

Find family fun on Interstate 93

By Barbara Rogers
 and Lura Seavey
 GATEHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

SALEM, N.H. – Interstate 93 draws a line through the center of New Hampshire. The highway crosses into the state near Lawrence and follows the Merrimack River through Manchester and Concord before passing the Lakes Region and traveling through the scenic heart of the White Mountains.

Even if you're using I-93 as a fast route to a destination you've already chosen, stop to enjoy family attractions and experiences, just minutes from the highway.

Begin at Exit 2 in Salem, at Canobie Lake Park, a century-old amusement park where dozens of rides are designed for all ages and thrill levels (603-893-3506, www.canobie.com).

Take Exit 9 in Manchester to watch salmon climb the fish ladder at the Amoskeag Fishways Visitor Center (603-626-3474, www.amoskeagfishways.org). In the converted mills along the

Merrimack, kids can explore science at the hands-on SEE Science Center (603-669-0400, www.see-sciencecenter.org).

Stray off at Exit 11 to Bear Brook State Park, where the low-key Museum of Family Camping and Snowmobile Museum join picnic sites and hiking trails as the large park's attractions (603-485-9869, www.nh-stateparks.com). In Concord, Exit 15-E leads to the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium, with astronomy shows in the 40-foot domed theater (603-271-7827, www.starhop.com).

A turn west at Exit 20 leads to downtown Tilton, and the impressive Tilton Arch, a 55-foot granite replica of the Arch of Titus in Rome. To the east, Weirs Beach, on Lake Winnepesaukee, takes on a lively resort atmosphere in summer, with a boardwalk, arcades, shops and family-friendly entertainment.

For a different lake experience, choose Exit 24 to Holderness, on peaceful Squam Lake, where the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center offers kid-pleasing exhibits of native wildlife (603-968-7194, www.nhnature.org).

Exit 32 offers a number of diversions for kids including Whales Tale Water Park (603-745-8810, www.whalestalewaterpark.net) and Hobo Railroad, a train ride along the river with a clown for a conductor and lunches packed in hobo bandanas (603-745-2135, www.hoborr.com). Clark's Trading Post, a charming park, has another train ride, an ice cream parlor and a show featuring bears that seem to be having as much fun as the kids watching them (603-745-8913, www.clarkstradingpost.com).

Littleton's classic Main Street lies off Exit 42. The top place the kids will want to visit is Chutters - believed to have the longest candy counter in the world.

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PHOTO BY STILLMAN ROGERS

Trained bears entertain at Clark's Trading Post.

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