



**THOMAS
COLE** NATIONAL
HISTORIC
SITE



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“BRIDGES TO PARKS” HIKE EVENT ANNOUNCED FOR JUNE 1 ALONG THE HUDSON RIVER SKYWALK

Guided Hikes Will Feature Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Rip Van Winkle Bridge, and Olana State Historic Site

Event Coincides with National Trails Day and Fifth Anniversary of Hudson River Skywalk Opening

(Catskill, N.Y. and Hudson, N.Y.) – The New York State Bridge Authority (NYSBA), the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks), The Olana Partnership, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site have announced an upcoming **“Bridges to Parks”** hike event. The event on June 1 will feature guided hike options along the Hudson River Skywalk, a scenic walkway that connects the historic homes and studios of the two Hudson River School painters Thomas Cole and Frederic Church via the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. Members of the public are welcome to register online on a first come, first served basis.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, June 1 at 9 a.m. and will kick-off at the park area next to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge office, on the west (Catskill) side of the span. The date will coincide with National Trails Day and the fifth anniversary of the grand opening of the Hudson River Skywalk in 2019.

Multiple guided hike options of varying difficulty will be offered. Options include:

- The New York State Bridge Authority will offer a guided tour of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, opened in 1935.
- A walk to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, where drop-in sketching will be offered throughout the historic gardens and grounds, which offer sweeping views of the Catskill Mountains. Sketching baskets with paper and pencils will be located throughout the property.
- An extended hike across the bridge to Olana State Historic Site, where The Olana Partnership will offer a guided landscape tour and a drop-in artmaking program for all ages, *Artmaking in the Afternoon*, at the Wagon House Education Center from 1 to 4 p.m.

Full description of tour options are available on the registration website. All tours will take place outside and participants should plan and dress accordingly. Participants are asked to indicate which hike program they are interested in when they register on the website.

Registration can be completed by visiting <https://nysbridgeauthority.ticketspice.com/hike-the-hudson-river-skywalk>.

Dr. Minosca Alcantara, Executive Director of NYSBA, said, “Our bridge crossings up and down the Hudson Valley connect to a number of stellar historic sites and outdoor recreation areas. The Rip Van Winkle Bridge stands out as an historic bridge set amidst a picturesque setting that has inspired artists for generations. As the main link in the Hudson River Skywalk, we encourage visitors to connect with this breathtaking landscape just as Thomas Cole and Frederic Church once did.”

Linda Cooper, Taconic Regional Director, Office of New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation said, “New York State Parks and Olana State Historic Site are pleased to join our partners to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Hudson River Skywalk. The Skywalk physically connects Columbia and Greene counties, a beautiful region, rich with natural and cultural history. The Hudson River Skywalk strengthens the relationship between the historic homes of nineteenth century landscape artists Thomas Cole and Frederic Church and their families. We continue to be inspired by the spectacular and expansive views of the mountains and river that thrilled them and we are delighted that a public site like Olana is part of this important American story.”

Elizabeth B. Jacks, Executive Director of Thomas Cole National Historic Site, said, “The Hudson River Skywalk is a stunning experience high above the river. I love how it brings art and nature together, as if you had magically entered a landscape painting. There is no other place where people can experience the Hudson Valley’s beauty while walking directly to the historic artist homes and studios of 19th-century landscape painters, Thomas Cole and Frederic Church. I’m thrilled to celebrate the five-year anniversary of this special place with the many wonderful partners that made the Skywalk a reality.”

Sean Sawyer, Ph.D, Washburn and Susan Oberwager President of The Olana Partnership, said, “The Olana Partnership is thrilled to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Hudson River Skywalk, linking two of our country’s most important cultural landmarks across the mighty Hudson

River” said. “Participants in this special day of guided walks will follow in Thomas Cole and Frederic Church’s footsteps in translating a love of our region’s scenery into environmental action.”

Special Anniversaries

Both New York State Parks and the Bridge Authority are celebrating significant anniversaries this year. State Parks is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the creation of the State Council of Parks in 1924 and citizen approval of a \$15 million bond act to build and enlarge a network of State parks. Meanwhile, the Bridge Authority is in the midst of its “BMB100” centennial to celebrate 100 years since the opening of the Bear Mountain Bridge, the first Hudson River vehicular crossing south of Albany and a span constructed in part to connect with state parks in the lower Hudson Valley. Those who are interested in learning more about these upcoming centennials can visit

www.parks.ny.gov/100 and www.bmb100.com.

The “Bridges to Parks” event will fall on the fifth anniversary of the grand opening of the Hudson River Skywalk. The scenic walkway officially opened on June 1, 2019 after several years of development and partnership among a broad range of local organizations in Greene and Columbia Counties, as well as major support from New York State. The event also coincides with the American Hiking Society’s [National Trails Day](#), a national event designed to connect communities to their local trails.

