

ADIRONDACK LIFE

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LAKE KORA

INSIDE ONE OF THE GREATEST GREAT CAMPS

BY ANNIE STOLTIE



GREAT CAMPS ARE, WELL, GREAT BECAUSE THEY TAKE the Adirondack camp to the next level. They're multi-structure feats of woodsy architecture, usually on water and in deep woods. They seem to grow from their foundations, like Birch Island's "study," whose log columns match the surrounding forest at Upper St. Regis Lake, or Camp Uncas's graceful boathouse, a form that emerges from the depths of Lake Mohegan.

While more than 50 Great Camps were built in the Adirondacks between the mid-1870s to late 1930s, when I picture the ultimate in that era's rustic design, I think of the Tree House at Kamp Kill Kare, in Raquette Lake. Inside, the ceiling soars, a tree stretches its limbs from the bed's headboard, and an imposing cobblestone fireplace dominates the room. Years ago in an essay for this magazine, a former Kill Kare bellhop—the help was once beckoned by bells—described sneaking in here in the earliest morning hours to remove the heavy metal fireplace gate and light a fire without waking the camp's owner. Last spring, before the property opened for the season, I was lucky enough to get a peek inside the Great Camp. To finally see the "tree bed" first-hand, even flop onto it, a stuffed owl perched above, gave me a real Adirondack moment.

For more than a hundred years, if you wanted to see beyond Kill Kare's log gate and its two-mile dirt driveway that tunnels through trees, you had to own the place, be a guest or work there. But today the Great Camp, now called Lake Kora, is a luxury resort owned by Marc and Jacqui Palmer, who also own an upscale coastal farm with villas in New Zealand. At Kora, guests can fly in to the 1,000-acre spread on seaplane, accept their glass of champagne at the camp's boathouse and from there, as Kill Kare's original name suggests, allow their kares to be killed. (The story goes that the angles in letter "K" are easier to craft with wood than the curve of a "C.")



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Inside the Tree House. The estate's boathouse anchors a 500-acre private lake. Lake Kora's original name, Kamp Kill Kare, incorporated the letter "K" because its angles are easier to craft with wood than the curve of a "C." An elegant rustic-style dock, built in 1901. PAGES 46-47: Guests arrive by seaplane.

Photographs courtesy of Lake Kora Kindra Clineff Photography



WHAT MAKES IT A GREAT CAMP?

In Harvey Kaiser's *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*, he writes that these historic private preserves have the following characteristics:

- Respond to the natural environment
- Integrate buildings with the site by nonintrusive planning and design
- Include the rustic aesthetic
- Have multi-building complexes

OTHER GREAT CAMPS YOU CAN VISIT

Great Camp Sagamore, Raquette Lake

Completed by William West Durant in 1897, then sold to Alfred G. Vanderbilt in 1901, the camp offers overnight stays and educational and recreational programs. www.sagamore.org

Great Camp Santanoni, Newcomb

Built for the Pruyn family in 1893, skiers and hikers can now explore the publicly owned property. www.greatcampsantanoni.com

The Hedges, Blue Mountain Lake

Built by Civil War general Hiram Duryea beginning in the 1880s, this Great Camp offers lodging and meals from June through October. www.thehedges.com

The Point, Saranac Lake

Originally named Camp Wonundra and built by William A. Rockefeller II in the early 1930s, The Point has year-round luxury lodging on Upper Saranac Lake. www.thepointresort.com

White Pine Camp, Gabriels

Built in 1908 for Archibald and Olive White, this estate on Osgood Pond was President Calvin Coolidge's summer White House in 1927. Cottages are available year-round. www.whitepinecamp.com

The historic preservation organization Adirondack Architectural Heritage offers tours of Great Camps. Visit www.aarch.org to learn more.



From the very beginning, William West Durant knew there was something special about his Raquette Lake holdings. He sold part of his land to New York State and turned the rest into three preserves, one that in 1897 he sold to Timothy Woodruff, Teddy Roosevelt's lieutenant governor. On this 1,000-acre estate, Woodruff began building Kamp Kill Kare, naming the lake after his wife, Cora. In 1913 Alfred G. Vanderbilt, owner of the nearby Great Camp Sagamore, bought Kill Kare. The following year he sold it to Francis P. Garvan, a New York City prosecutor who made a name for himself in high-profile cases, including the Henry Thaw/Stanford White murder trial. Garvan and his wife, Mabel, daughter of a wealthy entrepreneur, worked with designer Charles Hiscoe and architect John Russell Pope to elevate their rustic oasis into an Adirondack showstopper. Pope designed the Thomas Jefferson Memorial and the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, DC. Among his designs at Kill Kare are the main lodge (a fire had destroyed parts of the original one), the French Norman-style chapel, the boathouse and stone tower gate and barn complex. It "is arguably the greatest of the Great Camps," according to *Great Camps of the Adirondacks* author Harvey Kaiser. And thanks to years of careful maintenance, Lake Kora is as extraordinary as ever.

Kora's type of luxury isn't about marble, bronze or cutting-edge amenities. Great Camp-style is defined by hand-fashioned fur-



Local ingredients, such as the blueberries in the chefs' pavlova, are always a part of Lake Kora menus.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM: The well-appointed Library; other lodging at Kora includes rooms above the boathouse and in the main lodge; cottages; and an Island Cabin, accessed by boat. The Casino, where aristocrats and politicians were once entertained. A vintage bowling alley in the Great Camp's Playhouse.



LAKE KORA

niture and other décor that brings the wilderness inside. It blends the artifacts of the well-heeled—maybe Oriental rugs or taxidermied trophies from faraway lands—with a woodsy formality that can only happen when a fleet of people, behind the scenes, is polishing and dusting and lighting fires. Porches are meticulously swept, lawns are perfectly manicured. Watercraft are prepped and ready at the go. Done right, it looks simple and seamless. At Kora it's seamless.

Much of Kora's staff, including resident manager Cameron Karger, migrated from The Point, the Rockefeller family's former Great Camp Wonundra on Upper Saranac Lake, now an exclusive resort. Where The Point experience might involve a handful of different guests staying in various rooms and cabins and dining together for black-tie affairs, Kora gathers smaller groups—an extended family, maybe a wedding party or a corporate team. The estate can accommodate up to 24 guests. Meals at Kora, overseen by chefs Justin Souza and D'Anthony Foster, can be informal affairs or include seven-course extravaganzas in a space that feels elegantly medieval—blaze roaring in the fireplace, diners seated on benches along a table that practically stretches the length of the room. For fun, guests can explore the lake on an electric boat, sailboat, kayak or canoe; they can hike or mountain bike the property's trails; or bowl the vintage alley, play pickleball, tennis, squash or baseball. Flat screens don't go with the aesthetic (though you can find them in some of the rooms), so evening entertainment is billiards and board games, fireside cocktails, and campfires with s'mores and digestifs at the lean-tos along the lake.

Kora offers time-travel to the Gilded Age. You no longer have to ring a bell for service, but somehow, someone there knows exactly what you want and what you need. ▲▲

Lake Kora is open from July 1 through October 31. The entire estate can be reserved for \$22,980 per night based on 16 bedrooms for 24 people, inclusive of children. Learn more about Lake Kora at (844) 354-5503 or www.lakekora.com.