

# Muskoka: An Iconic Ontario Destination and Perfect for a Family Retreat!

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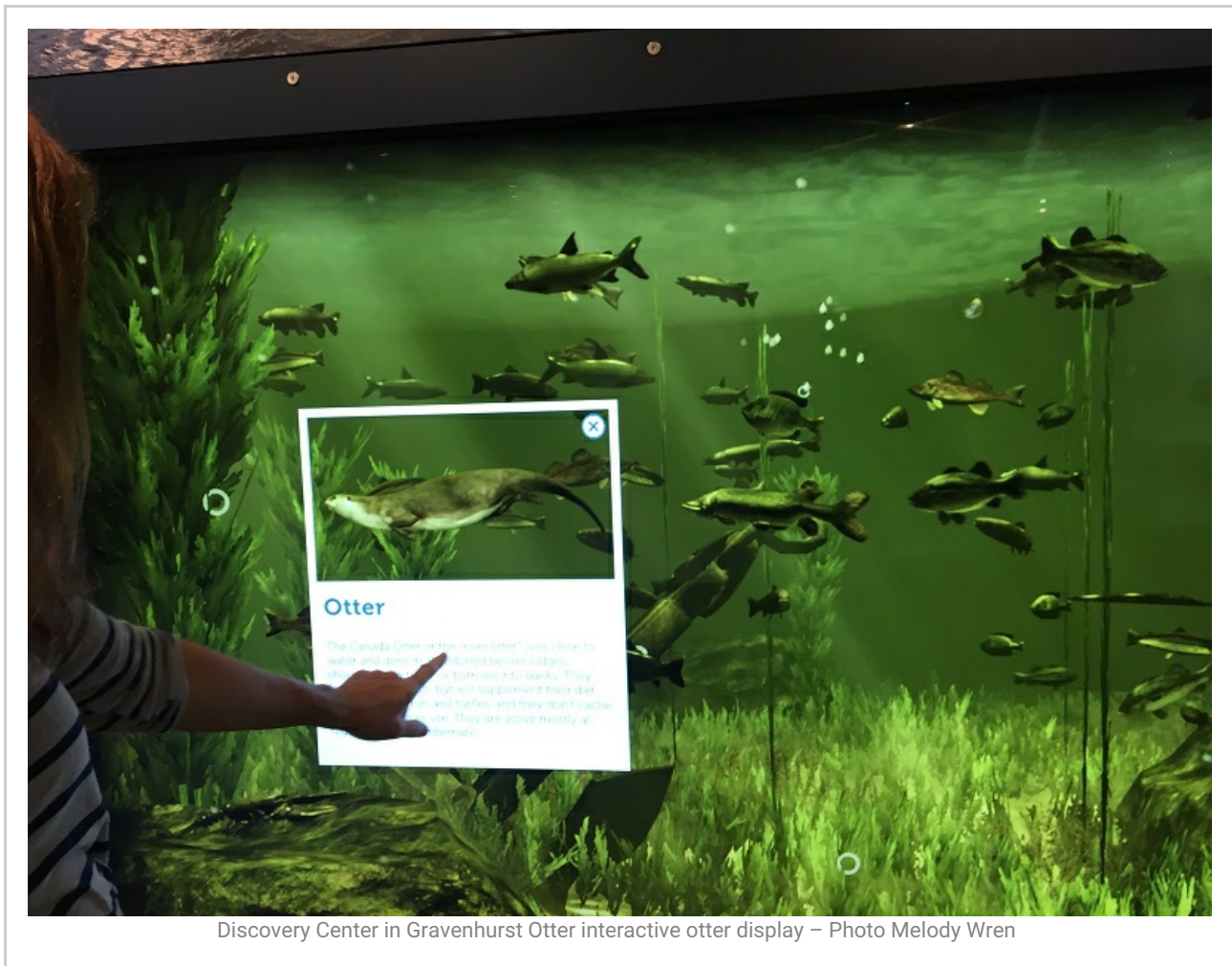
Muskoka! If you know the area, you know its magic. If you haven't been there, take the whole family to reconnect and prepare to be enchanted.



Muskoka for Families

Muskoka wears its history proudly, and it's part of what makes it such an iconic Ontario destination. We started our weekend getaway at the Discovery Center in Gravenhurst. Who knew that Muskoka used to have sixteen logging mills on the bay and that there are still sixteen local traditional boat builders? An interactive touchscreen displays the history of steamships from 1850. Kids can choose a video and see a re-creation of the Segwun steamship, the only steamship in Canada.

