

# Hike of the Week: Soaring across Hunter Mountain in a zip

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**Location:** Hunter Mountain Ski Area, Greene County

**Length:** The Mid-Mountain tour takes about two hours.

**Rating:** Zzziiiiinnnnngggggg!

**Photo Gallery:** [www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/players](http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/players)

**Dogs:** Can't imagine Fido zipping through the trees. Would be a YouTube winner, though, until the ASPCA heard about it ...

**Maps:** Follow your guides.

**Features:** Six ziplines, one approximately 650 feet long, connected by four rope/swinging bridges, high above the ground, in an ancient hemlock grove midway up the mountain.

**Watch out for:** If you have a fear of heights, some of the bridges, particularly the highest one, can be intimidating, even though you are securely attached, and cannot fall to the ground. Do not even think about trying to be cooler than the guides — there is no way you can out-cool their camo pants, black shirts, aviator shades and ultra cool bandanas — no way.

**Background:** We ziplined in Costa Rica in 2008, near Liberia. It was a rip, starting off tree-to-tree high up in the rain forest canopy, and eventually zipping over, and through, a narrow gorge with white water roaring through it. We'd heard of some zip-lines in Pennsylvania and the Berkshires, but as soon as we heard Hunter had one, we put it on our list to check it out.

New York Zipline Adventure Tours, [www.ziplinenewyork.com](http://www.ziplinenewyork.com), 518-263-4388, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., year-round. Mid-Mountain tour \$89.00. Reservations recommended. Restrictions: 60-250 pounds, 6 feet, 5 inches, recommended 10 years old and up, "relatively physically fit."

**Hike description:** We were geared up: straps, hardware, carabineers, hard hats and all. Safety, and the strength of our gear, were stressed right from the get-go. Everything supporting us was stupendously exceeding specifications, and could support tons. There were about 12 in our group: men, women and children.

We met our guides — Tom Cruise and Matt Damon? — were briefed, then boarded a tricked-out, bright yellow, Hummer-like, made-in-Austria Pinzgauer, and low-geared up the mountain to the staging area, where we were thoroughly briefed on the actual ziplining do's and don'ts.

Even though we'd ziplined before, I experienced the adrenaline rush that always precedes a commitment to, say, raging whitewater or jumping out of airplanes.

We climbed stairs to the first wooden platform — all the platforms were built around thick hemlocks, and had sturdy railings — and from here on we were always safely carabineered to something secure, all the way until we were boots-on-the-ground at the end of the trip.

You had to walk across a rope bridge — they all have see-through metal walkways and rope railings, and you are securely carabineered to a cable above them — to get to the first zipline. The rest of the bridges have double-wide walkways, but the first had a narrow, single-wide platform, and you have to almost tight-rope across it: not a big fan of exposed heights, for me it was a white-knuckled crossing, and, the highest bridges were yet to come.

One of the guides always zipped across to the next platform, and the remaining guide secured you to the cable, quadruple-checked everything, confirmed it was clear for you to launch — they were always in radio contact — then said something like "zip away."

Zzziiiiinnnnngggggg!!!

The highest rope bridges and platforms are in the middle of the course, and the last line is the longest, and the fastest. It's a rush, from the first zip to the rappel back to earth.

**How to get there:** Thruway north to Exit 20 (Saugerties), Route 32 north to 32A west to 23A west, left into Hunter Mountain Ski Area. Office is behind base lodge.

**Ralph Ferrusi has hiked the entire Appalachian Trail as a section hiker — twice!**  
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