

## Rockland County looking to be a burgeoning market for tour bus operators

BY JOHN DILLON JOHNSON

So does Rockland County have what it takes to make it as an overnight tourist destination in the lucrative tour-bus market? Early returns suggest the answer is a resounding absolutely!

An initiative spearheaded in 2006 by the Rockland Business Association Hospitality and Tourism Alliance and the Rockland County Department of Tourism to market Rockland at regional tourism fairs is beginning to bear fruit.

A dozen or so tour operators received a tour of Rockland in early May, stopping at venues such as Vertigo Restaurant in Nyack, the Palisades Center Mall in West Nyack, the Stony Point Battlefield and Matterhorn Nurseries in Pomona. Heather Duke, Director of the Rockland County Department of Tourism, says Rockland has a nice offering of history, natural beauty, shopping and of course a close proximity to the famous "big apple" New York City—one of the largest tourist attractions in the world.

That proximity to the city is what makes Rockland an attractive destination for The Tourist Program, a tour-bus company based out of New York City that caters to mostly European clients, especially from France. A representative of the company was on hand during the recent tour. "I like Rockland very much and it's not far from New York City. They have come from France so they don't want to spend the whole day driving," the representative said.

A representative from a Long Island based tour-bus company was also happy with her tour of Rockland.

"We think you have a great area and will do great with tourism. From what we've seen we're very impressed with the homes of Nyack and Piermont and as a history buff I learned a great deal from the guide. They made it real," she said.

Maria Rodd, president of Casablanca Events in Pomona and member of the RBAHTA led the early May tour. After showing some of the historic destinations in Rockland, Rodd took the group through the hip, party-laden streets of Nyack and to dinner at Vertigo restaurant. Opened in July of 2005, the three-story art-nouveaux/art-deco style restaurant on Main Street Nyack is a destination unto itself.

Rodd and restaurant publicist John Eccleston told the tour bus operators Vertigo was not only one of the finest restaurants in the Hudson Valley but also a hot destination for night life, featuring dance music on weekends and other features

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*Tour operator from Long Island*



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through the month such as open mic poetry, "talent time" Wednesday's and piano music on Monday's. Each floor of the locale has outdoor or balcony seating and can be rented out for parties. The second and third floors are not full floors but rather look over the first floor as if balconies unto themselves; hence the name Vertigo.

Tour operators sunk their teeth into appetizing entrees like pan-seared king salmon, breast of chicken on rosemary focaccia bread or Vertigo black angus burger while enjoying the impressive artistic décor the venue features. Owned by Irish natives Leslie McGettigan and Barry Gilsean, the restaurant was also designed by an Irish architectural firm, the internationally renowned McNally Design. Beside the historic Rockland County Courthouse, Vertigo Restaurant may be the most beautiful piece of art deco design in the county.

"It is a nice honor for the restaurant to be included in the county's tour of noteworthy locations for potential tourists," restaurant manager Anjo Duffy said.

Duke said as a whole Nyack has been doing its part to increase Rockland's reputation as a tourist attraction. She particularly cited the new biannual Art Walk as a feature that helped not only Nyack, but the entire county.

Twice a year merchants up and down Main Street Nyack make their shops home to not only merchandise, but the works of local artists, and they and stay open late to feature their works and draw in a nice crowd to the village. Duke said to learn all Rockland has to offer you only need check out the county's tourism website at [www.rockland.org](http://www.rockland.org). **RBD**



*Feeling dizzy yet? The view from the first floor looking up at Vertigo. The three-story art-nouveaux/art-deco style restaurant on Main Street in Nyack is a destination unto itself.*

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