Lakeside Fun in New Hampshire

Unplugging a teenager from their electronics remains the bane of a parent’s existence when trying to plan a summer holiday. Engaging and captivating that same child without use of a computer or iPhone is quite another matter. I look no further than the Lake Region of New Hampshire. A long time favourite of skiers and snowboarders, New Hampshire has a tremendous amount to offer those less fond of cold temperatures. We head to the mid-section of the state, punctuated by the beautiful Lake Winnipesaukee and its surrounding sister lakes.

Clearly water sports top the menu in this particular region with swimming, tubing, water skiing and boating being the favourites. First one must decide where to hang one’s hat at night as most of the lodging options include your entrance to the water sports arena. We opt for the Lakeside family run type of places, which offer rooms or small cabins such as Cottage Place on Squam Lake, just north of Winnipesaukee.

Quaint accommodations equipped with the ability to dine-in, and furnished with eclectic cozy items imbued with lake living, you can fill the hours lounging on the lake beach, swimming, taking the kayak out or touring the lake by motor-craft. After a fun-filled family day, a cozy campfire with s’mores rewards the sun weary souls of guests.

Those who are looking for more active water related activities don’t have to venture far. Local businesses such as the Squam Lake Association offer kayaks for self-touring of Little and Big Squam Lakes, and motorised vehicle-guided tours of the same.

If larger bodies of water are your passion, the M/S Mount Washington Cruises tours of Lake Winnipesaukee out of Weirs Beach can’t be beaten. You can take one, two or three hour tours of the lake, peacefully taking in the gorgeous scenery, while knowledgeable staff pipe in interesting facts about the area.

If nightlife interests you, themed dinner cruises complete with live music, dancing and spectacular four-course cuisine calls to all members of the family, young and old. If an active day in the sun on the water doesn’t wear out the family, then a day finished off with a night of dancing and dining will definitely tucker them out...and not a computer nor iPhone in sight.

For those with more ‘need for speed’ type of adventures, head over to Wolfeboro, on the southeast side of the lake. The New Hampshire boat museum gives a wonderful insight into the history of the wooden speedboats on Lake Winnipesaukee, and as part of the museum experience, you can head straight out and take a tour on one of those same wooden speedboats. Everyone got a clear, concise history lesson of the area from Captain Jim while the wind whipped through our hair and the lakes spray coated our skin. Delicious!

In addition to the water offerings, the wooded hills and mountains of New Hampshire are just within reach for hiking, climbing and exploring. A favourite of my family was the family owned and operated Polar Caves in Rumney.

Formed from granite boulders that fell at the base of Hawk’s Cliff as glaciers passed through during the last Ice Age, this venue boasts lovingly maintained trails/walks/stairs that wind around the cliffs and the nine caves so that each guest can explore at his or her own pace. So much to take in...gorgeous views, history and information, secret spaces and crevices, a menagerie of exotic birds, animals to pet, lots of fresh air and good old-fashioned exercise. Stay for a few hours, or make a day of it!

If your time commitment is more on the
meagre side, Rattlesnake Mountain is a mere 15 minutes away in Holderness. With plenty of parking located at the mountain base, the well-maintained trail, peppered with areas of crushed stone, logged steps and dampened earth, takes even a non-experienced climber only 20 minutes to reach the top. Even the least goal orientated will benefit from a refreshing sense of accomplishment as they are rewarded with expansive breathtaking views of the lakes below.

Just down the road from Rattlesnake Mountain is the Squam Lake Natural Science Center, a location that speaks to family members of all ages. The stated mission of the centre is ‘To advance understanding of ecology with educational programs presented throughout the park-like setting, and habitats and ecosystems scattered with colourful, well-organised exhibits’, including animal and bird exhibits, with natural history classes and crafts! For those looking to stay on the go but not interested in breaking a sweat, the lake region boasts many interesting low-key destinations to occupy your family. While in Wolfeboro, be sure to check out the Wright Museum of WWII, a beautifully preserved monument to this country during wartime. Loaded with historical exhibits with visual, auditory and interactive components, the kids will soak up more history by walking around the two-storied building than they would in a year of history classes!

Where else can you listen to authentic tunes from the 1930-40s while placing yours hands on a real Sherman Tank? Educational fun for the whole family! ‘Castle in the Clouds’ is a 1914 Arts and Crafts mansion located in Moultonborough and is constructed solely by locally procured materials - tour the home, which offers dramatic views of Lake Winnipesaukee below, or stroll around the many trails located on this 5,500 acre property. Whatever your choice, you can be assured of having a restful, peaceful experience in this most beautiful natural setting.

I believe that the success of a family holiday is underscored by the kids, weary but content…asking from the back seat, “When would we be back to visit the area again?” I wasn’t able to give a concrete answer, however, I was able to assure them that the lake region of New Hampshire hadn’t seen the last of us!”

Castle in the Clouds