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Growth of Tourism Assets in the Finger Lakes Region

Tourism industry continues to expand in Finger Lakes and New York State

Pittsford, N.Y. - As tourism spending in the Finger Lakes remains high, tourism assets within the region have expanded in the last 12 months. The region is exploding with more accommodations, new attractions, and culinary and craft beverage options to meet growing visitor demand.

The Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council (FLRTC) is the official tourism promotion agency of the Finger Lakes Region, as recognized by I Love NY. The FLRTC supports the growth of the region by coordinating the advertising and marketing strategy for the 14-counties located within the 9,000 square mile Finger Lakes Region. They are also the primary supporters for the tourism assets within the region, including the following new and expanding businesses:

Accommodations

There is a demand for additional rooms across the region as travelers and planners seek out new and refreshing accommodation options. The Finger Lakes has seen a growth in new properties and a resurgence of old properties updating their look as this trend continues.

Recently opened properties across the region include:

- Marriott Downtown Syracuse (Syracuse) - 261 rooms
- Homewood Suites (Carrier Circle, Syracuse) - 101 rooms
- Hampton Inn & Suites (Carrier Circle, Syracuse) - 96 rooms
- Aloft (Inner Harbor, Syracuse) - 134 rooms
- Sleep Inn & Suites (East Syracuse) - 54 rooms
- Microtel (Penn Yan) - 77 rooms
- Hampton Inn (Penn Yan) - 72 rooms
- Fairfield Inn & Suites (Geneva) - 84 rooms
- Wallcourt Hall (an Inns of Aurora property in Aurora, NY) - 17 rooms
- Single Island Shores Vacation Rentals (Watkins Glen) - luxury vacation rentals
- Watkins Brewery Apartments (Watkins Glen) - weekly vacation rentals

Recently renovated properties across the region include:

- Element (Inner Harbor, Syracuse) - 123 rooms
- Destiny USA hotel (Syracuse) - 209 rooms
- Fairfield Inn and Suites (Carrier Circle, Syracuse) - 108 rooms
- Extended Stay Property (Downtown Syracuse) - 120 rooms

- Bristol Harbour Lodge & Golf Club (South Bristol) - Added the Bernie Caprini Café in June 2016 and will be closed for renovations Feb. 26 - Apr. 17, 2017.

In addition to traditional lodging options, some unconventional options have been popping up around the region. The Local and Seneca Sol, both in the Watkins Glen area, are two such properties. The Local is the only known hostel in the Finger Lakes region. It offers three bunk rooms, each named after one of the Finger Lakes, that hold two to six people. Seneca Sol, on the other hand, is a site in Watkins Glen that capitalizes on the recent trend of "glamping" or glamorous camping, where people can choose to experience the outdoors without sacrificing comfort or luxury. Seneca Sol is the second glamping facility in the region, after Firelight Camps at La Tourelle in the Ithaca area.

Craft Beverage/Culinary

The Finger Lakes region has seen a huge surge of interest in craft beverages over the past several years. What was once known as a wine region, now celebrates craft makers producing cider, beer, and liquor from locally grown and sourced ingredients. This growth has also encouraged new culinary and farm-to-table offerings, some of which are opening within tasting rooms. In the past 12 months, the region has welcomed the following new cideries, breweries, distilleries, and eateries:

Original Stump Blower Ciderworks (Lakeville) - The first cidery in Livingston County, Original Stump Blower Ciderworks in Lakeville, NY uses all New York State apples to create craft hard cider from a 50-year-old family recipe. Sibling owners, Elise Barnard and Eric Smith, develop unique flavors in their Conesus Lake location that include Blueberry Hills Forever, GINger Citrus, Cherry Cloud, Maple, and Little Lakes.

FLX Table (Geneva) - Recently opened in Summer 2016 in the Geneva area, FLX Table offers a unique dining experience to foodies wishing to experience the flavors of the region. With only 12 seats in the restaurant, guests join each other at a large table to indulge in a set, 5-course menu - which changes each night and is based on seasonality. Two seatings are available on select nights throughout the week.

