SOUTH BEND Tribune/travel

COASTLINE IS reflected in sparking water in a scene along the shore of one of western Maine's beautiful lakes. Launch areas, such as the one shown here, help you get your boat in the water.

Western Maine's Lake Region offers tranquility

By Karen Feld

MOST PEOPLE think of the rugged north country or the rockbound coast of Maine when planning a vacation in this beautiful New England state. But to the initiated there is another Maine — the Lake Region in the western reaches of the state, midway between the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Atlantic Ocean.

Here one doesn't need designer jeans; any will do. Nor are designer swim suits de rigueur. In fact, any or none is acceptable in the complete privacy of the quiet cabins and country homes which dot the isolated shores of the multitude of small and large lakes and ponds which make this area so special.

Just three hours from Boston by car, the Lake Region offers the tranquility of still lakes rather than white water, the beauty of towering white birch, the aroma of pine without the ruggedness of the North woods, and escape from the social demands of trendy resorts without necessarily carrying a knapsack on your back.

If you've ever been to summer camp and yearn to recapture the experience of years gone by, this is for you. And if you haven't, now is your opportunity to get away from the city to an unpretentious place where you don't hold meetings, talk deals or otherwise mix business with vacation.

The wooded seclusion of the Lake Region is a far cry from the rugged coastal resorts and trendy ocean beach areas such as Old Orchard, Ogunquit and Kennebunkport where Vice President Bush has a home. This rural area, settled 150 years ago, has been virtually untouched by progress. You'll hear loons calling at night and may even spot a moose.

AT ONE TIME people came by train and lake steamer; now visitors can drive from New York in just seven hours or jet directly to Portland via Peoples Express or Delta for a weekend. Then rent a car and drive 30 miles west to the lake region. You're at the Lake Region when you reach Sebago, Maine's second largest of 2,500 lakes, the purity of whose water is attested by its still serving as drinking water reservoir for Portland. The Sebago-Long Lake Chain includes hundreds of lakes and ponds and covers several hundred square miles.

The five key Lake Region towns of Bridgton, Naples, Sebago, Casco and Harrison have a combined population of just over 10,000. Other picturesque towns and villages in the area include Waterford, Sweden, Denmark, South Paris and Norway. Tell a parent in the East where you have vacationed and you undoubtedly will find one whose children attended one of the 42 summer camps in the area. Those who are Peter Pans at heart can rent cottages by the week and live a more sophisticated adult version of summer camp, with the privacy of your own cabin on one of the many crystal clear lakes.

Experience the Lake Region once and you'll surely return — or stay as have novelist Stephen King ("Pet Sematary"), a longtime resident who writes frequently about Bridgton and its landmarks; writer-lyricist Will Holt ("Taking My Turn" and "The Me Nobody Knows"), who lives in North Bridgton; and Edward Singer, Olympic rowing judge, who lives in Bridgton and frequently is seen sculling on Long Lake.

There are no formal hotels but Route 302 which connects the Lake Region to Portland is lined with motels if you haven't planned ahead and booked a cottage or inn. The best of these hotels are the Midas Lodge at Naples, the First and Last Resort in Bridgton, and the Laurel [illegible] and Punkin' Valley Inn in W[illegible] Bridgton.

HOWEVER, THE best way to enjoy a Maine lake vacation is in a rustic lakefront cottage, often with housekeeping services provided. Rentals are available for as little as $200 to $400 a week. Sporting camps are also popular. The typical one has a central dining area and recreational facilities surrounded by individual log cabins or cottages. Visitors can enjoy the privacy of their own cabin, yet share the companionship of other guests for meals and sports. Some of the best of the community-type facilities are at Tarry-A-While on Highland Lake in Bridgton which is known for its

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Western Maine

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Swiss cuisine; Ferringtons on Lake Kezar in Lovell; and Chute Homestead Cottages on Long Lake in Naples.

Or if you prefer, turn back the clock and enjoy a stay in a renovated 18th century stagecoach stop in Waterford, just north of Bridgton on the old stagecoach line to the White Mountains. The entire town of Waterford, which has four historic inns, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One of the region's coziest bed and breakfast inns, the Olde Rowley Inn in North Waterford, charges $36 a night double occupancy. Innkeepers Debra and Michael Lennon and Pamela and Peter Leja prepare some of the finest food in the area, from homemade Irish soda bread to lazy man's lobster pie and walnut bourbon pie for dessert.

