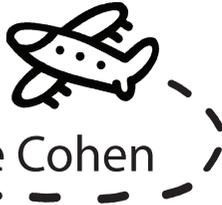




Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



NEW JERSEY'S WILDWOODS: It is always exciting for my family and me to explore a brand new vacation spot. After experiencing Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, for the first time in 2015, we decided to follow this up with the Wildwoods in New Jersey (www.WildwoodsNJ.com). As usual, we got an early start at securing reservations, doing so many months in advance of a July visit.

Home to more than 180 special events and festivals throughout the year, some might consider the Wildwoods the "Events Capital of the East Coast." The events take place at various locations throughout the island's three distinct municipalities: Wildwood, Wildwood Crest and North Wildwood. Visitors can find an event happening nearly every day of the week throughout the summer at locations including the Wildwoods Convention Center, Fox Park, Olde New Jersey Avenue and on the beach and world-famous Wildwoods Boardwalk.

The Wildwoods' annual calendar of events not only draws visitors to the family resort, but also provides additional activities and entertainment outlets to those already visiting for vacation or business. From firemen to fishing tournaments, music to marbles, the Wildwoods have developed a unique offering of special events not equaled in any other resort destinations.

Spring is the time when the outdoor fun

starts rolling in the Wildwoods, with events like the Boardwalk Classic Car Show, Easter Weekend and the one-of-a-kind Sensational Spring Weekend taking place. These events get the year started off right and help set the tone for the rest of summer. Highlighted by great music, loud engines and family fun, spring events in the Wildwoods are a great reason to warm up after a long winter.

Once Memorial Day hits, the summer really starts heating up. The Wildwoods host their annual International Kite Festival (the largest such event in North America), National Marbles Tournament, Wildwoods Baby Parade, New Jersey State Barbeque Championships, the Anglesea Blues Festival and spectacular 4th of July Weekend. Traditional events like these attract hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the country every summer.

Also taking place almost every weekend throughout the summer on the five-mile island are block parties, craft shows, conventions and many festivals. A wide variety of free concerts and live entertainment can also be found almost every single night of the week throughout the summer, including spectacular, free Friday Night Fireworks and free live concerts featuring national recording artists, oldies groups, dance and big band music and more!

Best of all, the fun doesn't end in the Wildwoods once September comes around. The

Wildwoods' "Second Season" starts up after Labor Day Weekend, offering visitors a host of events every weekend through the end of October. Fall events in the Wildwoods include the NJ Governors Cup and the Olde Time Italian Festival; the Irish Fall Festival; the Seafood and Music Festival and the amazing Fabulous '50s Weekend.

There's a little something for everyone on the Wildwoods Calendar of Events: Roller Derby, MMA, WWE Live and the Harlem Globetrotters for sports lovers; monster trucks, car shows and motorcycle rallies for auto enthusiasts; Comic, Sports Card, Toy, Postcard and Stamp Expos for collectors; a Barbeque and Blues Festival, Seafood and Music Festival and Italian and Irish Festivals for music and food lovers; and events like International Kite Festival and National Marbles Tournament for families. The best part about all of the Wildwoods' events is that they are open to everyone to come and enjoy – and most of them are free to attend!

The Wildwoods Calendar of Events is available online at www.WildwoodsNJ.com or by calling 1-800-WW-BY-SEA (800) 992-9732.

WHAT TO DO: There is an awful lot to do here and it all starts at The Wildwoods Boardwalk, often called "two miles of smiles." Here you will find spectacular amusement piers, world-class roller coasters, interactive waterparks, family atmosphere, carnival-style games of chance, shops and irresistible food. Imagine, nearly nine million visitors are attracted here each season. We just loved the atmosphere.

Since its birth as a mere 150-yard stretch of boards in the 1890s, the Wildwoods Boardwalk has always been the center of activity. Throughout the years, the Boardwalk has gone through many transformations, growing and evolving with the mood of the country, and in its 100-year history, was twice moved closer to the ocean with the changing shoreline. Today, it is one of the country's last great seaside promenades. Its rich history and world-famous ambiance has led to the very concept being replicated both in Disneyland and Hershey Park in Pennsylvania.

