

Haliburton Highland fling

By Katharine Fletcher

Want to bike undulating country roads rimmed by rugged outcrops of Canadian Shield? Want to take some arts and crafts workshops where, during lunch, you can stroll a statue forest? Or how about canoeing on a tranquil lake or swimming and relaxing at a resort?



Look no further than the picturesque village of Haliburton, a thriving arts community in the heart of the Highlands Region of Ontario.

Here discover an artistic community which boasts a highly respected art school and theatre. So, while exploring the village and its surroundings we realize we can not only relax amid nature, but also indulge our creative side.

The village of Haliburton is 284 km west of Ottawa, being 63 km west of Bancroft. Driving there takes us through a quintessentially Canadian landscape of rugged outcrops of Canadian Shield rock, iconic-looking windswept white pines, sparkling lakes and rivers.

Upon arrival, there are so many activities to enjoy, things to do. Here's a sampler.

The Haliburton School of the Arts (THSA)

This school offers an astonishing 300+ courses so whether you're interested in beginner's watercolour classes like I was, totem pole carving, jewelry making, or fabric painting, rest assured there's likely something to inspire you. I've attended classes for two summers, where five-day watercolour classes enthralled me. One year, my husband Eric accompanied me and took an introduction to printmaking class, also for five days. We thoroughly enjoyed a vacation where we were both creatively occupied during daytime, leaving us free to explore after classes ended at 4 p.m. daily.

Tip? Take your bicycle. We drove the short distance from our lodging to the campus, but a bike would've been fun to have, and would have given us some extra exercise, too!

Lodging? Ask THSA for their list of recommended accommodations which range from apartments to cabins.

Info: www.flemingcollege.ca

Haliburton Sculpture Forest

At Glebe Park in Haliburton, find inspiration and peacefulness amid a shaded ten-acre woods overlooking Head Lake (the lake which forms the centerpiece to the village). While strolling, discover such sculptures dotted about the woods as a beaver adjacent to a Narnia-inspired

lamppost – depicting a scene from C.S. Lewis' popular book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. (See a map showing all sculptures and trails: www.haliburtonsculptureforest.ca/park_map.php)

Paddling

Tie your canoe or kayak to your car so you can paddle tranquil Head Lake. Access it by parking at the lot beside the old train station, now the Rails' End Gallery and Arts Centre (where you can view some local artists' works). This is particularly enjoyable at dusk, when live music and voices float over the lake during one of the village's many summertime outdoors concerts.

Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve

A fifteen-acre wildlife compound here is home to this reserve's Wolf Centre, which is home to a family of wolves which we might be fortunate enough to observe from the safety of a large indoor observatory – if the wild creatures cooperate, that is! This Centre also has exhibits explaining fascinating details about wolves.

This Reserve offers many other soft adventure activities, including a canopy boardwalk. Here we can walk amid the treetops along a .5 kilometer boardwalk, suspended 10-20 metres from terra firma. Although being aloft isn't a "cakewalk" for people like me who get weak-kneed just contemplating being so far above ground. I actually have managed canopy walks. On-site guides help those of us with vertigo to overcome our fears, so we can enjoy the birds-eye view of Haliburton's glorious lakes and woods.

Info: www.haliburtonforest.com

Highlands Summer Festival

There's nothing like live theatre on a summer evening, where we can transport ourselves into another world. Scot Denton, Artistic Producer for this dramatic festival explains, "I think we have created an interesting mix of period pieces, comedy and music. From the pen of Charles Dickens to the rollicking comedy of Canada's Norm Foster, the 2014 season has something for everyone."

This season's lineup includes an adaptation of *Great Expectations*, *The Last Resort* – a murder mystery musical comedy, and *Billy Bishop Goes to War*. (Check times, dates, pricing at www.highlandsummerfestival.on.ca)

Ready, set, go!

My sampler merely scratches the surface of what to do, where to go... For more information, browse www.haliburton-tourism.com, where you'll find a menu which includes details about horseback riding, trails, golfing, cottage rentals, as well as the Haliburton Film Festival, which just might beckon you back in November!



Photo: Eric Fletcher

John McKinnon's "A Conspiracy of Ravens" sweeps down towards the trail in the Haliburton Sculpture Forest.

Resort life beckons here

Let's all admit it: sometimes it's divine to relax in a full-on destination resort, where someone else attends to all one's wants and needs. So if enjoying water sports such as kayaking, swimming, water-skiing, or sailing – or just curling up in an Adirondak chair and reading sounds appealing, investigate some of the village's nearby resorts.

Sir Sam's Inn is a member of Ontario's Finest Hotels, Inns and Spas – and comes with an historic connection, particularly this year which marks the 75th anniversary of the start of WWI. That's because it gets its name from Sir Sam Hughes, who distinguished

himself in serving Canada during the so-called "war to end all wars." The main lodge overlooking Eagle Lake forms the centerpiece of the resort, and it was "Sir Sam's" summer home. (www.ontariosfinestinn.com)

Another Canadiana style resort is Bonnie View Inn, on Lake Kashagawigamog. With 300 feet of beachfront, we can all get into such old-fashioned activities as horseshoes, as well as badminton and beach volleyball. While the lake beckons us with paddle and rowboats, canoes and kayaks, we can explore trails wending through the forest on bikes or on foot. (www.bonnieviewinn.com)

Find other area resorts at www.backcountrytours.ca.

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