WILD WALK
AN ELEVATING JOURNEY INTO THE LIVE NATURAL WORLD
A COLLECTION OF PRESS-READY IMAGES IS AVAILABLE AT:

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The final platform offers a 30 mile view.
A new one-of-a-kind experience is now open at The Wild Center in the geographic center of New York’s Adirondacks.

Wild Walk takes visitors up a winding trail of bridges and platforms from ground level to the treetops of the Adirondack forest. The entire walk is rich with learning experiences designed to illuminate the wildlife in the surrounding woods.

The experience, in the first two months since it opened, drew visitors from all 50 states.

Wild Walk took more than eight years to imagine and build. Designed by Charles P. Reay, who led Studio E at the global architectural firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum (HOK), and was the lead designer of the award-winning Wild Center itself, Wild Walk is designed to transform the way people see into the natural world by showcasing the perspective of the rest of nature - where the forest is nursery, neighborhood, breadbasket, and home to a staggering-diverse assemblage of plants and animals.

Did you know that there is more genetic diversity in a flock of chickadees than at a meeting of the United Nations? That bears can see the past as their noses signal to their brains not just what is happening now, but also what happened in the recent past? Or that raptors scan the ground watching for food along mouse highways marked by ultraviolet trails?

The Wild Walk experience includes a four-story twig tree house and swinging bridges; a spider’s web where people can hang out; and numerous places to just sit and observe the forest below. There’s a full-sized bald eagle’s nest at the highest point of Wild Walk, where visitors can imagine life as one of the great raptors that have made such an astounding comeback in the Adirondacks.

It’s all part of an indoor and outdoor experience on an 81-acre campus that the press has praised for delivering a new kind of museum experience. The Wild Center has been profiled by Google, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today and The Boston Globe for its innovation, breakthrough design and moving experience. Wild Walk adds a new dimension to what was already praised as the number-one attraction in the Adirondacks.

Wild Walk is part of a larger outdoor experience at the Center that transforms the forest into a living, breathing learning landscape.

Wild Walk will be open this summer beginning May 27 and closes in the late fall.
Bridge leading to a twig tree house and white pine snag
The Early Reviews

Wild Walk opened for a partial season in 2015, and the first visitors gave it great reviews.

“You’ve never seen the Adirondacks like this before.” Travel + Leisure

“This Museum is so well done that we felt the wildness in all of our hearts. Thank you Wild Center.” Tripadvisor review

“An Ewokian fever dream come to life.” Mother Nature News

“Have worked in many museums throughout the world, and this one tops them all. Something about the perfect combination of information and experience. Or maybe it’s simply the vibe. Don’t miss it.” Tripadvisor review

Winner of the Excellence Award - Society of American Registered Architects - Celebration of Architecture & Design Prize
About The Wild Center

The Wild Center opened in 2006 in the heart of the wild subject it covers: the six million acre Adirondack Park. The Center works to break new ground for how museums and science centers reimage their purpose. The Center opened in a time when free access to information was auguring a new way for museums to think about their role as learning resources.

In place of a traditional collection stored in vaults, the Center mixes the living natural world inside its 54,000 square foot main building where live animals swim in indoor rivers that seem to flow through the Center’s glass walls into a pond that laps against the building’s exterior.

The Center also takes full advantage of its 81-acre campus. Guides take visitors on canoe paddles on the wild river that flows by the Center’s forest, or introduce them to the live otters and birds that live on site. They lead scheduled groups up Adirondack mountains and on and across lakes on organized hikes and paddles. Staff and volunteers lead daily shorter walks (in winter on snowshoes) on the Center’s grounds to see nature where it lives, with details that often surprise. The Center attracts visitors from all 50 states and more than 30 nations in an average year.

The Center is dedicated to helping audiences increase their understanding of the way natural systems work in the Adirondacks, and by extension, the places they live. The Adirondack Park, larger than the commonwealth of Massachusetts, is seen by many as a potential laboratory to find better ways for people and the rest of the natural world to thrive in close proximity. The Wild Center is a not-for-profit organization overseen by a Board of Trustees with the assistance of its Advisory Board. It holds a New York State Charter as an educational institution. It is headquartered in the first LEED certified museum in New York.
THE WILD CENTER IS A DAY’S DRIVE FOR MORE THAN 100 MILLION URBAN RESIDENTS
Why A Center In The Adirondacks?

All over the world natural systems are threatened. There are few places where people have succeeded in supporting thriving human economies and natural systems at the same time. The result is great current and projected losses in the natural world that will exact human costs.

