Seeing Syracuse, New York

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Seeing Syracuse, New York

TRAVEL

December 10, 2014 | By Yoli Ouiya



A few months back, I was given the chance to explore the beautiful city of Syracuse, New York, as well as some of the surrounding areas. The opportunity excited me as I am a native New Yorker, but my exposure to the state as a whole was fairly limited. Not to mention all the work Syracuse has recently put into building itself up and making itself more sustainable.



During my trip, I had the chance to explore several businesses that are operating on sustainable models, take in some incredible scenery, saw the only traffic light where the green is at the top, and stay in an eco-friendly hotel—Hotel Skyler. And that is where the trip really began.

Hotel Skyler

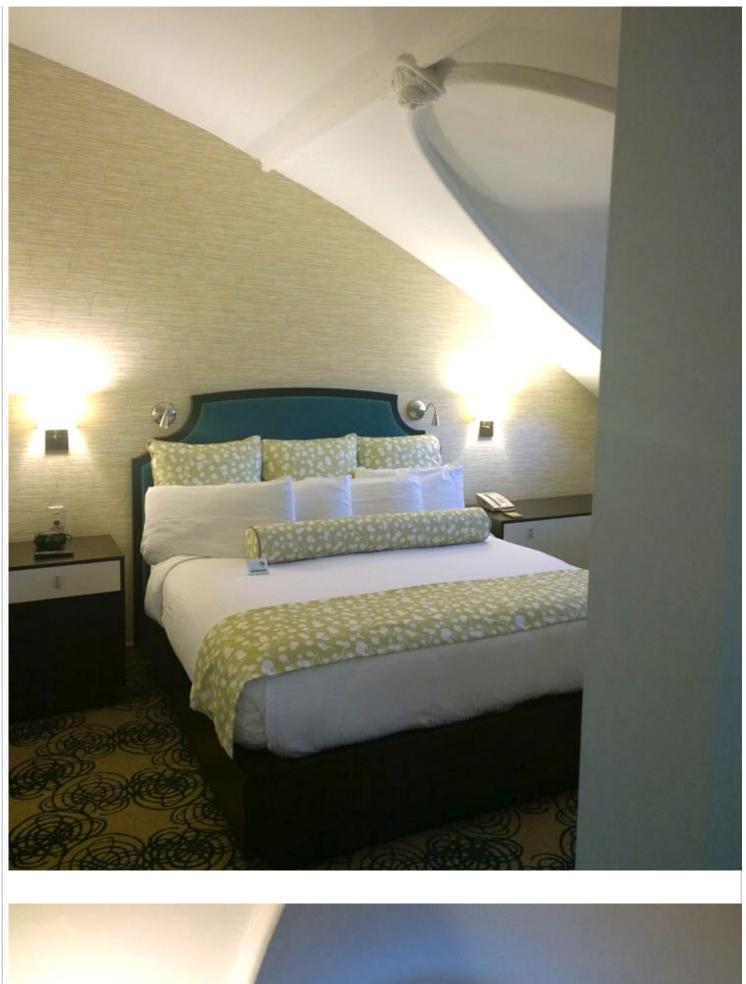


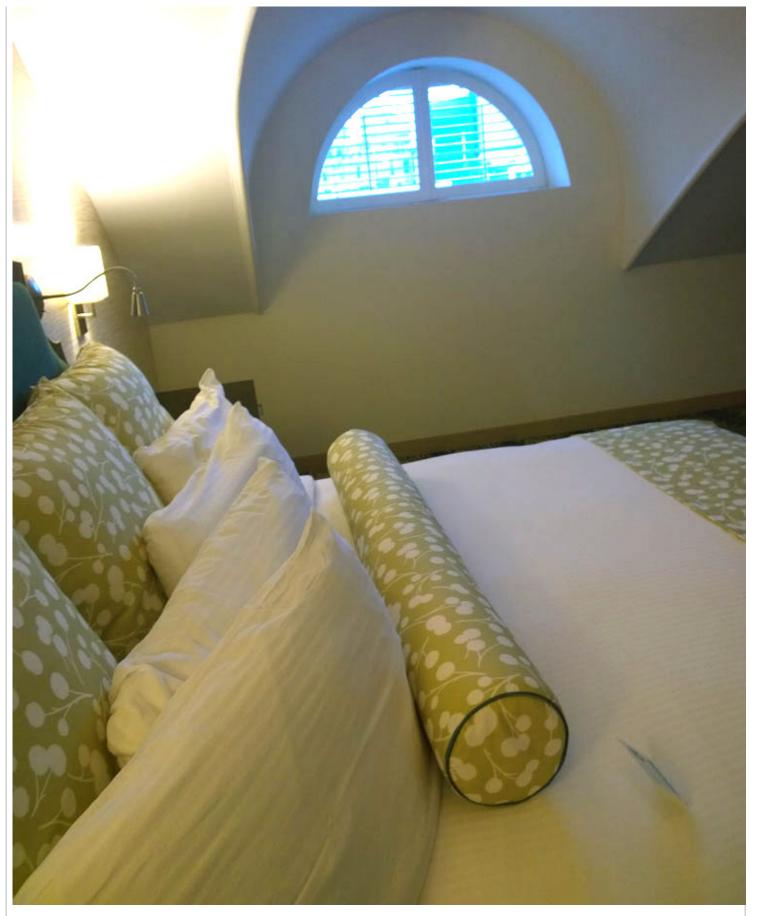
Anyone who travels knows how important the accommodations are. I personally always get excited about the chance to stay somewhere new. Hotel Skyler, however, held a special appeal for me. They are an eco-hotel; this means that from the building itself to the bedding and more, they always make their choices with sustainability in mind.

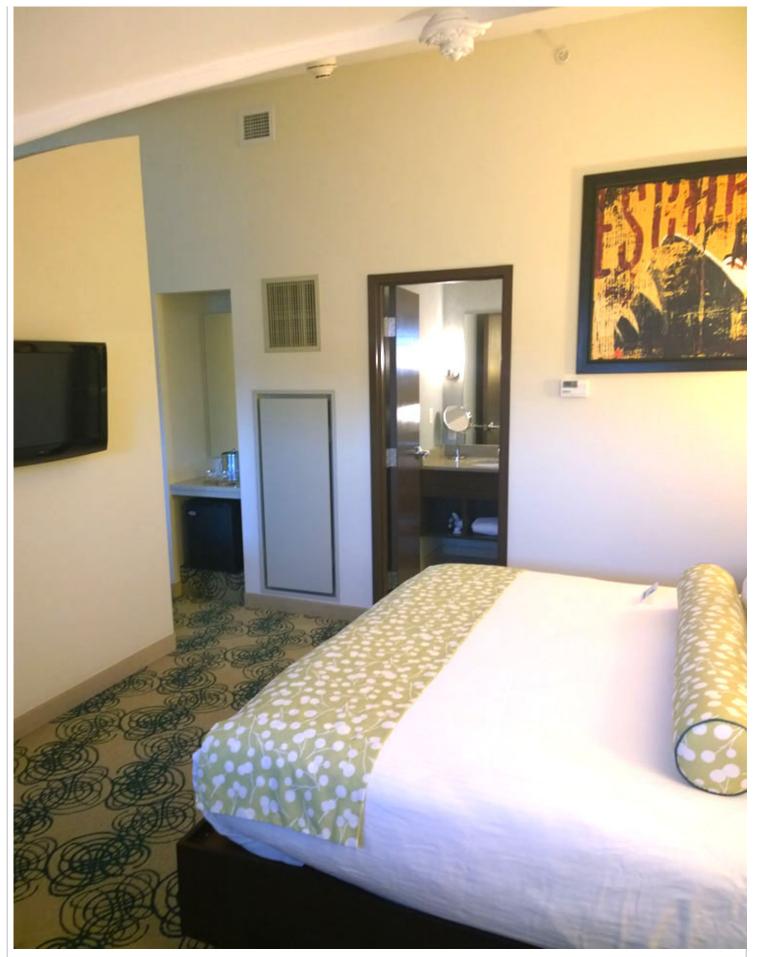
Now, I have enjoyed my fair share of eco-lodgings. Most of the time, this means roughing it a bit not the worst thing in the world, but it hardly appeals to everyone. However, Hotel Skyler makes ecofriendly much more palatable to the majority of travelers. The lobby mosaic alone lets you know that this is a new brand.

Housed in the repurposed, former Temple Adath Yeshurun synagogue built in 1921, Hotel Skyler is more boutique than you might imagine. Through renovations and plenty of creative thinking, they have met the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum standards; this means that they utilize the best possible practices in creating eco-friendly buildings. Some of the features they incorporated into their building to earn their LEED certification include a geothermal heat pump, keycard powered rooms, and natural cleaning products. You can't get any greener than staying at 1 of 3 in the US and 1 of 10 LEED Platinum Hotels in the world.





