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Howard Cogan, a Cornell alumnus who taught at Ithaca College and owned a communications firm downtown, created the “Ithaca is Gorges” slogan in the 1970s.

# City of Ithaca

Ithaca is a small city brimming with beauty, intellect, and heart. It spans the valley below Cornell University and Ithaca College. Gorges and waterfalls are around every turn, and Cayuga Lake ripples against the shore at Stewart Park. Ithaca has more restaurants per capita than New York City, with a vibrant music and arts scene. Innovative Ithacans have founded an alternative credit union and even an independent currency. The Ithaca Festival, the Apple Harvest Festival, and the Chili Cook-Off draw crowds downtown to the Commons to celebrate all the seasons and to come together as a community.

The population of 30,000 gets a constant infusion of young people arriving at Cornell and Ithaca College who keep things lively and looking forward. Students and faculty members come from around the globe, making Ithaca diverse and deeply connected to what happens in the rest of the world. But Ithaca is not just a college town. Many Ithacans trace their roots in the area for generations; their family members owned businesses or worked on the farms, in the shops, and in the factories.

Some people from other places find Ithaca and never leave. Many who grew up in Ithaca go off to see what else is out there—and for the first time fully realize what a remarkable place Ithaca is.

Ithacans have created some slogans to describe what they think of the place: Ithaca Is Gorges, 10 Square Miles Surrounded by Reality, Ithaculture, Ithaca Is Cold, and In Ithaca We Trust, among others.



Crowds watch the Ithaca Festival parade. *Photo by Simon Wheeler, the Ithaca Journal*

Ithaca has been named “one of the best” in too many rankings to list them all, but here are some: America’s Most Enlightened City, America’s Smartest Cities, Best Green Places to Live, 10 Best Places to Live for Gays and Lesbians, 12 Hippest Hometowns for Vegetarians, Best Places for Business and Careers, 12 Great Places to Retire, Number-One Emerging City, America’s Five Best Mountain Biking Towns, Best Places to Vacation, Best Fly Fishing through North America, 25 Terrific Places to Bring up a Family, and Most Secure Places to Live.

Ithaca is definitely one of the best places to be—whether for a weekend, for four years in college, or for a lifetime.



**FESTIVAL EVENTS** Since 1977, Ithaca has been celebrating its abundant talent, ingenuity, wit, sense of community, and arrival of good weather (not always true!) at the Ithaca Festival. Festival goers are treated to nonstop music, dance, arts and crafts, a uniquely local circus, and foods galore for four days in early June. Most of the action takes place on the Commons through Saturday, then everything moves to Stewart Park on Sunday. The ticket to all the fun is an Ithaca Festival button. *Photo of juggler by Connor Gleason, the Ithaca Journal*

**HUMAN PEACE SIGN** The world's largest peace symbol, made up of 5,814 people, was formed at Stewart Park during the 2008 Ithaca Festival. The feat was the inspiration of Trevor Dougherty, an Ithaca High School student and peace activist. Several small planes and aerial vehicles flew overhead to record the moment. *Photo by Jon Reis/www.jonreis.com*

# Gorges, Waterfalls, and Cayuga Lake

Ithaca is distinguished by its unusually beautiful landscape—and waterscape. Streams plunge over cliffs on the steep brims of the valley, cutting canyons on their way to Cayuga Lake.

Modern insight into the origins of Ithaca's landscape got a great boost from the eminent natural scientist Louis Agassiz, who took a break from Harvard in 1868 to help infant Cornell University as a visiting professor. He raved, "I was never before in a single locality where there is presented so much material in so many branches of natural history as here in this beautiful valley." Agassiz recognized Cayuga Lake not as a relic of a Biblical inundation, as was commonly thought, but as an enormous drowned groove bored by great glaciers during an Ice Age. Eventually, Agassiz's revolutionary theory of continental glaciation was generally accepted. The details in the Cayuga valley were left to later Cornell geologists.

Their story goes something like this. Several times during the past two million years, the earth cooled off, causing vast glaciers to overwhelm New York State. In the Cayuga valley, enormous volumes of rock were ripped, plucked, scraped, and hydraulically scoured away. After the most recent glacier had melted by 12,000 years ago, a long lake remained in a steep-sided trough hundreds of feet deeper than before.

