



The great escape

This delightfully quirky flea market has city slickers heading for the hills

Just inside Catskill National Park at the foot of Slide Mountain is an oasis of cool known as Pheonicia. Once a sleepy one-street river town in New York's Catskill mountains, Phoenicia is now a destination spot for the ultra-urban New Yorkers, who flock to the town of just 309 people to float down the winding Esopus Creek or just take in the any number of Adams-esque views. The charming town, just 2.5 hours from New York City, also has another draw—the Phoenicia Flea, a delightfully curated market of regional artisans headed up by James Anthony.

In 2012, a small group of Anthony's friends opened The Graham & Co, a rustic-chic Phoenicia getaway. The tastefully outfitted motel—think industrial lighting fixtures, reclaimed wood walls, cowhide rugs—immediately appealed to indie hipsters, who were eager to trade the hustle and grind of the city for a weekend of lazy afternoons spent poolside and an evening of campfire s'mores. Soon after, Small Room Collective, a mobile mercantile & gallery space, approached the hotel



about setting up their pop-up airstream shop on the hotel property. Its success, says Andrews, "was the catalyst for us to do a bigger event. We had the space and the means to promote it."

Last summer, The Graham & Co hosted the first Phoenicia Flea, with vendors representing the very best the region has to offer in handcrafted food, drink, confection, jewelry, accessories, apothecary, and housewares. It returns Memorial Day weekend this year, with fleas held monthly through autumn.

Roadtrip, anyone?

AS: What was the inspiration behind starting the Phoenicia Flea?

JA: It really was the town of Phoenicia. It's small but very special and very lively. It's in right in the heart of the Catskills and a hub for the entire region. I wanted to see a makers flea market in Phoenicia for years. I always believed the town could sustain one.

AS: Did any other flea markets serve as inspiration?

JA: Flea markets in general. The wonderful feeling of browsing on a weekend away. Having a treat and finding some treasure.

AS: What is your background? How did it all come together to create something so amazing?

JA: I've personally worked in music, beauty, design, and hospitality. What I love most is working with creatives and organizing environments for them to flourish. It's a lot of work but easy as pie.

AS: Did you run into any challenges getting it started?

JA: The only real challenge is logistics, but from the tents and tables to the makers and sellers our goal is always to build an overall aesthetic. To tell a story. To hopefully create a magical experience for everyone.

AS: Are there any vendors that you you're really loving right now?

JA: I'm very proud of Materia Designs, Andrew Molleur, The Brew & Compass, Straw & Gold and Captain Blankenship for example. The Phoenicia Flea was sort of their debut to the Hudson Valley markets. I come across makers and sellers any number of ways. I love strong brands, craftsmanship, and a unique point of view.

AS: How would you describe the typical Phoenicia Flea experience?

JA: We do want to have an elevated taste level, but it must always be accessible. Something for everyone. We want it to look and feel and smell and sound like an unforgettable event. Food, fun, community, creativity. The Catskill Mountains is the perfect backdrop.