The Adirondack Park is unique in the world. It’s home to great expanses of nature interspersed with small towns and communities. It is also unique as a place that was once severely damaged by human activity and has been allowed to restore itself. The lands inside the present Adirondack Park were heavily timbered and parts of it mined. The Adirondacks today is arguably one of the places on Earth where the forest has recovered over such a large area over such an extended time. That recovery was aided by people, who have demonstrably helped nature stage this remarkable comeback. It is this recovery on such a broad scale that causes many in the scientific community to call the Adirondacks a vitally-important experiment, and credible laboratory of people and nature thriving in the same space.

Tom Friedman, in his book “Hot, Flat and Crowded,” describes key elements that he says are needed in order for the planet’s natural places to continue to function. These elements include a viable local economic base that provides meaningful work without threatening biodiversity; permanent legal protections for some lands; an educational effort so residents and non-residents, especially those in succeeding generations, can personally appreciate the value of the natural systems; and ongoing scientific research to advance understanding of local natural systems. All of these conditions are being addressed across the Adirondacks, but they can be addressed better, and promoted better. That is the opportunity.

The Wild Center is committed to making the Adirondacks work for both people and nature through:

• Providing a center for education about the natural world where people can come into close and personal contact with the phenomena of nature.

• Providing a platform where scientists can come to present their current understanding of science as it relates to the health of the natural world.

• Providing leadership to help people better understand economic opportunity in natural places that doesn’t conflict with biodiversity. The Center’s work in this area includes service as a hub for broadband internet and providing leadership in green building education.

• Helping the Adirondacks move forward as a laboratory, where people can apply scientific principles to help them find better ways to work side-by-side with the natural world.
LAKE PLACID AND WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN
The unusual geology beneath the Adirondacks makes the modern history of the region equally unusual. Imagine the crust of the Earth beneath your feet rising up like a massive rock dome. Most mountain ranges in North America run as north-to-south ridges that served as paths of migration. The Adirondack dome was more like a blockade than a path. As the dome cracked and eroded over millions of years, it formed an irregular jumble of mountains, lakes and rivers.

The dome, still visible from space, was difficult to traverse and it was cold. To the European settlers spreading across America in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Adirondack dome was a forbidding land. It was an obstacle to people on foot and wagon, and its high elevations and northern latitude meant deep winter snow and cold. Given other choices, the Europeans tended to skirt the region, farming around its gentler edges. The interior of the dome remained a wild place long after most of the lands from Boston to the Mississippi were settled and farmed or industrialized.

By the middle of the 19th century, the Adirondacks were beginning to attract extractive industries. Mining operations and the iron forges they fed in the Eastern Adirondacks put particular pressure on the forests, which were often clearcut for miles around to produce charcoal to run the forges. The extraction started to transform the nature of the wild region. The Adirondacks were seen at the time as New York’s great water source, for both drinking and canal transportation, and the source was seen to be threatened by the mining and timbering, and that threat led to action. In 1872, two weeks after President Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill creating the first National Park at Yellowstone, the New York State Assembly appointed a commission to recommend ways to protect New York’s watersheds.

A young surveyor named Verplank Colvin was appointed to survey the Adirondacks, and in his report to the legislature he recommended that “Unless the region be preserved essentially in its present wilderness condition, the ruthless burning and destruction of the forest will slowly, year after year, creep onward ... and vast areas of naked rock, arid sand and gravel will alone remain to receive the bounty of the clouds, unable to retain it.”

A series of laws followed, first creating a Forest Preserve, then a park in 1892, then the amendment to the state constitution in 1894 declaring the lands of the Forest Preserve to be forever wild.

Today the 10,000 square miles of the Adirondacks are wilder in many ways than they were 100 years ago. There may be nowhere else on Earth where the same claim can be made for a space of this great scale. The Adirondacks, larger than many nations, is again blanketed in wild forests and home to clear rivers and lakes, and a year round population of close to 130,000 people.
The Wild Center’s History

Mission:
Ignite an enduring passion for the Adirondacks where people and nature can thrive together and set an example for the world.

The idea for The Wild Center was first discussed in August 1998, when a group of friends sat around Betsy Lowe’s cabin on the shores of Long Lake, New York, in the heart of the Adirondack Park. The surrounding forest was still scarred by the latest big natural event—a storm that had coated the Adirondacks and Quebec. The single, seemingly brutal force created a scene of trees glazed in ice that was beautiful and destructive. Betsy had supervised a small exhibit on the storm as part of her job at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and was impressed by the level of interest in the basic exhibit, and considered the idea of building some kind of museum to showcase the natural history of the area.

