

The Native American-given name Winnepesaukee means “beautiful water in a high place.” No modern-day author could describe what has become the summer heart of New England any better. It’s also big — the sixth-largest lake in the United States — and when you consider how easy it is to trailer here you understand why it’s the

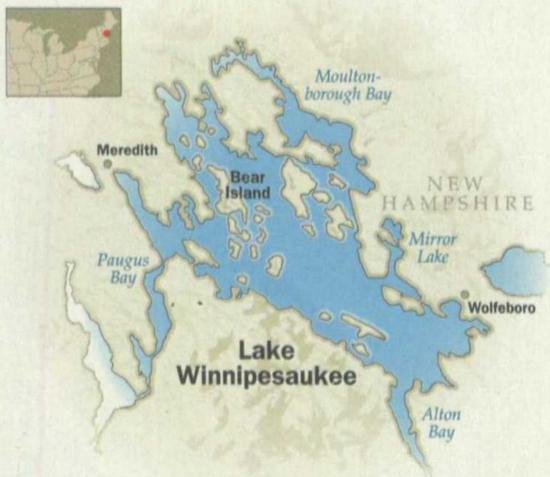
most popular inland boating destination in the northeast.

Boaters have the mode to escape the area’s popular on-land tourist attractions, and explore the lake’s 72 square miles and maze of 244 islands.

Trailing to Lake Winnepesaukee is as scenic as it is stress-free, especially in late spring when new leaves turn the

hillsides a pale green, or in the fall when they’re blazing in orange and crimson. Stunning vistas of the Ossipee, Belknap and Squam mountain ranges complement the lake’s 283 miles of wooded shoreline. Nearly 250 islands give the lake further visual identity, while guaranteeing boaters calm water somewhere.

A nav chart is a must on the sprawling “Big Lake,” partly to find the shallow spots outside the coves and island perimeters, and partly to find the liveliest boat-up scenes. The lake is loaded with things to do. Paugus Bay has a few establishments that boaters favor for tying up at the dock. Back Bay also has a couple dockside restaurants, and hosts some of the area’s best water-ski tournaments. But boaters who prefer to stay clear of dry land can beach up on the sandbars near Sleepers Island or Moultonboro Neck in the northwest corner of the lake. Then there’s Sally’s Gut — a narrow waterway between two islands, which leads



HOME PORT

Waterfront properties range from upper \$700s to the millions. Check out roukebuilders.com for a palatial five-bed, four-and-a-half-bath home offered at \$4.2 million. We also found a custom four-bed, four-bath home atop Spindle Point on Eagle Mountain in Meredith for \$995,000 at rocherealty.com, and an expanded three-bedroom, two-bath country waterfront home in Alton for \$799,900.

to Stonedam Island. This is a wildlife preserve only accessible by boat.

The clarity of the lake and the natural shoreline with minimal runoff make it worthwhile to bring snorkeling gear. An area called Forty Islands is well known in these parts. Another hot spot is the Witches (east of Governors Island), but navigation is a chore due to rocks just below the surface. Half the stories you hear of boaters getting hung up have

the Witches as a dateline. The mantra throughout the lake is this: Follow the markers. Sometimes they come in the form of milk jugs put out by boaters and property owners who know from experience what happens when a hidden rock meets a skeg. That's why we say there are two keys to enjoying Winnepesaukee: 1) giving yourself enough time to explore, and 2) being smart while you soak it in. — Leigh Duncan

Weirs Beach is a favorite target for boaters looking for off-water action like waterslides, restaurants and a public beach.

QUICK PASS

FIRST IMPRESSION: You can see by the breadth of the water and variety of scenery why northeastern boaters make this their number-one vacation destination.

TRIVIA: Lake Winnepesaukee is the location for the 1991 Bill Murray comedy *What About Bob?* Squam Lake on the north side of the lake was the setting for the 1981 film *On Golden Pond*.

SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO DO: Take a train ride to the Castle in the Clouds, a 5,200-acre palace built in 1913 and set atop a mountain overlooking the lake (castleinthecLOUDS.org).

TRAILERING HERE: It's scenic and simple via I-93.

LAUNCH ADVICE: Ames Farm is recommended for open space to maneuver a rig. For a detailed list, check out bizer.com or lakesregion.org.

LOCAL FLAVOR: Try the turkey sampler and butternut squash ravioli at Hart's Turkey Farm Restaurant in Meredith.