Antique boats held in a water storage area are beautiful to look at, and iPad stations display all the details. A new display on water cycles had an enormous touch display that was utterly mesmerising. As you select the fish, otter, or snake a description pops up. It felt like you were trying to catch them as you touched the pike or snake; it made it very hard to walk away.



The second floor is the kid zone, an area that will keep little ones entertained for hours, with the largest Lite Brite ever seen, colouring books, a house to climb into, and huge bins filled with LEGO. A reproduction hotel had a chess game displayed, a gramophone and all were begging to be played with. The life-like reproduction ship was fun to walk around and learn more on the shipping history in the area.

For many families, and mine is no exception, a vacation rental on the water is a common goal. Did I mention Muskoka? With a lakefront location comes so many activities including swimming, canoeing, kayaking, and hiking. Where to stay is the next question, and Muskoka



Photo Melody Wren

has no shortage of idyllic places. We were fortunate to visit at [Muskoka Soul | Cliff Bay](#), in its beautiful secluded location.



View of the dock at Muskoka Soul | Cliff Bay. Photo courtesy Muskoka Soul

Muskoka Soul | Cliff Bay has luxurious details to ensure everyone enjoys themselves from the moment they wake up until it's time for stories around a bonfire. A well-stocked games room, high thread count sheets and comfortable, well-appointed rooms to snuggle into at the end of a full day are details everyone enjoys. For a large crowd, there is room to spread out and feel you can be on your own if you need space.

With such a luxurious rental, it is tempting to stay put, but there is so much to see, you simply have to explore.

Dock yoga early the first morning had all of us laying on the wooden dock with the just risen sun, soothing waves rippled underneath, birds chirped happily, the scent of pines in the air and loons were calling. An early morning connection to nature and family washed over me. This was the first morning on our retreat, and it couldn't have felt better. Melanie from Freedom Yoga Muskoka walked us through sun salutations, a fitting beginning.

A look around [Muskoka Shipyards Marketplace](#), filled to the rafters with items for every



Morning yoga on the dock. Photo courtesy Sandra Crossman, Owner, Muskoka Soul

member of the family was a big hit. We grabbed refreshing drinks at Starbucks within the store to sip on as we loaded into Gary Campbell's traditional wooden 1913 boat for a tour of Lake Muskoka.

Gary pointed out local spots of interest, and we all enjoyed a smooth ride, an excellent way to see the area from the water. After snacks on the dock, we set off on a scavenger hunt, something families of any age can enjoy. Following a well-marked trail, we had two teams competing against each other.

Sunset cannot be missed in this beautiful area, and a short hike at nearby Brydon's Bay was an ideal choice. Afterwards, to avoid cooking, we dug into a catered dinner from [Relish Real Food](#) and [The Bakery from Gravenhurst](#), which gave everyone a relaxed evening, and led to lots of table chat, another connecting time with stories weaving every member together.



Traditional wooden 1913 boat – Photo Melody Wren

An evening wouldn't be complete in the Muskokas without a fireside chat around a fire pit with S'mores while we chatted and gazed at stars.

With our vacation rental providing all the ideal ingredients for a family retreat, we mixed well, stirred things up a bit with the scavenger hunt, sprinkled in local activities such as the boat ride, relaxing yoga, exercise and let it rest for a full weekend so that the final dish was a relaxed group with much laughter, chatting and playing together. What s'more could a family want?

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Photo courtesy The Shipyards Muskoka Marketplace

boy eating s'mores around campfire

While this is not the author's grandson, he certainly embodies the joy one gets from eating s'mores!

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## About The Author

### Melody Wren

Melody is an Ontario based travel writer who believes travel stories are meant to encourage and inspire and considers her age (over 60) a gift in her journeys, bringing wisdom, experience, humour and a major 'if not now, when' attitude to her writing. A formerly nervous traveller, experiential travel has helped her conquer fears as she snorkelled through the Galapagos islands, glacier trekked in the Northwest Passage, danced around a fire in Africa, learned how to make the perfect tiramisu in Florence, kayaked amongst spawning salmon in Ontario, snow-shoed in Colorado, and sailed in the British Virgin Islands . Her work appears in Canadian Yachting Magazine, Canadian Jewish News, The Toronto Star, Kitchener Waterloo Record, Caribbean Beat Magazine, Cottage Life Magazine, Waypoints Global, Active Over 50, and Inspired Seniors.