Hunt Country Vineyards (Branchport) - While Hunt Country has been in operation for quite some time, the business recently opened a farm-to-table café. Open seasonally during the warmer months, the café serves sandwiches, specials, sides, cheeseboards, charcuteries, and desserts, cooked up by an in-house chef. Ingredients used in dishes are seasonal, local, and organically grown - and many come straight from the family-owned farm.

Additional Openings:

- Water Street Wine Bar (Penn Yan)
- Lyons Smith Brewing Company (Penn Yan)
- Black Cat Bistro (Jerusalem)
- Sterling Cidery (Sterling)
- Linden Social Club (Geneva)
- Kashong Creek Craft Cider (Geneva)
- Kindred Fare (Geneva)
- Branch by Bellangelo (Geneva)

- Twisted Rail Brewing (Canandaigua) - Moved to new location on the lake in spring 2016

In addition to new openings, partnerships are also emerging across the region - like that of Empire Brewing Company and Beak & Skiff Apple Orchards, located in the Syracuse area. The two businesses recently teamed up to brew a New York State apple beer. Called "Apple Harvest Ale," the beer is brewed at Empire Brewing Company's new 60bbl brewhouse and uses over 800 gallons of fresh New York State raw apple juice made from Empire and Honey Crisp apples. A red-colored ale with a crisp, tart apple flavor and a sweet caramel malt finish, the limited release ale is available at Empire Brewing Company's brewpub in Syracuse, the tasting room at Empire Farmstead Brewery in Cazenovia, and the Beak & Skiff Tavern in Lafayette, along with a few select Central New York establishments.

Attractions

To round out the visitor experience, new attractions are springing up constantly, offering exciting and unique opportunities for guests who come to the Finger Lakes. Recently opened attractions include:

Humphrey Nature Center at Letchworth State Park - The new Humphrey Nature Center opened for visitors in June 2016. Serving as a welcome and education center, the \$6.75 million sustainable facility features interactive displays, including a gorge wall exhibit showcasing drone video of the park during all four seasons, and two meeting rooms. Outside the facility, there are five unique nature trails, an outdoor rock amphitheater/classroom, a butterfly garden, solar panels for energy production and a cistern for collecting rainwater. Interpretive staff are stationed onsite to answer questions and offer daily tours, hikes, and educational programming to guests.

National Warplane Museum - The National Warplane Museum in Geneseo has recently welcomed a new addition to their historic aircraft collection. In early spring, the Memphis Belle, a B-17 bomber used in the 1990 Hollywood film "The Memphis Belle," returned to Geneseo after being away for four years. The plane is one of only 35 B-17s still in existence, and one of about a dozen that still fly.

Tioga Downs - Tioga Down was officially granted a casino license in 2016. The property has since been expanding its gaming and dining operations on property. The new restaurant, called "Virgil's" offers live music and BBQ styles from Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas, the Carolinas, and Missouri in a rustic and casual dinner atmosphere.

The Remedy - The newest tour boat on Seneca Lake, the Remedy offers eco, history, winery, brewery, distillery, and sightseeing cruise tours. The boat is a 26-foot Coast Guard Certified Launch capable of carrying 16 passengers around the lake.

Watkins Glen International - After the race track re-opened following a \$12.5 million repaving project, the glen also announced the return of the IndyCar Grand Prix in September 2016 through 2018.

Watkins Glen State Park - The park recently began a \$6.5 million renovation project to transform its main entrance. The project plans to relocate the parking area to a space away

from the gorge and return the current area to green space, bringing back the natural environment nearest to the gorge. It is set to be completed in late spring/early summer 2017.

Seneca Art & Culture Center at Ganondagan - Opened in October 2015, the Seneca Art & Culture Center is a year-round interpretive facility that tells the 2,000+ year old story of the Seneca and Haudenosaunee contributions to art, culture, and society.

Bristol Mountain Aerial Adventures Zipline Canopy Tour - The new Zipline Canopy Tour opened at Bristol Mountain Aerial Adventures in November 2015, and features 7 ziplines measuring over 5000 feet. The tour includes 4 bridges in the sky, 2 hikes, 2 off-road rides, and a final "Leap of Faith," lasting over 3 hours.

