

go!

zipping along

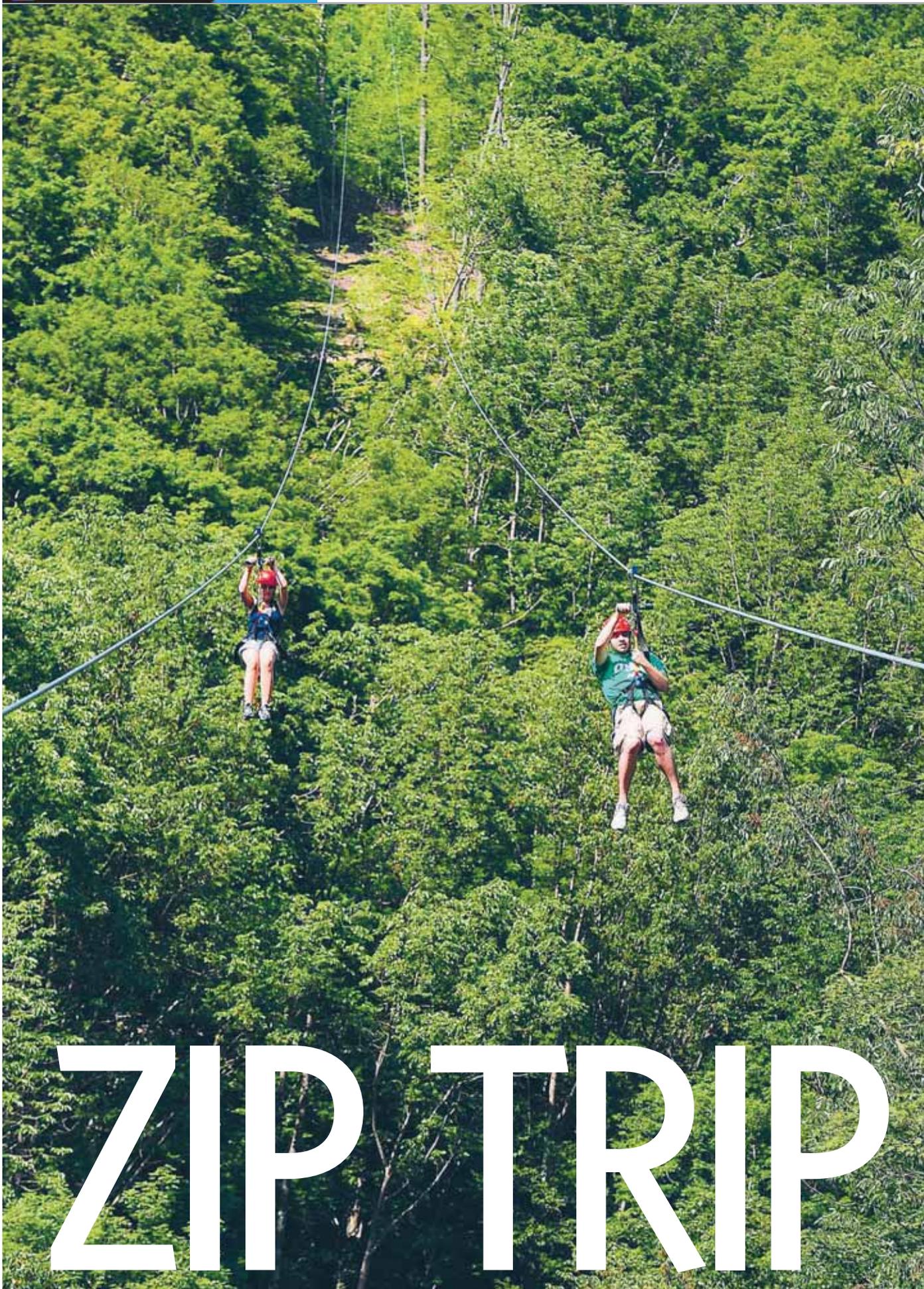
GOING
HIGHER, FASTER
AND FARTHER AT
HUNTER
MOUNTAIN

D4



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MILWAUKEE
New at the
Harley-Davidson Museum



BY ADAM WAGNER
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Phil Troiani stands on the edge of a cliff with nothing but a few craggy rocks and treetops looming a few hundred feet beneath him. “You ready?” asks his friend, Allen Scotto. Troiani, of Amityville, nods. Both men take running starts and leap. “Let’s rock and roll, baby!” Scotto yells.

A sound — like someone unzipping 10,000 jackets — fills the air, and the two men disappear into the distance, triumphantly riding side-by-side on cables strung over 3,200 feet of the Catskills forest, landing on a platform at the other end of the valley.

“I jumped off with a lot of vigor,” Troiani, 65, says later. “I was going for the gold.”

