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## **One-Tank Trip**

# **Take family on low-cost, local vacation**

**By WENDY THOMAS Correspondent**

Summer is coming, and that means family vacations. How can you and the kids have a thrifty vacation, while still having a relaxing, entertaining and educational time?

The answer: Vacation locally. New Hampshire has more than 72 Summer is coming, and that means family vacations. How can you and the kids have a thrifty vacation, while still having a relaxing, entertaining and educational time?

The answer: Vacation locally. New Hampshire has more than 72 state parks, historical sites and nature centers that for very little money can provide families with an entire day's worth of entertainment.

Here are some suggestions for local, thrifty trip ideas that won't break the bank.

### **Nature and science centers**

Nature and science centers are a great way to learn about the natural wildlife and plants in New Hampshire. From touching lamprey to being up close and personal with owls, many of these centers have extensive exhibits focusing on environmental education.

On the Seacoast, visit the Science and Nature Center at Seabrook Station and Seacoast Science Center in Rye. Science and Nature Center at Seabrook Station offers a look at the unique eco-system surrounding Seabrook. Children and parents can touch marine life in a tide pool or listen to the sounds of wildlife on the nature trail. The Seacoast Science Center in Rye is a must-see for anyone wishing to discover the natural treasures and rich history of coastal New Hampshire.

In Auburn, the Massabesic Audubon Center is a nature center on Lake Massabesic with live animal exhibits, walking trails and environmental education programs.

The Amoskeag Fishways Learning and Visitors Center in Manchester focuses on ecological and cultural issues of the Merrimack River and watershed. Visitors experience exhibits and educational programs year-round, as well as a fish ladder in the spring.

### **Historical sites**

As one of the original New England colonies, New Hampshire holds a lot of history. For an educational vacation, try having children do some research or read a book on the subject before visiting any of the many New Hampshire historical sites.

The Fort Stark Historic Site in New Castle is on a peninsula historically called Jerry's Point on the southeast corner of New Castle Island. It overlooks the Piscataqua River, Little Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean. The fort was named in honor of John Stark, commander of N.H. forces at the Battle of Bennington in 1777.

In Derry sits the Robert Frost Farm Historic Site, the home of poet Robert Frost and his family from 1900-09. The two-story clapboard farmhouse is typical of New England in 1880s. Frost attributed many of his poems to memories from the Derry years. Guided tours, nature-poetry trail, a video presentation and picnicking are all activities to explore at this National Historic Landmark.

The Daniel Webster Birthplace Historic Site in Franklin is associated with the birth and early childhood years of Daniel Webster, one of the United States' most respected orators and statesmen. Get a peak into the early years of Daniel Webster and a glimpse of 1700s farm life in the United States.

Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion Historic Site in Portsmouth is a National Historic Landmark and the 18th-century residence of New Hampshire's first royal governor, Benning Wentworth. Purple lilacs, descendants of European stock imported by Wentworth, decorate the grounds. The site is a great area for picnicking, kayaking or taking a stroll. There are also mansion tours, art classes and function rentals.

Another historical site is the Statehouse Visitors' Center in Concord. Swing into the gift shop or check out the display and exhibit area. Visitors can also tour the office of the Statehouse.

### **State parks and beaches**

A hike in the woods or a day at the beach at one of New Hampshire's many parks and beaches can be an entertaining and thrifty way to get the kids out of the house. New Hampshire offers easy hikes through groomed trails, as well as hikes up mountains that are a bit more challenging. There isn't much shoreline, but what New Hampshire has is beautiful and certainly worth a day trip.

Miller State Park in Peterborough has winding paved roads that lead to a scenic 2,290-foot summit. Tackle the hiking trails that ascend Pack Monadnock or pack a picnic for a relaxing afternoon. An operational fire tower affords panoramic view of surrounding countryside that includes Mount Monadnock, Mount Washington, skyscrapers of Boston and Vermont hills.

Mount Sunapee State Park in Newbury is a major recreation area in the Dartmouth and Lake Sunapee region with year-round activities. In the summer and fall, enjoy hiking, swimming, picnicking, boating, fishing and camping.

Crawford Notch State Park in Harts Location provides access to numerous hiking trails, waterfalls, fishing, wildlife viewing and spectacular mountain views. There are picnicking areas, parking for hiking and scenic pull-offs. Dry River Campground offers 36 wooded sites with flush toilets and showers.

Wellington State Beach in Bristol affords views of one of the deepest and clearest lakes in the state. There are two group picnic pavilions, volleyball and horseshoe courts and a snack bar. The peninsula nature trail features picnic and fishing areas, plant identification markers and spectacular views. state parks, historical sites and nature centers that for very little money can provide families with an entire day's worth of entertainment.

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