

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



GIMLI FILM FESTIVAL

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GIMLI, Manitoba — In late July, long after the traditional ice fishing huts have been towed back to shore, Gimli Beach is overrun with hundreds of eager filmgoers.

Gimli (pop. 2,500), located 56 miles north of Winnipeg, sits within a couple hours drive of western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota.

This corner of Manitoba's Interlake, originally called New Iceland, dates back to pioneering Icelandic immigrants who settled in 1875 on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg.

Gimli first served as an Icelandic fishing village. In 1905, the railway reached Gimli and opened up the region to more commerce and summer cottagers from nearby Winnipeg.

Yet the traditional ways continue since local Icelandic fishermen still harvest goldeye and walleye from the expansive Lake Winnipeg; in winter, these hardy Norse ice fishers use Bombardier 1930s-era tracked vehicles known as "Wooden Dinosaurs."

The early pioneers made their living as fishermen and farmers. The settlers cleared land for crops and pulled goldeye and walleye (known as pickerel locally) from Lake Winnipeg. This massive body of water is known as the inland sea: 9,465 square miles in size with its southern tip

34 miles north of Winnipeg.

The original Icelanders placed a premium on literacy and culture. Their daily lives included time set aside for reading, telling Bible stories, and recounting Icelandic sagas. The tiny colony is now the second largest community of Icelandic people outside of Iceland.

Since the roots of storytelling run deep in this lake community, it's no surprise that the 2015 Gimli Film Festival attracted more than 10,000 visitors. It's now the largest film festival of its kind in rural Canada.

For five-consecutive nights in late July, a giant screen perched on scaffolding protrudes from Lake Winnipeg like the white mainsail of a ship. When the sun sinks into the western horizon, the projector illuminates the screen and the assembled movie watchers settle in on blankets for two hours of free summer entertainment.

Many of the free films screened at Gimli Beach are popcorn-munchers, like "Jaws," the kind of accessible, escapist summer blockbusters that draw a big crowd. The indoor venues, like the Gimli Theatre, offer more cerebral fare. It screens Canadian feature films, circumpolar-themed films, and award-winning documentaries.

The film festival had its origins in the community's annual Icelandic Festival, Islendin-gadagurin, which was established in Gimli 127 years ago to celebrate Icelandic heritage and

culture. "In 2000, we screened films on the beach made by Icelandic directors. It was our first time erecting a screen in the water, which was a learning curve," recalls festival founder Janis G. Johnson.

A few years ago, the organizers decided to break off from the Icelandic Festival and secure their own weekend dates in late July. The concept has since expanded beyond Icelandic films to encompass the Scandinavian countries, the Russian Federation, the Baltic States, Ukraine, the United States, and Canada.

"The Festival's mandate is to screen films with a northern theme. We choose the circumpolar theme since we're a northern community," says Johnson. When she's not volunteering for the film festival, Johnson is a senator in the Senate of Canada in Ottawa.

Norma Bailey, a fellow volunteer and Gimli-born film director, sits on the festival's programming committee. Her most memorable screening was the 2001 Norwegian documentary "Cool & Crazy on the Road." Director Knut Erik Jensen follows the Berlevåg men's choir as members embarked on an American tour just three weeks after 9/11.

The singers, who are all fishermen, hail from a harsh and isolated community in the northernmost tip of Norway. "I was so moved by this documentary. It was uplifting to watch as these men sing so beautifully for the bereaved people

of New York," says Bailey.

For the last 12 summers, Winnipeg-based senior executive Michelle Aitkenhead and her family have been devoted film fest-goers. In a recent interview, she recalled the excitement of "marking your territory on the beach before the sun sets and the movie begins by spreading blankets on the sand, or digging your pit." A typical outdoor movie night for the family involves a race for ice cream cones from nearby Country Boy before the opening credits roll.

One summer evening, "The Snow Walker" completely captivated the family because of the synchronicity between the movie and beach setting. " 'The Snow Walker' was about a bush pilot flying a young Inuit woman out of her isolated northern community to a hospital in the south. The plane crashes into a lake, and the rest of the movie is how they struggle to survive," says Aitkenhead.

"That night, the waves were crashing against the screen in Lake Winnipeg ahead of us, the stars filled the clear sky, and I swear you could feel frost in the air as the temperature dropped, as if on cue!" Aitkenhead recalls.

The 2016 Gimli Film Festival runs July 20-24. Visit gimlifilm.com for screening times, prices, and programming information.

