, members of the Tivoli Progressive Garden Party, now in its fifth year, were weeding in preparation for their next meeting, at which they would tour one another's gardens and down glasses of prosecco. At the 18th-century riverfront estate of Edwynn Houk, a [photography gallery](#) owner, and his wife, Nancy Wu Houk, an art conservator and beekeeper, alternating rows of fruit trees and lavender plants provided a buffet for Ms. Houk's tough Russian honeybees. And just south of the village border, in the town of Red Hook, an honor guard of vivid purple salvia lined up in front of [Ham House](#), an 1854 Italianate Revival residence once owned by Saul Bellow that overlooks the 1,500 protected acres of [Tivoli Bays Wildlife Management Area](#).

The Schools

Tivoli children attend public school in the village of Red Hook, about seven miles southeast

[Mill Road Elementary School](#) serves about 800 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. On 2016 state tests, 51 percent met standards in English, versus 39 percent statewide; 50 percent met standards in math, versus 43 percent statewide.

[Linden Avenue Middle School](#) serves 481 students in sixth through eighth grades. On 2016 state tests, 45 percent met standards in English, versus 37 percent statewide; 43 percent met standards in math, versus 34 percent statewide.

[Red Hook Senior High School](#) serves 677 students in ninth through 12th grades. On the 2016 SATs, the school's average score in reading and writing was 540, compared with 483 statewide; the average in math was 544, compared with 501 statewide.

The Commute

The village is about 12 miles from the Rhinecliff-Kingston Amtrak train station in Rhinecliff, N.Y. The trip from Pennsylvania Station takes about one hour and 40 minutes and costs \$29 to \$69 one way.

Trains on Metro-North Railroad's Hudson line stop in Poughkeepsie, a 45-minute drive south. The trip from Grand Central Terminal takes about two hours and costs \$18.50 to \$24.75 one way.

The History

In the 1790s, Peter Delabegarre (also known as Pierre de la Bigarre) acquired riverfront property next to Clermont, the estate of Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, and planned a town he called Tivoli, after the summer residence of Roman emperors. The plan was never executed quite as he imagined it, and he eventually went bankrupt, but the name stuck. In 1872, Tivoli was incorporated with neighboring Madalin to create the village of that name today.