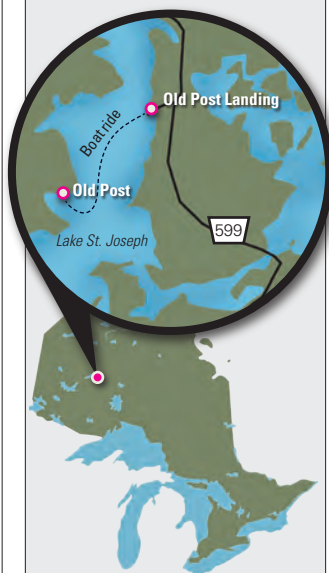


JAMES SMEDLEY  
TRAVEL EDITOR

Jonathon and Holly Little of the Old Post with a Lake St. Joseph pike.

PHOTOS: JAMES SMEDLEY

Getting there



Drive from Ignace 225 kilometres up Hwy. 599 to the landing for a 10-minute ferry ride to the Old Post and Village.

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1-807-928-2802  
1-807-928-2770  
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# A Trip to Remember

Walleye, pike, and years of history come together at the Old Post and Village.

“Feels like a good one,” calls Jonathon Grace, leaning against an arced rod. By the time I’m within camera range our seasoned 23-year-old guide is reaching into the water. With a grunt, he hoists a mammoth green creature draped in weeds. I snap a few photos before the toothy beast gyrates violently, shaking Jonathon’s wiry frame, before arcing back into Lake St. Joseph. “That had to be 44 inches,” he cries.

All I know is it’s probably the biggest pike I’ve ever seen and just one more feather in the cap of the Old Post and Village.

I’m here with my whole family: wife, Francine, and our two girls, Islay, 11, and Lillian, 9, as well as my parents, Faye and Gordon. We’re about an hour’s ride by 40-hp four-stroke outboards on three 17-foot aluminum boats and still only a third of the way down the 93-mile-long lake.

Sweeping vistas of land and water stretch out in every direction. Shorelines alternate from steep gravel banks to rocky bluffs and boulder-strewn bedrock interspersed with beaches and sandspits. To the angler, the structure below the waterline is even more engaging, with rocky shoals, mid-lake humps, steep drop-offs, and broad flats.

Even before wetting a line, it’s clear there’s a depth to the Old Post and Village beyond its capacity as a fishing lodge. Long before it became an angling destination, the sandy spit of land jutting into Lake St. Joseph was a Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) post called Osnaburgh House. It operated for 177 years before being abandoned in 1963.

John Grace and wife, Wendy, acquired the property in 1986 when their son, and our guide, Jonathon, was 2 years old. Their dream was to develop a modern lodge that takes advantage of the strong fishery, but also celebrates the rich history of the HBC post and the native people that continue to use the area. Their success is evident in the main lodge, suites, and housekeeping cottages, as well as in the careful restoration of the original HBC Store and Anglican Church that make this place as much a museum as it is a lodge.

## The Light of Day

We’re anxious to get on the water and our first morning is spent casting jigs over shoals and wave-washed shorelines. The girls alternate between catching walleye to 24 inches and sunning themselves in the

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boat. My mother is the least experienced, but she keeps my father busy releasing the big ones and contributing a few eaters for shore lunch. Toward noon we're off the tip of an island where jigs cast toward a sharply dropping shoreline rarely reach bottom before being smashed, when Jonathon suggests lunch. I'm reluctant to stop fishing, but if you wait for a lull in the action before you eat on Lake St. Joseph, you risk starvation.

The boats are barely beached before Islay and Lillian are cooling off in the tea-coloured water, while Jonathon steams dill-infused walleye fillets over mushrooms, onions, and wild rice. With nothing to do but relax, parents and grandparents watch our able guide prepare the first of several exceptional shore lunches that would include deep-fried, Italian, and even spicy curried walleye fillets. The laughter of the girls blends with the crackling of the cooking fire, as this potent blend of easy fishing, long sand beaches, scrumptious food, and conscientious service on and off the lake completes the recipe for an ideal family fishing vacation.

## Jacks Aplenty

For the next four days we fortify ourselves with walleye, then dedicate afternoons to pike along broad, weedy flats. We would land plenty of pike, including three over 40 inches, and lose a few that might have been bigger. We also catch walleye to 5 pounds and so many over 18 inches it seems silly to keep count. And like all big fish hooked by guests of the Old Post, all are released. It's a policy I learn more about when I meet owner John Grace on return to the lodge.

"We attacked the lake full force for the first few years," he said, adding that guests were taking home plenty of big pike and trophy walleye. "I knew this was not going to last." Grace imposed a no-kill policy for walleye over 18 inches and pike over 27. "Oh, we lost some business over it," he says, but he now has a loyal clientele whose appreciation for a healthy fishery with lots of big fish is much stronger than their desire to kill a trophy.

After all, the best trophies are warm memories. At the Old Post and Village, catching and keeping your limit of those is easy. ●

## Check List ✓

- Bring walleye jigs and soft-plastic grubs in yellow, white, and chartreuse.
- Bring big pike spoons in silver, gold, copper, or five-of-diamonds.
- Read *A Place Called Osna-burgh, The History of the Old Post and Village* by Rob Bundy. E-mail [fishing@old-post.com](mailto:fishing@old-post.com) to order or buy at the lodge, \$12.95.

## The Lodge

Main lodge with dining room and beach-front bar. Stay in large log cabins with full kitchens, indoor plumbing, and wood heat or in suites. Basic housekeeping rates are \$849 per person for five nights, four days, includes boat, motor, gas, and accommodation. Add \$225 per person for American Plan.