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# SKANEATELES, NEW YORK

## THE FINGER LAKES' TRANQUILITY BASE

by Les Abend

If your immediate thoughts of New York conjure images of a towering Empire State Building or the gaudy luminescence of Times Square, I'd like to offer an alternate picture. Perched at the very north end of the eastern Finger Lakes, the Village of Skaneateles is everything Manhattan is not. Not only is the village the epitome of New England quaint, but it is also a quiet, unassuming center for almost every popular, outdoor activity. In addition to recreation, Skaneateles is a strong supporter of the arts. Many of the village shops are filled with creations from local artists. The dining and casual cuisine is equivalent to the finest offerings of the best resort destinations.

If you are inclined to just chill out, especially on those notorious Upstate New York days when the weatherman didn't quite get the forecast right, Skaneateles provides plenty of diversions. The condensed size of the town's main boutique shopping and dining areas allow for a pleasant stroll. And Skaneateles is right next door to wine country, with a vineyard only 3 1/2 miles from the airport. It's an absolute requirement that you bring your camera, especially during peak leaf-peeping season. The natural

beauty of the area invites serenity and tranquility, attributes the locals are proud to promote. Prepare to relax, enjoy, and shed your stress.

### Flying There

Approaching Skaneateles Aerodrome (6B9) from any direction provides for a great scenic tour. Rolling hills, lakes, rivers, and the multi-colored tree canopy all combine to make the eyes smile. The airport is about 19 nm southwest of Syracuse Hancock International Airport (SYR). Lake Ontario is 35 nm to the north and Ithaca, the home of Cornell University, is 25 nm to the south at the south end of Cayuga Lake.

When the corn crop is tall or already harvested, consider flying over **Golub's Our Farm**, 1590 Peth Rd., Manlius, 315-655-8453, [www.fallpumpkinfarm.com](http://www.fallpumpkinfarm.com). Every year, the husband and wife owners create a corn maze in shapes that have ranged from a rock guitar to a bunny rabbit to a ladybug. The maze is about 12 nm southeast of the Syracuse airport, just north of Cazenovia Lake at N 42° 59.4' W 75° 53.4'.

Contact Syracuse Approach on 126.125 MHz for advisories in the Skaneateles area;

the Syracuse Class C airspace begins 9 nm northeast. The Skaneateles CTAF frequency is 122.8 MHz, but don't expect anybody to answer except to announce a position in the traffic pattern. The only specific threat is the terrain, and it is by no means mountainous. The Finger Lakes themselves are located within glacier-created valleys, and the surrounding area averages 1,000 feet elevation.

On the day my wife and I arrived, worse-than-forecast weather required a GPS approach. Considering that both the visibility and ceiling hovered near minimums, I was comforted by the fact SYR was a feasible alternate. The Aerodrome's 3,134 x 58-foot Runway 10/28 pavement is smooth and the threshold markings are bright white, which provided tremendous identification assistance for the finale of our GPS approach

Pilot James Murphy and passenger Lansing Schantz fly S. Robert Williams' 1940 Stearman over Skaneateles Lake. This Stearman is Serial No. 240 out of the nearly 9,000 built, making it one of the oldest Stearmans flying today.





in the grey murk. At the west end of the airport perimeter, perpendicular to the paved runway, is the well-groomed 3,350 x 130-foot grass strip of Runway 4/22.

The price for self-serve 100LL is competitive for the area, averaging \$1–\$1.50 less per gallon than at Syracuse. Seven marked tiedown spots are also self-serve, but they are easily found; some are east of the large westside hangar. Bring your own rope; tiedowns are free. If the marked spots are occupied, the grass behind the fuel pump is available.

Don't expect to be greeted with a red carpet, let alone a line boy. No FBO facility or pilot lounge exists. A portable toilet is the only restroom facility. The airport may be devoid of human life, especially on weekdays. That being said, an advance call to airport facilities supervisor Mike Richardson, 315-263-3491, will afford you the opportunity to check on runway status or answer other questions about the Aerodrome. Rumor has it that Mike might even offer you a lift into town. For additional reference, check out the airport website at [www.skaneateles-aerodrome.com](http://www.skaneateles-aerodrome.com).