BEDDING DOWN: The Manor on Golden Pond in Meredith offers summer rates of \$235 to \$450 for a double room (manorongoldenpond.com). Cottages and farmhouses are available for \$75 to \$110 though Anchorage at the Lake in Tilton (anchorageatthelake.com).

DISTANCE FROM BOSTON: 100 miles

BEST CONTACT: laconia-weirs.org, info@laconia-weirs.org, or 603-524-5531.

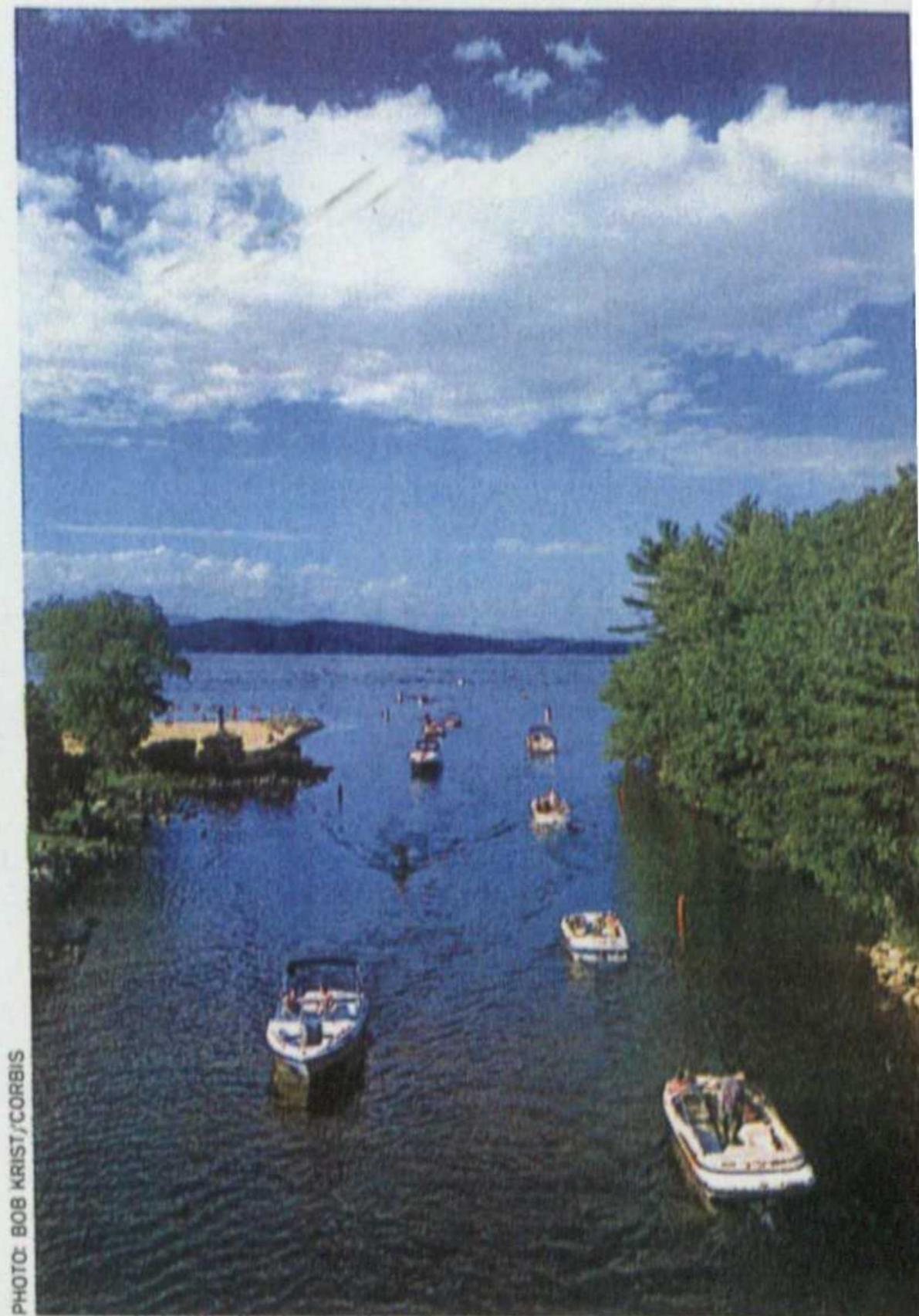


PHOTO: BOB KRIST/CORBIS