Over the next six months, volunteer committees were organized and a number of larger public gatherings designed to gauge community interest in the project were held. The crowds at the meetings grew, and more than 100 regional organizations, including the region’s other major not-for-profits, endorsed the museum concept. Donald “Obie” Clifford, who was then on the Executive Committee of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, joined the effort after reading about the nascent project in a local Adirondack newspaper.

A newly-formed Board of Directors launched an international search for a design team, culminating in the selection of the architectural firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum (HOK) and their team of designers and museum planners. HOK is one of the world’s foremost designers of green buildings, and its bid to build an immersive experience in a building that would adhere to green building standards helped them secure the contract to draft a complete Master Plan for the project. HOK’s other projects include the National Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC.

The winning team was led by Charles P. ‘Chip’ Reay, of HOK and the Office of Charles P. Reay, who began his exhibit experience work in the Charles Eames studio on a project for the IBM Pavilion for the 1964 World’s Fair, and cut his museum teeth with award-winning work at the National Air & Space Museum in Washington. The Wild Center team included Chip, Richard Lewis of Richard Lewis Media Group, originators of Public Television’s Nova series; Tom Martin, who heads ConsultEcon, a leading economic research firm; and Howard Fish of Fish Partners, whose firm designed the Center’s otter logo and who was the writer for the Center’s exhibit content.

The final Master Plan, produced in 1999, included the team’s overall concepts for the building, exhibits and site, as well as a market analysis and business plan. The plan also carefully defined a new approach to natural history, guided by the idea that building a major museum surrounded by its subject matter opened up new ways to look at the natural world. What emerged from the planning was a fundamentally new approach to museum exhibits and programs that would mix up the indoors and outdoors in novel ways.

In time, the project attracted support not only from prominent area and statewide not-for-profits, tourism officials and educational institutions, but also from distant places such as the Buffalo Bill Historical Society, Missouri Botanical Garden and Central Park Conservancy. Jane Pauley narrated a short film about the project. Then New York Governor George Pataki got involved, praising the grassroots, privately-funded effort, and pledging state support.

There was some early skepticism that the funds for the ambitious project described in the Master Plan could be raised, but the board collected $10 million toward the capital goal, triggering the decision...
to begin site preparation in the fall of 2002. The $10 million was already a record amount for a new cultural project in the Adirondacks. In the same year the Center hired Stephanie Ratcliffe, who was heading up the exhibits effort at the Maryland Science Center on Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. Ratcliffe arrived in time to bring her hands-on museum experience to bear as decisions were made that would shape the visitor experience.

A July 2004 groundbreaking event drew a crowd of 1,500 supporters, including Governor Pataki, who operated a giant earth mover to mark the official start of construction. With the opening set for July 4, 2006, almost eight years to the day from that first conversation in Long Lake, the funds had been raised from 5,237 donors, who had given 14,808 separate gifts totaling $28.3 million.

Before it opened, the board voted to change the name to The Wild Center, which officially opened on July 4, 2006. A crowd of more than 5,000 made their way to the campus - the largest such gathering in the Adirondacks since the opening ceremonies for the 1980 Olympic Winter games. Richie Havens, who opened Woodstock, performed. U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, former U.S. Congressman John McHugh, Chief Jake Swamp of the Mohawk Nation, and then-Governor George Pataki all were on hand for the day.

In 2016 a capital campaign for The Wild Center was completed and raised more than $20 million. While the Campaign was underway, a group of donors purchased and gave to the Center 50 acres of adjacent land that will be used to expand its outdoor experiences.

Stephanie Ratcliffe, now the Center’s Executive Director of The Wild Center, describes its collection as a trove spread over all six million acres of the Adirondacks. “It’s one of the best and most important collections in the world - and we’ve just begun to explore it.”
The Wild Center Press

“The wonderful Wild Center...”
— Frommer’s Guides

“stunning...”
— The New York Times

“Stunning state-of the-art museum...”
— Reader’s Digest

“linger in this glorious place...”
— The Wall Street Journal

“...the place to go..”
— The Boston Globe

“Don’t miss The Wild Center..”
— USA Today

“paradis pour les environmentalistes”
— Le Journal de Montreal

“a very interactive place..”
— Montreal Gazette
Wild Walk’s Designer

Charles P. “Chip” Reay led the team that designed The Wild Center. He designed the Wild Walk experience as well.