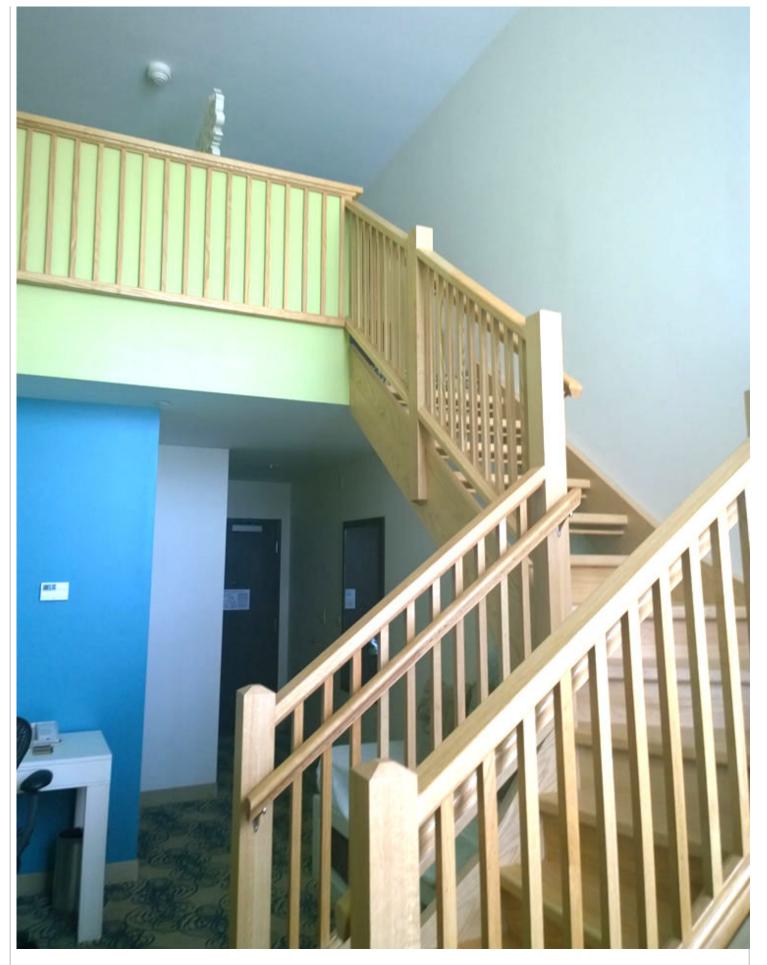


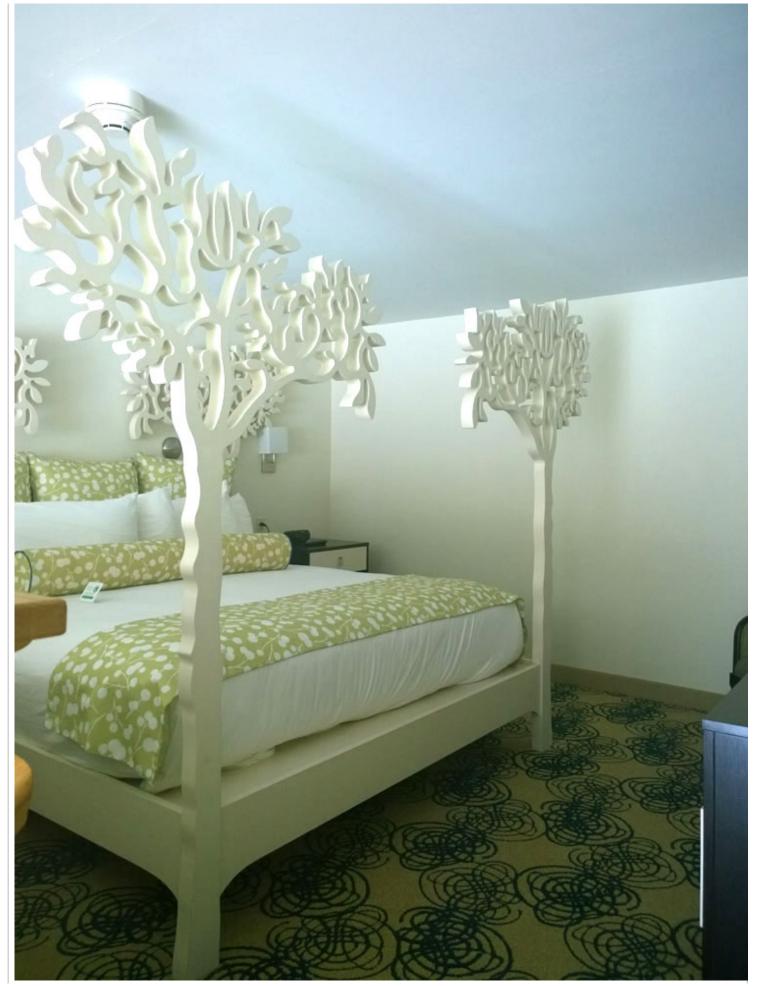


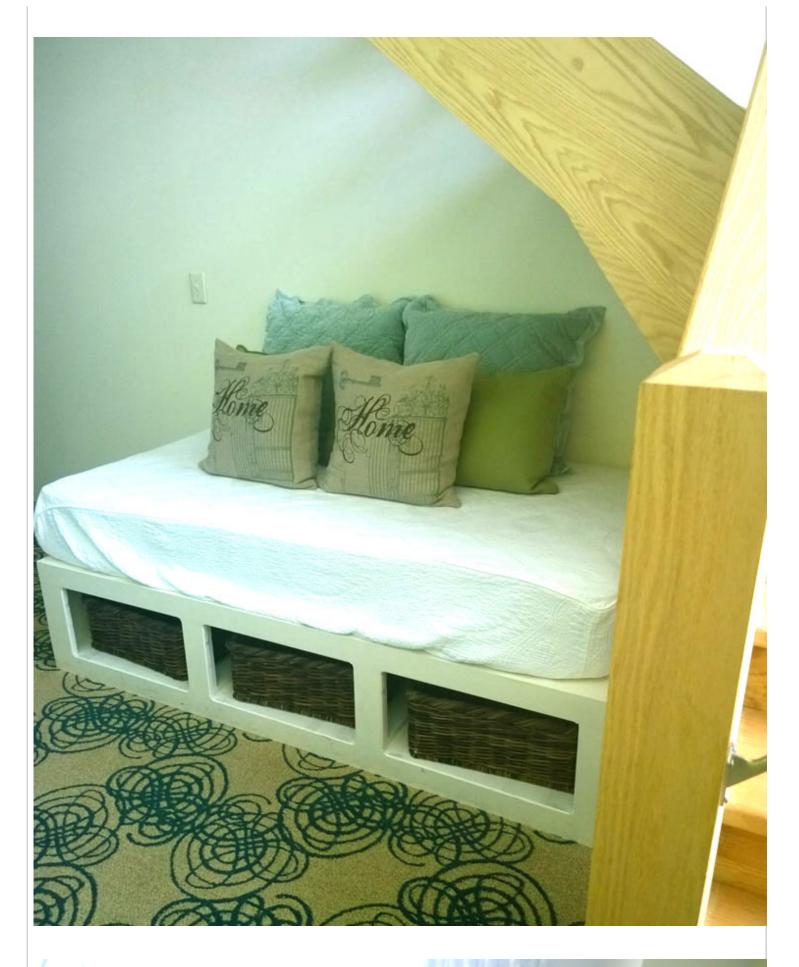
I was lucky enough to stay in the King Suite for the duration of my stay. This suite is designed to http://yolisgreenliving.com/2014/12/seeing-syracuse-new-york/

