

Revisiting the Falls

When was the last time you visited Niagara Falls? As a kid on vacation, squished between your brother and sister in the backseat of the family car? As a newlywed snapping honeymoon pictures in front of one of nature's most gorgeous backdrops? Or – can it be true – you've never visited? Whatever the case, it's time to go back.

I recently revisited the Falls with my family and was reminded once again why millions of tourists from around the world come to marvel at the Falls each year. Straddling the international border between the United States and Canada (and technically a collection of three falls – American Falls, Bridal Veil Falls and Canadian/Horseshoe Falls), Niagara Falls is the second largest falls in the world. (The first is Victoria Falls in southern Africa.) So impressed were New Yorkers by the Falls that in 1885 they made them the first state park in the United States. Today the New York state park system provides a wonderful sightseeing experience only matched by the fine job

done by the Canadians.

From the U.S.

Niagara Falls from the U.S. provides a number of excellent

activities. For the best experience, first head to the Observation Tower. From there, a long elevator takes you to the shore of the river where you and your family can board a Maid of the Mist tour boat. These exciting tours consist of a twenty-minute sightseeing cruise past all three cascades. If you opt for the adventure of standing on the deck of your boat, you'll be glad for your tour-issued blue rain poncho to protect you from a guaranteed soaking.

After your cruise, I recommend spending time taking in some of the other attractions including Goat Island and the

Cave of the Winds. Open May through October (Goat Island itself is open year-round), the Cave of the Winds tour takes you to the base of the American Falls via a system of

stairs and decks that is dismantled and reassembled each year. (If you plan to visit the Falls some time after the summer season, you can still take advantage of an abbreviated tour that stops 150 feet above the base.)



He's been around the globe – several times – yet Expert Traveler, Gig Gwin, still rates Niagara Falls as one of his favorite natural wonders of the world.



From Canada

Activities on the Canadian side are no less abundant. In addition to enjoying the best panoramic view of the Falls, when you cross the border into Ontario you can be entertained with everything from a monster movie museum to an exciting casino. I recommend an overnight stay at the beautiful Niagara Falls Marriott Fallsview. (Tip: Visit the



hotel's Web site for special package deals.) After a good night's sleep, you'll be ready to spend the day touring one of the cutest little

towns I've ever seen: quaint Niagara-on-the-Lake. Plenty of shops and fine restaurants await those looking to relax. For more adventurous spirits, I suggest a jet boat tour. These wild tours race down the Niagara River through rapids, past huge hydroelectric plants ultimately arriving at the legendary Whirlpool. Be sure to take an extra change of clothes because you're going to get drenched!

Connoisseurs – or just those that appreciate a good glass of wine – might choose to visit one or more of the area's several vineyards. (Tip: Don't pass up the local "ice wine" made from grapes harvested only during the winter months and served as an aperitif.) Golfers should take time to play a round or two at the historic Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

All in all, it is hard to beat a Niagara adventure. Both first-time visitors and those returning will enjoy the unique and awe-inspiring experience of being caught up by the Falls' "mystique of the mist."

– Gig ▶