Reay’s design career began in the Charles Eames studio in 1963, when he worked on the visitor program for the Eero Saarinen-designed IBM Pavilion for the 1964 World’s Fair in Flushing, Queens. Reay worked for most of his career at the global architecture firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum (HOK). His credits at HOK include a central role in the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, and King Fahd University in Riyadh. Reay also designed the Jack Daniels Distillery Visitor Center. His work has been recognized with awards from The American Institute of Architects, The Urban Arts Institute, The United States National Endowment for the Arts Federal Design Achievement Award, the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the Industrial Design Society of America, AIGI, the New York Art Directors Club and Communications Arts.

Reay’s work on Wild Walk began shortly after the July 4, 2006, opening of the Center. “The Wild Center was an invention in my mind of a new kind of museum, called a museum, but entirely different, something non-collections based that chooses to tell its stories with living things instead of dead things. I wanted to connect everything to the landscape, not to objects in glass boxes.

“I wanted The Wild Center building to pay homage to the historic architecture of the area, so it grew out of that landscape and meets the Adirondacks in its own terms. It seemed very appropriate to me that Wild Walk would come out of wedding the structure, the art, or architecture or whatever you want to call it, and let it be an outgrowth of the forest. The idiom is the forest. It is not trying to build the forest and hide that we built something, but to let the tree forms be a statement of a simplified natural form. I wanted to take the Adirondack forest at its most essential forms.

“The Wild Center was a culminating project in my life. It was happening when I was retiring so that came into play, and then Wild Walk was a chance to add a new piece. It was a chance to try to perfect that idea, to make it more wonderful. The Wild Center was unusual for a designer, because I could do the planning, and the building and the exhibits, and the interiors, it’s very unusual to get to do all of that. So it became a fuller expression of, more cohesive than any other project I ever did because it came from one hand. We had the chance, with our small team, to begin the whole building with the idea for the experiences, so we built the building to house the experience, and then the grounds to house that building.

“Working on the IBM project changed my life. I was there long enough to open my eyes as a designer on how to look at the world, and how to deal with ideas with elegance and the things Eames cared about.”

TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW WITH MR. REAY, PLEASE CONTACT TRACEY LEGAT AT TLEGAT@WILDCENTER.ORG.
EIGHTY-PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE IN NORTH AMERICA NOW LIVE IN CITIES.
The 80 Percent Challenge

More than 80 percent of the population of North America lives in cities. People, both urban and rural, spend a greater and greater percentage of their time indoors. The impact of this shift is being felt from health (not good) to attitudes toward the natural world, an increasingly foreign and sometimes feared place.

The Center’s experiences, including Wild Walk, are designed to invite continued outdoor exploration by visitors after a trip to the Center. The Center’s research into customer actions indicates that it is succeeding in this effort with the majority of visitors saying the Center experience led them to explore new places. The programs and learning experiences are designed to give people ways to see more deeply into the natural world wherever they experience it, including in a city park or suburban backyard.

Jen Kretser, Program Director at the Center, says, “It can be hard to find doors to the natural world from the modern world. We’re working to make sure people can come to the Center and that it’s not the end of an exploration, but more about letting people collect new ways to explore that they can use for the rest of their lives. We love it when they come back to get a deeper look, but we also like it when people tell us something they saw a year after they came here, and that they learned a good way to look when they came to the Center.”

The Center is currently developing a program funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to share its findings on using inquiry-based learning to advance exposure to nature and exploration of natural subjects by children. The pilot program is being tested and conducted in partnership with urban science centers around the United States.
“A High Line for the Forest”

When the High Line opened in New York in 2009, it surprised people who might have felt that, from windows and bridges and movie screens, every angle of the city had already been explored. It turned out that a simple change of perspective opened up a brand new way to see New York, and that new view was something people carried home with them.

In his review in The New York Times, then architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff described the effect this way: “... as mesmerizing as the design is, it is the height of the High Line that makes it so magical, and that has such a profound effect on how you view the city. Lifted just three stories above the ground, you are suddenly able to perceive, with remarkable clarity, aspects of the city’s character you would never glean from an office....The High Line is the only place in New York where you can have this experience — one that is as singular in its way as standing on the observation deck of the Empire State Building.”

The Adirondacks are traversed with trails, but even the one that ascends to the state’s highest point on the peak of Mt Marcy, a summit five times higher than the deck of the Empire State Building, never takes the walker higher than ground level.

Wild Walk delivers a chance to walk among the trees at a height that matches the High Line. “It’s surprising when you get up there to suddenly see things in a way you’ve never seen before,” said Derek Prior, who led the graphics team for the project. “It’s not that you might have never climbed a tree, or looked out a window at a scene, it’s simply that walking along the treetops is a place you have never been, and because of that, you just see everything in a different light, and can start to imagine how our regular point of view is really so limiting.”

