

**Travels
with Peggy**

Yoga with Amelia Earhart

By Peggy Newland

I'm sleeping in a bunkhouse at the summer camp where Amelia Earhart slept—open-air screened porch windows, dark wooden planked beams, hooked antique rugs, a cozy quilted bed, and the names of fellow campers scrawled across the walls of the bedroom. I look for the signatures of the Kennedy girls—Eunice, Jean, Kathleen—in my room, the music rooms, theater, tennis huts and abandoned horse barns, and think of the bonfires, camp songs, archery contests, and sporting events that took place at Ogontz White Mountain Resort. Built in 1923 as an elite summer camp on private Ogontz Lake for “ladies building their outdoor skills,” this is authentic Gilded Age rustication. Instead of target sports, handicrafts, equine classes, and training to become a self-reliant heiress, I'm here for Kula Yoga Retreat, and sleeping inside history with the call of loons at nightfall and with namaste as my guide.

The founder of Kula Yoga Fest, Laura Erickson, wants to help folks find “spaciousness in the land and stillness with nature” with a focus on relaxation and yoga calming techniques. She has succeeded at her goal, at least for me, as I'm surrounded by deep spruce and pine forest, and the lake below my bunkhouse sparkles like a mountain gem. After checking in, I run, not walk, down to the waterfront area and jump directly into Ogontz Lake. Two loons are my only company as I swim and float under clear skies. I have two hours before the dinner bell rings.

That late afternoon, after a shower in the bathhouse, I meet up with other yogafesters at the welcoming reception for pre-dinner “opening flow” class in the nature-focused event space: heavy timber framed interior with natural tree trunk

columns decorated with pine boughs, dimmed lighting, lit lanterns, and fairy lights. We relax and breathe in tree, mountain, and lotus poses and then we all head over to the dining hall deck for dinner. Dinner is not the usual summer camp fare of baked beans and “bug juice”. It is organic grilled salmon, heirloom tomato salads, orzo rice with pomegranate, fresh baked bread and churned butter, chocolate mousse, herbed teas, and shared bottles of wine while overlooking the sun setting on the lake. We all become fast friends as we walk over to the boathouse for an evening concert with guitarist, Ananda Das.

The next morning, after a group breakfast of avocado/herb toast, poached eggs, fresh fruit salad, homemade granola, yogurt and tons of coffee, we head out to individualized choices of morning meditations on the lake, sound bathing, waterfall yoga hiking, instrument making classes, singing lessons, paddleboard yoga, breathwork journeys, Ayurvedic cooking classes, power flow, or just “do your own thing” swimming and kayaking or sunning by the lake. I mix and match my day, adding in a “make your own taco” lunch followed by fudgy brownies and cookies. After ending the afternoon at the lake, a group of us find out about a stoked, wood-fired hot tub by a waterfall in a moss forest near the boat house and it's like finding a fairytale secret, alternating between waterfall leaps and hot tub soaks.

Dinner, again, is outside on the deck, for sunset and conversation and shared glasses of wine. We dine on tomato, basil, caprese salads and homemade dressing, filet medallions with root vegetables, local mushroom risotto, and “make your own sundaes” for dessert. After dinner, I head over to a candlelit slow flow vinyasa class and almost fall asleep while others



Courtesy photos



head over to a dance party and nighttime swim. Sleep comes easily in my classic cabin; the windows open to the echoes of loons and cool summer breezes.

The last day is calming after breakfast of pumpkin pancakes, local cured bacon, fresh fruit, and squeezed orange juice. I take a morning swim and then stay for a sound bath and water ceremony on the lake focusing on hearing “the quiet around you.” Then I head up to the lodge for mindfulness immersion in nature, and more paddleboard yoga. Lunch and the closing ceremony is a celebration of taking a break from the usual rush and chaos of “the everyday schedule.”

I can't think of a better way to go to summer camp as an adult, with the spirit of Amelia Earhart in the clear waters, the deep forests, the sunset dimming the day

into heavy starlight, and a cabin holding stories. The history and peacefulness of Ogontz will bring me back next year to this special festival in the White Mountains.

if you go

Kula Yoga Fest.
www.kulayogafest.com.
14 Ogontz Road,
Lyman, NH.
August 6-8, 2027.
Special, “early-bird” rates available.

Pick your cabin and enjoy the peacefulness on Ogontz Lake.