

Leech Lake - fishing and a whole lot more!

LEECH LAKE, MN – Leech Lake has long been known as Minnesota’s fishing “hot spot.” Today, however, this original “up north” destination has become the ultimate northwoods vacation for families each and every season.

Like many regions throughout Minnesota, the Leech Lake area prides itself on its pleasant, small town atmosphere and “Minnesota Nice.”

“Here, people go out of their way to help make your vacation great,” said Shay Fortier of Adventure North Resort. “It’s a great place to reconnect with family or a terrific place to start a family vacation tradition.”

Randy Berkland’s family has made Leech Lake their family vacation destination for half a century.

“My family has been visiting Leech Lake for more than 50 years,” explained Berkland.

Originally from northern Iowa, Berkland and his parents and siblings began traveling to Leech Lake in the 1950s.

“With the exception of maybe one or two years, our family has been to Leech Lake practically every year since the 1950s,” said Berkland. “When I was a young, we’d take a family vacation for a week away from the heat of Iowa,” said Berkland.

Berkland recalls fishing on Leech Lake for hours on-end as a child. “We’d fish for probably 12 hours a day,” he added. “Now, my kids and grandkids participate in a variety of activities.”

As one would expect, the Berkland family has grown since the 1950s and, fittingly so has the Leech Lake region.

Like the Berklands, countless families and guests have come to enjoy Leech Lake not only for the outstanding recreation, but also for its “Up-North” character.

“The Leech Lake area is the perfect place to make family memories,” said Cindy Wannarka, Executive Director of the Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. “Here, families can take advantage of a number of recreational activities while on vacation or just kick back and relax on the beautiful shores of Leech Lake.”

According to Fortier, there is much to see and do both on and off the lake.

“The lake itself offers so much on its own,” explained Fortier. “The size of the lake as well as the different bays within really allows guests to take part in many different water-based recreational pastimes like fishing, boating, waterskiing or even swimming.”

Betty Greer of the AmericInn in Walker agrees, “There’s no way you can’t find what you are looking for when you visit Leech Lake.”

Off the lake, numerous retail shops, sporting goods stores, knick-knack shops and bookstores dot Walker’s downtown district. Along with numerous shopping outlets, Leech Lake dining options are plentiful.

Most restaurants in the Leech Lake area offer a casual “come as you are” dining experience. A selection of fine dining venues provides an upscale dining alternative to guests, as well. Some, like Trapper’s Landing Lodge, the 502 or Chase on the Lake, even present lake accessible dining options.

“Leech Lake has really developed some great restaurants,” said Berkland. “We make a point of visiting The Boulders when we visit each year...they’ve got a great setting and some really great food.”

A handful of exceptional nine and 18-hole golf courses in Leech Lake and Walker bring another avenue of fun for families. Experience championship golf at the Tianna Country Club, a short two mile drive from Walker or take the whole family to Wildwedge Golf & Mini Golf, where everyone (kids and adults) can enjoy a little fun on the course or the newest, scenic mini-golf course.

Hop on the Paul Bunyan Bike Trail where you can travel for hundreds of miles in any direction. When complete, the Paul Bunyan Trail will traverse approximately 100 miles, from Brainerd in the south to Bemidji at its north-most point. Several trail access points, parking areas and rest areas are scattered along the trail, many located right in Walker.

Situated amongst the tall northern pines of the Chippewa National Forest, Leech Lake is a hiker’s paradise. On many of the area trails, hikers might spot a bald eagle, while others provide self-guided nature tours. Nearby, hikers will discover the world famous Itasca State Park where you’ll find an additional trail system that allows guests to walk across the mighty Mississippi River at its source. Six other state parks are located nearby and each offer unique experiences for hikers and nature enthusiasts.

“While vacationing in Leech Lake, one can’t help but venture out and experience the northwoods just a little bit more,” adds Greer.

Beginning right in Walker, a drive along the Lake Country Scenic Byway is sure to treat guests to an array of recreational and nature based activities.

“There’s no question guests from across the country travel to the Leech Lake area for recreation and relaxation,” said Fortier. “And no matter which season they’re here, there’s sure to be an event that suits their taste, too.”

From the ever-popular Eelpout Festival held each February, to Moondance Jam Country and Classic Rock festivals and gigantic Fourth of July celebration, the Leech Lake area offers a variety of events that spans both generations and personal penchant.

After a day of fun and sun, the Leech Lake area offers lodging accommodations to suit everyone. From quiet campgrounds and family resorts to elegant hotels, quaint bed & breakfasts and even adventurous houseboat accommodations, there is a place for everyone.

“The resorts in the Leech Lake are really in a world of their own,” added Wannarka. “The resorts here really make an effort to accommodate families and especially children...and there are always activities planned for children right at the resorts.”

Fortier may have best explained why Leech Lake is more than just a fishing destination, “From biking and hiking trails, to golf, boating and sailing, wineries, shopping, dining, gaming and, of course, fishing, Leech Lake has it all...it really is the perfect vacation destination for families.”

Adds Berkland, “It’s a place to come year after year with my kids and grandkids...we’ve got a lot of great memories from years’ past and we plan to come back again in 2009.”

For more information about Leech Lake fishing, please contact the Leech Lake Tourism Bureau at 800-735-3297.