The High Line continues to attract steady crowds years after its opening, not only because the view from it is so unusual, but because it succeeds at a human scale. Karrie Jacobs, writing for Metropolis, wrote about how it placed walkers in a new scene. “The height, about three stories up, is just enough to alter your point of view. It’s voyeur height rather than spectacle height. It immerses you in the city instead of elevating you above it.”

Unlike other Adirondack trails, Wild Walk elevates visitors into a new realm. “We know how almost infinite nature is,” said Prior, “and that we can scratch the surface of seeing and knowing it, this is a chance to scratch something brand new, and look into nature from a point of view that can be mesmerizing. Hopefully, like the High Line, people will carry that perspective around with them, and come back to refresh it.”
Third Time’s The Charm

Wild Walk was built three times, and its second coming raised concern and eyebrows along a stretch of highway outside Syracuse, NY. The first Wild Walk happened on an intricate 3D modeling program in New York City. Linearscape, the architectural firm in charge of the design-build effort, says Wild Walk would have been close to impossible to pull off without this technology.

The geometry of the structure is incredibly complex, steadily rising bridges needed to perfectly meet platforms at precise angles. The platforms were supported by as many as 25 angled steel poles all rising from an uneven terrain in the forest. The technology, refined in the past few years, allowed all the adjustments to take place on a computer. “If any aspect of Wild Walk didn’t match, the flaw would have cascaded, and the thousands of odd angles meant it would be hard to remedy on site,” said Wayne Striker, architect with Linearscape. “Even getting the model to work was complex, so if we had had to adjust anything after the steel was cut, and the sections welded, it would have been like trying to use one of those old erector sets, but with every piece just a little wrong-sized. Square would have turned to rickety, and the more you made the worse it would get.”

Striker led the final design work for Wild Walk. He was previously with HOK in New York, and was the lead for the original Wild Center work. He said Wild Walk could not have been possible without building it first in a 3D program, and from those exacting specification, building it on the site of the steel fabricator, and then disassembling and trucking it to The Wild Center site and reassembling it. “It was an assembly line that ran from our studio up to Syracuse and then across the state to the Adirondacks, and a really unusual process that might become more usual based on the results.”

Striker said the work went up on site with almost no hitches. “When you see this sprawling piece of art flowing through the trees, it’s hard to imagine how it was built, unless you know that it was modelled to the millimeter first,” he said.
FOUR-STORY GIANT WHITE PINE SNAG WITH BRIDGES AND INTERIOR EXHIBITS
The tallest trees in the Adirondacks are eastern white pines. The tallest white pine in the modern Adirondacks measures in at just over 160 feet. That tree is also the tallest in New York, and neighbor to four other white pines that are all taller than the Statue of Liberty from base to torch. White pines, when rising high above their neighbor trees, can be prone to lightning strikes and to snapping off in gales. When that happens, the pine’s towering trunks, called snags, begin to team with life that burrows into the softening wood.

Wild Walk’s snag is a giant among giants, big enough for a stairwell inside, and four stories tall. To make the snag scale true to life, the team that created it turned to technology, and also to a towering grove of 300-year-old trees in Paul Smiths NY.

“We wanted to make the snag as accurate as possible,” said Rob Carr, a member of The Wild Center’s exhibit team. “We needed to enlarge it, so people could get inside, but we wanted to make the scale real, so if you got close you would really see exactly what the bark was like, and get a little deeper look than you could in other places of the way a snag works.”

A team from COST of Wisconsin, a noted exhibit fabrication company, traveled to Paul Smiths and made high-resolution 3D scans of the bark from a 150 year-old pine section on The Wild Center’s own campus. They used computer modeling to enlarge each detailed form so that a larger, perfectly-scaled version could be created. “What COST did, using this technology for the first time, was to produce the most accurate-looking tree replica I have even seen produced.” said Stephanie Ratcliffe, Executive Director of The Wild Center.