## History

As with much of upstate New York, the Iroquois had a tremendous presence until European settlers began to infiltrate the area. The lake's name, pronounced Sken-ee-atlas, is a derivative of the Iroquois name, Skeh-ne-a-iles. Although most historic references translate the name as "very long lake," another translation considers it to mean "beautiful squaw." A visit to the area will prove that either translation is appropriate.

The Finger Lakes are some of North America's best examples of glacier influence. The Indians believed the region to be the handprint of the Great Spirit. Perhaps the Great Spirit could have considered rubbing his hands together so the water temperature would have gone beyond the take-your-breath-away range. But then the vodka-like clarity of the visibility would probably not exist. In that regard, the qual-

ity is such that the city of Syracuse uses the water supply unfiltered.

The first settler to Skaneateles arrived in 1794. Much of the town tracts were given to Revolutionary War veterans as payment for their service. Initially, the village flourished with typical businesses of the time: gristmills, blacksmiths, cloth production, machinery manufacturing, and farming. Unique to the local economy was the teasel industry. The teasel is an annoying burr-infested plant that grows on a tall stalk. It was used to raise the nap on woven wool materials. The teasel business continued until the mid-1900s.

From the first occupants until present day, the 16-mile Skaneateles Lake has been used for recreation. Organized boating activity in the form of the first regatta was recorded in 1840. Serious manufacturing of canoes, sailboats, and motor launches began around 1876 and continued until 1945. One-design racing class sailboats like the Star and Comet were built in the area, and the Lightning was first created in Skaneateles. *Lightning #1* was launched from the Skaneateles Country Club in 1938. The boat has been restored to its original condition.

## What to Do

No matter the season, finding an enjoyable activity in Skaneateles is never a problem. Aside from the standard daytime fare of scenic walks, jogging paths, hiking trails, biking roads, and impeccably maintained parks, much more is available that is unique to the area. For nighttime activities, if you are satisfied to relax with a delectable dinner and fine wine, then Skaneateles is a good option, [www.skaneateles.com](http://www.skaneateles.com). For more evening excitement, Syracuse is only a 30-minute drive away, [www.visitsyracuse.org](http://www.visitsyracuse.org).

Why visit one of the most picturesque lakes in the country and not spend at least a little time on the water? The summer, of course, is alive with all types of boats from sailing to fishing to waterskiing. But the fall offers **boating** opportunities too, when the colorful leaves light up the densely



Ray Kolo's 1,800-foot grass strip (left) is 1.5 miles west of the Glenn Curtiss Museum in Hammondsport, where you can see several immaculately restored aircraft including a P-40 (above).

forested shoreline. Skaneateles Marina has a fleet of seven 50-hp pontoon boats that rent for \$335 per day, \$225 half-day. Prefer some exercise? Single/double kayaks and canoes are also available at rates of \$15–\$25 per hour or \$120–\$150 per day; paddleboards rent for \$90 full day, \$50 half day. Open May 1–Oct 23, fall hours Wed–Sun 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m., 1938 West Lake Rd., 315-685-5095, [www.skannmarina.com](http://www.skannmarina.com).

Rather have somebody else do the boating? Mid-Lakes Navigation offers 50-minute scenic **cruises**, two-hour lunch cruises, and romantic three-hour dinner cruises of Skaneateles Lake on the boats *Barbara S. Wiles* and *Judge Ben Wiles* (named for the grandparents of the owners). Sundays bring a Dinosaur Dinner Cruise with pulled pork, chicken, ribs, side dishes, and dessert catered by Syracuse's famous Dinosaur Bar-B-Que. Typical cruises run \$12–\$50 for adults, \$8–\$40 for children. Mid-Lakes Navigation also operates 50-minute to two-day excursions on the famous **Erie Canal**, \$12–\$420. More adventurous travelers can **captain their own Lockmaster canal boat** for a long weekend or an entire week. Calm waters and channel markers make navigation easy, and each canal town is unique. Tie up at public docks, in the locks, or anchor in a secluded spot, charters \$1,550–\$3,075. All tours and cruises run May–mid-Oct, 11 Jordan St., 315-685-8500 or 800-545-4318, [www.midlakesnav.com](http://www.midlakesnav.com).

