

# Wilderness Wellness in the Adirondacks: Schroon Lake



By Peggy Newland

It's a vast wilderness in the Adirondacks but when you have a forest concierge showing you the hidden trails and unknown ponds in this nook of the North Woods, you are in on the secret of the newest trend, Wilderness Wellness. Jamie Frasier, the Lodge at Schroon Lake's "Resident Trailblazer" and owner/operator of outfitter Adirondack Mountain and Stream, guides guests across parts of the Northern Forest Canoe Trails (730 miles of interconnected systems of ponds and portages), secures fly fishing forays on remote lake islands, leads group backpacking tours along some of the park's 5000 square miles of ridges and the High Peaks and is our guide for the day as we hike up Pharaoh Mountain and around the pristine ponds of this wildly lush reserve.

"Look for loon nests," Jamie suggests as we walk/balance our way across a wooded bridge and past a boulder-strewn pond. "They love the reeds and back edges."

It's early and so quiet that the pond's ripples murmur like whispers. My thoughts aren't circling around or racing anywhere. There are no lists in my head of "to-do's", just a simple keeping pace on the trail, searching for the glide of loons on the clear pond water, breeze on birch leaves, and the next step forward.

Jamie grew up in the woods and raised his family "without another house in sight." He talks about helping people experience the landscape, "not just pass through." We hike through old growth forest of pines and boulders coated in vivid moss carpets as we learn about logging, and some mining during the 1800's in this area. "It's a preserved and protected landscape," Jamie adds.

The trail gets steeper as we scramble up tumbledown rocks and deadwood. Lucy leaps easily over logs while we straddle and hoof up the incline. We spy patches of blue sky through the understory of deep forest and then, we are offered expansive views from multiple peak ledges. Standing still, we pause, this sense of awe as we feast on the rolling mountains; dotted ponds, and roaming rivers are in every direction. Clouds scuttle across the sky and seem to drape across the distant ridges.

After a lunch of peanut butter and honey sandwiches, apples, and a ton of nuts, seeds, and chocolate chip gorp, we head down, Jamie telling us about his adventures, hunting

and fishing and "finding all the nooks and crannies" of this "huge park." He is a gem of a storyteller and there's laughter often, which makes the trudge down on roots, boulder fields, and streambed "quick and easy."

We decide to come back for another trip with Jamie, this time in a canoe. We don't say goodbye, instead, we nod, "See you next time."

Making a stop at Schroon Lake Village's Main Street is a must. Wood beamed shops, the historic general store, an Irish pub, and funky furniture boutiques could make for a perfect afternoon, but we are muddy, in need a beer on our deck, and tired so we head back to the Lodge to rusticate and relax in our refined setting.

The slow-down in the Adirondack chair back at the chalet allows calm to settle easily between my shoulder blades as I sip a Paradox Ale. Images of that day's hike rise and fall like the High Peaks surrounding me over Schroon Lake: the mushrooms interspersed between moss gardens, the arc of a hawk's flight in the thermals, the coolness of my toe in an unnamed pond, the smile on Lucy's Lab face as she flops on a rock ledge, her belly to the sky.

In the late 1800's, Schroon Lake and the previous Brown Swan Club, were known for "providing health-giving qualities" by allowing guests to soak in the "aromas" of pine, spruce and evergreen and enjoy the fresh mountain air. They knew then, what we search for now, forest bathing, stillness, and utilizing the calming balms of being inside nature is healing. The Brown Swan Club's motto was "large enough to be excellent, small enough to be personal" and it's apparent at the Lodge on Schroon Lake as Brian and I wander the grounds. Large stands of pine with grouped Adirondacks, wooden cabins, chalets, and lodge offering authentic rustication vibes, outdoor bars, firepits, and the Brown Swan Restaurant's wraparound porches for nature-forward dining.

Lucy, Brian, and I head to dinner on the porch. Lucy has kibble, and shares some of our steak tips. We also try crab cakes with basil aioli, fresh tomato jam, and arugula. Salads are full of fresh greens, grilled corn, black beans, red quinoa, and beets. Dessert is needed: hot honey-peach cheesecake and key lime pie. Then we head over the patio to listen to an acoustic guitarist serenade us into sunset.

The next morning, we stroll down to the beach area. Although too early in season, we note that the Lodge will be having Astro-Cruising after dark, starting June 18. Constellation viewing while on a pontoon boat? Perfect plan for summer. An expanded waterfront beach, dock, and beachside bar will be happening in late June. I dip a toe in the lake and realize that a swim may not be in order that day, but a return seems to be a must for more wilderness wellness.

The Adirondacks is a place that invites exploration but allows for a simple connection to nature-- stunning vistas, restful beach coves, moss ledges, pine groves, the rise of a hawk on thermals. Sometimes it is more important to disconnect from the busyness to reconnect to calm. The Lodge at Schroon Lake is a ticket to happiness.

## if you go

The Lodge at Schroon Lake.

[www.lodgeatschroonlake.com](http://www.lodgeatschroonlake.com).

210 Registration Way, Schroon Lake, NY. 518-987-0708.

Luxury cabins, lodge rooms, and chalets on 36 acres with views across expansive lawns to Schroon Lake. Pet friendly. Lakeside dining on the porch and live music at the Tavern and patio/terrace. Indoor pool and private beach and dock.

Check out the Forest Concierge Program and find your wilderness wellness. Summer specials and events.



Lucy at Schroon Lake

Photo by Peggy Newland