“It’s really convincing,” said Carr. “It’s hard for us to imagine how big a white pine might look to a small animal that calls it home, the snag gives you a little taste of what it might be like to look at a white pine, and see a giant, soaring place to live.”
get caught in the spider’s web 24 feet off the ground
## The Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Bird feeders around Feeder Alley, the enclosed 60-foot long bird observation zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>3,640</td>
<td>Pounds of bird food projected annually for Feeder Alley</td>
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<tr>
<td>6000</td>
<td>Number of volts for bear proof fencing to keep bears from knocking over feeders</td>
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<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Tons of steel used to fabricate the 27 Tree Towers</td>
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<td>1,270</td>
<td>Number of feet of bridges on Wild Walk</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Number of bridges</td>
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<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Percent of funds that came from private donors</td>
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<td>Ranking of The Wild Center among all attractions in the Adirondacks in TripAdvisor (Spring 2016)</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Height in feet an average adult's eyes will be at highest point</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>Number of known bird species that come to The Wild Center site</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Distance in miles to the furthest mountain summit visible from the top of Wild Walk</td>
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<td>1,864</td>
<td>Average miles traveled over open ocean by blackpoll warblers who will fatten up for their trip south at Feeder Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Years between designer Chip Reay's work on IBM Pavilion for 1964 World's Fair and the completion of Wild Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Cubic yards of concrete used in the fabrication of the snag</td>
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BRIDGE FROM THE FOUR-STORY TREE HOUSE
Life’s a Risky Thing

Animals don’t have life spans, they have daily odds, and the odds, every minute of the day, are long. To really see nature where it lives, it can help to leave our familiar comfort zones and see the riskier side of living. Nature is rarely still, and never without tradeoffs. At Wild Walk we give people a way to experience life in this other zone, from bridges that sway to a stairway-accessed bald eagle’s nest perched 40 feet off the ground.

Survival in the woods means avoiding hunters equipped with infrared vision and sonar search systems and survival requires wild aerial escapes. For most of us a walk in the woods is just that, a peaceful walk. Wild Walk will certainly have chances to contemplate the web of life, but it will have a chance to clamber across a spider’s web too. The experience is designed to let people sense a little of the rest of the life of the forest, with features that let visitors use more of their senses, and even their sense of balance, to turn this walk over the woods into one that lets people appreciate what a real wild life might be like.

“Research shows that our brains turn down when our surroundings are too familiar,” said Howard Fish, who wrote the exhibits in the The Wild Center’s Main building, “We’re wired to stop using band-width on the things we see every day. One thing Wild Walk will do is make everything unfamiliar, and that will be part of the experience, where our minds are turned on by the unfamiliar, and more alert, and that’s how we think animals are all the time, because their ability to get to the next day depends on their paying close attention to everything around them.”
transparent signs are designed to let the real world shine through

WILD WALK

THE WORLD FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

TRANSPARENT SIGNS ARE DESIGNED TO LET THE REAL WORLD SHINE THROUGH
The Wild Walk Experience

Each time you take Wild Walk you have the chance to sense the living natural world in compelling new ways.

Wild Walk includes a tree house you can explore, spacious platforms connected by a web of bridges, and raised walkways that twist and turn through the forest. The experience slowly peels back the layers of the scene around you to show you how the living Adirondack forest works. Fascinating stories and interactive experiences along Wild Walk freeze moments in the forest, and visitors get to see them in intimate detail.

Stories are told in a groundbreaking way. There are no dry labels here, but descriptive pointers that direct you to feel how earless snakes hear, or learn how birds stand watch for each other against predators, or discover how spiders use electrical charges to move their web to grab fly-by food. Inside the Twig Tree House you learn how woodpeckers carve homes for hundreds of thousands of animals all over the Adirondacks. A giant game lets you appreciate how wildly different life is for the birds that stay in the Adirondacks through the cold winter versus those that fly away to tropical lands when the days grow short.

There are spiders and others who live their entire lives without ever setting foot on the ground. There are creatures for whom the forest is like a tall building, with each floor reserved for different plants and animal species.

Gradually you start to sense the forest around you - as if time had slowed down and you could see, smell, feel and hear more. When you take Wild Walk you see nature filling every part of the forest with life. It’s a fantastic world that’s hard to imagine, until you experience Wild Walk, where the things we never see or hear or smell are creatively and often artistically illuminated.

The experience is all about discovery. On Wild Walk you can float on a special spider’s web 24-feet above the ground. You can spiral up inside a dead tree, called a snag, and see a hidden world more alive than the tree in full bloom next to it. In the snag you can see the home of the least-seen of local animals, who wait for darkness in order to hunt. You can hear the gentle tap of a woodpecker trying to scare ants into moving and signaling their hiding place. Once you see and hear its inside story, the snag will seem busier than the busiest skyscraper.

The highest point of the walk offers a treetop vista with the forest stretching out at your feet. Stand and stare for a minute, and you will not see a forest beneath you but a green roof sheltering a vast living web of life.

The perspective alone is worth the journey, because you will see the natural world from an entirely different point of view.

