

Twists & Turns

Posted: Wednesday, September 16, 2009 12:00 am

Outdoor mazes are a fantastic way to enjoy the late summer and early fall weather, and offer just as much fun for adults as they do for children. You can easily lose yourself amidst the tall stalks of corn in a corn maze, one of the newest forms of agribusiness and a sprouting up across New York State where cornfields are aplenty. In order to have a successful, safe, an amazing maize maze experience, check out the farm's Web site for an aerial view, and print out a picture of the maze to have with you as a guide. Be sure to bring along everything you might need for an action-packed day, including comfortable shoes, bottles of water, snacks, and maybe wipes for clean hands. Definitely consider the weather, especially in the unpredictable Southern Tier. And go a head and expect small children to get tired and cranky. Adults are allowed to get cranky, too.

Ithaca Sound Maze, Calkins Road, Ithaca

Only in its second year, the Ithaca Sound Maze is Tompkins County's first sound garden. Intertwined within a corn maze, it features a number of interactive instruments and sound installations hidden throughout. The instruments were built by local musicians and artists, and were created out of found and recycled materials collected at Steep Hollow Farm and other farms and sites around the Tompkins County region.

There are gongs, for example, formerly part of an industrial stainless steel pressure-washer in a restaurant kitchen, that can be played with tennis-balled drumsticks. There's also a "harrowphone," created out of broken teeth from a tine harrow, a farm implement used to cultivate soil - and the pitches are all random. There are no dead ends in the Ithaca Sound Maze, located on the grounds of Steep Hollow Farm, three miles south of downtown Ithaca on Calkins Road just west of Route 13 in the Town of Ithaca, between Buttermilk Falls and Robert Treman State Park. Admission is five dollars per person, but children under five are welcome free of charge.

T-Burg Mini Golf Corn Maze, 1966 Trumansburg Road

The T-burg Mini Golf Family Entertainment Center uses its 10-acre backyard cornfield to construct a maze big enough to fill the entire space. In fact, it claims to be the largest corn maze in Tompkins County. And every fall, it's a different course: in 2008, the owners carved out a massive castle, and this year the maze is set to open by early September but the shape is still a secret. Located right on Route 96 a few miles south of the town of Trumansburg, the maze will be open Friday and Saturday nights through the end of October. The owners recommend allowing 45 minutes to an hour to complete the maze and bringing a flashlight, though visitors can purchase flashlights upon arrival, as well.



Twists & Turns

Sounding Off: The Ithaca Sound Maze, only in its second year, is Tompkins County's first sound garden. Look for a number of interactive instruments and sound installations hidden throughout. (Photo by Rachel Philipson)

Iron Kettle Farm, 707 Owego Rd., Candor

A half-hour drive south of the City of Ithaca, the Iron Kettle Farm is 22 miles away in the rural town of Candor. Located right on Route 96, it's a hard-to-miss open farmland that looks more like a fairgrounds, complete with a pumpkin sling-shot, a spook barn, and a corn maze cut out of a modest two-acre cornfield. The Iron Kettle Farm, just three miles south of the Village of Candor, celebrates its fortieth anniversary this year - a family-owned business started by the grandparents in 1969. The corn maze is not overwhelmingly big, and is actually perfect for kids eight and older who want a little independence. Kids can get through it without needing adult supervision, but the owners recommend parent accompaniment for kids under eight. At \$2.50 a person, the Iron Kettle corn maze should take about 15 minutes. The farm is open for fall activities from the last weekend in September through the end of October.