

# High adventure in Western New York

## Fall Colours



Aerial park and mountain coaster, plus natural beauty

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TORONTO STAR

**ELLCOTTVILLE, N.Y.**—Checking out the fall foliage is a great way to spend the weekend, but if sitting in a car and staring out the window leaves you pining for a little more action, here's an alternative.

Holiday Valley, a ski resort popular with Canadians an hour south of Buffalo, has recently completed a couple of adventure attractions that has turned leaf peeping into a contact sport.

The Sky High Adventure Park features eight enormous tree-top courses of varying difficulty — yellow, green, blue and, if you dare, two double blacks that soar to 60 feet, Black Storm and (gulp) Commando — where visitors navigate an assortment of wildly unstable rope bridges, obstacles and zip lines.

"You'll be able to recognize the zip lines," said our kindly instructor, "because there won't be anything to put your foot on." A point worth remembering when you're standing on a small platform high in a tree. From this vantage point, nature's annual show is not only in colour but also hi-def.

Participants (\$42 for three hours) wear harnesses with a special locking lanyard that prevents a fall of more than a couple of feet. Tethered to a cable or not, it takes a certain leap of faith to step off a platform onto a free-swinging block of wood with only a piece of rope to hang onto.

Strategy, more than strength, is the key to completing the aerial park courses, which is why a couple of beefy twentysomethings, who'd been pretty boisterous during the orientation talk, needed to be rescued by staff from a double black. A



The new Mountain Coaster at Holiday Valley is similar to a roller coaster with two-man cars on rails that first travel up the ski hill before turning around and zooming down a 760-metre course through the woods.



The Sky High Adventure Park at Holiday Valley is open until Oct. 9 and features eight tree-top courses of varying difficulty.

couple of young women in their group who'd completed a blue course really enjoyed that.

Sky High will remain open on weekends through the resort's Fall Festival Oct. 7-10.

metre course through the woods. Riders can control their speed using handles on the sides of the cars.

The Mountain Coaster (\$6) also operates on weekends through Oct. 10 and will run during the ski season.

Holiday Valley includes a well-maintained 18-hole golf course, Double Black Diamond (\$22-59), that offers some spectacular views of the resort's tree-covered hillsides from an array of elevated tees.

Mountain bike and hiking trails that weave through the ski area are another fine way to experience the autumn show. And unlike some of the more popular colour destinations in New England, you're likely to encounter more deer than fellow hikers on the trails of Holiday Valley.

Roasting Simores by the fire pit next to the swimming pools is a wonderful way to finish the day for kids of all ages. The John Harvard Brew House is only steps away, just in case you need something to wash down the graham crackers.



## JUST THE FACTS

**WHEN TO GO** The best time for colours in Ellicottville are the first two weeks of October.

**ARRIVING** Cross border at Peace Bridge and take 190 South to Interstate 90 West. Take Exit 55 to Rt. 219 South for 80 kilometres to Ellicottville, 247 kilometres from Toronto. Estimated fuel cost for mid-size car: \$50.

**SLEEPING** Holiday Valley offers a number of packages that incorporate golf, pampering at the serene Falling Waters Spa, the Sky High Adventure Park and the Mountain Coaster. Accommodation ranges from the four-star Tamarack Club condo/hotel with spa and heated pool to the Inn at Holiday Valley to a wide range of comfortable family-style condos within the resort or in the village of Ellicottville. In town, the spotless Kelly House Lodge (\$70) is hard to beat for families on a budget. The favourable exchange rate is a bonus for Canucks.

**DINING AND DRINKING** The John Harvard Brew House offers a nice range of craft beers and good pub grub. In town, the Gin Mill on Washington St. is the liveliest spot, with loads of atmosphere and terrific burgers.

**WEB SURFING** [www.holidayvalley.com](http://www.holidayvalley.com); [www.kellyhouselodge.com](http://www.kellyhouselodge.com)