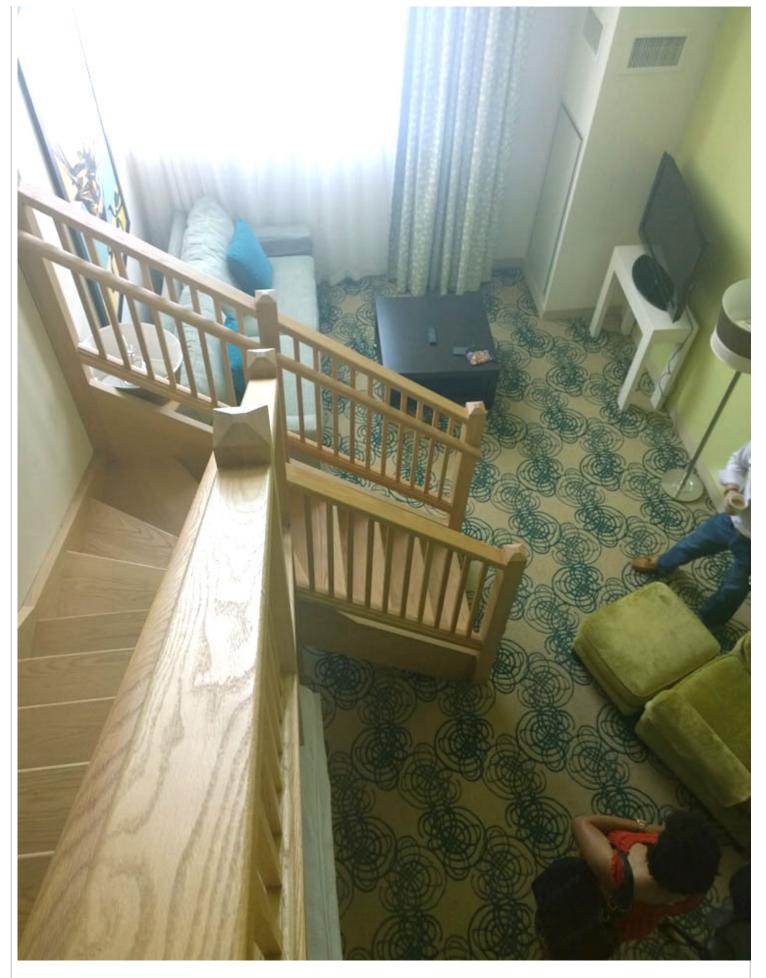
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make you feel completely at home—except more relaxed. The bed was large and soft—perfect to rest in after my long days around the city—and the vaulted ceilings made the room feel even more spacious and luxurious. I also enjoyed having the sitting room with television to unwind, as well as the desk to work at and reflect on all of my adventures in the beautiful city of Syracuse, New York.









While I didn't stay there, I did have the chance to tour their tree house suite. This suite was very whimsical in its design and felt like something I would have dreamed up as a child-only better. What makes this suite even more special, however, if that a percentage of its profits are donated to a local hospital. It is definitely my top pick for when I visit again, which I certainly will; between the beautiful accommodation and the friendly, helpful staff, it is in the top tier of places to stay in Syracuse.

The Rich History of Syracuse

Before I get into my adventures in the city, I'd like to note some of the city's fascinating history, which we were able to learn through Gregg Tripoli at the **Onondaga Historical Association**.

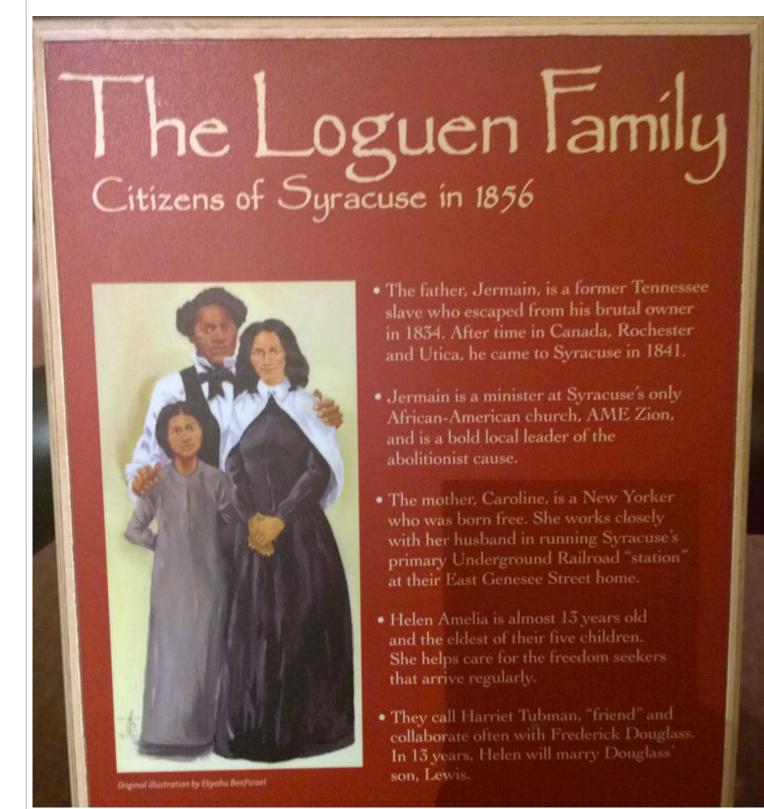
It is started with with the Onondaga tribe of the Iroquois Nation. The Onondaga's history is recorded back to 1142 AD; however, it certainly started much earlier than that. This nation populated a large portion of what is now New York State and was quite involved with the early history of the U.S. In addition, they were also one of the first tribes to have their right to their homeland acknowledged by the U.S. government.



Settler interest in the area picked up after the Revolutionary War when the area was set up as a center of trade with the Onondaga tribe. As the population grew, interest moved away from trade

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and towards salt production. Due to the high concentration of salt beds in area, the salt industry sustained the city from the 1700's until the early 1900's. Once the Erie Canal was completed, the city was finally able to realize its potential as a port city, which invited more industries to set-up shop in the city.



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"{Syracuse} bas more abolitionists...than any other town

An Alliance for Freedom

The anti-slavery movement embraced many factions that cut across economic, social, gender and racial lines. Motivation for Americans of European ancestry usually sprung from religious faith. In Syracuse, reform minded Christians from Unitarian, Methodist or resbyterian backgrounds were most active. Samuel Ringgold Ward

African-Americans most clearly understood the prejudices and inhumanity of slavery. Many took a direct hand in helping shelter fugitives. Several former fugitives provided passionate arguments for the cause by telling dramatic

Gerrit Smith Central New York's role as a center of

uel R. Word. Mary Elizabeth Leavenworth

began abolitionis New York. The Importial Citizen was published in ocuse by former sla

In 1858, Mary Leavenworth joined 28 other prominent Syracuse women in hosting a fund-raiser at City Hall to support Underground Railroad efforts. Over 300 women were among the 1000 citizens attending a Syracuse tally on October 14, 1851 to oppose the Fugitive Slove Law



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Cazenovia Anti-Slavery Convention A state-wide anti-slavery meeting drew 2000 people to Cazenovia, 20 miles southeast of Syracuse, in August of 1850. This remarkable image documents the presence of Rev. Samuel May, Gerrit Smith and Frederick Douglass, all upstate New Yorkers who were among the movement's national leaders.

anti-slavery activity rose, in part, from the presence of wealthy reform Gerrit Smith, who lived near Syracuse in Modison County. Smith donated to many abolitionist organizations and publications. He also was active in political efforts to end slavery.

> First Congregational Church

This modest structure housed Syracuse's most active anti-slavery congregation, organized in 1837 by reform-minded Presbyterians It stood just east of Hanover Square and was the site of many crucial anti-slavery gatherings.

"Yonder is my brother, in chains. I feel his sufferings, and participate in his anguish in the North Struggle for A Willingness to Sacrifice istice and the Enslaved Everything African-Americans in the North worked diligently for abolition. Several former fugi faced danger by serving as guides on the Underground Railroad. If caught, these as could east them back into slavery forever. Free blacks risked severe penalties as well. Being an African-American in the North also meant a personal struggle. Everywhere they encountered prejudices, customs and laws the encountereu prejudices, customs and laws that hindered access to education and decent jobs. Even many white abolitionists had difficulty accepting black people as equals. Black leaders denounced the hypocrisy of a society that advocated an end to slavery and yet tolerated injustice toward free black people. They sought to shape the passion of white abolitionists sought to shape the passion of white abolitionists into a commitment for improving the lives of all A Cited A contribution (Learne or desired model white African-Americans. It was a vision most white Northerners, blinded by racism, would long Backdrop Image: A Possible "Depse" in Syracus be unable to see.

However, the most fascinating element of Syracuse's history must be its involvement in the abolitionist movement. New York State abolished slavery in 1827, making it the destination for many seeking their freedom. Syracuse functioned as something of a depot on the Underground Railroad—a system designed to help those held in slavery to escape to freedom. Many chose the settle in the area, while others spread outward into the surrounding areas.



When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, many former slaves chose to head north to Canada to ensure they were not recaptured. However, the people of Syracuse were not supportive of this law. One very famous moment in the city's history is what has come to be called Jerry rescue. A former slave, who went by the name Jerry, was arrested under the act and set to be returned to slavery in Missouri. Citizens of Syracuse rescued him from his captors and helped him make his way to

ed

Canada.

TYPEWRITER CAPITOL

In 1906, three-quarters of the world's typewriters were produced in Syracuse.

Local inventor, Alexander T. Brown convinced business man L.C. Smith to give up a thriving shotgun business and build his newly designed *ball bearing typewriter*. Because the parts for the ball bearing typewriter were not locally produced, L.C. Smith began manufacturing all of the parts as well.

The typewriter business was instrumental in bringing the industrial revolution to Syracuse. In particular, the industry opened up new opportunties for women. Local women enrolled in typewriting classes and became an important part of the work force.

A good typist could produce twice as many typed letters as handwritten ones. As a result, handwritten letters were gradually replaced by more cleanly printed typewritten ones.