The Finger Lakes region has 119 operating **wineries**. The first evidence of a vineyard dates to 1829 when a local pastor planted seeds behind the church rectory in Hammondsport, at the south end of Keuka Lake. Taylor Wine Company, the most recognized brand of the region, was established in 1880. Taylor eventually sold to the Coca-Cola Company in 1976, the same year the state law allowed wineries to sell directly to the public. Reisling wines are the most common for the area. To access wine country, motored transportation is required. To imbibe without having to drive yourself, hire a local limo company (see



Clockwise: The landmark Sherwood Inn, built in 1807, offers lake view rooms, a tavern, a fine dining restaurant, and complimentary breakfast; The Sherwood Inn's tavern offers classic pub fare and a raw seafood bar on Fridays; A Mid-Lakes Navigation Lockmaster canal boat cruises the Erie Canal near Rochester; Glass Artist Phil Austin at the bench in his studio/store, Snake Oik Glassworks.

Transportation). As an alternative to a long excursion, **Anyela's Vineyards** is only 3 1/2 miles south of the Aerodrome. Say hi to owners Jim and Patti; Jim flies a Bonanza. To protect their vines from frost, they bury them each year after harvest. Stroll the gardens and admire the lake, daily tastings \$3, noon–5 p.m., 2433 W. Lake Rd., 315-685-3797, [www.anyelasvineyards.com](http://www.anyelasvineyards.com).

**Beer** lovers, don't feel left out! A handful of breweries dot the wine country. The closest are War Horse Brewing Company at 623 Lerch Rd., Geneva, 315-585-4432, [www.3brotherswinery.com/war-horse.html](http://www.3brotherswinery.com/war-horse.html), and Crafty Ales & Lagers, 2 Exchange St., Phelps, 315-332-1606, [www.drinkcraftyales.com](http://www.drinkcraftyales.com). War Horse's Riesling Ale actually blends local Riesling juice with wheat beer for a subtle blend of white wine and malt. For suggested breweries and itineraries, visit [www.fingerlakesbeertrail.com](http://www.fingerlakesbeertrail.com).

For the aviation enthusiast, the **Glenn Curtiss Museum** is a must. Yes, the 1 hour and 45 minute drive to Hammondsport requires planning, but the day can include wineries also. Alternatively, you can fly to the private, uncharted airstrip 1 1/2 miles

west and call the museum for a free pickup. The single, grass, 1,800-foot Runway 8/26 has a 200-foot overrun across the dirt road to the west. You'll find it at N 42° 23.5' W 77° 15.1', elevation 770 feet. Call the owner, Ray Kolo, for landing permission and runway conditions, 607-569-3587. The museum boasts a large collection of Curtiss-made artifacts from bicycles to motorcycles to automobiles to a replica of the June Bug. The June Bug was the first observed seaplane flight, accomplished from the south end of Keuka Lake. Often called the "Father of Naval Aviation," Curtiss set speed records and made numerous first flights, including the first long distance flight, from Albany to New York City, in 1910. The Restoration Shop has a number of historic aircraft under restoration, including a Curtiss Fledgling, a P-40, and the Curtiss Albany Flyer. Admission is \$5.50–\$8.50, Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m., 8419 State Road 54, Hammondsport, 607-569-2160, [www.glennbcurtissmuseum.org](http://www.glennbcurtissmuseum.org).

And finally, don't forget **village shopping**. Chocolates, clothing, artwork, and unique gifts are all part of the concentrated

area of shops on East Genesee Street. **Imagine** sells ceramics, hand-made gifts, jewelry, and blown glass, much of it created by local artists. Your restless child or partner can enjoy the view of the lake out the back door while you shop, Mon–Thu & Sat 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Fri 10 a.m.–8 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.–5:30 p.m., 38 E. Genesee St., 315-685-6263, [www.imagineskaneateles.com](http://www.imagineskaneateles.com). **Snake Oil Glassworks**, a pleasant two-mile walk north of the Village, offers the opportunity to observe the process of blowing glass. A retail store and studio is also located on the premises, Thu–Fri noon–6 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.–4 p.m., 4251 Jordan Rd., 315-685-5091, [www.snakeoilglassworks.com](http://www.snakeoilglassworks.com).

## Where to Stay

The Village of Skaneateles is a fairly exclusive area. Hotel lodging is at a premium with only about 65 rooms available; B&Bs provide numerous alternatives. The website of the Skaneateles Area Chamber of Commerce offers a respectable overview of the area, [www.skaneateles.com](http://www.skaneateles.com).