Stretching for two and a half miles, the Boardwalk offers pure sensory overload with over 100 rides and attractions (more than Disneyland) ranging from world-class roller coasters and wet 'n wild waterparks to carnival-style midway games, flashing arcades and a myriad of retail shops and eateries (more than the Mall of America).

The Boardwalk features Morey's Piers (www.moreyspiers.com), containing three

action-packed amusement piers. Morey's Mariner's Pier, located at Schellenger Avenue in Wildwood, offers the atmosphere of a traditional amusement park. With classics like the Super Scooters, Teacups, Musik Express and the Giant Wheel, Mariner's Landing takes families back to the turn of the century when life was simpler. It's also the only place to experience Breakfast in the sky - a gourmet, white linen and china breakfast on the Giant Wheel, offering spectacular views of the ocean and all of the Wildwoods.

Morey's Surfside Pier, located at 25th Street in North Wildwood, is like stepping into a colorful seaside carnival. It was the first of Morey's three piers, opening in 1969 with a giant fiberglass slide that only costs 25 cents to ride. Surfside Pier mixes a variety of kiddie rides with family thrills in an environment fueled by neon colors, bright lights and music.

Morey's Adventure Pier is the one that rocks, packed with high thrill extreme rides, the world famous wooden coaster and the Three-Point Challenge Basketball Game. Soar through the air over the beach on the SkyCoaster, feel the G force of the Sky-Scraper or shoot your way to the moon on the SlingShot. A brand new stage features School of Rock.

Guests visiting the Wildwoods Boardwalk will find an array of exciting amusements, including three of the best seaside roller coasters in the country at Morey's Piers: the Sea Serpent, the Great Nor'easter - an inverted looping coaster, and the Great White - one of the tallest and fastest wooden coasters on the East Coast. Also, giant monster trucks offer a high-speed, bumpy ride along the beach; and the Wildwoods' three large beachfront water parks provide cool relief on a hot summer day - with plunging waterfalls, cool cabanas, spas, hydrochutes, speed slides, raft rides, tube floats, lazy rivers, waterslides, rope swings, water guns for soaking, and a 1,000 gallon dumping bucket. We secured special bracelets, which provided us with unlimited access for a full day to any ride in the amusement park as well as access to the water parks. You can also purchase tickets individually. I loved their flume ride, where we got happily soaked during two plunges, and the huge Ferris wheel. There were no huge lineups that you see at many amusement parks and that was appreciated.

Service Animals, defined as dogs or miniature horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities, are permitted in most locations at Morey's Piers. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents



The Adventure Ocean Inn pool.



using these devices. If a service animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or the service animal is not house broken, the handler may be asked to remove the animal from the premises. Service animals are welcome in all restaurant and merchandise locations, attraction queues, and most other locations. Due to safety considerations and the dynamic nature of their rides and attractions, service animals are not permitted on most rides. In both waterparks, service animals are permitted on facility grounds, but are not permitted to enter the water.

Most of the facilities are wheelchair accessible. There are specific boarding requirements and accommodations at most attractions for guests using wheelchairs. Some attractions feature auxiliary access entrances. These are intended to allow guests using wheelchairs more convenient access to the attraction, not to bypass the line. Guests utilizing the access entrances may be accompanied by up to three others. In most cases, if you are capable of transferring to the ride vehicle's seating (either by yourself, or with the help of another person in your party), you may do so. Some attractions are capable of allowing guests to remain in a standard wheelchair for all or part of the attraction experience.

Each of the facilities offers accessible restrooms designed for use by guests using wheelchairs or ECVs (ECVs are single-riders, for-wheel electric vehicles).

Another of the Boardwalk's most popular attractions is the Sightseer Tram Cars (<http://watchthetramcarplease.com/tramcar>), the source of one of the most familiar quotes to any visitor to the Jersey Shore and the Wildwoods Boardwalk: "Watch the Tram

Car, Please," transporting visitors from one end of the famous wooden way to the other. While I did not see any place for a wheelchair, someone who has difficulty walking will want to take advantage of this feature.