After the Civil War, the salt industry began to decline while manufacturing came to prominence. This industry sustained the city until the 1970's, at which point it began to decline as well. As the industry left, so did some of the population, leaving behind empty buildings and deteriorating infrastructure in their wake.

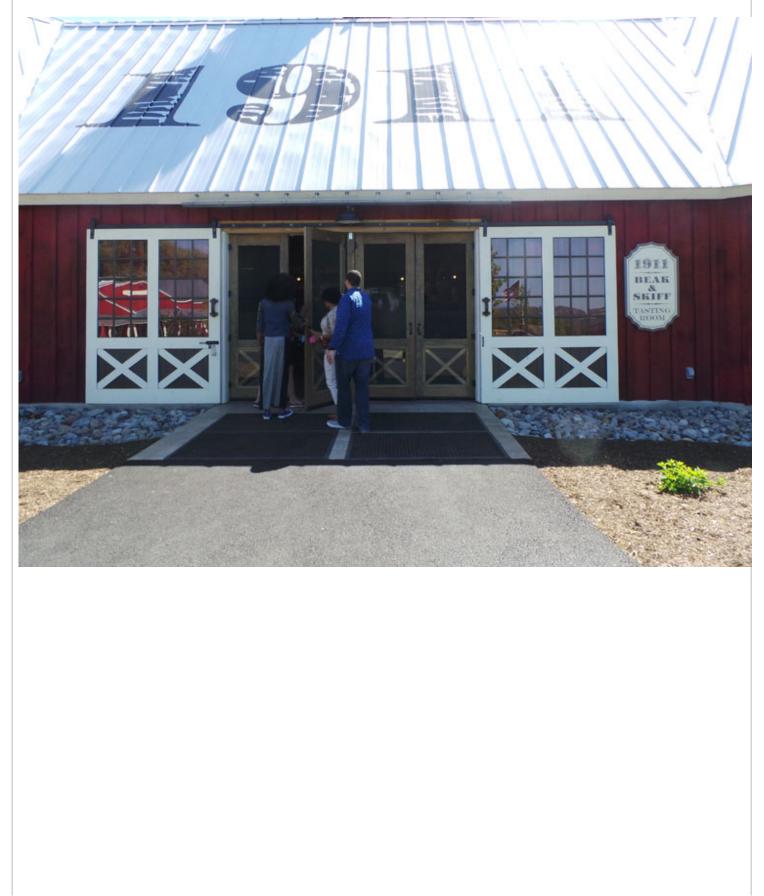
Now, Syracuse is looking to rebuild itself, with a focus on education, green living, and culture—all of which I wanted to see for myself.

Beak and Skiff Orchard



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My first adventure in Syracuse was at **Beak and Skiff** Apple Orchard. This apple orchard has been in operation for more than a century, surviving droughts, freezes, and economic downturns. Their survival can be credited to their hard work and ingenuity, which has produced creative and sustainable solutions to the problems the orchard faces.





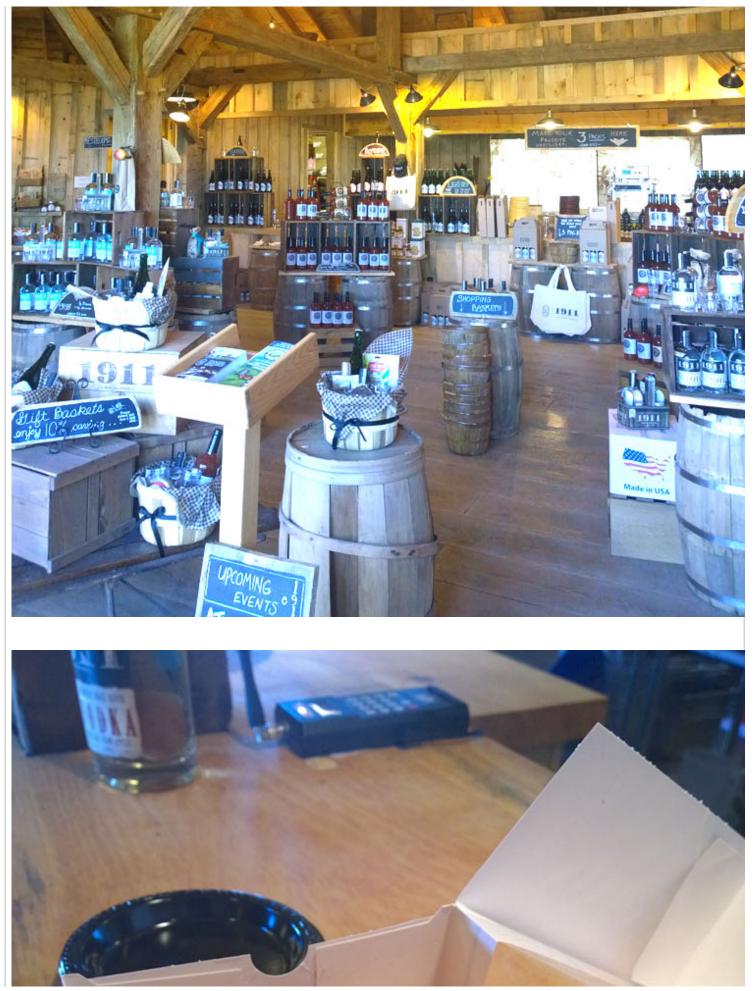
From 1911 to 1975, the Orchard operated on a strictly wholesale model. In 1975, they decided to open their doors to the public, allowing them to pick their own apples. This has become something of a fall ritual for the locals and quickly become a rite of passage for generations of children.

Personally, I found the orchard to be enchanting. I am always thrilled anytime I get the chance to be close to nature, especially when it comes to food sources. Our society is often too disconnected from the actual process or raising and harvesting our food. Getting the chance to see how the orchard in managed, the fruit harvested, and the products made was a true pleasure.



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Even if the whole process doesn't excite you, Beak and Skiff Orchard is a beautiful place to visit. Wandering amongst the trees is incredibly relaxing—almost meditative. They also have a beautiful café with a stunning view of the orchard; it features many of their products as well as dishes that utilize the apples they grow. I cannot stop thinking about their apple infused bread pudding. Making it all even better is that they built their facilities entirely from reclaimed wood.











In the off-season, this traditional apple orchard utilizes some of its crop to make artisanal cider and spirits, **1911 Spirits**. While you can sample their ciders and liquors at their café, you can also purchase them at their store to enjoy at home. Their hard ciders, in production since 2001, are a delicious alternative to beer. Made from their sweet cider, they make for an incredibly palatable

drink to share with friends.



Their 1911 line of apple-based spirits are a recent addition to their product line. These spirits are

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made in small batches with extreme care—and you can taste the difference that makes. These spirits can be mixed to make delicious cocktails. However, their complex flavor can certainly be savored by sipping as-is. In fact, the only word that could truly describe all of their offerings—from food to drinks—is perfect.

Empire Brewing Company

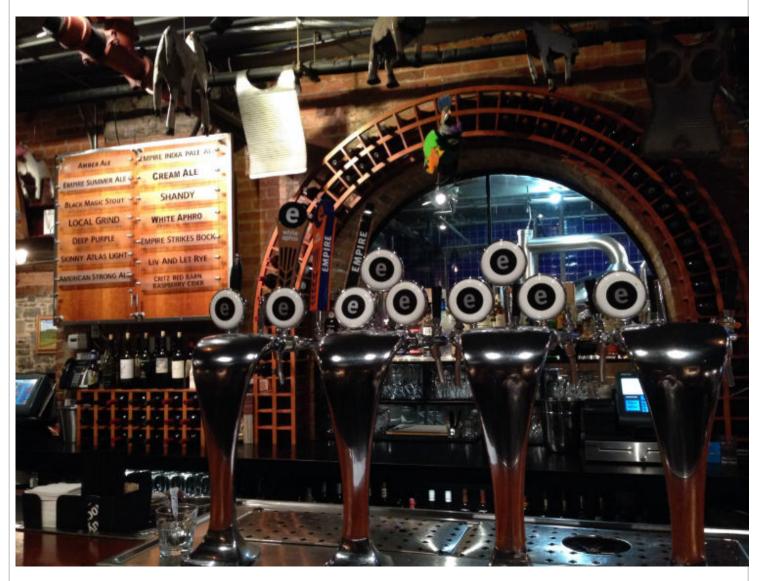


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wrvo.org

I was almost hesitant to head on to **Empire Brewing Company**. After all, I don't want my readers to think me a lush! However, I had seen their beers for sale throughout New York for years and was excited to learn more about the company.





wrvo.org

What sets this brewery apart from others—aside from the incredible quality and diversity of their products—is their commitment to sustainability. No aspect of their business is overlooked. They use 100% renewable energy, all paper-products used by the company are biodegradable, and equipment has been upgraded to energy-star products are just some of the eco steps taken.

yoliouiya • 7 months ago

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Buy local. Hey @empirebrew! #buylocal #yglinsyr #travel

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They are also committed to keeping it local. All of their ingredients are locally sourced whenever it is possible. Additionally, any waste products from the brewing process that can be used to feed livestock—such as spent grains and frying oil—are given to local farmers.