Not only is **Hobbit Hollow Farm** within one mile of the Aerodrome, it shares the

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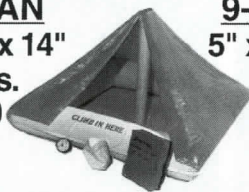
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same owner as the airport. This restored, Colonial Revival farmhouse is on five acres and offers postcard-perfect views of the lake and vineyard, the equestrian barn and meadow, or the garden. Reserve early, as only five guestrooms are available. Each room is unique; some have fireplaces or whirlpool tubs. All have WiFi, spa robes, and private phones. Your stay includes a complimentary country breakfast with fruits and berries from the garden, locally made granola, and a hot entrée. Light refreshments and cheese tasting, along with sweet goodies, are served every evening around 6 p.m., rooms \$175-\$325, 3061 W. Lake Rd., 315-685-2791 or 800-374-3796, [www.hobbitthollow.com](http://www.hobbitthollow.com).

The landmark of Skaneateles is the **Sherwood Inn**, in the heart of the Village and on the north shore of the lake. The Inn has a colorful history, established first as a tavern and stagecoach headquarters in 1807. It has been a hotel now for almost two centuries. Renovations over the years have integrated the old with the new, making all rooms unique; some have lake views. The on-site restaurant and full-service tavern are first class, having an upscale reputation among the locals. The *Stephanie*, a restored wood classic antique Chris-Craft built in 1946, is available for sightseeing. A one-hour cruise for up to eight people runs \$175; a sunrise breakfast cruise for two or evening champagne cruise are each \$200. Rooms include complimentary continental breakfast, \$175-\$295 per night, 26 W. Genesee St., 315-685-3405 or 800-374-3796, [www.thesherwoodinn.com](http://www.thesherwoodinn.com).

If you're not concerned with proximity to the lake, the **Arbor House Inn and Suites** is at the northern corner of town, still well within Village walking distance. Five of the 11 guestrooms have double Jacuzzi tubs and six have fireplaces. Rooms are decorated with antiques and Oriental rugs; all have WiFi and televisions. They also offer a free breakfast, \$160-\$230, 41 Fennell St., 315-685-8966 or 888-234-4558, [www.arborhouseinn.com](http://www.arborhouseinn.com).

If you want to splurge, try the **Old Stone Mill Inn**. Four tastefully furnished, spacious, two-bedroom condo apartments, on the second and third floors, feature modern design, hardwood floors, granite baths and countertops, full kitchens, washer/dryers, and balconies with lake views, \$395-\$495 per night including complimentary continental breakfast, one-week minimum in summer, two- to three-day minimum Fall-Spring, 3 Fennell St., 315-685-3405, [www.oldstonemillinn.com](http://www.oldstonemillinn.com).

### Where to Eat

With its white tablecloth dining and classic water views, the **Sherwood Inn** is a Skaneateles culinary landmark (see *Where to Stay*). Choose the Lakeview Porch or cozy dining room. Seasonal menus are rooted in classic American fare. Ensure that someone at your table orders the Yankee Pot Roast or the Pecan Crusted Salmon, dinner entrées

\$11–\$45. Rather eat casual? Don't leave the Inn. The tavern offers pub fare in a relaxed atmosphere, with a raw seafood bar on Fridays, open Mon–Sat 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m., Sun 11:30 a.m.–9 p.m., 315-685-3405 or 800-374-3796, [www.thesherwoodinn.com](http://www.thesherwoodinn.com).

Locals recommend **Rosalie's Cucina**, less than a mile from the north end of the lake, for its Tuscan-style Italian dining and atmosphere. The establishment was founded in 1995 by Phillip Romano, designer of many theme restaurants such as Fuddrucker's and Macaroni Grill. It is named after Mr. Romano's late sister. In addition to a Manhattan-quality dining menu, Rosalie's includes a Starbucks, a bakery, and gourmet pizza take-out. Pizza, also available in the restaurant, runs the gamut from exotic to traditional, thin crust to deep dish. Try the Robinson with red and yellow bell peppers, broccoli, Kalamata olives, fresh basil, cherry peppers, and a feta cheese blend. The extensive wine menu includes the region's best selections. As a tradition, the restaurant invites patrons to write their names on the signing wall. But before you take out your pen, a \$100 charity donation in Rosalie's honor is required. You'll be in good company. Celebrities like Bob Costas and Bill Clinton have frequented Rosalie's; entrées \$12–\$39, open Sun & Tue–Thu 5–8:30 p.m., Fri–Sat 5–9 p.m., reservations preferred, 841 W. Genesee St., 315-685-2200, [www.rosaliescucina.com](http://www.rosaliescucina.com).

