

# Five Days in Family Friendly Finger Lakes, NY

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With rolling hills and field after field of vineyards, charming towns filled with architecturally beautiful houses and a thriving culinary scene, comparisons to France are inevitable. While France flourishes as an elegant film set, Finger Lakes has a relaxed tangible quality that lends itself perfectly to a gentle long weekend away.

Situated in central New York State, the group of 11 long narrow lakes is informally called the Finger Lakes region. Seneca Lake is the deepest glacial lake at 613 feet, and any town in the area is ideal to use as a base.

When planning a holiday in any area, an essential topic of conversation is on what type of accommodation is best suited. Since we were going with adult children and a 5-year-old grandchild, the logical choice was a rental home. With so much to explore in the area, it is tempting to linger at a comfortable rental, but with so many towns and wineries to explore, it makes sense to make the best of the time there.

## **Day 1:**

Drop your bags at the rental after picking up food provisions locally, and stroll down the road to a local winery, [Zugibe Vineyards & Phoenician Bistro](#), to enjoy al fresco dining with live music. Diners munched on Mediterranean style mezze and sampled some of their eleven different varietals including Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir.

Covering 40 acres of vinifera wine grapes, the views are vineyards to one side, flanked by hydrangea hedges and Seneca Lake from the patio.



Zugibe Vineyards Photo Melody Wren

## Day 2:

It might be a bit early for a wine tasting at [Three Brothers Wineries and Estates](#), but the adjoining Iron Heart Café is the perfect spot for a morning latte and made fresh muffins.

Part of the Seneca Lake Wine Trail, Three Brothers is home to three wineries, a microbrewery and cafe. Owner Dave Mandell started the vineyard in 2006 and built it up to 40 acres. A passport for \$25 gets you into all three wineries and the microbrewery for tastings of up to 5 in each.



Dave Mandell, Owner, Three Brothers Winery Photo Melody Wren

It is a short drive to Seneca Falls for a visit to the Women's Rights National Historical Park and Visitor's Center, with the story of the first Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls NY on July 19-20, 1848. The historic home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton who initiated the convention is nearby as is the water-wall at Declaration Park and the Wesleyan Chapel where the convention took place.





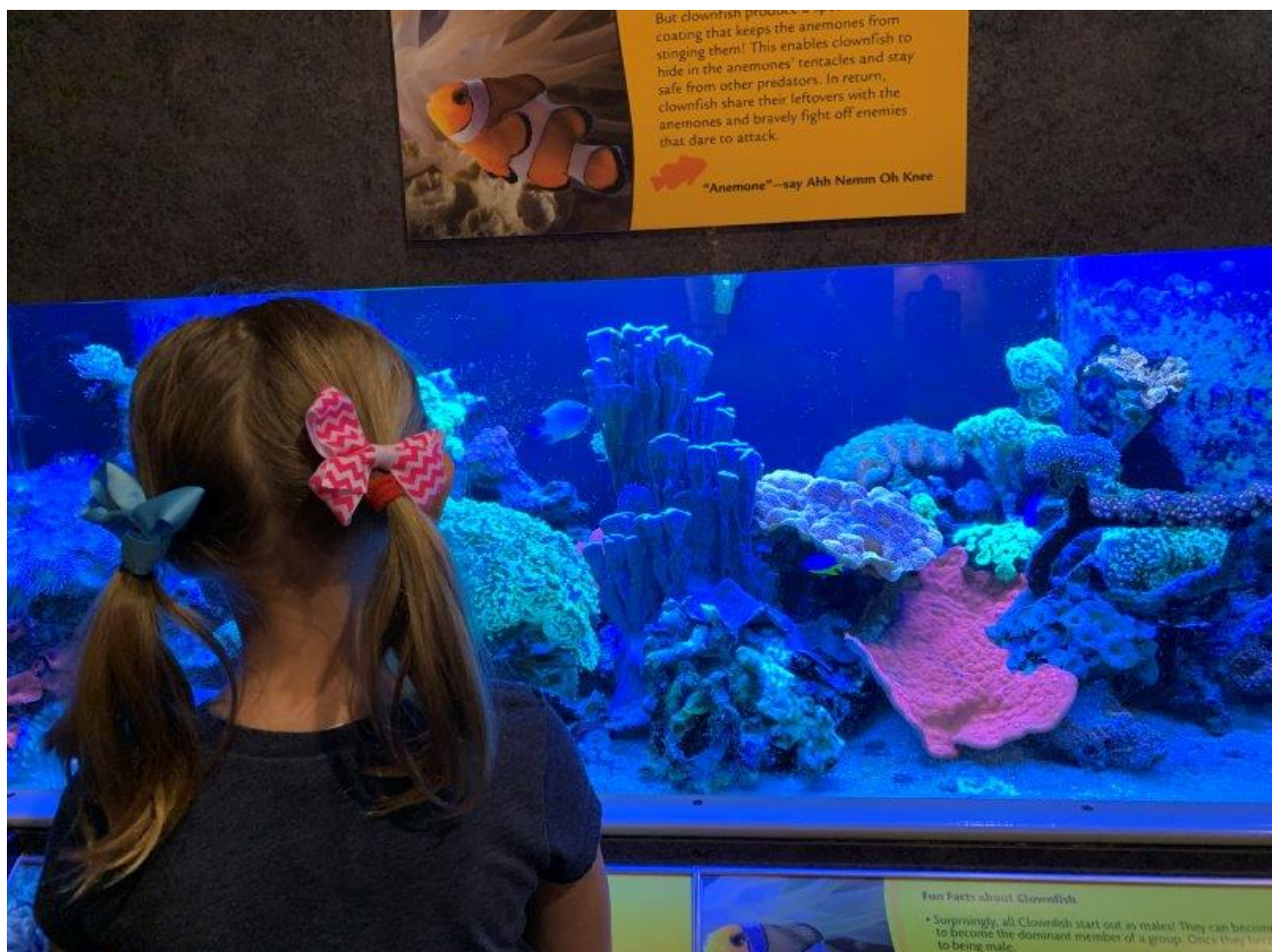
Women's Rights museum statue of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and participants Photo Melody Wren