This commitment to staying local extends to their on-site restaurant. There, you will find local ingredients featured in their beautiful dishes, which include vegetarian and gluten free options. If you get the chance, you must try some of their blue corn bread, which is highly recommended.

They will be opening a new Farmstead Brewery in 2015. The goal of their brewery is to get as much of the process into one location as possible, while also adding educational and cultural components. This brewery will expand on their current sustainability efforts and allow them to increase their distribution of their products.

Cleaning Up Onondaga Lake



One of the projects in the area that first caught my eye as I was researching Syracuse was the cleaning on Onondaga Lake. In an effort to honor the natural beauty of the area, many residents and representatives wanted to help restore the area, including the lake—once the most polluted in the country thanks to the manufacturing boom the city experienced in the early 1900's.



In order to decontaminate the lake, the city began dredging the bottom in 2012. The project became bigger than expected—in the first year alone they pulled up 731,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil. The project isn't expected to be complete until 2016. However, the city is firmly behind the project and believes that the payoff of having a safe and beautiful lake will be worth all the effort.

The city is working hard to encourage tourism by building up the area surrounding the lake and incorporating some fun activities—my favorite was peddling around the lake. I could really feel the positive vibes during the time I was there and I am excited to see the project once it is complete.

Eco-Friendly Shopping and Dining at Destiny USA

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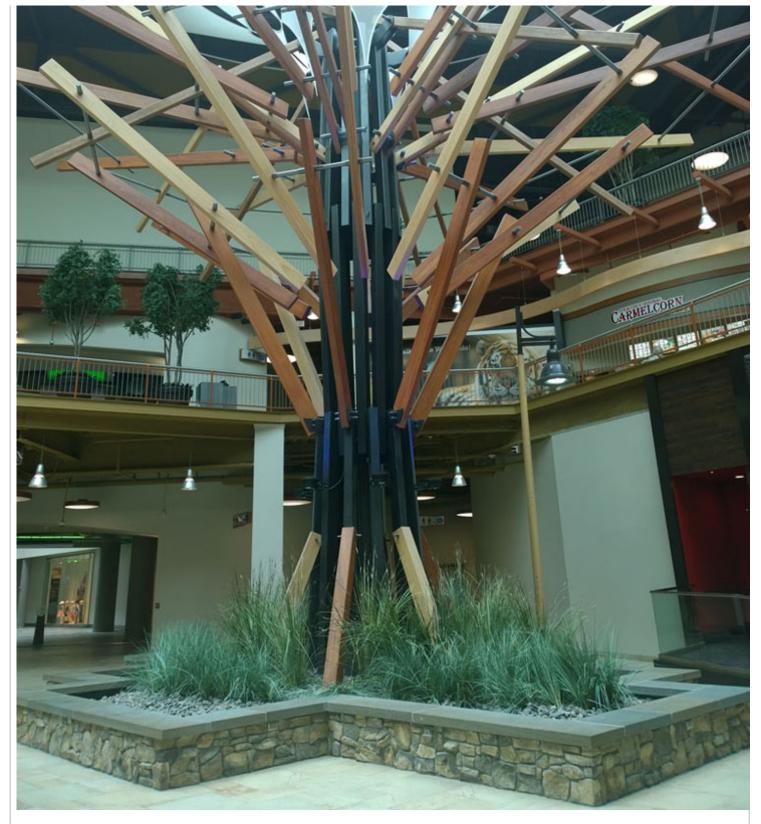
Like everyone else, I enjoy a little shopping when on vacation. And in Syracuse, the ultimate shopping destination is **Destiny USA**.





When it comes to sustainability and shopping malls, you probably have a hard time picturing the two as going together. However, Destiny USA has managed to do just that. Opening its doors in 1990, the center was built on land the developers helped to clean after a devastating oil spill. Despite housing hundreds of stores, restaurants, and entertainment options, it has managed to get its LEED certification. While the mall itself meets high standards, it also holds its retailers to the same guidelines and educates them in the process.



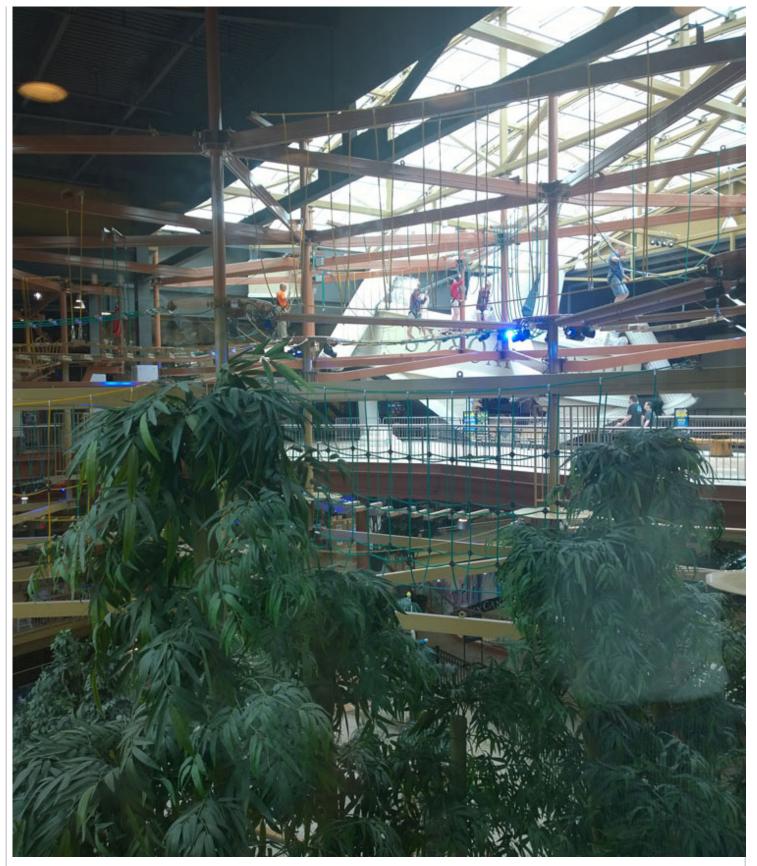


Destiny USA attracts visitors from across the country and around the globe. Approximately 25% of its business comes from Canada—2 million visitors per year. One of their biggest draws is Wonderworks, an indoor amusement park focused on edu-tainment. Yes, a shopping mall can host an amusement park, hundreds of stores, millions of visitors, and still get LEED Gold certification. Incredible, I know. It is so big, 43.5 White Houses could fit within Destiny USA. If you spent 10 minutes in each store, it would take you 38 hours to visit the entire facility. With such a massive entertainment and shopping space, one may ask how were they able to pull off achieving LEED Gold

status? Well here are some specs that help make it happen:

- 4 million gallons of water are conserved annually through their rainwater harvesting system.
- 23,000 tons of 95% recycled steel were used in building.
- The expansion flooring is made of recycled rubber, cork, and crush walnut shells.





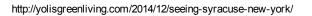
It is also home to the largest suspended, indoor ropes course in the world – **WonderWorks Canyon Climb Adventure**. And no I did not jump at an opportunity to climb. Not a fan of heights. We did however enjoy the quirky WonderWorks experiences such as lazer tag and the science experiments. Overall, there is enough here for almost every age to have a good time.

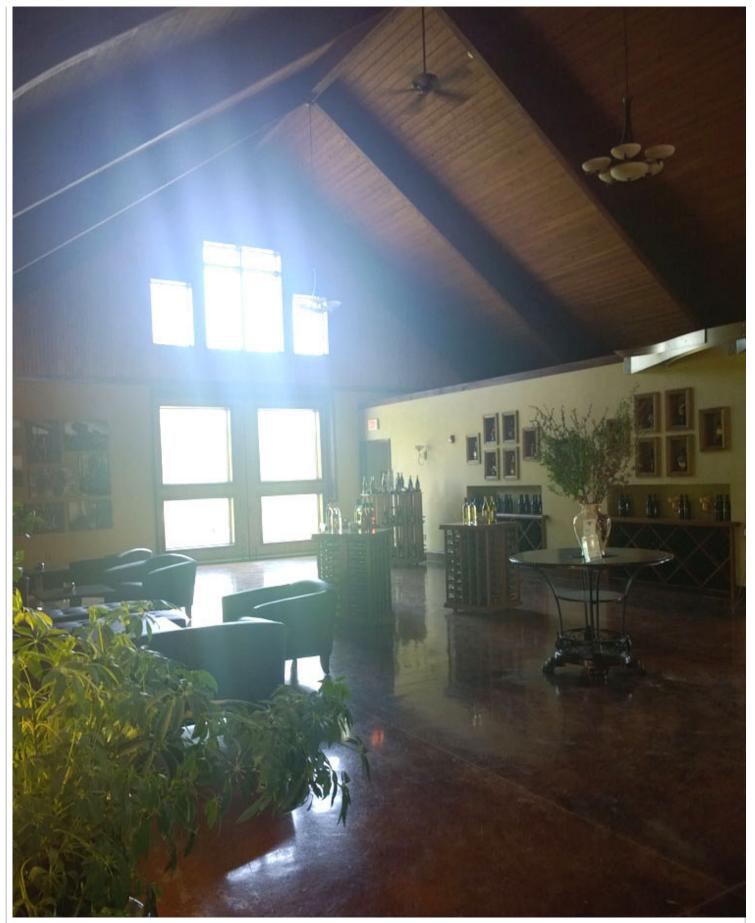
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I can only hope that it will inspire other malls in the US to pursue their LEED certification as well.