Studies show how much more alert our brains are when they are in new places. It’s why we often feel so ‘alive’ when we travel. Our minds are fully engaged. Wild Walk turns people’s brains on by exposing them to unfamiliar elevations, making the stories they will see and hear that much more memorable and meaningful.
Wild Walk’s gentle grade of ascent means it is accessible at its highest point.
Accessible Wild

Wild Walk is exactly as long as it is because it was designed from day one to be accessible to people of all generations and abilities. Its gentle sloping walkway, as well as the accessible trail leading up to it, were intentionally created so a mother with a stroller, a family visiting with a great grandparent, a friend with a wheelchair could all enjoy and experience everything Wild Walk has to offer. There are side paths and options to take suspension bridges, or stairs, but the entire main structure, from beginning to the final tower platform, is accessible.

Wild Walk and The Wild Center can be part of a larger accessible experience in the Adirondacks. The Wild Center is located just 20 minutes from John Dillon Park, a fully accessible wilderness area. Whiteface Mountain, the only accessible major summit in the Adirondacks, is also just a short and scenic drive from The Wild Center.

John Dillon Park is a purpose-built accessible park with trails, nine accessible lean-tos that can be reserved for overnight camping, and picnic areas.

The Memorial Highway up Whiteface Mountain was built when Franklin Roosevelt was governor of New York. The Highway terminates at a castle built into the side of the mountain. The summit itself, the fifth highest in New York, can be reached by a tunnel and elevator carved into the mountain.
Feeder alley is designed for viewing wild birds.
Feeder Alley

Wild Walk leaves the ground in an enclosed wood-lined tunnel with a transparent curved roof. Slits in the enclosing walls on each side let visitors peer out into the surrounding forest, which is planted with species known to attract birds. Feeders on each side attract specific types of birds, and pools, dust baths, and piles of nesting materials make this a place that will thrive with birdlife. Labels describe behaviors and some of the incredible evolutionary adaptations of the 70-plus species of birds that live near the alley.

Birds are one of the rare animals in the forest that show themselves by day, and are easy to observe. In Feeder Alley, visitors will start their trip up into the forest with a chance to slow down and watch a myriad of actions, each with its own story. They will see how birds understand each other’s warning calls as they scatter when one of them sees a hawk above; how some carry and hide food for their winter supply; or how some birds eat small rocks to grind their food (they have no teeth), or see exactly how birds minimize their weight when they fly by pooping on takeoff. Every second matters for survival, and carrying extra weight in flight is not a luxury any bird can afford.
What To Do Nearby

See Stars

It’s the only one in a huge park known for its dark night skies. The Adirondack Public Observatory offers free nighttime events all summer, a chance to look inside a roll-off roof stargazing dream house. The people who run this place are starstruck in the best way imaginable, and are happy to share their universe.

178 Big Wolf Rd
Tupper Lake, New York 12986
(518) 359-3538
www.apobservatory.org

Paddle up a Raquette

There are ten rivers within a 30 mile radius spinning out from the Center. They range from the whitewaters of the Hudson to the smooth Raquette that touches the Wild Center’s campus. Raquette River Outfitters, just downstream from the docks at the Center, is the best place to stop to get tips, directions and boats, if desired. They also offer pick up service at paddle’s end.

1754 State Route 30
Tupper Lake, New York 12896
(518) 359-3228

Get Back

Thirty-seven minutes away as the car flies, the Adirondack Museum is a great partner experience for The Wild Center. You’ll feel the beating history of the Adirondacks in its 30-plus buildings that house a famed collection of classic boats, art troves and completely twigged-out rustic furniture.

Route 28N & 30
Blue Mountain Lake, NY 12812
(518) 352-7311
www.adkmuseum.org

Climb a Fire Tower

Mt Arab is topped by a restored Fire Tower that is its crowning attraction. The view is great, and there’s something about being on top of a peak and then climbing stairs to be even more above it all that makes this a special climb. The hike is short, around a mile each way. This tower was first erected in 1918. Towers were like forest lighthouses, and the keepers, called observers, lived nearby, and were on the summits to warn of smoke. In World War Two they also monitored the skies for aircraft.

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What’s New In The Adirondacks?

Local Food
More farmers markets per person than anywhere in New York State, and the still-reasonable price of farmland in the North Country is attracting more growers to set down roots here.

ASGAARD FARM & DAIRY
Once home to artist and activist Rockwell Kent, the fields and mountain that surround Asgaard Farm were memorialized in his art. Today it's a thriving family-owned operation on 1,500 acres.

74 Asgaard Way
AuSable Forks, NY 12912
(518) 647-5754

DOGWOOD BREAD CO.
To be honest, the name Wadhams just asks to be looked into. The bakery (and coffee house) is worth the stop from any direction.
Heading home? Stock up. Heading to see friends? Assure a warm welcome. Hungry? This woodfired bakery is local, and great, and worth a detour. Friday Night Pizza is a special occasion too.