ON THE COVER and left Each line presents a task and each teaches the zip-liner certain techniques.

Visitors who are used to skiing Hunter Mountain’s black diamonds might be surprised to learn that there is an equally thrilling ride down the slope — and it doesn’t involve snow. New York Zipline Adventure Tours’ newly opened Sky rider Tour — billed as the fastest, highest, longest zip line in North America — offers thrill-seekers a bird’s-eye view of the surrounding Catskills and an excuse to head north during the summer.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Canopy tours go off rain or shine — riders have to meet weight and health requirements and must wear closed-toed shoes.

The tour begins with a bumpy ride up the mountainside in an off-road vehicle followed by a brief lesson on zip-line safety and technique that will be used over the roughly three-hour tour, which encompasses nearly 5 miles of zip lines.

There are no refunds for those who balk and bail out at the top of the mountain.

TAKING A RIDE

After the tutorial, visitors are thrown into the proverbial deep end, as the first ride on the tour is the longest and highest cable, standing 600 feet above the gorge at points. Suspended by a waist harness and two carabiners, guests are encouraged to take a running start and pull them-

NEWSDAY PHOTO / ALEJANDRA VILLA

ZIP TRIP

Flying down Hunter Mountain — without the snow



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / ALEANDRA VILLA



Participants negotiate five zip-line challenges, varying in speed and angle, including an optional walk across a suspension bridge, left. Parallel cables allow friends to race each other.

“A zip line’s based on gravity, where you just ride it out and your weight’ll get you to the other side,” says Morse, who has been building zip lines for 26 years. But for the zap line, “you have to run as fast as you can and use your own speed to get to the other side.”

The next stop is the Yo-Yo — the shortest but fastest line of the course, with riders reaching speeds between 50 and 55 miles per hour. The final zip line requires riders to combine all of the techniques they have learned throughout the day in order to make it across the gorge. After the last ride and a few photo ops, guests are taken back to the bottom of the mountain.

Troiani says he appreciated the tour guides’ laid-back attitudes and obvious experience.

“They took care of every detail,” he says. “All you had to do was jump.”

selves into a cannonball position as they cross the ravine for a faster ride.

The second zip line is a lower, slightly shorter version of the first. Like every line, it has side-by-side cables that add a level of competition to the experience.

“The parallel cables allow you to race your buddies, scream and yell and carry on as you’re heading down the line,” says Bradd Morse, principal partner of New York Zipline Adventure Tours. “It makes it so much more thrilling.”

The third zip line is the first very fast one, as it descends toward the landing platform at a sharper angle. Riders are encouraged to “open up”

on the ride down in order to capture wind with their bodies and slow themselves down for a less-abrupt landing.

On the next leg, guests are given a choice: Walk across a suspension bridge or propel yourself across a 500-foot “zap” line across the valley.

IF YOU GO

New York Zipline Skyrider Tour

64 Klein Ave., Hunter, N.Y.; 518-263-4388, ziplinenewyork.com
COST \$119 for three-hour tour. Sessions offered at 9 a.m., 1 and 2 p.m. daily, with 2:30 and 3:30 sessions on weekends. Riders must weigh between 100 and 260 pounds — children younger than 10 are strongly discouraged.

This time, leave your skis behind

Three other New York ski resorts offer offseason attractions:

1 WHITEFACE LAKE PLACID 5021 NYS Rte. 86, Wilmington 518-946-2223, whiteface.com

Thrill seekers can head to the Adirondacks to experience some of the area’s most challenging mountain biking. With 27 trails, Whiteface offers a ride for any skill level (\$35 adults, \$24 ages 12 and younger; from \$80 for rental bikes and pads). The resort also has a nine-hole disc golf course (\$6 a round of disc tossing) and hiking trails.

2 BELLEAYRE 181 Galli Curci Rd., Shandaken 845-254-5600, belleayre.com

Families looking for a more relaxed afternoon can head to Pine Hill Lake, where a beach offers chances to boat, fish or swim depending on everyone’s mood (\$8 a car). Belleayre also offers concerts throughout the summer, including performances by k.d. lang today; Clint Black Aug. 13, and Bela Fleck and the Flecktones on Sept. 3.

3 HOLIDAY VALLEY 6557 Holiday Valley Rd., Ellicottville 716-699-2345, holidayvalley.com

The Ellicottville resort’s Sky High Adventure Park offers an Aerial Park, which features eight courses of elevated platforms, suspension bridges and zip lines (\$42 for three hours). In late July, the resort will open Mountain Coaster — a roller coaster-esque attraction that allows riders to control their own speed as they zip down the mountain-side (\$6 a ride).



Whiteface has an off-road mountain biking course with 27 trails for all skill levels.

Watch a video of the Skyrider tour newsday.com/travel