For more information on the Hudson River Skywalk, visit www.hudsonriverskywalk.org.

Exhibitions Now on Display

Tickets for tours inside the historic homes and studios are also available for purchase, with both historic sites hosting special exhibitions that are included with admission.

Now through October 27, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site presents the new special exhibition **“Native Prospects: Indigeneity and Landscape”** with large-scale contemporary art installations and 19th-century Hudson River School landscape paintings. The exhibition juxtaposes an Indigenous approach to the articulation of land with the American landscape paintings of Thomas Cole. The exhibition presents Cole’s paintings featuring Native figures, in context with Indigenous works of historic and cultural value, and artworks by contemporary Indigenous artists: Teresa Baker (Mandan/Hidatsa), Brandon Lazore (Onondaga, Snipe Clan), Truman T. Lowe (Ho-Chunk), Alan Michelson (Mohawk member of the Six Nations of the Grand River) and Kay WalkingStick (Cherokee).

“Native Prospects” is curated by Scott Manning Stevens, PhD / Karoniaktatsie (Akwesasne Mohawk), Associate Professor of Native American Studies and English at Syracuse University, where he is also Director of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Program and Founding Director of the Center for Global Indigenous Cultures and Environmental Justice.

Now through October 27 at Olana State Historic Site, the public can experience the exhibition **“Afterglow: Frederic Church and the Landscape of Memory”** organized by The Olana Partnership. While Church is best known for his monumental, panoramic paintings of natural wonders, he also created smaller, intimate works full of personal symbolism for a primary audience of friends and

family. Church painted memorial landscapes throughout his career, and they are key documents of nineteenth-century America's search for spirituality in nature. As he experienced personal losses, Church expressed grief through his paintings and immersed himself in the natural world to heal. As they wander through the historic house and designed landscape at Olana, a place known as a powerful source of solace and inspiration, the public is invited to reflect on the healing power of landscapes in their own lives.

About the New York State Bridge Authority

The New York State Bridge Authority operates the Bear Mountain, Newburgh-Beacon, Mid-Hudson, Kingston-Rhinecliff and Rip Van Winkle Bridges. It also owns and maintains the structure of the Walkway Over the Hudson pedestrian bridge. The Authority receives no operating funding through state or federal tax dollars, with nearly all of its revenue coming through tolls. Tolls are reinvested back into capital improvements on the Authority's spans, ensuring these critical pieces of infrastructure can continue serving the Hudson Valley for decades to come. Connect with the Bridge Authority on [Facebook](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#).

About New York State Parks

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation oversees more than 250 parks, historic sites, recreational trails, golf courses, boat launches and more, which saw a record 79.5 million visits in 2022. For more information on any of these recreation areas, visit parks.ny.gov, download the free [NY State Parks Explorer app](#) or call 518.474.0456. Join us in celebrating our Centennial throughout 2024, and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and the [OPRHP Blog](#).

About Olana State Historic Site and The Olana Partnership

Olana is the greatest masterwork of Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), the most famous American landscape artist of the mid-19th century and the most important artist's home, studio, and designed landscape in the United States. Church designed Olana as a holistic environment integrating his advanced ideas about art, architecture, landscape design, and environmental conservation. Olana's 250-acre artist-designed landscape with five miles of carriage roads and a Persian-inspired house at its summit embraces unrivaled panoramic views of the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains and welcomes more than 170,000 visitors annually.

Olana State Historic Site, administered and operated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, is a designated National Historic Landmark and one of the most visited sites in the state. The Olana Partnership is the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit cooperative partner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation at Olana State Historic Site, with primary responsibility for visitor engagement, programming, and exhibitions.

The landscape is free and open daily from 8 a.m. to sunset. Guided tours are available Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with reservations highly recommended. Visit www.olana.org for more info.

About Thomas Cole National Historic Site

The Thomas Cole National Historic Site is an international destination presenting the original home and studios of the artist and early environmentalist Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole founded the influential art movement of the United States, now known as the Hudson River School of American landscape painting. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole's 1839 Old Studio; the reconstructed 1846 New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. Activities include special exhibitions of both 19th-century and contemporary art, print publications, lectures, extensive online programs, school programs, the Cole Fellowship, free community events, and innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—a map and website that enable people to visit the places in nature that Cole painted—and the Hudson River Skywalk, a new scenic walkway connecting the Thomas Cole Site with Frederic Church's Olana over the Hudson River. The goal of all programs at the Thomas Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole's life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives.

The grounds are open every day from dawn to dusk. Guided tours are offered in-season Wednesday through Sunday from 9:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visit www.thomascole.org for more info.

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