2576 county rt 10
Wadhams, NY 12993
518-962-2280

Local Beer
One of the earliest of microbrewers, the Matt family and the Saranac line, have been followed by others. Chris Ericson of Lake Placid’s UBU fame is the leader in output, and a great beer savant. He’s joined now by a flotilla of great small brewers, using hops and other ingredients from neighboring farms.

Here are two of note that put the micro in brewing:
AUSABLE BREWING
RAQUETTE RIVER BREWING

Live Arts
The towns of the Adirondacks seem to attract clusters of artists who in turn spawn all kinds of art spaces. The uniquely named “Recovery Lounge” - by day an upholstery shop, by night – a comfortably furnished performance hall, is one of many that keep a cadre of performers cycling through the mountains. View is on the other side of the park from the Lounge, and also home to a superb new performance space.

Here are five that are each worth a long look and listen:
RECOVERY LOUNGE
THE ADIRONDACK LAKES CENTER FOR THE ARTS
VIEW
PENDRAGON THEATER
DEPOT THEATER
Uplifting Views
This summer you can discover some unusual ways to see the Adirondacks. From a skimming plane, drivable peak, giant treehouse or the roof of an old cruiser, each affords a little new perspective on an expansive place.

WHITEFACE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY
Opened by FDR, the highest roadway in New York just got a fresh upgrade. You can glide up by car, or bike, or mix the options, and test your grips on the 12-mile descent that hairpins from the hewn stone castle near the summit to the Swiss inspired chalet at the base. Oh, and there's a 14-story elevator through solid rock that lurches you to the summit for a mile-high view.

Route 431
Wilmington, NY 12997
(518) 946-7175

PONTOON PLANES
Just like in the movies, when the props whir and the water splashes and the plane hurtles along the water and lifts off. Helms Aero’s planes will take you up for a cool and different way to see exactly how many hidden lakes and mountains there are in one of the most roadless areas left in the eastern United States.

Helms Aero Service
Long Lake, NY 12847
(518) 624-3931

CRUISING
Going by boat was once a way of life. Now it’s an oddity for most. The Raquette Lake Navigation Co. is a simple idea. A slow boat to nowhere. It’s worth it. The Adirondacks are all about water, and to sit high in a chair, or experience the silent sweep of their classic electric launch, is to travel timelessly.

Raquette Lake Navigation Company
254 Antlers Road, Raquette Lake, NY 13436
(315) 354-5532
A Few Facts

Official Name? Wild Walk
When? Opens Memorial Day Weekend.
Where? In the woods on The Wild Center’s 81-acre campus, located in Tupper Lake, New York.
Costs? $5.5 million, of which $1.25 million was funded by NYS through the North Country Regional Economic Development Council and the remainder funded by individuals. Fundraising is ongoing.
How High? The highest point is the top of the bald eagle’s nest, 42 feet.
Accessible? Accessible from start to finish for all ages and abilities.
Adirondack Trail? This one will be unlike any other, designed to help people see more on all future walks they take through nature.
Seasons? Open annually – from Memorial Day Weekend through leaf-peeping season in October.
PROJECT DESIGNER

Office of Charles P. Reay
1116 Warson Woods Drive
St. Louis, MO 63122
http://www.chipreay.com/

EXHIBIT FABRICATORS (SNAG)

Cost of Wisconsin
4201 County Road P
Jackson, WI 53037
www.costofwisconsin.com

ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS AND PLANNERS

Linearscape Architecture, PLLC
1133 Broadway, Suite 1317
New York, NY 10010
www.linearscape.com

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

William W. Palmer
1 Berrywood Lane
Highwood, NJ 08829

Structural Engineer

Robert Silman Associates, P.C.
88 University Place
New York, NY 10003
www.silman.com

ELECTRICAL AND PLUMBING ENGINEERS

Syksa Hennessy Group
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036
www.syksa.com

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER

Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers
225 West 34th
New York, NY 10122-0002
www.mrce.com

GENERAL CONTRACTORS

Northland Associates, Inc
4701 Buckley Rd.
Liverpool, NY 13088
www.northlandassoc.com

STEEL SUB-CONTRACTORS

Phoenix Welding & Fabricating
10 County Rt 6B
Phoenix, New York 13135
www.pwfny.com

ELECTRICAL SUB-CONTRACTORS

Watson Electric, Inc.
6 Circle Drive
Norwood, New York 13668
www.watsonelectric.net

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