

ADIRONDACK LIFE

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Glamping

Roughing it in style at Camp Orenda



Photograph courtesy of Camp Orenda

Ever wanted to step into a Gilded-Age camping photograph? You know the scene: fancy folks reclining on the porch of an Adirondack platform tent, servants waiting off-frame to see to their every comfort.

You don't have to be a Vanderbilt to enjoy a little backwoods pampering. Upscale camping, or glamping, is having a pop-culture renaissance. And what's not to love? It's nature without the heavy lifting, sleeping under the stars without bruising your bottom on rocks and roots. Add a side of gourmet grub and you've

got Camp Orenda, in Johnsbury.

The restful resort offers four woodstove-warmed tents scattered over three acres on the banks of Mill Creek. The largest den can sleep a family of four; a more romantic creekside bower houses a queen-size bed piled with throws.

The delight of this place is in the details: the smell of woodsmoke as you arrive, the crosscut timber that marks the path from your car, the handmade bridges over the bouldered brook. Each canvas tent is packed with touches both homey and handy, from candles and flowers to headlamps and Camelbaks. In the common area there's a heated plain-air shower and Adirondack chairs circling a fireplace, plus a metal-roofed outdoor kitchen with a hemlock-slab island and tree-stump stools.

It's all been a labor of love for 35-year-old backcountry guide David Webb, who crafted every rustic detail himself. The land—more than 40 acres in all—has been in Webb's family for a half-century; he and his brother, composer Chris Webb, spent childhood vacations along this creek, which once hosted traplines and mills. When Chris died of cancer in 2008, David decided he wanted to share their favorite spot with others.

Within the next couple of years he quit his construction-management job in New York City and began carving this cozy niche in the woods; Orenda opened July 2011. Webb is almost always a holler from his guests, and three employees help him keep up with cooking, guiding and maintenance.

Though visitors come to Orenda with varying degrees of wilderness experience, many are a bit green. Webb, a former National Outdoor Leadership School educator, shows newbies the basics of Leave No Trace, plus how to start a fire or maneuver a canoe. But his favorite clients are the real babes in the woods—the kids who come to tramp along the trails and catch minnows in the stream. "I want to share with them what I experienced growing up," he says.

There are two miles of paths around the property—one leads to an old maple stand and syrup works—for families to roam while learning about local history, wildlife and plants. Tots to teens can pick berries, go geocaching, shoot archery or learn the constellations.

Webb has a "choose your own adventure" policy: he customizes stays for each visitor, from Camping 101 to hard-core backcountry survival, from canoeing on the calm waters of Garnet Lake to spelunking in nearby caves. "No two trips are ever the same," he says.

One popular excursion is 3,254-foot Crane Mountain, just down the road from Orenda. It's a moderate hour-and-a-half climb with a pretty pond near the summit—perfect for a post-hike swim.

After the day's exertions, and maybe a quick nap to recharge, guests can watch as Webb preps dinner. A typical feast includes blue cheese-stuffed burgers with applewood-smoked bacon, a Southwestern potato salad and cremini mushroom caps piled high with Nettle Meadow goat cheese from Thurman—all cooked over the fire. Every evening wraps up with do-it-yourself s'mores.

Webb is a self-taught chef, though he did work over an open flame at Radegast Hall, in New York City, for a summer. His ingredients are as local as possible, including veggies and herbs from the camp's kitchen garden and maple syrup from the next tree over.

It's as delicious as it sounds, especially served alfresco with a congenial group of fellow campers. But for Webb that's almost beside the point. "It's not just about wining and dining," he says. "It's about this place—the Adirondacks ... how special it is."

A stay at the resort starts at \$135 per night per adult. There is an extra fee for some guided excursions, such as rafting or caving. For more information call (347) 287-7359 or visit www.camporenda.com.