

Taking The Kids: Everybody Has Fun in The Adirondacks



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The Club House at the Whiteface Lodge.

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Published: Saturday, July 3, 2010 at 12:25 a.m.

Last Modified: Saturday, July 3, 2010 at 12:24 a.m.

No one cares that the water is cold. The kids splash at the lake's edge, play on the small sand beach as older, daring ones splash in the water and peddle kayaks, rowboats and paddleboats. Our pup eyes them all curiously.



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The Golden Arrow Lakeside Resort at dusk.

Lake Placid (www.lakeplacidregion.com) - home to two Olympics - is that iconic old-fashioned vacation spot that works as well for 21st-century families - and their pooches - as it did a century ago for families and millionaires who came to the Adirondacks.

With 6 million acres, Adirondack State Park is the largest state park in the United States, larger than Yellowstone, Everglades, Glacier and Grand Canyon

national parks combined. It boasts more than 3,000 lakes and 2,000 miles of hiking trails and offers kayaking, canoeing, fishing and mountain biking.

(The Whiteface Downhill Mountain Bike Park features 27 downhill and cross-country mountain bike trails that run between the ski trails, through streams and woods.)

Lake Placid, a town where everyone seems to be an athlete, or at least an outdoors enthusiast, has only 3,000 residents, but that number swells close to 10,000 in summer.

Main Street overlooks Mirror Lake and it's lined with ice cream and coffee shops, all variety of restaurants, a brewery, even a creperie, some with outdoor patios) and stores selling N.Y. state maple syrup, local chocolate, antique ski posters, local wines and cuddly stuffed moose.

"The kids love it because it's so safe we can let them go out on their own," said Louise Meeachran, here with a group of young freestyle skiers from Ontario. "Whatever the season there is something for the kids to do," adds Suzanne Boger, an attorney from Saratoga Springs, N.Y., who comes here winter and summer with her two kids, husband and two dogs. We meet them hiking and splashing in Lake Placid along the Peninsula Trails that run for miles. Our puppy, Trooper, happily joined in.

"Even when the weather is bad, there are things to do." (Bowling anyone?)

There's even some Civil War history when you visit Abolitionist John Brown's farm and gravesite. But what sets this place apart - besides the natural beauty and Olympic history, as if that weren't enough - is how genuinely friendly people are. Pooch-friendly too.

We learn that first-hand at the 166-room Golden Arrow Lakeside Resort (www.golden-arrow.com), which has an idyllic location on Mirror Lake (smaller than Lake Placid and ideal for young families).

The Holderied family has run the Golden Arrow for more than 30 years, attracting families who return again and again. Besides having fun, the kids might learn a thing or two about vacationing greener. The resort is the first, and so far only, one in the United State to achieve 5 Green Leaf Rating from the Audubon Society for its green initiatives.

There are small touches like the paper shopping bags in each room to encourage guests to recycle cans and bottles. Small placards around the hotel point out the green features.

"We want kids especially to realize they can help," says Jenn Holderied, the youngest of the three siblings overseeing the hotel, which was bought by their parents, who spearheaded the green initiatives. "The things you can do aren't difficult," she says. "Our goal is to get people thinking about it."

That extends to the resort restaurant, Generations, where the family is set to have harvest dinners, inviting farmers to showcase their wares. Eventually, Holderied, the mom of two children, hopes families will be able to visit area farms and see where the food on their plates came from.

Some families who come here might prefer a cabin or condo, though, and there are certainly plenty to choose from at every price point.

If you're coming with grown kids and want a laid back but luxurious respite - or want to feel like you were one of those millionaires from a century-ago - check out the 30-room Lake Placid Lodge (www.lakeplacidlodge.com), which was rebuilt after a fire to resemble a Great House.

The Lodge, however, doesn't welcome kids under 12 (unless you book the entire place), but will pamper your dog.

The Mirror Lake Inn touts itself as summer camp-plus. It's located on a lake with swimming, canoeing, kayaking and fishing. But there's also a spa, three gourmet restaurants and, they promise, serenely comfy beds.

Visit www.mirrorlakeinn.com.

Whiteface Lodge (www.thewhitefacelodge.com) on the other hand has got everything a family could want. Though not on the lake, it maintains a private beach a half-mile away with the requisite canoes, kayaks and more.

This is the kind of place that offers the convenience of deluxe condos in the woods with the amenities of a first-class resort. Parents will appreciate that the Whiteface Lodge also offers complimentary organized activities for kids as young as three. How about learning orienteering with the Adirondacks as your playground?

"It may be touristy," laughed Suzanne Boger. But then she gestures across the spectacular lake, with Whiteface Mountain in the distance. "There are plenty of places to get away from the crowds."

With the kids - and your dog, of course.

[For more on Eileen's visit to Lake Placid, read her trip diary at www.takingthekids.com.]