

Monday July 28, 2014

[The Buffalo News.com \(/\)](#)

Life & Arts



To truly enjoy a trip to the Rochester area, it takes two villages

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SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Updated: July 23, 2014, 02:00 PM Published: July 27, 2014, 12:01 AM

Just east of the city of Rochester, along the historic Erie Canal, are the two picturesque villages of Fairport and Pittsford, which offer visitors a variety of shops and restaurants to enjoy. With just a few more weeks of summer to go, these two villages, which are about a 90-minute drive from Buffalo, are the perfect place to take a day trip or even an overnight getaway. While they have the canal in common, each has its own distinct vibe.

Fairport

Legend has it that the village got its name from a traveler who stopped at a local tavern shortly after the canal first opened in 1825. As he took his rest and refreshments, he was heard to comment, “This is truly a fair port!” When the village was incorporated in 1867, that name was given to the village officially.

One of Fairport’s claims to fame is its lift bridge over the Erie Canal, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. This bridge is the only lift bridge in the world built on a bias. The south end is higher than the north end and it is built in a way that no two angles in the bridge are the same. It has been featured in Ripley’s Believe It or Not 16 times.

One of the best spots in town to watch the lift bridge in operation is from the deck of the Towpath Café, where I enjoyed lunch on a recent trip to Fairport with my daughter and youngest son. Along with the great view, the food is really good too. (www.towpathcafe.com (<http://www.towpathcafe.com>)). Afterward, you can enjoy some ice cream at the Ice Cream Factory of Fairport, which is located right next to the deck.

There are several other restaurants in the village, including the Fairport Village Inn (www.thefvi.com (<http://www.thefvi.com>)), which dates to the 1880s; Riki's Family Restaurant (www.rikisfamilyrestaurant.com (<http://www.rikisfamilyrestaurant.com>)), a large family-friendly restaurant; and Joey B's (www.joeybsrestaurant.com (<http://www.joeybsrestaurant.com>)), which offers casual fine dining overlooking the canal. If you're looking for a refreshing sweet treat, enjoy some gelato at the Royal Café. (www.royalcafegelato.com (<http://www.royalcafegelato.com>)) I also noticed the fairly new Fairport Brewing Co. when I arrived in town, which has a taproom serving its hand-crafted brews. (www.fairportbrewing.com (<http://www.fairportbrewing.com>)).

One can experience traveling on the canal by taking a cruise on the Colonial Belle, the largest tour boat operating on the Erie Canal. It offers sightseeing cruises, lunch and dinner cruises and private charters. (www.colonialbelle.com (<http://www.colonialbelle.com>)). If you really want to get up close and personal to the canal, you can rent a canoe, kayak or SUP (stand-up paddleboard) from the Erie Canal Boat Co. (www.eriecanalboatcompany.com (<http://www.eriecanalboatcompany.com>)).

If you like to shop, you'll love strolling along Fairport's Main Street. One of my favorite shops is Main Street Mercantile, which carries antiques, gift items, jewelry, Erie Canal and Fairport themed items, country décor and more. A short walk down the street, Canalside Gifts has a nice selection of jewelry and accessories. Lombardi's Gourmet specializes in Italian gourmet imports such as olive oils and cheeses, along with specialty cooking and baking items, pottery and china.

Since there is so much to see and do in Fairport, you may want to stay the night. The Lodge at Woodcliff, which is a few miles outside the village, features a complete fitness center, pool and nine-hole golf course (www.woodcliffhotelspa.com (<http://www.woodcliffhotelspa.com>)).

Upcoming events in Fairport include the Fairport Music and Food Festival Aug. 22-23. Featured will be three stages of live music, children's activities and great food, with proceeds to benefit the Golisano Children's Hospital, part of Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital (www.fairportmusicfest.com (<http://www.fairportmusicfest.com>)).

Pittsford

When the Erie Canal opened in 1825, Pittsford became a busy shipping port. In the late 1880s many wealthy Rochester families built country estates in this area; today many of those historic homes are well preserved, and Pittsford is considered an upscale residential community.

Of particular interest in Pittsford are the many shops that are close to the canal. Northfield Commons, a quaint collection of about two dozen shops is located in a former lumberyard. Some of these shops include Bella Amore, which has gifts and accessories crafted by local artisans, as well as a nice selection of Polish pottery. Harmony in Wood has wooden giftware created by American and Canadian artisans, while Creations Gifts has reasonably priced toys, jewelry, candy and artwork.

Take a short walk along the canal to Schoen Place, where there are more shops to browse. My kids especially liked the Game Gamut, which specializes in board games. Another shop, Mostly Clay, has a nice selection of gift items, jewelry and Polish pottery, along with pet items.

Restaurants in Schoen Place include the Village Coal Tower, a family friendly restaurant located in a former coal tower; Simply Crepes; and Aladdin's Natural Eatery, a restaurant overlooking the canal that has Mediterranean foods on the menu.

You can even take a cruise along the canal on the Sam Patch, which offers daily cruises from mid-May to mid-October (www.sampatch.org (<http://www.sampatch.org>)).

There are a couple of overnight accommodations within walking distance of village shops and restaurants. The Canal Lamp Inn Bed & Breakfast (www.canallampinn.com (<http://www.canallampinn.com>)) is located in the oldest home in Pittsford. Decorated with antiques and reproduction, the inn has the original flooring and woodwork. The nearby Renaissance Del Monte Lodge is the area's only luxury hotel.