

A "Grand" Island to visit in New York's Niagara Region

Travel Spotlight

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GRAND ISLAND, NEW YORK:

For 12 of the past 13 years our family has spent the Christmas holidays in the warmth of South Florida. This year we decided to do something completely different. With some US friends of ours we headed to visit their family in Buffalo, New York. We thought it would be nice to go to the same area as well. And what a pleasure it was to travel with our Canadian dollar at par with the American buck!

Here is my first very important piece of advice. You need not actually stay in Buffalo. When we last visited the area more than five years ago, we discovered Grand Island, located smack in between Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York (www.niagara-usa.com.) The Holiday Inn Grand Island Resort and Conference Centre (www.holiday-inn.com/grandislandny) was our base and we simply loved this gorgeous 263 room property, located at 100 Whitehaven Road. We were lucky to get a reservation, selecting a comfortable Jacuzzi suite. This is a great year-round choice. In the winter, the fitness centre, large indoor pool and whirlpool are real bonuses. The property is ideal for business and leisure travel alike. Soon enough the attractive outdoor pool will be in operation. There is also an on-site health and fitness center, a gift shop and yes, for the business executive, secretarial services.

Standard Guest rooms have private balconies, flat screen televisions with on command movies and free wireless high speed internet. The hotel has two room

executive suites, two room Jacuzzi suites or two room hospitality suites, each of which has pull-out sleeper sofas and large private balconies facing the majestic Niagara River. They also are equipped with microwave ovens and mini refrigerators. On site you can enjoy a delicious meal in Currents "A Bistro on the Niagara" or unwind over a cocktail in the hotel's comfortable lounge.

In the summer you can look forward to a number of fireworks displays at the annual Canal Festival. The hotel is conveniently located just a few minutes off of Highway 190, yet secluded from the hustle and bustle of the busy Falls tourism trade. There are two beaches nearby - Beaver State Park and Sandy Beach. For more information you can call 716-773-1111.

There are two fabulous shopping options to consider. The Fashion Outlets (www.fashionoutletsniagara.com) with 150 stores, can keep you busy for hours, with bargains galore. There is also a Target store nearby. In Buffalo, the Walden Galleria (www.waldengalleria.com) is a fabulously large mall, with major anchors such as Macy's, JC Penney, Lord and Taylor and Sears. It's a 25 minute drive from Grand Island. We spent six hours there.

Niagara USA (www.niagara-usa.com) offers visitors "A Great American Getaway" filled with exciting events, one-of-a-kind attractions, fascinating history and adventure that the entire family will enjoy. The main attraction, Niagara Falls State Park, is the perfect spot for experiencing this magical landmark. There are a number of viewing platforms here, as well as some unusual opportunities to get even closer. For those who don't mind becoming one with the water, the Park's Cave of the Winds is a thrilling guided walking



During the summer, the Maid of the Mist experience is a must on either side of the Falls.

tour along wooden platforms at the base of Bridal Veil Falls. Participants will inevitably get wet as they walk through the spray. Another wet adventure is the famous Maid of the Mist (www.maidofthemist.com), a boat cruise which takes guests right up to the roaring water at the base of Horseshoe and American Falls. Nearby is the Lockport Cave and Underground Boat Ride. History-themed attractions will educate younger minds and capture the attention of their mature companions.

For the kids, there is no better place to go than Martin's Fantasy Island (www.martinsfantasyisland.com), located at Exit N-19 (Whitehaven Road) in Grand Island. It is recognized as Western New York's most affordable and fun theme park, with more than 100 rides and attractions. That includes a neat water park, complete with slides, a lazy river and a wave pool.

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