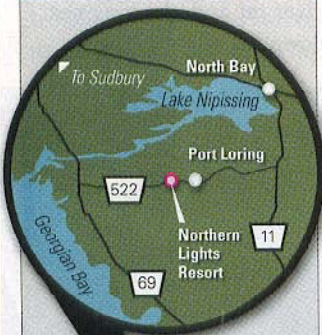




A Near-North Fishing Paradise

Getting There



Drive: One and a half hours from North Bay and 3.5 hours from the greater-Toronto area. Turn on Highway 522 West to Port Loring off Highway 11. The resort is roughly 56 kilometres from the turnoff.



The Resort:
N45 54.310, W80 03.514

Close to both the GTA and Sudbury, Northern Lights Resort offers great fishing and family activities in a comfortable wilderness setting.

BY TIM ALLARD

At dusk, a light mist hung in the trees around Little Long Lake. “I’m marking plenty of fish on the finder,” said Phil Welton, who was wrapping up my lake tour. “Why don’t we stop and wet a line.

“You don’t have to twist my arm,” I replied.

We drifted into a small bay filled with sunken timber, where a walleye grabbed my white and pink jig. With dusk approaching, we worked the bay with a variety of baits, fooling several more fish before it was time to return to the dock. The day had been damp, so Phil invited me in for a coffee to relate more about the area.

Phil and Jeannine Welton own Northern Lights Resort, resting on the shores of Little Long Lake in Loring, approximately a 1.5-hour drive southwest of North Bay. From the resort, guests have access to more than 40 miles of water and several intercon-

nected lakes, part of the Pickerel River System.

The system’s scenery offers a nice mix of cottage-dotted shores and tree-clad areas void of development. “A vast majority of the area here is crown land,” said Welton. “There are only a few cottages on our lake, but you see more on some of the other lakes.”



The vast majority of shoreline is crown land, making shore lunches a tempting option.

As my visit was in early June, bass season wasn’t open. I spotted a few respectable smallmouths and largemouths in the clear water, which left me pining for a return trip.

For walleye, we focused on large bays, islands, reefs, and points. Fish were active and in water from 6- to 12 feet deep. Swimming jigs

around deep weeds or hopping them over rock structures produced the most fish. A telltale tick in the line as the jig fell had me setting the hook on plenty of 2- to 3-pound walleye. In addition to jigs, Welton says casting minnowbaits and crankbaits,

as well as trolling cranks or live-bait harnesses, are also effective.

The river also has a decent pike population. Several hammered 4-inch jigs, peeling drag with gusto, before I could subdue them with a medium-action rod. Casting spoons, spinnerbaits, and large plastics around bays, points, and deep weeds are other tactics recommended for pike.

"Family fishing is the focus for a lot of our guests, but there are also plenty of other things to do in the area," said Welton. Local craft shops, a farmer's market on Wednesdays, and boat-in fine dining at nearby Old Mirror Lodge Restaurant are some recommended activities.

The Weltons also cater to paddlers. They offer one-, two-, and three-day canoe packages. Trip length and destination can be customized. A canoe, safety equipment, life jackets, paddles, and a river map are provided. The Weltons shuttle your paddling group and gear to various put-ins, while your vehicle stays secure on resort property. The resort features on-site camping with a hot shower, so you can spend a night before or after your paddling

The Lodge

Cottages are available May to October. Peak-season 2008 rates (mid-June to September) range from \$715 to \$1,125 per week. Call or check online for off-peak rates and weekend specials.



CONTACT INFO

Northern Lights Resort, 13497 Hwy. 522 West, P.O. Box 79, Loring, Ont. POH 1S0, 705-757-2554 or 1-888-387-9991.
www.northernlightsresort.on.ca

Ontario's Near North, 1375 Seymour St., P.O. Box 351, North Bay, Ont. P1B 8H5, 705-474-6634 or 1-800-387-0516.
www.ontariosnearnorth.on.ca

For more information about Northern Ontario Fishing Adventures, visit:
www.gofishinontario.com

Check List ✓

- Pack beach and personal towels, toiletries, and toilet paper, as these aren't included with cabins.
- Stock up on lures. Jigs, minnow-baits, spinnerbaits, and spoons are top producers. Bring a mix of hot and natural colour patterns.
- Pack fly repellent and bug clothing. Mosquitoes and blackflies can be bad in spring and early summer.
- Don't forget your hiking boots, camera, and binoculars. There are plenty of trails, wildlife viewing, and photo opportunities.

trek. All canoe routes end at the resort dock, so each day offers new scenery.

The resort has 10 cottages ranging from one-, two-, and three-bedroom units. Staggered on the lake's hillside, each unit offers a view of water. Weekly cottage rental includes a 14-foot aluminum boat with a 9.9-horsepower motor (gas and oil extra) or free docking space for your own boat. Cottages are equipped with a full-sized refrigerator, a microwave, a stove, a coffee maker, cutlery and dishes, and a propane barbecue. They also have three- or four-piece baths.

The Weltons provide guests with many small touches to keep their stays comfortable. In July and August, fresh local pastries and hot coffee are served every Sunday. For those looking for pampering, the resort features a part-time massage and spa facility. A coin-operated laundry, small entertainment hall, sand beach, and store with tackle are some of the resort's other features. But, remember to leave the dogs at home; the resort has a no-pet policy.

Northern Lights Resort provides a gateway into great angling and paddling opportunities. The rugged scenery of the area wraps visitors in a wilderness setting, yet the Weltons hospitality is sure to keep guests comfortable. ●