

Lakes Region of New Hampshire



Welcome to New Hampshire's Lakes Region, where water and mountains meet with a harmonious splendor setting the perfect vacation destination. Located in the eastern central slice of the Granite State, this beautiful area is bounded by the towns of Rochester on the south, Plymouth on the northwest, and the Maine state line on the east. Visit the Lakes Region and you'll appreciate the source of its name, as this land is dotted with hundreds of lakes and ponds carrying such magical names as Winnisquam, Silver, Crystal, Winnepesaukee, Ossipee, Halfmoon, and Sunset. Here you'll see the "classic" New England; church steeples rising above majestic trees, boats zipping across crystal lakes, and endless mountain ranges stretching as far as the eye can see.

Lake Winnepesaukee

As the spiritual and physical hub of the Lakes Region, Lake Winnepesaukee has the distinction of being the largest of New Hampshire's 1300 lakes and ponds. Not only do Winnepesaukee's waters encompass hundreds of habitable islands, but her shores are home to many of the Lake Region's most important towns. The lively resort of Weirs Beach rests on western side of the lake, boasting a cavalcade of attractions, including water parks, arcades, train rides, a board walk, beaches, and a port that serves as a jumping off point for a variety of lakefaring cruises. Parents and kids alike relish vacations in Weirs Beach, which plays host to a variety of concerts, fireworks celebrations, and many special events throughout the summer. A quick drive up the road is Meredith, also on Winnepesaukee's western shore. This quaint New England town lures visitors with its colorful marketplace, millrace, and inns, along with lakefront parks, docks, museums, galleries, golf courses, campsites, and theaters.

Water is a big part of the fun here, from swimming and fishing, to waterparks, cruise ships, boat tours and nature centers

Hikers have enjoyed the spectacular views from the Lakes Region mountain ranges for more than a century. Mount Major, Belknap Mountain and Rattlesnake Mountain are a few of the most popular.



The Lakes Region is located approx 45 minutes south of Lincoln, Take I 93 South to Exit 23, Route 104, east to Meredith, Then Route 3 South to Weirs Beach.

Towns and Villages Along Lake Winnepesaukee

Laconia/Weirs Beach

Laconia is the Lake Region's principal city. As well as serving as the area's retail hub, it also is the home of various artistic, dramatic, and historic exhibits and performances throughout the year. Laconia's restored Belknap Mill is one of the town's chief attractions, staging many cultural programs for the public. Laconia can be found at the intersection of Routes 3 and 11, along the southwestern shore of Lake Winnepesaukee.

Weirs Beach, Laconia's northern neighbor, is located along Route 3 on the western shore of Lake Winnepesaukee. This popular resort town features a large number of waterparks, arcades, recreation centers, and family attractions. The town hosts fireworks, parades, concerts, and many special events throughout the summer and the year, and is a good place to make the kids happy. Other attractions in town include train rides, cruise boats, and a beautiful sandy beach stretching along the big lake. This town is the biggest hub for vacationers and fun seekers alike, and has enough attraction to keep visitors busy for days.



Wolfeforo/Wolfeforo Falls

Another of the major cities in the Lakes Region, Wolfeforo has a classic New England-style downtown area, complete with church steeples, specialty shops, quaint homes, lovely restaurants, and the campus of the Brewster Academy. The town sits along a corner of Lake Winnepesaukee known as Wolfeforo Bay, and has its fair share of marinas, beaches, and even a yacht club. The town is home to Wentworth State Park, which has a public beach and an archaeological site. A decent share of the shops, restaurants, and attractions of the Lakes Region is to be found in this town, as well as a tour guide service, and The Laker, one of the region's local newspapers, headquartered in Wolfeforo Falls. Special events are held in town throughout the year, including concerts during the summer. Wolfeforo can be reached on Routes 28/109 on the southeastern side of Winnepesaukee, directly across the lake from Weirs Beach and Laconia.

Gilford

Gilford lies a little to the east of Laconia, on the southern side of Lake Winnepesaukee. The town is home to Gunstock, the Lake Region's major alpine and Nordic ski area, which also stages events and programs throughout the year. Gilford also features the beautiful Ellacoya state park, with its lakeside beach and RV camping areas. If you enjoy hiking, Gilford is a good place to visit, as it is home to a variety of trails that wind through the countryside.