Anyela's Vineyards and Mirbeau Inn & Spa

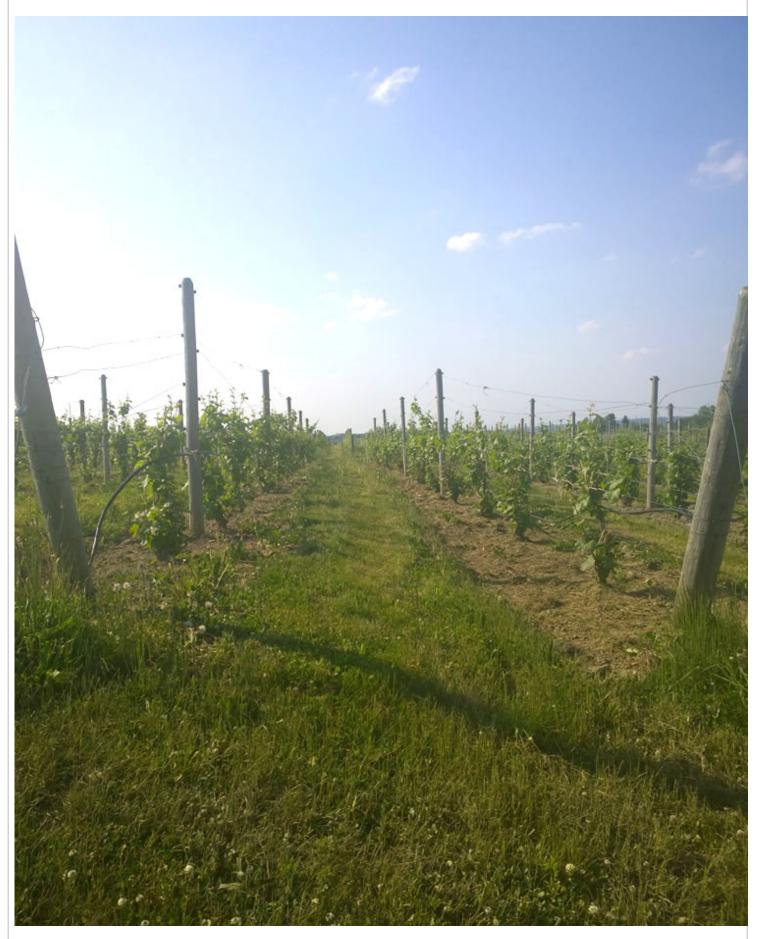


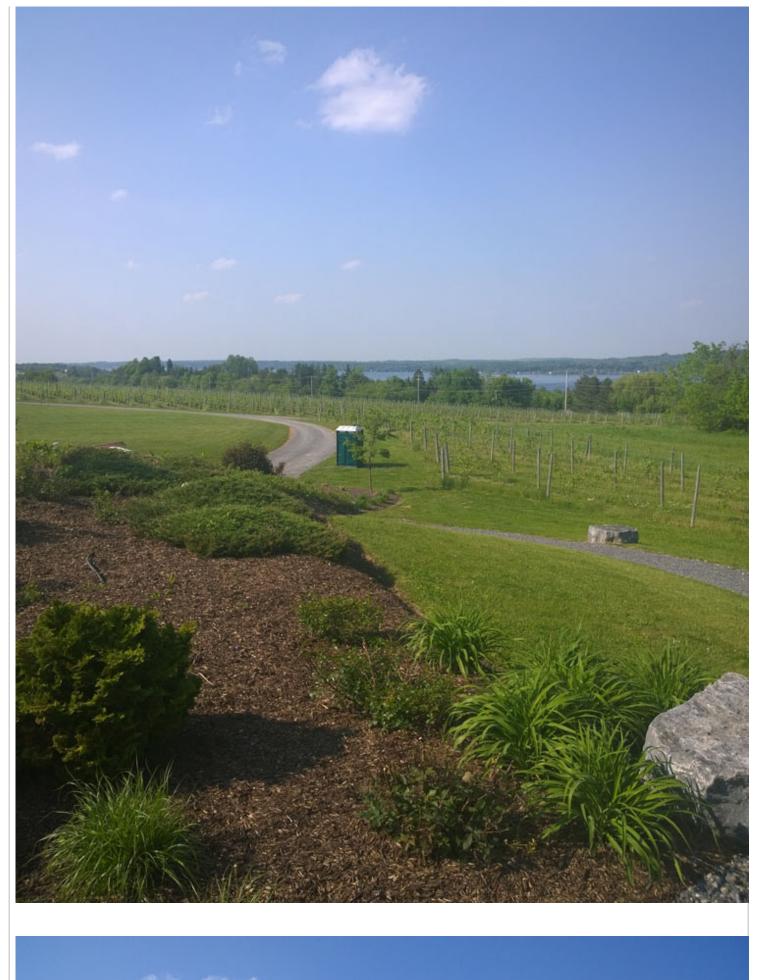




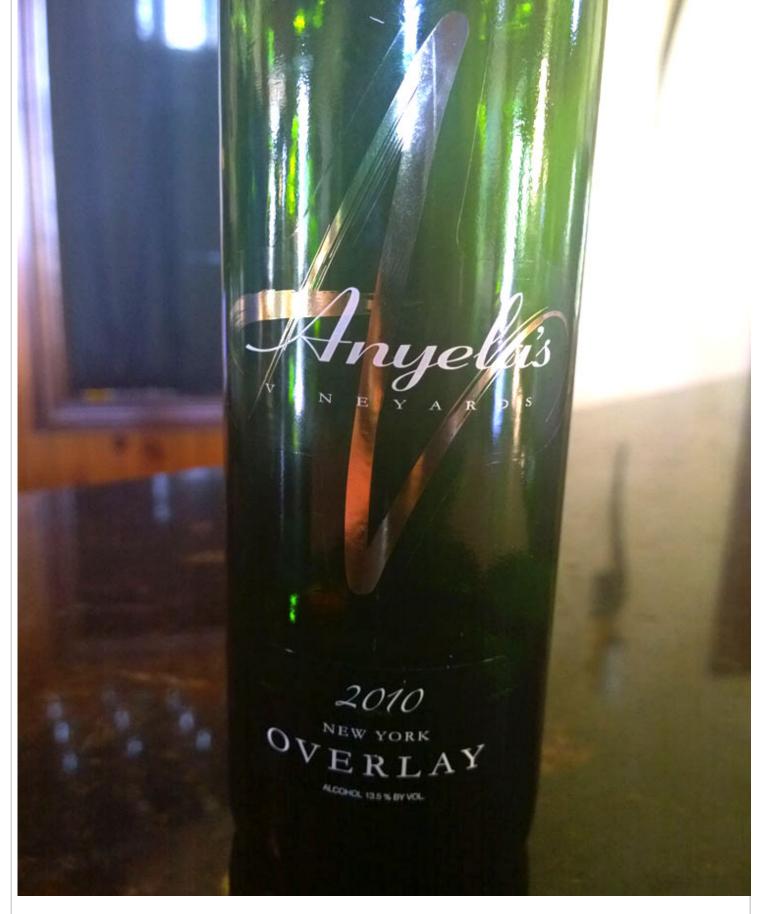
I wanted to really relax and enjoy myself before heading back home. My first stop was **Anyela's Vineyards**, located in Skaneateles. It is the perfect day trip to make while staying in Syracuse. The

vineyard itself started in Eastern Europe before putting down roots in New York.



