

# Checking In: New Hampshire inn straddles lakeshore and Main St.

Romantic getaway is also great spot for families

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE JUNE 7, 2013



The Wolfeboro Inn in New Hampshire is a tranquil lakeside retreat and is also one block from the main street action.

**Photograph by:** The Wolfeboro Inn

The delightful Wolfeboro Inn has been the happening hub of a New Hampshire resort town for 201 years.

Originally a private home built in 1812, it has evolved into a fine 44-room hotel, the best and most prominent in a tony town on the shore of Lake Winnepesaukee. The hotel's Wolfe's Tavern also is one of the top dining spots, popular for its live music, progressive pub cuisine and TVs tuned to sports. And for a party on the water, the Wolfeboro Inn's Winnepesaukee Belle, a reproduction of a turn-of-the-century sidewheeler, is among the most pleasurable ways to cruise the lake. I hear the Thirsty Thursday rides make big waves.

The Wolfeboro Inn is partly a romantic lakefront destination that orchestrates 45 weddings a year and partly a low-key family getaway with beach activities on site and ice-cream parlours in town. It's a full-service hotel that looks like a picture-perfect New England country inn. From the main street, it is a clapboard manor house with a white picket fence, dark green shutters and glowing coach lights that say "we're home!" From the waterfront, we see the inn's well-kept lawn and thicket of pines, maples

and birches. Waves lap against the sand and a light breeze whiffles the weather vane. Lounge chairs make a peaceful spot from which to gaze out and the gazebo is the perfect place for summer romance. It's all meant to help visitors unwind from the faster pace of the city.

"The Wolfeboro Inn's special quality is that it has a dual personality," said general manager George Soderberg II. "We're on the lake and very tranquil, if you want a pastoral getaway, but we have a lively pub and we're also one block from main street's shops and boat docks."

Indoors, the Wolfeboro Inn has been remodelled with some of the features of a rustic lakeside chalet, but a very comfortable one. The lobby's deep leather seating is clustered around a large riverstone fireplace. The decor is strong on a handsome country style of antler chandeliers, polished woodwork and admirable antique dressers in the sturdy, square Arts and Crafts style.

At the top end of the room register is No. 300, a honeymoon-worthy suite with a lake view and two balconies — one facing the sunrise and the other for the glow of the sunset. There is space in spades. A cuddling couple could snuggle into an over-sized club chair in the sitting area. Plus, there is a king-sized bed, a writing desk, a flat-screen TV and a breakfast table. Room No. 317 is a good buy. It's not quite as deluxe, but it also has a private porch, although no lake view.

The Wolfeboro Inn has introduced hotel-style services and inviting details such as express checkout, morning coffee and afternoon lemonade and cookies, bathrobes and slippers in the guest rooms, beach toys for the kids and good-quality reading lights. At evening turndown, the housekeeper left me two welcome treats: the weather forecast and cranberry-chocolate cookies (which I saved for the next day's kayak excursion).

Wolfe's Tavern is the section of Wolfeboro Inn that dates to 1812. You can relive the old days with its tin ceiling, brick fireplaces and wide-planked pine floors, all appealing, warm and inviting. But the remarkable thing is that Wolfe's Tavern really has broken through the barriers that more staid hotel dining rooms face. In short, by staying casual, it manages to be busy for breakfast, lunch, cocktail hour, dinner and Sunday brunch.

The Tavern's Mug Club is a big deal for local clients and perennial visitors. Whoever is game enough to sample the bar's 100 beers gets a private pewter tankard, engraved and hung from the rafters for all to see. So far there are 2,400 members — and hundreds of mugs on display. Wolfe's Tavern also holds Tiki Tuesdays with Caribbean music, Ladies' Wednesdays with quickie spa treatments, and karaoke and live music on some nights.

On the food front, the Tavern serves hearty New England comfort cuisine with a modern twist. The menu features burgers, clam chowder and such specials as shellfish cakes, steak tips in barbecue sauce, shrimp pot pie, house-cured corned beef, meat loaf with gravy, asparagus fries, wild mushroom ravioli and a short-rib shepherd's pie. I was bemoaning the calorie content when I spotted some lighter fare: grilled fish and steak, roast turkey and dinner salads.

Even breakfast is an elaborate affair with such unique dishes as coffee-cake French toast, strawberry

blintzes, prime rib hash, eggs Benedict and grilled zucchini bread with whipped maple-orange cream cheese.

The Wolfeboro Inn belongs to Hay Creek Hospitality, which also operates the Eagle Mountain House in Jackson, N.H., and the Centennial Hotel in Concord, N.H., among others. The Balsams in Dixville Notch, N.H., a vintage resort two hours from Montreal, is getting a makeover and tentatively will reopen in fall 2014.

### **IF YOU GO:**

Wolfeboro is a four-hour, 15-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 10, Route 55 south to the U.S. border and Routes 91 and 93 to Exit 25, drive through Plymouth, Center Harbour and Moultonborough.

The Wolfeboro Inn: 800-451-2389, 603-569-3016, [www.wolfeboroinn.com](http://www.wolfeboroinn.com); 90 North Main St., Wolfeboro, N.H. Open year-round.

Price: Rooms and suites approximately \$110-\$199 U.S. per night, for two, weekdays, or \$199-\$279 on weekends, without meals; includes twice-daily housekeeping, beachfront, morning coffee and afternoon refreshments. From July-Oct., approx. \$279-\$359 per night, for two; extra person, \$20; children 2 and under stay for free. Minimum two- or three-day day visits apply at certain periods.

Wolfe's Tavern: 800-451-2389, [www.wolfestavern.com](http://www.wolfestavern.com); breakfast, \$5-\$11; lunch & dinner, \$15-\$40; Sunday brunch, \$17.95. Children's menu, \$7.75 incl. dessert.

Winnepesaukee Belle: \$16 adults; \$8 children under 12; discounts for seniors.

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*The writer was a guest of the hotel. The Wolfeboro Inn did not approve or review this story.*

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