

Vacationing on Veranda Beach: Where to Escape and Explore (on the cheap) in Niagara



Finally - Spring has sprung in Niagara. Birds are chirping. Plants are growing. Mud is everywhere. Warmer winds are blowing. But when we look out our front windows at the sun on our verandas, we can imagine the glory of summer. And the fun of summer vacations!

On a recent not-so-sunny-day, a member came in to see me about just such a thing: he wanted to plan a summer vacation. As a teacher, he saw his colleagues planning their holidays. He just wasn't sure he could afford to travel.

Sure enough, we reviewed his finances, discussed his plans to replace his roof in the fall, and I had to break it to him: summer travel didn't fit in his budget. Before he left with a rain cloud over his head, I found a patch of sunshine for him. I recommended travelling in Niagara. A vacation on Veranda Beach, if you will. I explained that he could stay close to home and still enjoy the benefits of travel without breaking his budget.

I don't recommend taking on debt to travel. I like to be a bit more realistic. A vacation to reduce stress doesn't do much good if you return to a cycle of debt that stresses your finances and your family! Luckily, it's not hard to find relaxing, low-cost adventures in Niagara.

Our region is full of amazing places to escape to and explore. Here are a few day trips I

recommend to have fun in the sun while living within your means:

Niagara Gorge

Whether you like hiking, rock climbing, barbecuing with friends and family, or meditating in nature, the Niagara Gorge is a great place to visit. If you like a bit of a thrill, try the Wildplay Niagara Zipline and Adventure course or a Whirlpool Jet Boat ride! For the horticulturally inclined, check out the nearby Floral Clock and Botanical Gardens.



Port Colborne

Check out the beautiful sandy beaches in Port Colborne, including Sherkston Wyldewood Beach, Sherkston Elco, and Pleasant Beach. These beaches have all you need for swimming, kayaking, picnicking, and having fun in the sun and sand with friends or family. Close your eyes and imagine yourself saving all the money you would have spent to fly to a far off beach to do the same things.

Niagara Falls

It is easy to forget how many people travel to our region to see this wonder of the world. Play tourist for a day. Check out the Falls in different ways: from street level or a tower, with Journey Behind the Falls, or from below the falls on the White Water Walk. If your budget allows, and you enjoy the misty views, experience the falls from the water with Hornblower boat tour.

Port Dalhousie

Enjoy Lakeside Beach, a frozen treat, a game of Frisbee, and a 5 cent carousel ride. Check out a nearby restaurant for lunch or dinner, and walk across the scenic bridge to visit Jaycee Park for a view of the sunset over Henley Island. Perfect for family or friendly fun, and even a romantic evening.

Niagara On the Lake

Stroll the stores on the main street, visit a fruit stand on the Niagara Parkway, or enjoy a winery tour (or several). If the local architecture doesn't take you back in time enough, visit historic Fort George or the Olde Angel Inn (say hi to Captain Swayze while you're there!). Skip over to Queenston Village to check out the Laura Secord homestead and other historic sites.

Wainfleet

Explore this awesome area on foot, on wheels, or on horseback. With its gorgeous beaches, yummy fruit stands, and thrilling skydiving, Wainfleet has more to offer than you may realize, including several beaches and Wainfleet Wetlands Conservation Area -- a great place for nature buffs and photographers to escape.

Short Hills Provincial Park

Come for a hike or a trail ride in this sprawling park and revel in the beautiful views. Pop over to nearby Morningstar Mill at Decew Falls to see a piece of Niagara's history. Cap off your day with a visit to a nearby winery, such as Henry of Pelham or Hernder Estates, for a tour or a meal.

Niagara Parkway

Hop on a bike and make a day of riding from Fort Erie to Niagara on the Lake. This safe trail is great for families and fitness folks and offers many spots to picnic, rest, and enjoy amazing views of the Niagara River. Feel the wind and sun on your skin and relax in the beauty of our region.

Remember that member I mentioned earlier? He's planning to visit Queenston Heights for a day with his family. Maybe even check out the Gorge. Then he plans to return home to his front porch, kick his feet up, and enjoy feeling rested and rejuvenated. You know what he won't feel? Stress or worry. He'll have enjoyed a vacation close to home, supported his community, and lived within his means. Sounds like a great summer vacation to me!