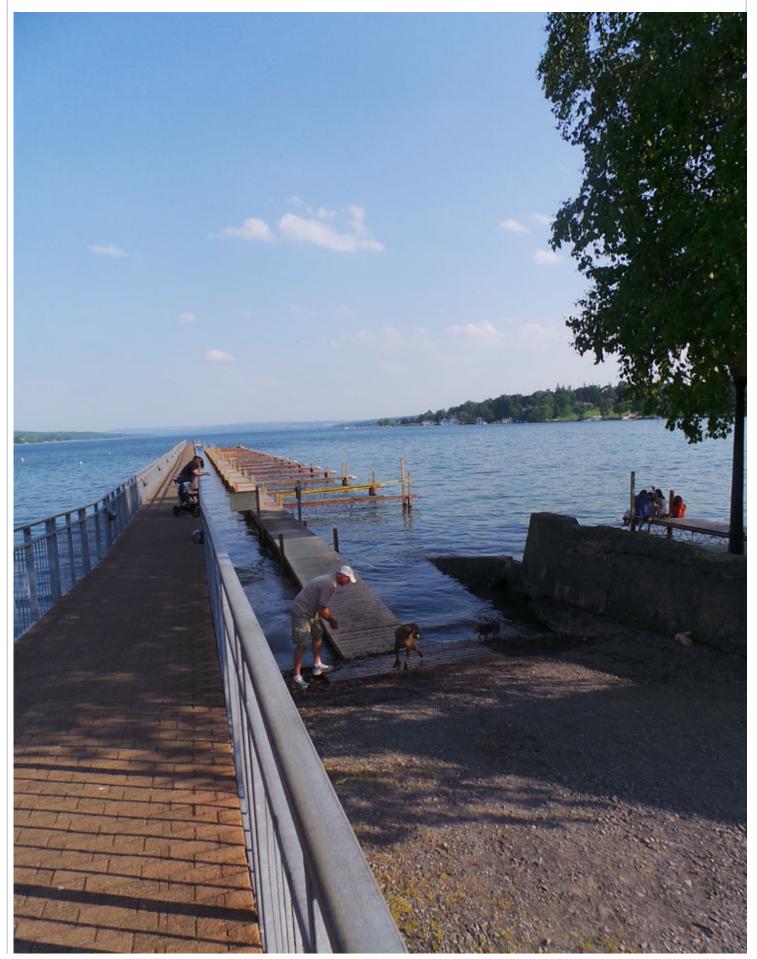






While the wines were incredible and the staff friendly and knowledgeable, the highlight for me was the landscape. The view amongst the vines was absolutely breathtaking and the stroll through the gardens incredibly peaceful. That alone was worth the trip. It is no wonder that so many locals

select it as their wedding venue.





Follow

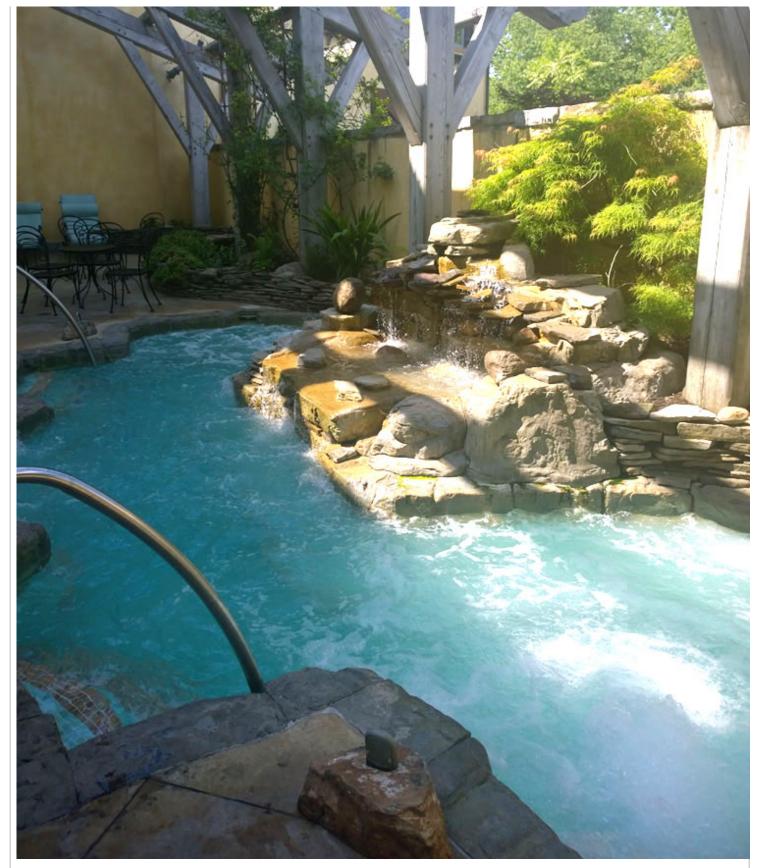
Clear waters at Skaneateless Lake. #yglinsyr Can see all the way to the bottom. One of the cleanest lakes. #visitsyracuse #nofilter

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I took a quick break to visit one of the Fingerlakes located in town. It happens to be the cleanest of all the lakes and was simply gorgeous. It certainly made for some excellent photo ops.



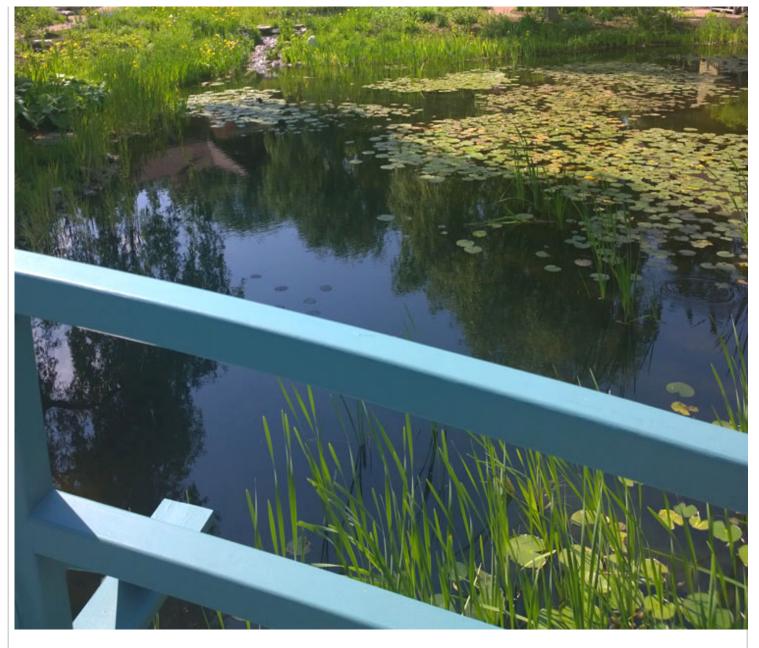




From there, I headed to **Mirbeau Inn & Spa**, also located in Skaneateles. I had been told that this was the crème de la crème of spas in the Fingerlakes area—how could I resist? This spa resort has 34 rooms and can accommodate both day and overnight guests. With 12 acres of gorgeous scenery, it is the perfect place to relax and commune with nature. And this doesn't even take into account the quality of their spa treatments. Mirbeau left me wanting more—there is certainly a





