

More Than Just Amish Country - A Road Trip to Lake Aldred

By Pamela M. Bossard-McDanolds

Driving down the winding, narrow country road bordered closely by trees, you may start to feel lost. Just about the time you are beginning to wonder how you'll turn your trailer around, the trees open up. There, below you, spread out between the Pennsylvania Mountains of Lancaster and York counties, is a part of the Susquehanna River known as Lake Aldred.

The Susquehanna is Pennsylvania's longest river. And, although most of the river is shallow and non-navigable, the Holtwood dam has created a boater's dream. Lake Aldred is dotted with five islands and surrounded by scenic mountains covered with hiking trails. The lake encompasses 2400 acres and reaches depths of up to 50 feet.

Parking and boat ramps are located in the town of Pequea. There is no charge at the public ramp for launching a boat, as long as it and your trailer are registered in your home state. But get there early on weekends. By 10:00 am, you'll have to wait in line for the double ramp. Across from the boating ramp is Arrowhead Marina. Bob, the owner, is a super-nice guy who has fuel at the dock in case you need to fill up the tank.

Once on the lake, go around to the far side of the island directly in front of you. That's the meeting place of the Lake Aldred Water Ski Club. Members of this family-oriented club are extremely nice and are more than happy to explain river conditions or swap boating stories. And they can always use another person for volleyball on the island. Bring your lunch and join them for a picnic on the beach.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission are the marine police in this state. They are always available for emergencies and to give a helping hand. They are responsible for registration and boating regulation compliance, and they do check. So, read up on Pennsylvania's boating laws beforehand.

After a full day of boating and meeting new people at Lake Aldred, stop in at the Frogtown Café for a bite. They have a huge parking lot and are quite used to seeing waterlogged people with wind-dried hair and wet clothing walking through their door. Not sure what to order? Try the cheese steak stromboli.

If someone in your family doesn't enjoy boating (it happens!), you can spend time sightseeing in beautiful central Pennsylvania. In fact, even the most ardent boater will enjoy some time away from the water in this gorgeous countryside.

Lancaster County is famous as Amish Country. Among the many places of interest are the Amish farms, the towns of Intercourse and Bird-in-Hand, old farmhouses with handmade quilts, jams and baked goods for sale and the list goes on and on! Along the Lincoln Highway (US Rt. 30) in Lancaster you can load up on bargains at the designer outlets. There is enough to keep a family happy and busy in Lancaster County even if it rains the whole time.

Thirty minutes to the west of Lancaster and Lake Aldred is Hershey, PA. It is home to the Hershey chocolate factory, Hershey Museum and Hersheypark. While you're in Hershey, take a drive down Chocolate Avenue to see the Hershey Kiss streetlights. Then hop on over to Chocolate World for a free tour on the history of Hershey's chocolate.

You'll be sure to enjoy the time spent exploring Lake Aldred and Lancaster County. Since it is a major tourist destination, they are plenty of hotels, B&B's and campgrounds. Almost all of them have space in their parking lots for a boat. One word of advice: if you are thinking about visiting, call ahead for reservations. Otherwise, you may find yourself snoozing next to your motor box with your head on a ski.

RESOURCES:

Lancaster County Visitors Bureau: 1-800-PA-DUTCH;
<http://www.padutch.com>

Hershey Information Center: 1-800-HERSHEY

Sickman's Mill Campground, Pequea, PA: (717) 872-5951

Arrowhead Marina, Pequea, PA: (717) 284-4462

Lower Susquehanna River hotline: 1-800-692-6328

PA Fish & Boat Commission: (717) 657-4540