WHERE TO STAY: We were fortunate to get reservations at The Adventurer Ocean Inn (www.AdventurerInn.com), which I can confidently say is probably the nicest hotel in all of the Wildwoods. This is indeed an oceanfront location, which has everything that your family or group needs to relax and unwind at the beach. You can wake up to the sounds of the ocean, watch the sun rise from an ocean view or oceanfront balcony, enjoy breakfast in their oceanfront restaurant or simply bask in the sun at the beach or at the pool area. From this location, you can walk to the beach, the Boardwalk and waterparks, and the Wildwoods Convention Center with ease. It comes complete with a cardio room, convention/meeting rooms, Southern exposure outdoor pool and kiddie pool, and free outdoor and garage parking on the premises.

Mary Nell Murphy is the managing director and owner of the hotel, which was originally operated by her grandparents. While her dad Greg Lacivita is still involved, he is slowly drifting into retirement and allowing Mary Nell and her sister Joanna and brother Chris to keep the family tradition going.

We felt right at home at The Adventurer Ocean Inn the moment we arrived. This hotel features some of the largest and cleanest two, three and four room suites in the Wildwoods. Upgrades are done each off-season. They used to close from October until May. But given the increased activity at the Convention Centre, their opening date has been moved up to April, March and next winter February. We had a very comfortable two-room suite, which had a king size and dou-

ble bed in one area. This was separated by a sliding accordion door, opening up to a nice sized living room/full kitchen with a pullout sofa bed, a nice sitting chair and a table with five chairs, at which we ate. It also became my "go to" spot to do work on my computer.

As far as the pool facility is concerned, I want to give a huge thumbs up. On the eighth and final day of our visit, we felt very emotional leaving our very comfortable chairs and taking our last swim in the perfectly heated pool. There are plenty of chairs and umbrellas. You just need to give your room number and you will receive some nice sized towels for the day. We particularly appreciated the covered outdoor lounging area with an adjacent sundeck at the second level, which also had comfy couches. There is WiFi poolside so we could enjoy our different devices. At pool level there is an enclosed oceanfront lounge/meeting area, which connects to the beach. It also has tables to eat at, a TV to watch and washrooms.

The front office staff are extremely friendly and helpful. They will steer you in the direction of different tourist attractions. The reception area has an endless array of tourism flyers and booklets to choose from. There is a business centre with two computers and two printers.

The Adventurer Pancake House and Family Restaurant is located on the first floor on the oceanfront side of the building. It has been privately run by the same family for the past two decades.

There is a washing station on the oceanfront side of the building, just before entering. Guests are encouraged to wash sand off there before entering the building or the pool area. We swam in the ocean each day, which was happily quite warm in the month of July. It was an easy walk from poolside.

The hotel is located at the beginning of the Boardwalk, which has shops, eateries and arcades. The rides are three quarters to one mile from the Boardwalk, so you do not hear any noise from them.

Coin-operated laundry and ironing facilities are available on site. Groups can take advantage of a Penthouse convention / meeting room. There are elevators on each side of the building, complimentary cribs and cots and daily housekeeping service. I was very impressed with the number of luggage carts available in the garage. There is a large Acme Supermarket only a few blocks away from the hotel so we were able to do a full order to stock the fridge when we arrived and go back and forth during the week to pickup other items.

The hotel has excellent access for those using wheelchairs from the garage elevator. There is a ramp leading to the pool. Mary Nell plans to have a company come in the next off-season and conduct a needs assessment. She has already added roll-in showers to some rooms.

All of the 113 rooms are non-smoking and have individual climate control(s), private balconies, telephone(s) with automated voice mail, free wireless internet access, refrigerators and microwaves, an in-room safe, flat screen TVs, hair dryers and toiletries, iron and ironing boards, kitchens, coffee pot, a two burner stove, pots and pans, dishes and silverware and a toaster.