The valley sides had been sheared away, leaving high, steep banks overlooking Cayuga's valley. Streams reestablished themselves in the uplands above, and gravity drew them toward the main valley as before.



Taughannock Falls near Trumansburg lies at the head of a 3/4-mile-long canyon that fronts on Cayuga Lake. Another gorge continues above to the lesser-known Upper Falls.

When streams reached Cayuga's valley, they were in for a big surprise. Instead of encountering the formerly gentle grade to the ancient Cayuga River, they issued from "hanging valleys" and cascaded down the flanks of the great glacial groove, cutting gorges in succeeding millenia.

Ithaca's hanging-valley waterfalls are some of the highest in the East. Ithaca Falls crashes 150 feet, while Taughannock plunges 215 feet, more than Niagara. Lucifer Falls' 115-foot leap in Robert Treman State Park is the climax of an angular rock gorge. Buttermilk Falls is the final and most dramatic of several cascades that bounce down the hill nearly 500 feet on the way to Cayuga Inlet. Cascadilla Glen's six waterfalls connect Collegetown with downtown. And Six Mile Creek offers a charming alternation of gorge, falls, small lakes, and a forest treasured for its spring wildflowers.



**CASCADILLA GORGE PATH** The trail through Cascadilla Glen is 1/3 mile long and climbs 400 feet from downtown. It is the quickest and prettiest pedestrian route between downtown and the Cornell campus. The path is closed in winter.

**CASCADILLA GLEN** The trail passes six waterfalls on the climb from downtown to Collegetown. Cascadilla Creek emerges from under the College Avenue Bridge. Cascadilla Glen forms the southern boundary of the Cornell campus.

**FIRST WATERFALL** In summer, Cascadilla Creek's flow can diminish, revealing a bare, fractured creek bed. A grassy area at the mouth of the glen is called the Treman Triangle and was given to Cornell University for a park in the early 1900s by Robert H. Treman, an 1878 alumnus and successful local businessman.



**REUNION** Tent parties light up the Arts Quad and cast dancing music across the campus until 1:00 a.m. during Reunion Weekend. Thousands of alumni return to campus each June to attend Reunion. *Photo by Cornell University Photography*

**SLOPE DAY** Students celebrate the last day of classes in spring semester by gathering on Libe Slope to hear live music and hang out. Slope Day performers have included national recording artists such as Snoop Dogg, Kanye West, Pussycat Dolls, The Wailers, Taio Cruz, Drake, and Nelly. *Photo by Lindsay France, Cornell University Photography*

**COMMENCEMENT** About 5,000 students, faculty members, and proud relatives fill the field and crescent in Schoellkopf Stadium for commencement, held on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. Cornell's president always gives the commencement address.