Alton Bay

Alton Bay sits at the very southeastern tip of Lake Winnepesaukee, where a narrow finger extends down from the main body of the lake. This charming town features a boat launch, public beach, and a unique on-the-water bandstand. Community events are hosted here throughout the summer, including a barbershop concert and an Old Home Week packed with activities. Nearby Mt. Major, to the north of town, has breathtaking views of the region from its summit at 1,780 feet, and is a good excuse for an invigorating hike or bike ride. Alton Bay and environs is wedged between Routes 28 and 11.

Center Harbor/Moultonboro

Center Harbor and Moultonboro rest on the northern side of the big lake and are accessible on Route 25. These quiet country towns have plenty of peaceful lodging options; inns, cottages, and motels. There is also a marina and a small airport, from which scenic flights can be booked to get a bird's eye view of the Lakes Region. The area also features North America's largest quilt shop, Keepsake Quilting, and the resort area of Castle Springs, with its "Castle in the Clouds" and miles of horseback riding and hiking trails. Guided tours of Center Harbor can even be booked here through a special guide service.



Melvin Village/Tuftonboro

Along the eastern edge of Lake Winnepesaukee, these towns can be reached by following Routes 109 or 171. Abenaki Tower, in Melvin Village, reveals beautiful views of the lakes and the western slopes of the circular Ossipee mountain range. Antiques and quaint cottages abound in these towns, as well as a marina.

Meredith

Meredith is set on the northwest side of Winnepesaukee, along Routes 25 and 104. The town also encompasses the smaller lakes of Waukegan and Wickwas. Meredith features such attractions as a marketplace and inn spanning an old millrace, plenty of lakefront space, docks, and boat launches. The town also has a large number of galleries, museums, public parks, campgrounds, golf courses, theaters, and plenty of specialty shops.

Other Areas of the Lakes Region

Newfound Lake and environs

Newfound Lake lies at the western side of the Lakes Region, and can be reached by following Route 104 to 3A from the Weirs Beach area. Wellington State Park occupies the western shore of Newfound Lake, and features a beach, boat landing, and places for fishing and swimming. The surrounding towns of Alexandria, Bridgewater, Bristol, and Hebron all are quaint and unspoiled, with lovely cottages, motels, and fine restaurants. Ragged Mountain ski center lies a little to the west in Danbury, and natural preserves abound for walking and hiking.

Plymouth, New Hampshire, lies north of Newfound Lake, close to I-93. This college town features caves open for tours, collegiate sports events, motels, restaurants, and cultural events all year long. Nearby Rumney has hiking trails in the Baker Valley. Waterville Valley is located north of Plymouth and features areas for mountain biking and skiing, as well as plenty of lodging.

Squam Lake Area

Squam Lake is the very same lake as featured in the film, "On Golden Pond." To commemorate this, there are guided boat tours available across this pristine lake. Holderness and Ashland are the two main towns on Squam Lake, complete with many lovely cottages, restaurants, inns, and a covered bridge over the Squam River. The Science Center of New Hampshire is located in Holderness, and features a huge wildlife trail where you can see all varieties of animals living in their natural habitats while undergoing physical rehabilitation. Squam Lake lies to the northwest of Winnepesaukee and can be reached by following Route 3/25 North from Weirs Beach.



Weirs Beach Boardwalk

The boardwalk **BEGINS** on Lakeside Avenue, just after the entrance to Weirs Beach. It runs the full length of Weirs Beach, offering a gorgeous view of the lake and mountains with every step. There are wide wooden benches every few feet where one can sit and rest and appreciate the view. And the boardwalk provides easy access to Lake Winnepesaukee. In fact, there are five ways to get down from the boardwalk to the lake.

At the boardwalk's start is the first way down. Stairs lead down to the middle of the beach, where the picnic area and the bathhouse are located.



Directly across from the Beachview parking lot is the second way down. This set of stairs also leads down to the beach, at its narrow beginning.

In the **MIDDLE** of the boardwalk, the third set of stairs will take you down to the public boat docks. Soon you come to a little bridge with built-in seats, where it is fun to sit and watch the boats go by. Continue to the very end of the docks, where you can dangle your feet in the water and breath in the fresh breeze off the lake.

The fourth way down from the boardwalk will take you from the cruise boat ticket offices down the long ramp to the cruise boats: the M/S Mount Washington, the Sophie C., and the Doris E. Before heading down the ramp, check out the information center. There are racks and racks of brochures, and local newspapers. There are also public restrooms in this building.



