

Buffalo, New York: Lots of great shopping and attractions to enjoy



The Museum of disABILITY History.

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

My family and I recently spent some time in Buffalo, New York to visit friends. Buffalo (www.visitbuffaloniagara.com) is the commercial, political and entertainment hub of an eight-county region of western New York State consisting of nearly 1.6 million people. Located at the easternmost end of Lake Erie, overlooking the Niagara River, Buffalo is just across the Peace Bridge from Ontario.

Buffalo is only a 20-minute drive to and from Niagara Falls and its array of world class tourist attractions, including the Maid of the Mist sightseeing boat and the Cave of the Winds, a web of wooden catwalks and staircases accessed through a tunnel in the rock behind the American Falls that provide spectacular up-close views of the cataract.

Retail destinations include malls like the Walden Galleria, Boulevard Mall, Eastern Hills Mall, Fashion Outlets of Niagara and the McKinley Mall, as well as eclectic and charming shopping districts

such as Buffalo's Elmwood Village, Hertel Avenue, Williamsville, Clarence Center and the village of East Aurora. If you want to check out a quaint little town, take a drive to Hamburg with its neat downtown area of shops and one big movie house.

How much time do you have? The Buffalo area has outstanding theatre, a world-class orchestra, architecture tours, nightlife along the resurgent Chippewa Street and one of the world's top collections of modern art at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Sports lovers will find Buffalo Bills football, Buffalo Sabres hockey and Buffalo Bisons baseball, as well as major college football, basketball and hockey. For people with an appetite, there are a wealth of charming bistros and restaurants serving local specialties such as "Buffalo" chicken wings, as well as truly affordable fine cuisine.

Nearby attractions include Darien Lake, New York State's largest amusement park; the "Grand Canyon of the East" at Letchworth State Park; the internationally-renowned Victorian vil-

lage at the Chautauqua Institution; the Erie Canal; the oldest buildings on the Great Lakes at Old Fort Niagara; the Seneca Niagara Casino and the Genesee Country Village and Museum, the country's third-largest living history museum.

Among some of the family attractions to look out for are the Buffalo Zoo, the Buffalo Museum of Science, Explore 'n' More Children's Museum, the Amherst Museum, Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum, Martin's Fantasy Island Amusement Park, the Aquarium of Niagara, Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours, Old Fort Niagara and the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park.

We saw a movie at the Regal Transit Center Stadium 18 & IMAX at 6707 Transit Road in Williamsville, a mere 10 minutes from our hotel. I always enjoy seeing a movie at the Regal chain (www.regmovies.com). As the name of the complex says, this is stadium seating. There is a large parking lot and very friendly staff.

For special needs patrons, most of the movies shown offer closed captioned

equipment upon request. There are listening devices for the hearing impaired and wheelchair access. Go to their website and at the bottom of the homepage under Theatres, click on the Captioning and Descriptive Video link. This page will provide you with a list of theatres, sorted by state. Click on the state in which your theatre is located. This page will provide a list of what movies are being shown that offer the captioning and descriptive audio, as well as their show times. If you go online to Fandango.com and locate the theatre, movie and showtime the website will list if closed captioning is available for that performance. Upon arriving at the theatre location, printed materials are available that explain how to use the closed captioning system. Staff members and managers are knowledgeable on the closed captioning system and can assist with any specific questions you may have.

Regal Entertainment Group (NYSE: RGC) operates the largest and most geographically diverse theatre circuit in the United States, consisting of 7,342 screens in 576 theatres in 42 states along



Breakfast at the Staybridge Suites Buffalo Amherst.

with Guam, Saipan, American Samoa and the District of Columbia.

In terms of accommodations, we were very fortunate to come across the brand new Staybridge Suites Buffalo Amherst (www.staybridgesuites.com/amherstny), at 1290 Sweet Home Road, adjacent to the University at Buffalo –SUNY North Campus. Resting on the eastern shore of Lake Erie, the suburb of Amherst provides great access to entertainment, restaurants and attractions. Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BUF) is eight miles away. It turned out to be an excellent location. Having only opened on November 11, 2013, general manager Shannon Ruth, assistant GM Sarah Esposito and their team really provide a welcoming atmosphere.

This is an extended stay pet friendly hotel, which offers studios, one bedroom and two bedroom/ two bathroom suites, as well as an indoor saltwater pool, a fitness room, an in-season BBQ Pavillion with grills and complimentary guest laundry. You also get a full hot breakfast each morning, along with evening social receptions Tuesday through Thursdays. We chose the two bedroom option and for three of us it offered the kind of personal space one is not normally accustomed to during a family stay in a hotel. With a king size bed (and one amazingly comfortable reading chair) in the master bedroom, two double beds in the other and a pullout couch in the living room two families could happily share the premises. We also appreciated the 24 hour free coffee, tea, hot chocolate, milk, juices and soft



drinks, the "Great Room" where you can hang out with business associates and the "Den," filled with books, games and lots of comfy little nooks.

Each hotel room is furnished with a 42 inch flat screen HD TV, DVD players, iPod docking stations, alarm clocks and fully equipped kitchens, complete with pots, pans and utensils. There is good workspace and wireless internet. This property even has additional storage units available on each floor.

This is the eighth property opened by the folks at Ellicott Development and over the next couple of years they plan many more. You can see the others at <http://www.ellicottdevelopment.com/portfolio/hotels>. They range from luxury boutique to other extended stay

locales. You can call 1 877 660 8550 for reservations or do so online at www.staybridgesuites.com/amherstny.

There are no shortages of places to dine in the area. Busy Maple Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard are minutes away and features a slew of restaurants, from Denny's and IHOP to Red Robin to one of the USA's great seafood chains the Bonefish Grill (www.bonefish-grill.com). That was on our "to do" list for this trip, but we were not able to squeeze it into the schedule so I will wait until we visit another town where one of their 300 plus locations exists. For kosher restaurants, log on to <http://yibuffalo.org/food.htm>. At the Tops grocery store on Maple there is a full kosher section, including food you can take back to the hotel and enjoy.

Here is something I did not know. Buffalo is home to the only "bricks and mortar" museum in the U.S. dedicated to the history of people with disabilities called The Museum of disABILITY History. It is located at 3826 Main Street. Visitors and those who see its travelling exhibits, enjoy wide-ranging topics like disability and pop culture, the wide world of disability and sports, and the evolution of adaptive equipment, among many others, illustrated by photos, rare books and historic artifacts - truly a unique experience. Group tours are available. To schedule a tour, call 716-629-3626 begin_of_the_skype_highlighting, 716-629-3626 or log on to <http://museumofdisability.org>.



Hussam El-Saadi
Real Estate Broker
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