Artemus Ward, the country's first national humorist, grew up in a house in the center of Waterford village on the shore of Keoka Lake. His 150-year-old home, Artemus Ward House, is now a popular spot for bed and breakfast or simply for tea and crumpets or English trifle. A one-man show about the popular showman is presented in the barn every Sunday with tea.

THE WATERFORD Inne, a restored farmhouse sits on 10 secluded acres, and offers an antique shop along with bed, breakfast and dinner. The Kedarburn Inc., also in Waterford, has five guest rooms and serves hearty country style breakfasts as well as Sunday brunch and twice weekly outdoor lobster and clambakes.

The Center Lovell Inn in nearby Center Lovell is another 19th century farmhouse overlooking Kezar Lake and the White Mountains. Guests dine on Italian cuisine on a screened porch.

Variety is the key to a Maine lakefront vacation. There's something for everyone, whether you're a sportsman, antique buff, shopper or just want to relax and enjoy the warm days, cool evenings and brilliant sunsets.

This is the kind of region where when vacationing, one wants to keep the outside out, but for what's happening locally, pick up the weekly Bridgton News, which is indispensible reading while in the lake country. It's been published by the Shorey family since 1870.

When not otherwise diverted by the natural beauty surrounding your cottage, you can enjoy a day at the 1,300 acre Sebago Lake State Park with its sandy beach, boating and campsite facilities. Open from May 1 to Oct. 15, it's located between South Casco and Naples, and has long been a popular spot for both overnight campers and day picnickers.

Or plan a day at Pleasant Mountain overlooking Moose Pond in Bridgton. Ride the 4,300-foot chairlift part way up the mountain and then hike to the top. Be sure to bring a basket. You'll want to pick fresh blueberries on a cool morning. You may even be lucky enough to find an amethyst on Pleasant Mountain. Then whiz down the mountain on the dual track Alpine Slide, a summertime thrill when the snow is gone. After the ride, and scenic view, relax at the lodge with a drink or lunch. Bands entertain in the evening throughout the summer at the Loft Lounge at the base of the mountain.

FISH ARE FOUND in abundance — and may be caught — on the inland lakes from early April when the ice melts to late September. Sebago Lake, nestles up to eight towns, encompasses 46 square miles, and reaches depths of 300 feet. It's known as the home of the landlocked salmon. Fishermen troll by boat or cast from shore. Salmon fishing here is good in spring and fall. During the summer, bass, whitefish and togue (lake trout) take over. Long Lake and Brandy Pond are connected to Sebago on the north via the Songo River. Highland Lake, Woods Pond, Crystal Lake, Thomas Pond, Moose Pond, Peabody Pond, Hancock Pond, Panther Pond and Little Sebago are all good for fishing and watersports, as is Lake Kezar to the northwest cradled in the foothills of the White Mountains. The annual Bridgton-on-the-Lakes Association Fishing Derby runs June through Labor Day and offers weekly cash prizes for the biggest fish caught.

The most complete tennis facilities in the area are at Mt. Cranmore in North Conway, N.H., conveniently located to the Lake Region. The club hosts the annual Volvo International every July. Point Sebago in Casco, the Bridgton Highlands Country Club and the Bridgton Academy rent courts on an hourly basis. The academy holds traditional round-robin mixed double competitors every Sunday afternoon followed by a potluck supper.