At the **END** of the boardwalk, if your walk has made you hungry, walk straight ahead to the Winnepesaukee Marketplace, where you'll find the Patio Garden Restaurant, the StageView SubShop & Grill, and JB Scoops Ice Cream.

Or turn right, and head down the ramp (the fifth way down) to the Winnepesaukee Pier. You'll pass by several shops, and then, just before reaching the arcade, a set of stairs will lead down to Anchor Marine, where you can rent a boat, if you wish, to further explore the lake (highly recommended).

Weirs Beach Attractions

At the very center of Weirs Beach you'll find the HALF MOON AMUSEMENT ARCADES. There are actually two arcades: a Penny Arcade and a Family Fun Center. Both arcades feature a large variety of video games, including the latest simulators; flashy pinball machines; antique games which you can play for a dime; and a tremendous assortment of prizes, which you can win by playing Skeeball, Skil-O-Bingos, and other redemption games.



Adjoining the Penny Arcade you'll find the HALF MOON BUMPER CARS. The bumper cars are full size and can carry a grown-up and a child in the same car. Unlike the bumper cars you might be used to, these modern cars pick up their energy from the floor, and don't have unsightly rods extending to the ceiling.



Of course, no visit to Weirs Beach would be complete without an excursion out onto Lake Winnepesaukee. From Weirs Beach, even with its vast view, you are only seeing a part of the Lake. In the center of the Weirs Beach boardwalk, you'll see a train station where the ticket offices for the cruise boats the M/S Mount Washington, the Sophie C., and the Doris E. are located. There are morning, afternoon, and evening cruises, short cruises and long cruises, fast cruises and slow cruises, so there's really no excuse for not getting out onto the lake.



For a one-hour narrated lake tour, the Winnepesaukee Lake Tours (528-6900) picks up passengers every hour from 10:30am -4pm at the Weirs Beach public docks. The lake tour travels a course which snakes through many of the beautiful islands and coves that dot the map of Lake Winnepesaukee. Or, on Wednesdays through Sundays, take the 1 1/2 hour sunset cruise! Also available for private charters for 2-25 people.



If you're the landlocked type, an alternative to a cruise is to ride the Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad. You'll be treated to scenery along Paugus Bay if you ride south towards Lakeport; while the northern route takes you along the edge of Meredith Bay to Meredith. Buy your tickets at the small kiosk on the boardwalk.



For a really fun time on a hot summer day, there are not one, but TWO waterparks located within walking distance of the boardwalk. At the very entrance to Weirs Beach, you can't miss the Weirs Beach Waterslide. The slides actually pass around, and through, a giant volcano!



wave pool and a kiddie "spray ground".



Leaving Weirs Beach, turn left at the Weirs Beach sign, cross the bridge over the Weirs Channel and head straight onto Route 11-B. In about 100 feet, turn right onto White Oaks Road, climb the hill, and enter the Surf Coaster on your left. Its a little bit of a walk from Weirs Beach, but still manageable. This water park has been consistently rated by travel guides as one of the best in New England. In addition to slides, the park features a giant

Miniature golf aficionados have five 18-hole choices in Weirs Beach to choose from! The closest course, at the Winnepesaukee Pier (603) 366-5849, has the patriotic and educational Salute to the USA course. Volcano Mini-Golf is a very challenging course that winds up and down



and in and around the giant volcano at the Weirs Beach Waterslide. The Daytona Fun Park (603) 366-5461 (right across Route 11-B from the Surf Coaster) also has a nice course, plus a bonus 19th hole. Logs of Fun not only has 18 beautifully landscaped holes, but also features a nature walk around the course, complete with bench's, picnic tables and views of the public beach and Weirs channel. For the maximum in fun, the courses at Pirate's Cove, on



Rt. 3 near the Weirs Beach/Meredith border, are filled with adventure for kids and adults alike.

Other things to do in Weirs Beach include:

- Climbing walls, batting cages, and the thrill of miniature Indy Car racing on the Go-Karts at the Daytona Fun Park. Ladies and Gentlemen, start your engines!

- Zap unto others as they zap unto you. At the corner of Tower St. in Weirs Beach is Phasers Laser Tag (603) 366-5052.

- One of the last drive-in movie theatres in the country is located right across the street from the Weirs Beach sign. At the Weirs Drive-In Theater (603) 366-4723, there are four screens, each showing a double feature, with the first movie starting at dusk.