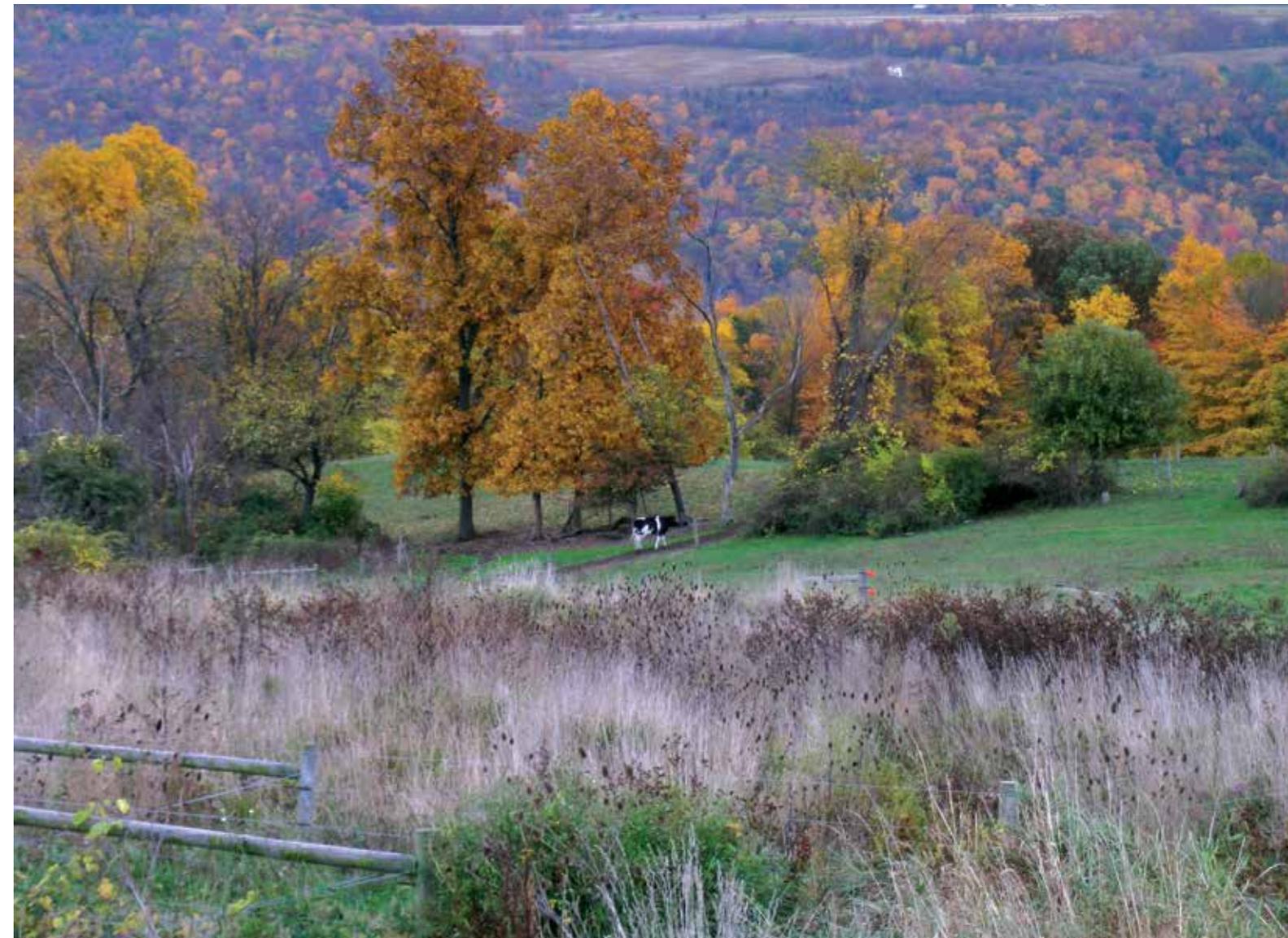
**DILLINGHAM CENTER AND FOUNTAINS** Named for the college's fourth president, Howard Dillingham, the center is used primarily for theater arts. Dramatic, musical, and dance performances are held in the Clark and Hoerner theaters, like the dance shown here called *No Translation Needed*. The fountains are one of Ithaca College's best-known features, for their elegance and for the splashing they inspire when seniors jump in on Fountain Day. *Photo of dance courtesy of Ithaca College by Rachel Hogancamp; photo of fountains by Robert Llewellyn/www.jonreis.com*





**MUSEUM OF THE EARTH** The natural history museum of the Paleontological Research Institution displays magnificent collections of bones, fossils, and petrified wood. A skeleton of a right whale hangs overhead in the atrium. The skeleton of a mastodon (with eight-foot-long tusks) that lived more than 13,000 years ago stands before you. *Photos courtesy of the Museum of the Earth*

**COUNTRYSIDE** Though many family farms have disappeared from the Ithaca area, some local farms remain.







Cornell men's crew team on Cayuga Inlet

Ithaca stirs the hearts of people who know it, whether they are residents, college students, alumni, or visitors. This book paints a portrait of the special character of Ithaca—from the city and Cornell to the cascades and Cayuga Lake.

**Writer, editor, and photographer Liz Bauman and naturalist, writer, and photographer Tony Ingraham have combined their talents to produce a book that is the first of its kind. Chapters on the city, the gorges and Cayuga Lake, Cornell University, Ithaca College, areas nearby, and historical highlights portray Ithaca's many facets. More than 200 color photographs capture Ithaca's charms, while words tell stories of this wonderful place.**