Destiny USA - The six-story entertainment and shopping center just keeps expanding and offering new stores, restaurants, and amusement for visitors. The newest openings are:

- **At Home** - Home Décor Superstore
- **Mystery Room** - Strategy-based Escape Room
- **Kraze Burger** - Gourmet Burger Joint
- **Torrid** - Fashion for the Curvy Girl
- **Lush** - Cosmetics and Bath and Body Items
- **It'Sugar** - Candy Store
- **Kung Fu Tea** - Bubble & Specialty Tea Shop
- **Cowboys Saloon** - Western-themed, American Bar & Grill
- **Bath & Body Works (Remodeled and Relocated)** - Fragrant Body Care Shop
- **Johnny Rockets (Remodeled and Relocated)** - Classic, All-American Diner
- **Old Navy (Remodeled and Relocated)** - Value-priced Clothing & Accessories Store

Live like a local-Authentic Finger Lakes Experiences at Destiny USA:

- **Bellangelo 'Branch'** - Get a "taste" of the Finger Lakes Region... right at Destiny USA. Sip and savor the premium wines from Seneca Lake at Bellangelo 'Branch' and its new retail shop and tasting room, located on Destiny USA's 1st Level, right across from The Cheesecake Factory.
- **Finger Lakes Coffee Roasters** - Check out all that's brewing at one of Destiny USA's newest additions- the Finger Lakes Coffee Roasters. Using only beans sourced from Organic and Fair Trade Certified farms worldwide, Finger Lakes Coffee Roasters serves up its signature blends on the 2nd Level of the Destiny USA expansion.

As a collaborative effort, the region recently had a hand in the opening of the **Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park and Visitor Center**, which operated through September and October 2016. Located on the NYS Thruway between exits 40 and 41, the park welcomed canal enthusiasts and thruway travelers to step back in time to authentic life on the Erie Canal during the mid-19th to early-20th centuries. Visitors were encouraged to explore the well-preserved Erie Canal Lock 52 and Erie Complex, comprised of mule barn, blacksmith shop and the Erie House - which once served as a canal-era tavern and boarding house. Docents provided by the Canal Society offered guided tours of the facility's historic structures. The park will re-open on May 1.

Designations

While the assets within the region are expanding, the already-popular attractions within the area continue to gain recognition through national accolades. Four properties in the Watkins Glen area made the USA Today 10Best list in the past 12 months, including Watkins Glen State Park (#3 on the list of Best State Parks), Watkins Glen International (Best NASCAR Track), Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel (Best Waterfront Hotel), and Finger Lakes Wine Festival (Best Wine Festival). Letchworth State Park in Mount Morris, NY made the 10Best State Parks list at #1. Expedia named Watkins Glen, NY as one of the 55 Most Beautiful Destinations in the World, and Trip Advisor named the State Park one of the Top Trending US Attractions with a 96.4% year over year increase in search traffic on Trip Advisor.

Just south of the glen, Harris Hill Soaring in the Elmira area received recognition as a top pick in Conde Nast Traveler's "Best Fall Adventures in the U.S." Mirbeau Inn & Spa in the Syracuse area also received recognition by Conde Nast Traveler, listed as #7 for Top Resorts in New York & Mid-Atlantic.

"The development in this region is exciting to us as tourism professionals," says Brittany Gibson, Tourism & Marketing Manager at the Watkins Glen Area Chamber of Commerce. "We look forward to being able to better serve our visitors with these new businesses - and to continue to promote and share our award-winning attractions."

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The Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council

The breathtaking Finger Lakes takes its name from eleven lakes spanning the region like a giant handprint, stretching from its easternmost point in Onondaga County to its westernmost border in Livingston County, near Letchworth State Park. Boasting a mix of nature trails and natural beauty, wineries and breweries scattered across the region, and quaint villages close to large metropolitan areas, the Finger Lakes Vacation Region has a plethora of tourist attractions within its borders.

In January 2014, the 14 Official County Tourism Promotion Agencies of the Finger Lakes Vacation Region formed a 501(c)(3) organization known as the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council (FLRTC). The FLRTC Board includes representation from all 14 TPAs and counties: Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne and Yates. For information about attractions and events throughout the Finger Lakes region, visit www.fingerlakestravelny.com or call 1-888-408-1693.