Ellacoya State Beach

Ellacoya State Park is located in Gilford on the southwest shore of Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire's largest lake. The 600-foot long sandy beach, with views across the lake to the Sandwich and Ossipee mountains, is a great place to spend with the family for a full day of swimming and picnicking. An accessible bathhouse, with a changing area for swimmers is located near the swimming area and a small park store offers refreshments for sale. An area to launch small boats, such as those carried on car rooftops, and canoes are located to the side of the beach area. Ellacoya is open weekends starting Memorial Day, and daily from mid-June through Labor Day.



Directions From Weirs Beach :Travel south along US 3. Take Route 11B south to Route 11 east. continue along Route 11 heading east. From this point, travel approximately 3 miles to reach the state park.



HIKING / NATURE WALKS IN THE LAKES REGION

There are many hiking trails throughout the Lakes Region. Trails both large and small are available for seasoned and beginning hikers. The following are the more well-known and accessible trails. Please be sure to dress properly, bring provisions and do not leave litter on the trails or parking areas.

The trails listed here are well-marked. They are maintained by the U.S. Forest Service, New Hampshire Division of Parks, the Appalachian Mountain Club and private hiking clubs.

Belknap Mountain

Round-trip distance : 1.5 miles

Round-trip time : 2 Hours

Elevation : 740 feet

This easy and invigorating climb will bring the hiker to a magnificent view of Lake Winnepesaukee from the top of Belknap Mountain. On a clear day, the Ossipee Mountain range rises from the shores of Winnepesaukee and Mount Washington, often snow capped, can be spotted in the distance. To reach Belknap Mountain, turn off Route 11A at Gilford and drive south through Gilford Village. Stay on this road past the high school (road makes a sharp left turn) and you'll begin your climb up Belknap Mountain Road. Follow the road up until you see signs and a parking area on the left. Follow the well-marked trails, which begin on the right a few yards along a wooded road. This challenging trail rises steadily and takes the hiker past spruce trees. Eventually, you'll see the summit a short distance beyond.



Mount Major

Round-trip distance : 3 Miles

Round-trip time : 2 Hours

Elevation : 1000 feet

With an easy-to-find trail beginning off Route 11 in Alton Bay, this hike is a bit more challenging than Belknap Mountain, and offers equally spectacular views at its summit. Near scenic look-offs of Lake Winnepesaukee on Route 11, about five miles north of Alton Bay a highway sign marks the parking lot for Mount Major. This is a very popular spot, even on a cloudy day, and you'll know you've arrived when you see the many cars spilling from the parking lot during the summer months. Don't be deterred by the thought that the trails will be crowded. There is room for all. Beginning at a trail in the parking lot, follow the hiking path until it is joined by a logging road. Next you'll see old stonewalls and an old cellar hole. Soon, a trail sign on a tree marks the way and the path grows steeper with ledges. You'll be rewarded as views of Lake Winnepesaukee are spotted. The ledges, in places, will require some scrambling, so be sure to wear good hiking boots. At the top of Mount Major, a four-sided stone shelter cuts an unusual figure against the sky. The views are spectacular and certainly make the challenging hike worth the effort. You'll see Alton Bay to the south and Wolfeboro to the north. Rattlesnake Island sits proudly in Lake Winnepesaukee. This is the perfect place to be on a hot day. Due to its elevation, there are always refreshing cool breezes.



Stinson Mountain

Round-trip distance : 4 Miles

Round-trip time : 2 ½ Hours

Elevation : 1390 ft

To reach Stinson, drive west from Plymouth on Route 25 to Rumney. Turn north and drive through the village to Stinson Lake. Bear right near the outlet of the lake and drive uphill. Take a sharp left-hand turn and you're in the parking lot. An old road is the start of this trail, and should be followed for about ¼ mile where the trail turns left into the woods and borders stone walls and an old cellar hole. If there has been enough rain, a tiny brook near the trail may be water-filled. This trail is winding, and you'll be rewarded all at once when the trail curves right and suddenly you're in the clearing with spectacular views of the Baker River Valley, and the Franconia and Sandwich Ranges.

Rattlesnake Mountain

Round-trip distance: 1.8 miles

Round-trip time : 1 ½ miles

Elevation : 1260 ft

If you want the best view of the Squam Lakes, this is your hike. The Old Bridle Path is the easiest route to the rock covered summit and follows an old cart route. Bring your camera, one look won't be enough! To get to the trailhead, follow Route 113 N from Little Squam in Holderness Village. The parking area is between Center Sandwich and Holderness just after the Rockywold and Deephaven camps. The trail entrance is across from the Mount Morgan Trail. Use the same parking. Look for signs to the "Old Bridle Path" as there is a privately owned trail nearby.