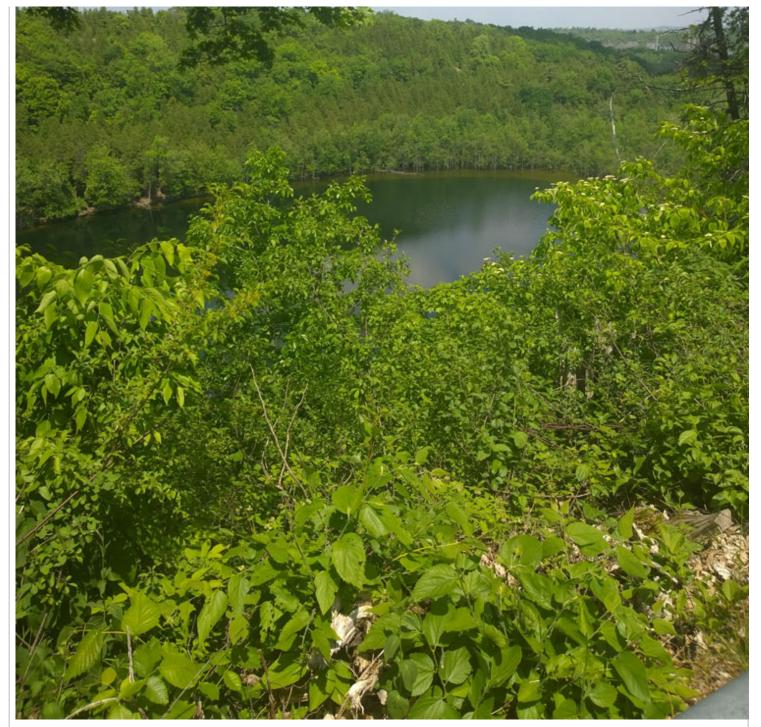


Green Lakes State Park





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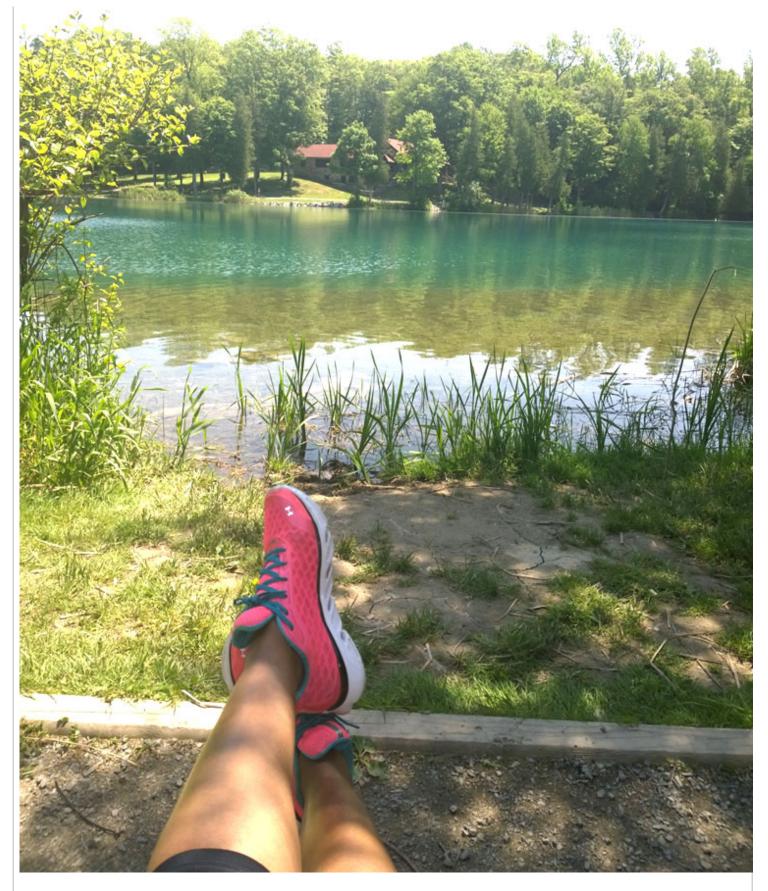


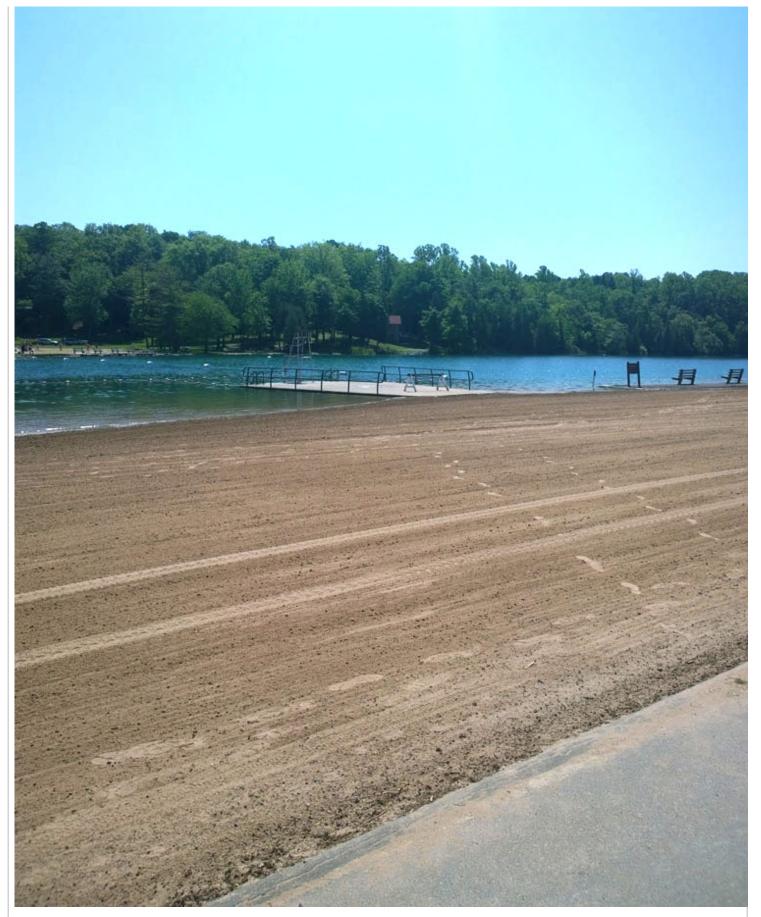
Somehow, we managed to find some time during the trip to hike the **Green Lakes Park**. Let me tell you, this lake is beautiful—and actually green! It was as if I were in a painting come to life. From camping ground to event a mineral enriched beach, it's the perfect place to sit back, relax, and put your feet up while you take in the beauty of nature.



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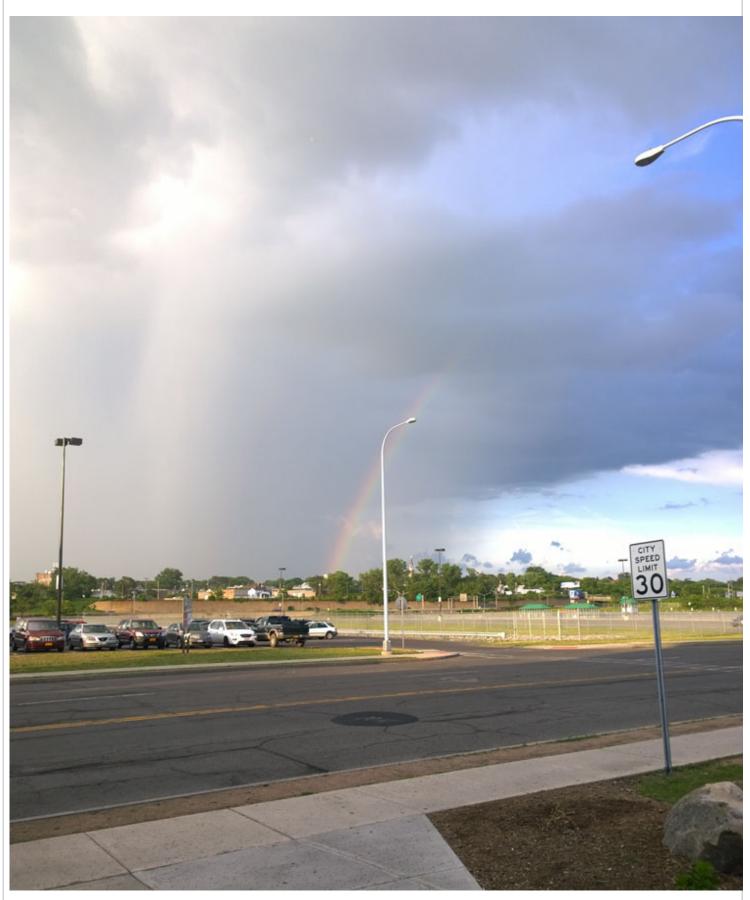






All in all, I was left in awe of the city and its people and eager to return for more. The efforts of the city and its residents to revitalize the area is incredible, and their commitment to sustainability

inspiring. Cities across the country—and the world—should look to it as a model for balancing modern life with a care for nature.



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I want to thank everyone who helped to make my trip as incredible as it was, but specifically the following individuals for their hospitality and commitment to their city: Nikita Jankowski and the Syracuse Visitors Bureau for going above and beyond to show Syracuse is so much more than what meets the eye. Much thanks for Tom for his tour of Hotel Skyler and giving us an inside look at its inner workings. Thanks to all the business who support raising Syracuse to new heights: Hotel Skyler, Beak & Skiff, Onondaga Historical Association, Empire Brewing Company, Destiny USA, Anyela's Vineyards, and Mirbeau Inn & Spa.

To see my Syracuse trip in its real time experience, check out the hashtag #yglinsyr.

Edited by Sarah B. Martin.



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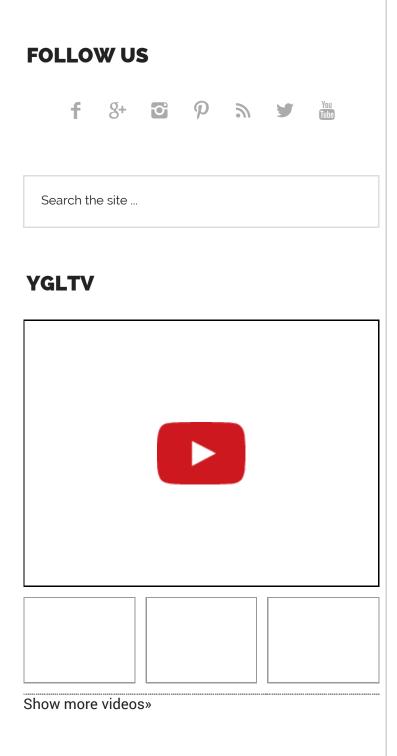
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