



Pirates Cove Adventure Golf has two excellent courses.

Shoppers just adore New Hampshire's 'outlet city' of North Conway

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

NORTH CONWAY, NH — With a backdrop of over 700,000 acres of protected White Mountain National Forest and boasting the tallest peak in the East (Mt. Washington 6,288 feet.), visitors to the North Conway area have many activities to choose from which span all four seasons. This includes some of the finest skiing, snowmobiling, hiking, golfing, fishing, canoeing, camping, family attractions, scenic tours, shopping and leaf peeping in the entire country! These activities are complemented by a wide array of lodging choices. While in the area visitors can shop at the outlet malls, and other local hand-craft, antique and gift shops, see a play at one of the area playhouses, ride one of the area's scenic train rides, visit one of the many area family attractions and enjoy the local cuisine in

one of the nearly 100 area restaurants and cafes. And remember, it is all tax free! For shopping, the Settlers Green Outlet Village on Route 16 and the White Mountain Outlet Stores on White Mountain Highway attract most of the traffic. Log on to www.northconwaynh.com. Santa's Village and Storyland are nearby and big favorites with the kids, who also have outdoor waterslides, mini-golf, go-karts, museums and trains to select from. This was our third visit to the area. We discovered, for the first time, North Conway Village. This amounts to a few blocks of neat shops and restaurants.

One of North Conway New Hampshire's newest hotels, the Hampton Inn and Suites (www.hamptoninnnorthconway.com), boasts a four-storey, attached, indoor water park as well as an on-site fitness center! The hotel only opened in 2006, yet it still looks spanking new. When you check in, there is a large plate of soft chocolate chip cookies

to welcome you.

There are 97 rooms and suites here. Our family decided to get connecting rooms, which translated into a very nice suite-like atmosphere. One room had a king size bed and a large walk-in shower; the other two queen beds. We requested a small fridge for the room. A few doors down was a large on-site laundry room. People tend to come here for extended stays to enjoy all of the attractions in the area, so having such an option can be a real bonus.

The hotel has complimentary wireless high-speed internet access, a hot breakfast buffet served until 10 a.m. each day, "on the run" breakfast bags for folks on the go, an on-site fitness center, a business center with computers and a printer, an on-site suite shop convenience store and even a babysitting service.

Hampton's new Cloud Nine bedding boasts pillow top mattresses and all white duvets. I really appreciated the small

portable cushioned laptop tables, which makes typing while sitting in bed or in a chair a great deal more comfortable. There is no extra charge here to bring your pet. Ditto for cribs or rollaways. The hotel plans different activities, such as movie nights and BINGO games. Rates here include unlimited use of the indoor water park, home to Fernando the Frog, a six-foot amphibian with a mini waterslide connected to a heated pool. The water park features dozens of interactive water activities and slides, twisting flumes, a raining umbrella, and more! I must have gone down the open yellow slide more than a dozen times, lying flat on my back and plunging at a rapid speed. It was a blast. Afterwards I decompressed in the nice warm jacuzzi. There is nothing quite like having access to such a facility and being able to go back and forth to your room in the same building. If you are in the area and staying elsewhere, you can pay a fee to gain entry to the water park. The Hampton Inn and Suites is located at 1788 White Mountain Hwy. For more information call toll Free: (888) H2O-PARK or (603) 356-7736. Whenever our family goes on summer vacation, we always seek out a good spot for

miniature golf. The much respected Pirates Cove Adventure Golf (www.piratescove.net) chain is present here in North Conway at 2001 White Mountain Highway with not one, but two 18 hole courses. Some people do both of them back to back. Our plan was to do so over two evenings. We started off on what was considered the more challenging course, featuring a neat mountain cave, cascading waterfalls and some tricky holes. It was a great deal of fun. The course itself was nicely arranged and the pirate theme was present throughout. If you are headed to North Conway with a group and wish to arrange a mini-golf tournament, call ahead to Josh Power at 603-356-8807. Oh yes, regrettably it rained the second evening we were there so we will just have to head back to this impressive course on our next trip. This was the first time I played mini golf in two years and I was excited to sink two holes-in-one. There are nine holes on the front course that are accessible and can be played twice, notes manager Josh Power. Close to the Hampton Inn and Suites is Merlino's Steakhouse (www.merlinosteakhouse.com), independently owned and operated by the Luciano family since 1967. Merlino's features only Certified Angus

Beef, which assures customers the finest quality beef available. They also serve some of the finest Italian food, using time tested family recipes, chops and ribs, fish and poultry, Merlino's has a great children's menu, featuring ziti with jumbo meatball, kids smoothies, hot dogs, cheeseburgers, chicken fingers and pizza. You can even get a kids smoothie. There is a generous assortment of appetizers, soups and salads. I strongly recommend the Prime Rib, which comes in six, 12 and 18 ounce portions. The garlic mashed potatoes on the size are delicious. If Caesar salad is to your liking, a large bowl will be brought to the table for everyone to share. They even serve lobster, in the shell or a lazy man style (all cut up). The lobster macaroni and cheese is a new creation. I had the 14 ounce Delmonico steak and it was tender and juicy. Our server Dan, recognizing that we were from Quebec, brushed up on some of the French he learned in high school and gave us a nice "Bonjour" upon taking our orders and even a "Merci." The two floor facility was busy on the evening we came, including a spirited engagement party just across the room from us.

This indoor waterslide at the Hampton Inn and Suites in North Conway, New Hampshire is a blast.