The beach is free and available for your vacationing pleasure. Umbrella and beach chair rentals are conveniently located directly on the beach; no need to bring your own! The Beach Patrol can also assist handicapped or wheelchair-bound individuals and their families onto the beach and/or to the waters edge. Guests can simply walk outside the building and enjoy!

This a fabulous family location and from speaking with many of the guests, they come back year after year. In fact it is fairly common for them to book their rooms for the following year upon checkout. By doing so they are able to lock in the rates that exist at the time.

I strongly recommend the Adventurer Ocean Inn! It made our trip and I thank the people from the Greater Wildwoods Tourism and Improvement Development Authority for recommending it.

DINING OUT: I would like to recommend two restaurants in particular, which are part of the Big Fish Restaurant Group: the Beach Creek Oyster Bar and Grill (www.beachcreek.net) and The Boathouse (www.boat-houseonline.com). Both promise outstanding dining experiences.

At the Beach Creek, located at 500 West Hand Avenue, general manager Colleen Guest and her team run a successful operation. You can tell this when you arrive and see the wait for tables. Intimately served indoors amidst copper and wooden decor, or outside on their waterfront deck, this place knows its food. Located directly on the water, the Beech Creek is known for its award winning contemporary international cuisine. This casual surf 'n turf restaurant and bar features an intimate dark lit dining room, a marina-side deck and live bands.



The famous Wildwood Boardwalk.

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This restaurant has such a wide array of choices for wine, cocktails, appetizers and main courses that you will want to come back more than once. We began our meal with some cocktails, a Hawaiiitini and a Pineapple Express. It was difficult to select from the delicious looking presentation of appetizers. We settled on the Sunset Seafood Platter - six oysters, six top necks, six shrimp and colossal lump crab meat. It was amazing! We also shared some delicious seared scallops - cornmeal seared scallops and some more colossal lump crab meat, served over a tomato-basil bruchetta.

A Caesar and petite house salad were next, making way for the main entrées. The seafood à la vodka featured sweet sea scallops, tender shrimp and jumbo lump crabmeat in a vodka infused tomato cream sauce over penne pasta. The sea bass Champignon really stood out for us. This char-grilled Chilean sea bass filet was served with sautéed greens on a lobster risotto filled grilled Portobello cap and in a light grilled Portobello broth. Our final choice was the rib steak - 14 ounces of grilled Black Angus beef, served with sautéed greens and potatoes. This was an absolutely outstanding meal. We did save room for dessert, sharing a superb and nice-sized piece of double layer chocolate cake and a vanilla bean crème brûlée. The menu is on their website and I would recommend you take a look before going for dinner.

If you get to the Beach Creek before 6 p.m., then you can take advantage of the three-course early bird special. For \$25, you get

bread, bruschetta, soup or salad, an entrée and dessert. Keep in mind that the portions are very generous. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible. You can call them at (609) 522-1062.

At The Boathouse Restaurant and Marina Deck (www.boathouseonline.net), located virtually next door at 506 West Rio Grande Avenue, there is ample seating indoors and on the deck overlooking the intercoastal waterway. We arrived to a nice atmosphere of live music and young children dancing to the tunes of the musician. General manager Rick Raduns and his team provide a warm welcome to all guests. The Boathouse has been in business since 1989. It was built on the site of old bait and tackle shop and serves lunch and dinner daily in June, July and August. Come September they offer dinner daily, and lunch on the weekends. They open for dinner on weekends in October, until October 15. Happy hour is from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and take-out is available as well.

There is wheelchair access via a ramp. If you are wheelchair bound you will need to stay at the first level. We were seated in the nicely air conditioned second floor. Our lovely server Michaela went over the daily specials and some recommendations from the menu. I started off with a mouth-watering Pina Colada while another member of our party enjoyed a glass of Pinot Grigio. Some fresh dinner rolls arrived at the table piping hot.