Take time out to watch a local production at the [Auburn Public Theater](#). We enjoyed watching Kafka's Metamorphosis: The Musical which was engaging and creatively done. Since 2005 the theater has welcomed more than 100,000 patrons with diverse year-round programming.

### **Day 3**

Hit the road to visit the [Strong National Museum of Play](#) in Rochester, the only collections-based museum anywhere devoted solely to studying and encouraging play.

With the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of toys, dolls and electronic games, the building is enormous. There is a high level of interactivity to explore how play encourages learning, creativity, and discovery. It wasn't just the children that were squealing in delight at the interactive displays. It was a challenge to pry our five-year-old granddaughter from the Wegman's Grocery store filled with everything a regular grocery store has but in miniature. It was also a challenge to pry her dad from the superhero section and the vintage video games and pinball machines. Mr Hooper's step is a lure for children and adults to sit on for a selfie after a walk down Sesame Street. Make sure to visit the adjoining Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden. Children can quickly identify butterflies by using a chart picked up at the entrance.



Strong Museum Photo Melody Wren

A short walk from the Strong Museum, The Owl House restaurant was ideal for all our food allergy needs. Homemade lemonade and juice made with watermelon, guava and other fruits along with french fries roasted with rosemary were dunked enthusiastically in house-made ketchup eaten with a beef burger for some and a Chick Pea Burger for others. Followed up by gluten-free, vegan carrot cake for Nana and Vegan, nut-free ice cream sandwich for the little one, it was a huge hit and gave us enough energy to return to the Strong Museum for a few more hours.



## Day 4

Start the day off with kayaking on Owasco Lake at Emerson Park. Owasco Paddles is within Emerson Park which includes 135 acres located at the northern end of Owasco Lake with one mile of lakefront and two miles of riverfront. The park features boat launches, boat slips, a disc golf course, playground, paddle craft rentals, and picnic shelters.

Recharge after all that paddling at Prison City Pub & Brewery. The award-winning, on-trend restaurant with industrial décor hits all the right notes with elevated pub food focusing on farm-to-table cuisine catering to all allergies with aplomb. Roasted Brussel sprouts with pork belly jostled for attention against macaroni and cheese, shepherd's pie and rosemary French fries. Our server, James, says the best selling brew is *Riot in Vermont IPA* but you can sample more in a flight.



Prison City Brewery flight of beer Photo Melody Wren

## Day 5

Take a hike through Watkins Glen State Park, the largest outdoor attraction in the Finger Lakes region. On a two-mile (3.2 km) gorge trail, visitors see 19 waterfalls with the bridge and tunnel built in 1908. In 1866 it was a big resort area with summer visitors coming from

New York. The magnificent park has dramatic views at every turn that will keep any weary walker going and needs to be on every visitor's to-do list. I would drive from Canada just to see the views again.



Watkins Glen Photo Melody Wren

Centrally located in Watkins Glen, Seneca Harbor Station is a waterfront restaurant with a seafood focus is a great place to refuel after hiking through Watkins Glen Park. The Finger Lakes train drives past the restaurant several times a day delighting the little ones.

To see Seneca Lake in its entirety, take in a sightseeing trip aboard Captain Bill's vintage motorboat. The captain and first mate share historical information about the lake. The boat carries 200 passengers taking in the sights along the 35-mile long lake.





Seneca Lake Boat tour Photo Melody Wren

Before heading back to the rental for a relaxing evening, dine at the patio at [Blue Pointe Grille](#) in Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel. Fresh local flavours at the waterfront Blue Pointe Grille with traditional American Cuisine, seafood and fresh salads. The outdoor patio is the spot to go.

After packing up the car to head home, stop in at [Seneca White Deer](#). After more than 70 years, the public can finally see the world's largest herd of white, white-tailed deer, as well as the fascinating relics of 60 years of secret weapons storage. This is home to one of the 519 earth-covered concrete igloos that stored everything from tactical missiles, conventional bombs to nuclear warheads. Started in 2017 and funded totally by donations, there is a lot to see on the guided tour of the former Army Base. Dennis Money, President and one of six founders, gives a daily tour sharing his passion for this unique project.





Senaca Deer Photo Melody Wren

## Finding a Vacation Rental in Finger Lakes

### Finger Lakes Premier Properties

Having a water view rental house outfitted with everything you need is a relaxing way to have a holiday. There are no worries about cleaning or bringing bedding as everything is supplied. Starting out with breakfast at your rental sets you up for a day of exploring and gives you options for dining out or in.

Premier Properties made the choice an easy one; a home away from home right on Seneca Lake with room enough for all of us and plenty of outside space to relax. Three bedrooms, four bathrooms, in a quiet residential neighbourhood was ideal. With a lake view, we got exactly what we needed for the beautiful Seneca Lake area.

*Although we do our best to provide you with accurate information, all event details are subject to change. Please contact the facility to avoid disappointment.*

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## About The Author

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### 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.