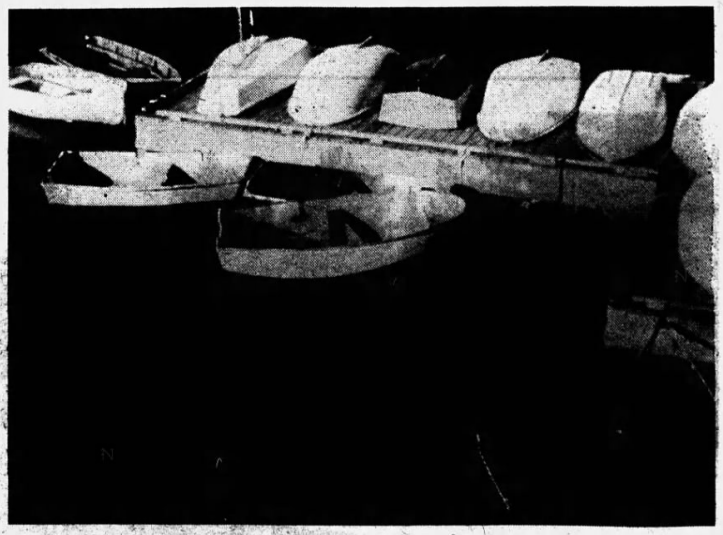
Golfers will find a 6,424 yard-long course at the Bridgton Highlands Country Club. Other courses open to the public include Naples Golf and Country Club, Lake Kezar Country Club in Lovell, Norway Country Club, and the North Conway Country Club offers an 18-hole course and plays to a par of 71. And if you don't object to taking a ferry boat to get to the course, Frye Island Golf and Tennis Club in South Casco features 9 holes.

OR HORSEBACK riding, water skiing, windsurfing, sailing, kayaking, rowing, or canoeing can be enjoyed on any of the lakes. Guided canoe trips on the Saco River near the Maine and New Hampshire border are popular. The Saco is flat and broad, and paddlers can go for a dip or stop on a sandbar for a picnic lunch. Rental canoes as well as guided excursions are available. Several marinas on Sebago Lake and Brandy Pond rent small craft including power boats, skiis, canoes and sailboats.

The Songo Lock, which separates Sebago Lake and Brandy Pond to the north, allows miles of access to waterways. Built in 1830, the lock permitted boats to navigate from Portland harbor to Harrison at the northern end of Long Lake. These canal boats would rise and fall 270 feet during the trip, bringing manufactured goods north in exchange for agricultural, forest and farm products. Now one of only a dozen small locks left in the U.S., its wooden gates are still operated by hand. Today the area is a popular spot for fishermen and boating enthusiastis.

The Songo River Queen II departs from Naples and cruises the 12-mile Long Lake, and the Point Sebago Princess offers daily runs on Sebago Lake. There's even a mailboat which cruises from Naples to Bridgton on Long Lake making deliveries as in "On Golden Pond." And there are 25-mile scenic seaplane rides from Naples for those who want to view the area, including the White Mountains of New Hampshire, by air.

For historic sightseeing, the



BOATS TIED up at a dock form an interesting pattern on one of western Maine's lakes. Maine's Lake Region is ideal for a summer vacation, although not nearly so well known as the state's trendy ocean resorts, the author reports.

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boyhood home of Nathaniel Hawthorne, located on the eastern shore of Sebago in the town of South Casco, is now a museum.

When you tire of outdoor sports and sightseeing, auctions are a favorite summer pasttime, as is antiquing, craft fairs and bazaars. Estate auctions are held several times during the summer. The Bridgton area is a haven for old books and antiques, especially early American folk art, china, and glass and porcelain, crafts, Shaker items and quilts. In Harrison, Sam Pitts Jr. offers some of the best buys in unusual refinished oak furniture and caters to summer cottagers.

LIVE OR STEAMED lobsters and fresh produce can be purchased at roadside. At Adams Bakery on Main Street in Bridgton, large freshly baked breakfast cookies cost only pennies. Restaurants are either country inns or roadside lobster houses. The Lobster Pound and Alberts in Naples offer the best steamed lobsters and the best value in the area. A complete twin lobster (a pound and a half each) dinner costs about $6.95. Ye Olde House in Raymond offers the area's best stuffed lobster and continental cuisine in a homey atmosphere. The Loaf and Ladle in Bridgton boasts homemade breads and muffins along with a full menu including lazy man's lobster pie (It's pre-picked and shell-less).

This is also the land of summer festivals, pontoon boat parades and an annual 22-mile bike race, at Pleasant Mountain in Bridgton.

There's even a summer theater in the region. The Thomas Playhouse in South Casco, located in a remodeled barn, begins its 16th repertory season this summer.