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HERE

RACE AND THEN RELAX IN VERMONT

Push hard during a 5K road race in the Green Mountains then kick back and enjoy some of Vermont's top brews. The Craft Brew Race takes place at the Stoweflake Mountain Resort & Spa on May 21, when you can run the timed 5K route and afterward take part in a craft beer festival, featuring beer and cider from Harpoon, von Trapp, Magic Hat, Switchback, and more. The run begins at noon, and the festival takes place from 12:30 to 4 p.m., with food trucks, about three dozen drink vendors, and live music. Don't feel like running? Purchase a festival-only ticket. Designated-driver tickets are also available, or stay at the resort (save 15 percent off room rates for May 20-22 when you say the magic word: "crafty"). Rates start at \$165.75. Tickets: \$15 (designated driver) to \$55 (for race and brew fest). Each festival attendee receives a free pint glass. 401-856-9197, www.craftbrewraces.com/stowe

WELCOME SPRING AT WILDFLOWER EVENT

See 21 species of trilliums — the most extensive collection of its kind in New England — at

Framingham's Garden in the Woods May 9-15. Trillium Week includes lectures and workshops on trillium propagation and care, garden tours, family events, and a chance to buy trilliums from New England's oldest native plant botanical garden (only available this week). Wander around the 45 acres of gardens and nature trails, where you will see hundreds of spring ephemerals and trilliums in bloom (try to spot



DAN JAFFE

the three trillium species native to New England). The week-long event includes a talk by William Cullina, director of horticulture at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, workshops led by the garden's propagator Dan Jaffe, and trillium-themed stories and crafts for kids. Admission: \$6-\$12; kids under 3 free. 508-877-7630, www.newenglandwild.org

THERE

LAST CHANCE TO SEE TITANIC ARTIFACTS

See seven fragile artifacts recovered from the Titanic before they retire from public display this summer. The Luxor Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas has just added these precious objects, which include textiles, personal goods, and paper documents, to its permanent exhibit, "Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition." You will see a men's leather shoe fragment, a pair of socks, a blank page from a waiter's order pad, and a pair of men's cotton pajamas, among other items. View these objects in a special conservation case until they get put into long-term monitored conservation July 18. Once stored, the objects will be available to historians, archeologists, and other quali-



fied researchers. Exhibit hours: 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Admission: \$24 ages 4-10 to \$32 adults. 702-262-4400, www.titanictheexhibition.com

FLORIDA RITZ-CARLTON LAUNCHES KIDS' PROGRAM

Kids can meet baby alligators and play in the Swamp, as it's called, thanks to a new interactive experience at the Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes that teaches children about Florida's rich biodiversity and history. The new Ritz-Kids program includes a re-created frontier farmhouse, a garden where kids can learn about edible seeds, and a play area that has a carpet made from recycled fishing nets and a pattern that mimics a bird's-eye view of the Everglades. The Swamp, incidentally, is home to a giant cypress tree and all sorts of harmless critters. The Ritz property is part of the 500-acre Grande Lakes Orlando resort, which also includes a JW Marriott ho-

tel, a Ritz-Carlton spa, and an 18-hole golf course. Starting rates: \$239 Ritz, \$199 JW Marriott. 407-206-2400, www.grandelakes.com

EVERYWHERE

CAPTURE THE WORLD OF DRIVING

Swann's new Navigator HD Dash Camera can't protect you from crazy drivers, but it can capture whatever happens in front of you — and prove when you're not at fault — whether you're road tripping closer to home or driving a rental car on the other side of the world. The 140-degree camera captures HD 1080p video, still shots, and audio, and can even zero in on license plates. It has a built-in GPS that records time and location information with your footage, and motion detection video recording, meaning it starts recording when you turn on the car and begin moving. It also has G sensor accident detection, which detects sudden acceleration and collisions. The tiny camera suction onto the windscreen, perfectly tucking in behind the rearview mirror,

and plugs into your 12-volt car charger. It measures 2.09 by 2.32 inches, and has a 2-inch color LCD screen. \$149.99. 562-777-2551, www.swann.com

BIG STORAGE IN A TINY, DURABLE DEVICE

Samsung's new rugged and compact Portable SSD T3 device measures about the size of a pack of Extra gum, yet can store up to 2TB of data. Its shock-absorbent aluminum casing protects the solid state drive in case of falls of up to 6 feet, or while getting battered around in your travel bag. The device has a USB 3.1 Type C port, meaning its cord is compatible with many new Android devices and the latest MacBook. Blazing fast speeds — up to 450 megabytes per second — enable you to transfer movies, music, photos, and other data quickly, as long as the drive is connected to a USB 3.0 port (it is backward compatible, however). The drive also comes with AES 256-bit encryption, which is easy to set up and works with Windows, Apple, and Android devices. Currently \$99.99 (250MB) to \$779.99 (2TB) through Samsung.com. 800-726-7864

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