



Off the Beaten Path in Finger Lakes

2015/03/17 by [Brette Sember](#)

Although New York City is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the US, there is actually way more to the state than just the Big Apple. Today's guest writer, [Brette Sember](#) from [Travel Shopper Expert](#), is taking us upstate to the beautiful Finger Lakes region. Finger Lakes is quite popular as New York's largest wine producing area. However, it's the many [active travel](#) opportunities in this area that will truly quench your travel thirst.

New York's Finger Lakes region is often cited as a great wine tasting getaway. Granted, there is a great wine trail, but there's much more to do in the Finger Lakes for active boomers looking to explore this beautiful NY area.



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Since 2008, we've published articles and photographs focusing solely on travel for boomers: where to go, what to do and how to do it. To learn more about us, read [Our story](#).



1. Local Markets

The Finger Lakes is home to Mennonite and Amish families who sell baked goods, crafts, and produce throughout the region. One great place to connect with them is at [The Windmill](#), a Saturday-only farm and craft market located between Keuka and Seneca Lakes is the perfect place to pick up some shoo-fly pie, browse quilts, and buy some sunflowers. Sample the butterflied potato chips while you're there. World-renowned pottery and housewares can be found at the unique [MacKenzie-Childs](#) on Cayuga Lake. Quaint small town shopping is perfect in Skaneateles, at the tip of Skaneateles Lake with lovely gift shops (including 1st National Gifts, located in an historic bank vault), and in Naples, south of Canandaigua where you'll want to stop at [Monica's Pies](#) for a grape pie as well as the artisan shops. .

2. Put the Pedal to the Metal

Watkins Glen is famous for its racetrack where you can catch a race (plan ahead because these sell out) or [drive a racecar on the track yourself](#). Not much compares to doing laps on a world class racetrack with your own hands on the wheel.

3. Hiking



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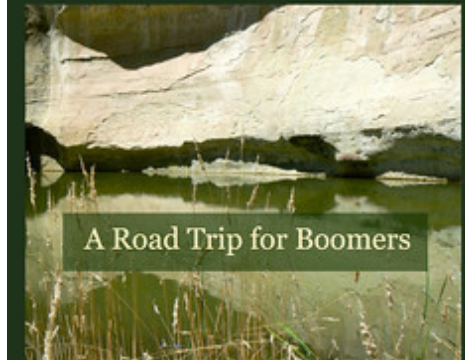
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My two favorite spots for hiking in the Finger Lakes are [Watkins Glen State Park](#) and [Taughannock Falls](#) in Ithaca. Both offer stunning waterfalls, many trails, and incredible gorges, perfect for an afternoon hike and a picnic. Earn bonus points for swimming at the base of the waterfall in [Buttermilk Falls State Park](#) (not quite as cold as a polar bear challenge, but close!).

4. Walk the Solar System



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Billions and billions of years ago (ok maybe not *that* long ago) famous astrophysicist Carl Sagan was a professor at Cornell University and created the [Sagan Planet Walk](#). This interactive exhibit is spread out over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in Ithaca and is a scale model of the solar system. It's an amazing way to really understand our place in space. And it's free!

5. Get on the Water

While perhaps the best way to experience the Finger Lakes is from a pontoon boat you rent for the day, leaving you free to fish (walleye and bass are the sought after fish here, but you need a license to put a line in), swim, or tube, but if you want someone else to do the driving one of the best options is [Captain Bill's](#) on Seneca Lake where you can take a one-hour cruise or a dinner cruise on the deepest Finger Lake. For a truly original experience, take a ride on the [Skaneateles mail boat](#), which delivers U.S. mail to mailboxes at the end of the docks on the lake.

6. Go to the Birds

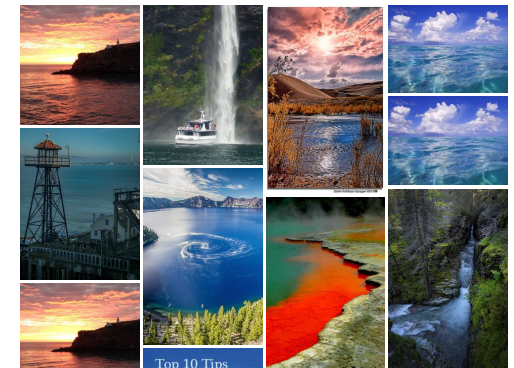
For veteran birdwatchers and newbies [Sapsucker Woods](#) in Ithaca is a must-visit bird sanctuary with boardwalks and trails in a place where over 200 species are at home. Print out their bird checklist and see how many you can spot.



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My Itchy Travel Feet



Top 10 Tips

7. Celebrate Women's Rights

Seneca Falls (north end of Seneca Lake) is home to the [National Women's Rights Historical Park](#) which memorializes the first women's rights convention in 1848. There are four historical buildings (including Elizabeth Cady Stanton's home) and a visitor's center and all are worth a visit. While you're in town, ask yourself if it looks familiar. Seneca Falls was the inspiration for Bedford Falls in [It's a Wonderful Life](#).

8. Pamper Yourself

While the Finger Lakes may be sprawling and rustic, you can definitely relax in luxury here. [Belhurst Castle](#) in Geneva offers luxury accommodations in a real castle with a world class spa. [The Sherwood Inn](#) in Skaneateles is a sumptuously appointed inn at an historic stagecoach stop.

9. Stop and Smell the Roses

[Sonnenberg Gardens](#) in Canandaigua is one of only two public gardens in the state. This 50-acre estate complete with a gorgeous mansion you can tour offers an eclectic mix of stunning gardens: The Japanese Garden, The Pansy Garden, The Italian Garden, The Rose Garden, The Moonlit Garden and more, as well as greenhouses and a café and gift shop. Plan to spend several hours here if you want to even see the highlights

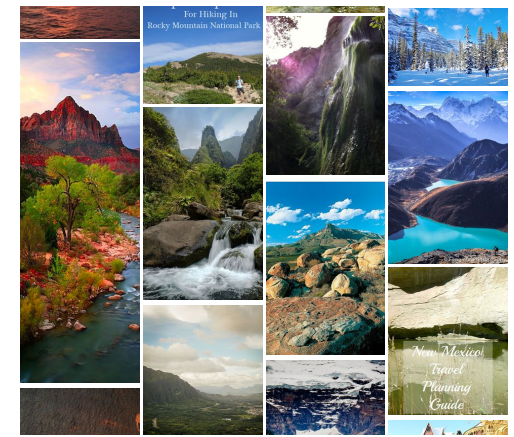
10. Experience Local History

Long before the Finger Lakes was a tourist attraction, it was home to the Haudenosaunee, the people of the longhouse, also known as the Iroquois. Their rich history can be explored at [Ganondagan](#), the historical center of their culture where you can visit a longhouse replica and understand the rich history of the people who loved this land. Visit on a summer weekend for the Native Dance and Music festivals.

Have you been to Finger Lakes or are you planning a trip? Come join the conversation at the [My Itchy Travel Feet page](#) on Facebook. Or [send us an email](#) with your thoughts.

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Author Bio



Brette Sember is a dedicated travel shopper who blogs about her finds at [Travel Shopper Expert](#). She is the author of [The Gluten-Free Guide to Travel](#).



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