And 20 minutes west at North Conway, N.H., and Mt. Washington Valley, one finds a strip of casual restaurants and pubs as well as discount shopping outlets, including Dansk, Bass, and Frey Boots. No trip is complete without a visit to the L.L. Bean store in Freeport, less than an hour's drive from the Lake Region. Open 24 hours, it has everything for the sportsman. Route 114 from the Lake Region, east around Sebago, dead ends at the new Maine Mall, the largest shopping center in New England.

Although the season in the Lake Region begins when the ice melts in May and continues until Labor Day, if you miss the summer, don't overlook the fall. Plan a trip in early October in time for the changing foliage and the famous Freyburg Fair.

Five log cabins are on annual Brown County tour

SOMETHING TO please every log cabin lover is the goal of the 11th annual Brown County Log Cabin Tour, planned in the scenic Southern Indiana county Saturday and Sunday, May 19 and 20.

The tour will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day and includes five cabins along a 26-mile drive through the hills and back roads of Brown County. Tickets are $6 per adult and $3 for children under 12 and may be obtained at the Chamber of Commerce, one block south of the courthouse on Ind. 135.

Among the buildings on the tour are:

A cabin constructed of old logs at the edge of Nashville with a passive solar and geothermal heating system.

A small, charming cabin of old logs, built by the current owner, with a lean-to shed roof addition with shake shingles.

A "salt box" design cabin of newly-cut logs squared with a power saw and notched with a chain saw, housing a collection of antiques.

A cabin with several additions decorated with some Oriental touches.

A rustic log Roman Catholic chapel known for restful simplicity.

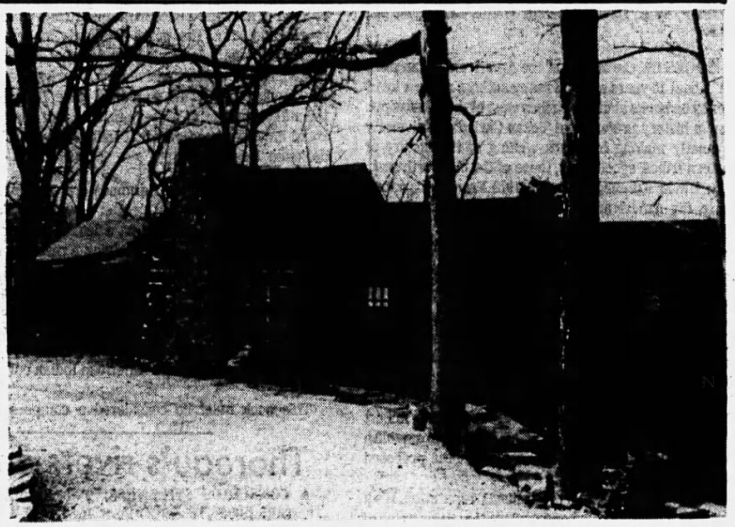
Proceeds of the tour, sponsored by Psi Iota Xi, are used for college scholarships, speech and hearing, art and music projects and in general helping to enrich the life of the community.

There are currently more than 500 log cabins and buildings in Brown County, some dating back to the early settlers who hewed building materials from the virgin forest. Logs most readily available were poplar, oak and beech.

Advance tickets can be ordered by mail by sending a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope, with a check or money order, to Psi Iota Xi, P.O. Box 39, Nashville, Ind. 47448.

AN IMPRESSIVE line-up of professional talent awaits audiences attending the premiere season of the Ann Arbor Summer Festival.

The three-week-long event includes 35 performances in mime, dance, theater and the humanities. The performers include such distinguished entertainers as Marcel Marceau, Claire Bloom, the Detroit Symphony and the American Repertory Theater. Mail orders for tickets will be accepted through May 31.



THE BAER CABIN, one of the log buildings on Brown County's annual tour May 19 and 20, is believed to have been reconstructed about 40 years ago. It looks out on Grandma Barnes Road, several miles away. The cabin is furnished in antiques and Oriental and Indian "objets d'art."

Travel tips

By Frederick Karst

At the same time as the festival there will be several exhibitions, films and more casual entertainment, along with special activities for University of Michigan alumni.

Further information about the festival may be obtained by writing to Ann Arbor Summer Festival Inc., P.O. Box 4070, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. Maps and details about lodging, dining and shopping are available from the Ann Arbor Conference and Visitors Bureau, 207 E. Washington, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104.

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