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[A Grand Hotel Opens in Watkins Glen](#)

By Jason Feulner, Finger Lakes Correspondent



Last week I had the pleasure to attend the grand opening of the [Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel](#) which has been in operations since July. The hotel is located on the waterfront in the Village of Watkins Glen with a commanding view of the deep blue waters of Seneca Lake as it stretches north from its southernmost point.

The hotel staff was kind enough to give me a tour of the facility and some of the rooms. The decor is striking throughout, with strong elements of wood and stone.



The rooms invoke what I would call a New England coastal theme with light wood floors, white trim, tones of blue, and an airy atmosphere framed by multi-paned windows and sliding doors between rooms. The presence of a large body of water and the shrieking of seagulls reminds the visitor that this theme is not only workable but in many ways accentuates some of the qualities of the region that are often overlooked.

Yes, the Finger Lakes can in some respects be a coastal destination.

Watkins Glen is located near many wineries and a popular NASCAR [race track](#) that holds a variety of events throughout the year. There is also a [state park](#) right

in the middle of the village that has one of the most tremendous gorges in the Finger Lakes region. A train line originally built for the salt industry (the Finger Lakes has some of the biggest underground salt mines in the world) runs around the waterfront and can carry tourists to various destinations.

Despite these attractions, Watkins Glen has remained a sleepy village that has struggled with its transition from an industrial to a tourist economy. This hotel, located on the site of a former jelly factory, is one of many new improvements to an area that is poised to become just as much of a destination as Canandaigua and Geneva.



The hotel takes advantage of its waterfront location and its event rooms, restaurant, and bar are located along a large open patio that has a fire pits for warmth on chilly evenings. The reception was laid out beautifully and the food was nothing short of delicious. The available wines were, of course, all Finger Lakes.

While there are some nice places to stay in the Finger Lakes, including some bucolic and very authentic inns and bed and breakfasts, there are hardly enough high-end hotel rooms to accommodate a growing interest in the region. The room and the grounds at the Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel would please any worldly traveler and the hotel will undoubtedly provide some needed facilities for all kinds of visitors and events. The hotel has full concierge service and the staff assured me that they will go to any length to ensure that a Finger Lakes visitor has a full regional experience.

The rooms at this hotel are not cheap and the prices might not appeal to those who are used to paying the average hotel price in Upstate New York. If, however, you are looking for a Finger Lakes vacation that includes a spectacular room, a great view, and fine dining, the Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel might be the place for you.