NEWFOUND LAKE REGION NATURE WALKS AND HIKES

State Parks, Geologic Sites & Waterfalls

• Wellington State Park - W. Shore Rd. 1000 foot beach. Sheltered from weather by peninsula and two islands at its point, Cliff and Belle. Public boat launch and nature trails. 204 acres. Bathhouse, picnic tables, fishing and hiking.

• The Ledges – Granite ledges 200+ feet tall, carved from a glacier. Drops into lake to a depth of approximately 60'. W. Shore Rd winds through ledges for a picturesque tour. The ledges are a popular ice climbing location. Underwater ledges great fishing spot. The Sugarloaf hike goes to top of ledges. The trailhead is marked Elwell Trail, across from Wellington State Park.

• Sculptured Rocks Natural Area – State Park/Waterfall. Sculptured Rocks Rd, Groton. Picnic and swimming. Cold! Kids can swim, jump from boulders and swim in an underwater tunnel carved from the river. Waterfall and 40' carved gorge. Trails and lots of old foundations. Spectacular Bird migration! • Profile Falls, Hill Waterfall. Route 3A, 2 miles south of Bristol. At stone bridge, turn left to parking area – The waterfall and pool are part of Smith River. Swim in river and sit under 50+' waterfall that runs over huge glacial boulders. Very private and scenic

• Welton Falls, Alexandria. Waterfall. Some very challenging cliffs for jumping and diving. Keep the diving to the lower cliffs as the water is not very deep. Rt 3aN from Bristol to W. Shore Rd. Straight to Fowler River Road and Welton Fall roads. Follow this road about 1 mile and you will see a very old town road on the left hand side just before a hill. There is parking slightly down this road. Follow the road on foot for about 1/4 mile and watch for the well worn trail diverging off to the left. This trail follows the brook for about 1/2 mile and you will come to the falls.

Bicycling In The Lakes Region

As you are probably aware, busy roads make for less than ideal conditions for bicycling, and in the summer, busy roads are often a staple of the Lakes Region. There are no officially maintained paths in the immediate Weir Beach area, and it's just too busy to safely bike along the main roads, which have no shoulder. You don't have to travel far to get to some better spots, which we will outline below. Like everything involving outdoor recreation, weather is one of the most important things that you should pay attention before heading out. It's not a bad idea to bring along a poncho, even if the chance of rain is limited to the standard twenty percent risk of an afternoon thunderstorm. Bring along plenty of water, depending on which ride you take, the nearest store may not be just around the corner, and keeping yourself hydrated is important. It's a good idea to let someone know where you are going, what route you plan to take, and about when you should be back. Should you suffer equipment failure, it's nice to know that someone will come looking for you if you're not back by sunset.



Belknap Point Road

A reasonably long road, much of which is flat. This road is probably one of the best to go on if you happen to be looking to bike along the edge of Lake Winnepesaukee with stunning mountain views in the background. This road ends (or starts) at Ellacoya, which is New Hampshire's state beach. You'll probably want to end there, if it's a hot July day, there is almost always some breeze at Ellacoya.

Governors Island

Take your bike around one of Lake Winnepesaukee's largest islands and see some home we all can only dream of someday owning. It's a ride of moderate difficulty, as this is no flat island, you'll find yourself climbing upwards a lot more than you would expect. As you head over the bridge to the island, just bear to the right and follow the road, it will take you around the entire perimeter of the island.

Scenic Road & Rollercoaster Road

A short ride, but one with many ups and downs, some steep enough to make you have to get off your bike and walk. We'd recommend starting off at the Rollercoaster road end of this ride, in Meredith, off of Parade Road. At the half way point, you'll come up to an intersection, continue on straight, and the road becomes Scenic Road. Once you reach the end, you'll be at Weirs Beach, where you can rest in the company of good food and nearby restrooms. Until you reach Weirs Beach, you will not run into much traffic.

Gunstock Mountain Biking

Gunstock offers several miles of mountain biking trails which are well maintained of varying levels of difficulty. Some trails offer excellent views of Lake Winnepesaukee. Some of their trails used for biking are also used for Horseback Riding. There is a \$5 trail fee, which allows you a full day on the trails along with usage of their pool and campground showers. Bike rentals are available for 2 hours or a full day.