



THE LAST GREAT CAMP

Relax like the Vanderbilts and Morgans at Lake Kora, one of the Adirondacks' last Great Camps.

by Grace A. Capobianco photography courtesy of Lake Kora

DEEP IN THE PRISTINE FORESTS of Upstate New York lies Lake Kora, among the last of the legendary Great Camps—rustic compounds created by families such as the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Astors, and Morgans. The sprawling compound sits on 1,000 square miles originally purchased by Timothy Woodruff, Teddy Roosevelt's Lieutenant Governor from 1897 to 1902, and since that original purchase the property has had only four other owners. Up until 2015, the only way visitors could arrive at Lake Kora was through an invitation by the owners, but today the property is open to guests who can reserve the property to experience romantic camp life for themselves.

Of course, not all camping is created equal. The Great Camps were known for their luxurious lodgings and for the extensive amusements taking place on the properties. Private railway cars brought guests from the city, and roughing it included bowling alleys, billiards tables, gondolas imported from Venice, and as early as 1903, telephone service. Lake Kora, which was then called Camp



LAKE LIFE Lake Kora is one of the last Great Camps in the Adirondacks region open to guests. Opposite: The Boathouse, where guests can head out on the lake with a vintage canoe.



Kill Kare, had all the comforts of home, surrounded by the spectacular wilderness that the Romantics celebrated.

The region known as the Adirondacks was first settled in the early 1800s, when Americans began to depart from their grand European roots to prioritize creativity, reflection, and the natural world represented in the new country by vast regions of uncharted territory. By the mid 19th-century, American novelist James Fenimore Cooper catalyzed this relationship between humans and nature in his classic *The Last of the Mohicans*, which depicted humans in the wilderness as both skillful and resilient. American painter Thomas Cole later elaborated on this regional affinity for raw wilderness with a series of romantic paintings that became the foundation of the Hudson River School, a 19th Century American art movement.

Affluent city dwellers who dreamed of catching trout or hunting deer with the characters of Cooper's novels and in Cole's painted wilderness were able to hire guides and purchase large swaths of land to make these dreams a reality. Transportation to the region was difficult, expensive, and often limited by rail to the wealthiest of New Yorkers, but today the romantic beauty of Upper New York State is accessible by car or by Seaplane in just a few short hours.

Privacy and seclusion still abound in the Adirondacks, where the Great Camps — many of which were originally designed by William West Durant in the late 19th century — incorporate a sense of deliberate solitude. The camp buildings, of which Lake Kora is a prime example, were artfully designed to bring the textures, colors, and scents of the region indoors. Lake Kora sits in Adirondack Park, a pristine wilderness larger than all of Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Glacier National Parks combined, making it the



BETTER THAN GLAMPING
The historic buildings on Lake Kora include the stone chapel (opposite), the Island House (top left) and the Gardener's Cottage.

WATER RETREAT The Island House is a retreat within a retreat, surrounded by the blue waters of Lake Kora. In the main lodge (left), rustic public rooms are great for reading, lounging, or playing a game of billiards on the antique table.



TWO IF BY SEA (PLANE)

Lake Kora is accessible by car, but for a truly epic camp adventure, head out of the city via Fly the Whale's seaplane service. We spoke with Timothy Cairo-Devlin, the company's director of commercial flights: "Fly The Whale prides itself on offering the highest level of safety, service, and style in all aspects of our business. We are dedicated to providing a superior product and continuing to Fly The Whale across the New City City skies."

1. How long has Fly the Whale been in service, and how many New Yorkers use private air travel? Founded in 2010, Fly the Whale has become a premier aircraft carrier in the Northeast for private charter service. Operations have expanded to Florida and the Bahamas in the winter months. Private air travel in the City has consistently risen over the past few years, and we are now seeing an even greater demand.

2. How long has Fly the Whale been flying to Lake Kora? Last season we saw a surge of interest in the area, and while we service the Saranac Lake area frequently, this was our first time to Lake Kora. We were able to operate multiple trips per week for the majority of the summer season and into early fall.

3. What should clients know about the flight route, and what will they see on the way to Lake Kora? The journey to Lake Kora is half the fun, as you will see breathtaking mountain and lake views. If you're fortunate enough to travel in the early fall you will see a sea of reds, oranges, and yellows. Prepare to keep your camera ready and your eyes open!

4. Most people have not had the pleasure of experiencing a seaplane. Can you describe the experience? We currently operate seven seaplanes, and it is an experience not to be missed. Whether you are taking off from the water or landing lakeside there is nothing like the rush you will feel with the water spraying along the floats as you glide along the crystalline water. While it is an adventurous experience, the landing and take off from water can be as smooth as landing on an airport runway.

5. Where does Fly the Whale stand on eVTOL (Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing)? As Fly The Whale also operates helicopter service, we are closely watching the progress of eVTOL and are excited to see how it will change the landscape of private travel. We are always looking to expand our charter options for our clients and eVTOL will be an exciting option for everyone involved.

perfect all-encompassing escape from an urban summertime.

Visitors to Lake Kora today can experience the untouched beauty of the lush green forest, crystal clear lakes, and abundant wildlife complimenting the fairytale-like cottages. The luxuriously rustic accommodations are complemented by a private chef and staff, and guest activities include swimming, kayaking, sailing, and fishing in vintage boats. Dine on fresh farm-to-table cuisine and enjoy after-dinner activities such as bowling, squash, antique board games, billiards, and table tennis. Cap off the day in a private spa complete with a sauna and hot tub, or receive a pampering massage from a private masseur.

As evening falls, head over to the bonfire pit at the edge of the lake to reflect on the day while enjoying s'mores or a nightcap from the extensive wine list. The fire pit dates back to the camp's inception and remains

the focal point of nighttime revelry and woody communion. The fire pit is flanked on both sides by lean-tos known as Wickiups — classically utilitarian 3-sided Adirondack structures designed to provide shelter to arriving travelers. Snuggle up in private lodgings at the end of the day with every delight at your fingertips, from stone fireplaces to plush robes, vintage soaking tubs, and even surprise late-night treats by the chef. Drift off to sleep enveloped in peaceful bliss while overlooking the lake's panoramic views.

At Lake Kora, the minimum stay is four nights through Labor Day, and three nights from September 7th through October 31st. The estate can be reserved on an exclusive basis for guests to enjoy the privacy of the entire Great Camp at \$21,980 per night, which includes sixteen bedrooms for up to 24 guests. lakekora.com **DT**