As a lunch suggestion, although dinner is certainly available, the **Bluewater Grill** is right on the lake. Inside or outside on the patio, the views are tremendous. The scallop, roasted garlic, corn chowder soup is a must. The Maryland crab cakes are also worth a try. The menu also includes salads, burgers, sandwiches, and sushi, entrées \$9–\$23, open 8 a.m.–9:30 p.m., Fri & Sat until 10 p.m., 11 W. Genesee St., 315-685-6600.



Hobbit Hollow Farm, near the airport, sits on five acres with lake, vineyard, and equestrian barn views. Enjoy savory breakfasts and light evening refreshments.

**Joe's Pasta Garage** is located inside an 1820s stone building where sleighs and automobiles were once manufactured. It's a quick walk from the north end of the lake. The restaurant has an eclectic menu that includes meatloaf, chicken scaloppini, sandwiches, and stone-baked pizzas, entrées \$10–\$19, open Tue–Thu 11:30 a.m.–8 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–9 p.m., Sun noon–8 p.m. 28 Jordan St., 315-685-6116, [www.joespastagarage.com](http://www.joespastagarage.com).

### Transportation

If you feel hearty, brave a 45-minute bag schlep into town by foot. Otherwise, it's a 10-minute ride from the Aerodrome to the Village with **Deluxe Cab**. The company is located about a half hour away in Auburn, so you may have a bit of a wait without advance notice. The one-way fare is \$25, 315-253-3333.

**Skaneateles Town Car** provides rides to town from the airport for \$30, but the

one-man, one-car professional operation focuses more on specialty transportation. A six-hour wine tour costs \$350, including gratuity. At \$55 per hour, a night on the town in Syracuse with someone else doing the driving is a reasonable and safe option, 315-575-1465.

**Enterprise Rent-A-Car** will pick you up at the Aerodrome and bring you to their rental location in Auburn. You return the car to Auburn and a rental agent will bring you back to your airplane. Rates average \$50 per day, 315-253-4004, [www.enterprise.com](http://www.enterprise.com).

Aside from the scenic tranquility of the area surrounding Skaneateles, much can be said for the convenience of flying into an airport within minutes of a hidden Upstate New York place of peace and relaxation. This writer, who grew up and learned to fly in the town's backyard, returns on a regular basis. Visit once and you just might do the same. ■

# 6B9

## Skaneateles Aerodrome

Skaneateles, NY • N 42° 54.8' W 76° 26.5' • Elevation: 1,038 ft.

Sectional Chart: New York

Pattern Altitude: 1,838 ft. MSL

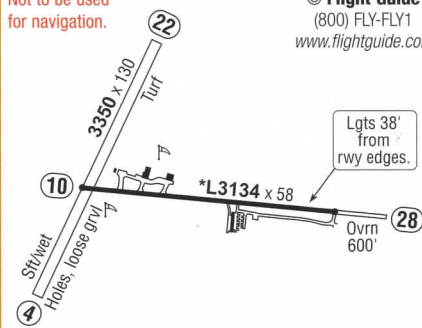
### FREQUENCIES

CTAF: **122.8**  
 Syracuse Approach: **126.125**  
 Boston Ctr. ARTCC: **133.25**  
 Buffalo FSS: **122.1R / 117.8T**



View facing northeast

Not to be used for navigation.



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**NOTES:** Rwy 4/22 is only available May 15–October 15.  
**RUNWAYS:** 10/28 3,134 x 58 ft. Asphalt. Lighted. Activate MIRL PCL 122.8 MHz. 4/22 3,350 x 130 ft. Turf.  
**SERVICES:** *Skaneateles Airport*. Fuel: 100LL: \$5.95 (self-serve).  
**PHONES:** Airport office: 315-263-3491. Clearance Delivery: 888-766-8267.