We ordered two appetizers to share: the cold shellfish sampler contained three clams and

three oysters on the half shell and chilled shrimp cocktail, with some delicious dipping sauces; and the Maryland style crab cake, broiled and served with a siracha remoulade sauce. Michaela then brought a bowl of house salad for the three of us to share. It was superb, with a house vinaigrette dressing and plenty of croutons.

For the entrées, we had a wonderful choice among meat and poultry, pasta and fresh seafood. Our selections were the broiled seafood combination, seafood à la vodka and the king cut prime rib. The broiled seafood combo is the restaurant's best seller and includes a delicious sampling of fresh local flounder, shrimp, scallops, crab imperial and clams casino. Seafood à la vodka included shrimp, scallops, crab meat and penne, tossed in a cream rosé sauce. As for the prime rib au jus, it was cooked perfectly and cut like butter. All dinners are served with the garden salad, rolls and two choices from either French fries, baked potato, roasted red bliss, the daily vegetable, cole slaw or apple sauce. Pasta (marinara or butter) or for \$2 alfredo can be substituted for the two sides.

When it came time to order dessert, Michaela tempted us with her description of the homemade decadent chocolate pie. The recipe apparently comes directly via the chef's grandmother. Well, it was beyond "decadent" and highly recommended. The chocolate had a fabulous fudge flavor and there was plenty of whipped cream and chocolate sauce as well.

Take note that the sunset specials include two entrées for only \$29. There is also a children's menu, with items at \$8 each. You can call the restaurant directly at (609) 729-5301.

For more information or a list of dining options please visit www.WildwoodsNJ.com and click on the "Where to Eat" button or call 1-800-WW-BY-SEA (800) 992-9732.

MORE INFO ON ACCESS: In Wildwood Crest, there is wheelchair access to the boardwalks and beaches on 39 streets. Only Cresse and Washington are not accessible. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible rest rooms are available at the Sunrise Park at Rambler Road. Wildwood Crest is considering adding handicapped parking at Rambler Road as part of a new project for this area in the future. There are a limited number of surf chairs available at the different beaches. These are wheelchairs that are easier to manoeuver in the sand.

New walkways, ramps and dune crossovers were installed in North Wildwood two years ago, making the city's beaches more accessible to visitors with physical disabilities. Upgrades to improve access to the beach and Boardwalk saw the addition of new ADA compliant walkways made of composite materials that will lead from under the Boardwalk to the beach.

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Buddy Cruise set to sail in October 2017

By Pamela Arnoldson

Buddy Cruise is a non-profit charity serving individuals and families with special needs. Founded in 2008, it provides educational resources, advocacy and awareness for individuals and families with special needs. In addition to their annual cruise, Buddy has events scheduled across the country. They take part in conferences across the United States and recently took part in the Canadian Down Syndrome Conference in Montreal. They hosted their first charity golf tournament in Boston, and will be the recipient of a fundraising event generously arranged by Chef Robert Irvine.

In 2015, Buddy Cruise hosted its annual event on board Royal Caribbean's Independence of the Seas with over 350 in at-



Buddy Cruisers having fun at '70s night on the Buddy Cruise 2015.
(Photo credit, Bluehuna)

tendance. They visited St. Kitts, St. Maarten and San Juan, Puerto Rico. The week was packed with workshops, activities, and ex-

cursions. They even hosted a Halloween carnival at sea! There was something for all ages and abilities. This October Buddy Cruise set sail on the Oasis of the Sea.

The annual "Buddy walk at Sea" takes place on the cruise to raise awareness for Down syndrome, and has over 800 participants. "We invite everyone to join us wheth-

er they have a loved one with special needs or not. You will have an amazing time. It's a life-changing event," said former "Apprentice" star and current Buddy Cruise director Troy McClain. "Join us once and you will become a Buddy Cruiser for life."

"We already have our 2017 event on the books for October 30th. It will be an exciting Halloween sailing. If you would like to join in the fun of this, or any other Buddy Cruise, call (877) 239-2789," adds Jorge Arnoldson, director and Lithia resident.

If you would like more information about Buddy Cruise please email joinus@buddycruise.org.

Pamela Arnoldson is the Director of Buddy Cruise Inc.