

Life after Labor Day

Lake George Tourism season expected to last into month of October

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LAKE GEORGE - Monday might have marked the unofficial end to summer, but business owners in Lake George say they're hoping to go strong through Columbus Day -- or later.

Parasailers soared above the lake; "no vacancy" signs hung in front of hotels; sidewalks and Canada Street were equally clogged. Labor Day brought, as predicted, many tourists.

But the village is striving more and more for year-round visitors, and in doing so, is stretching the busy season, said Luisa Craige-Sherman, executive director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"The more you have, the better chance you have of capturing a visitor to drive three to five hours to get here," she said. "In our area, because we have the benefit of fall foliage, I think our September into our October is going to be very strong for us."

The September events are many, she said. Starting this weekend, the Adirondack National Car Show, with fireworks three nights in a row, will attract vacationers, she said. The Adirondack VetteFest, the same weekend, is also expected to bring car enthusiasts to the area.

Adirondack Winery, a store on Canada Street that sells wine made on the premises, has struggled to keep up with demand during its first year. Owners Sasha and Michael Pardy offer customers wine tastings and cheese and chocolate pairings, as well as bottled wine made from purchased juice. The new business had nature on its side, even when soggy weather threatened to slow other businesses this summer.

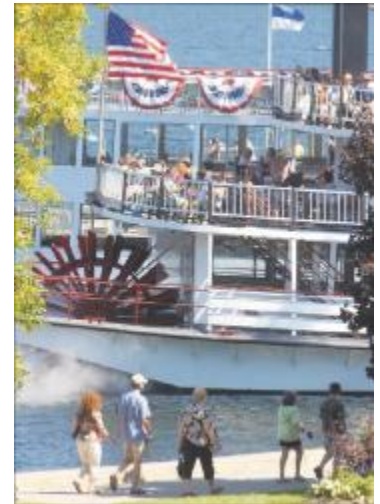
"For us, (rainy weather) means people aren't at the beach, and they're not out doing adventure sports," said Sasha Pardy.

The winery is planning to stay open all winter, though with reduced hours. Sherman said there is a collective effort in Lake George to try to keep some businesses and hotels open during winter months to accommodate winter tourists and business travelers.

"With more and more lodging rooms being available year-round, I think that's where we're seeing that shift," Sherman said.

Pirate's Cove, a miniature golf course with locations in Lake George and Queensbury, will remain open through October, with limited hours in Lake George.

"We do stay open until the end of October, but really, this is our winding down time," said Ellen Cabana, assistant manager. "July and August is really busy up here, and we do a great business for the summer months, but right after about 3 p.m. today, it slows right down."



Adirondack Winery Featured in Post Star Article, "Life After Labor Day".....Sept. 2, 2008.....pg.2

A Westchester County family weaved in and out of the mini-golf holes at Pirate's Cove on Monday afternoon. Frank and Rosemary Drenga, of Yorktown, said they bring their daughters Deanna, 12, and Julia, 8, five or six times each year.

Sure, Rosemary said, they are hit with the gas prices, especially driving trucks. But it didn't slow their plans to spend the weekend in Lake George.

"We complain about it, but we're not letting it stop our family fun," she said.

Patricia Dow, office manager of the Lake George Steamboat Co., said cruise schedules mimic a bell curve -- Memorial Day through Labor Day is busiest, with flagging numbers until Oct. 26, when the last cruise sets out on the lake.

October can be a desirable time for the lake cruises, she said.

"Often, that's really a beautiful time here in terms of fall foliage," Dow said. "People do like to be out on the lake at that period of time during the day, so it's just an effort to extend the season in this area."

Stretching the summer season, Lake George Restaurant Week runs Sept. 8-13, and the Lake George Jazz Weekend will run the weekend of Sept. 13-14 and is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. The Lake George Triathlon, boasting more than 600 athletes already this year, will take place on Sept. 14.

The following weekend, starting Sept. 19, the Adirondack Balloon Festival will begin.

"Those first three weekends in particular have events that will usually start bringing people," Sherman said.

Sherman did not have any statistics to indicate the strength of the tourism industry this year, saying it was too early to tell whether weather and the economy had any impact on Lake George businesses.

Anecdotally, some businesses said they were fairing well, while others were struggling, she said. Sherman said she expects to conduct a survey in mid-October.

"I think it's really too early for people to predict that. What I have heard is a varying range," Sherman said.

The Drengas said they've done most things Lake George offers but still enjoy them, and they plan to return.

They'll be going to Fright Fest at Six Flags Great Escape next month.