

Title:

Lake Winnepesaukee - New Hampshire's Playground

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828

Summary:

Lake Winnepesaukee nestles in the foothills of the White Mountains in New Hampshire. It's the states largest body of water and one of the deepest. Centered in the popular vacation area known as the Lakes Region it provides 4-season pleasure for millions every year. Discover what to see and do from this article.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Lake Winnepesaukee nestles in the foothills of the White Mountains in New Hampshire. It's the states largest body of water and one of the deepest. Centered in the popular vacation area known as the Lakes Region it provides 4-season pleasure for millions every year.

Before Europeans visited the native people had been enjoying the lake for 10,000 years. They gave Lake Winnepesaukee the Indian name meaning "Smile of the Great Spirit." Spend a week on the lake and you'll understand what they mean. The area is a magnificent playground for both water and hiking activities.

These days people still fish and canoe on the lake but it's shared with modern day jet skis and motorboats. But essentially Lake Winnepesaukee is an area to take your time exploring, and enjoy the lazy feeling of messing around on water.

The lake is spring fed and clean, and many homes on the lake take their water supply directly without any filtering. The towns around the lake are mindful of conservation and it makes for a safe and pristine lake for everybody.

I've been visiting Lake Winnepesaukee for the last twenty years and I have these suggestions for enjoying your visit to the Lake.

M/S MOUNT WASHINGTON CRUISE

For a 132-years a cruise boat has been traveling up and down the 72 square miles

of the lake. The current boat - M/S MOUNT WASHINGTON - has been operating since 1946. Due to the demand it was extended in 1982 by cutting the boat in half and placing a middle section.

The three decks of the M/S Mount Washington provide stunning vistas of the mountain ranges overlooking Lake Winnepesaukee. These mountains include the Belknap, Ossipee, and Sandwich ranges - the foothills of the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

There's no better way of getting oriented on the Lake. You can board the boat at Weirs Beach and take the 2 and ½ hour cruise down to Alton Bay or up to the picturesque town of Meredith depending on the day.

When you make the trip be prepared to do a lot of waving. The M/S Mount Washington is a popular and the most distinctive boat on the lake, and you'll find most boaters and people on the shorelines waving in recognition of this majestic large ship.

THE LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE SCENIC TRAIN RIDE

You don't have to venture far from the cruise ship to take the scenic train ride. They share the same ticket office and almost the same dock - except of course it's a train platform. Nonetheless the Lake Winnepesaukee scenic train runs from Meredith to Weirs Beach to Lakeport and back. You can take a 1 hour or 2 hour ride. You'll get spectacular views of the lake and shoreline and Belknap Mountain.

At times the train hugs the shoreline of the lake and seems like it's in the backyard of homes built on the lake. But it all adds to the charm and fun of the ride. This is a slow train as it travels the section down to Paugus Bay and back to Weirs Beach.

THE CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS

The Castle in the Clouds is a magnificent home built on a mountaintop in 1913 by industrialist Thomas Plant. You can tour the castle and grounds where you'll find waterfalls and miles of trails to explore. During the fall foliage season it offers majestic views of the lake and surrounding area.

The Castle is near Moultonboro on the eastern side of the lake and you can get there by following Route 171 in Ossipee. This side of the lake is the "quieter" region, as there are less towns and villages. In particular worth visiting is Wolfeboro for a fine evening dinner at one of the majestic country inns.

BELKNAP MOUNTAIN HIKE

For those willing to be a little more adventurous Lake Winnepesaukee offers some great hiking trails. Many are moderate to difficult, but the Belknap Mountain hike in Gilford is easy and can be done by most people including small kids.

This is an enjoyable walk and you should allow 2 and ½ hours round trip to appreciate the walk to its fullest. At the summit you'll be rewarded with a magnificent view of Lake Winnepesaukee, and if conditions are right you can sometimes spot Mount Washington in the distance.

Take Route 11A to Gilford and drive south through the village. Stay on this road as it climbs Belknap Mountain road. Eventually you'll see signs and a parking area on the left.

WEIRS BEACH

Weirs Beach is the closest to a hub and family entertainment center on Lake Winnepesaukee. It has a water park, amusement games, miniature golf, and many of the activities you'd expect at the seaside. A great place to take the kids when they've had enough of train rides and cruises.

Lake Winnepesaukee offers a visitor pure relaxation coupled with a range of activities that'll keep your mind and body in balance.