

An Artful Gathering: *Squam Art Workshops*

by Christine Chitnis

There is something so incredibly freeing about stepping away from the busyness of everyday life, the task of caring for home and family ... It opens up space to explore the depths of our creativity, with no interruptions or distractions. As women, we so often extend ourselves to the fullest. We give to our families, friends, work, and home. Often, with all of this giving we forget to take time for ourselves, forget to give ourselves time to create, craft, and play. What if you were to set aside three days of uninterrupted time devoted to making and creating? What would that even look like? It would look something like Squam Art Workshops (SAW), an art retreat founded in 2008 by Elizabeth MacCrellish.







An Offering for Creative Souls

SAW offers creative souls, no matter where they are on their journey, a chance to gather, learn, and come away inspired. It is about so much more than the workshops and the crafts. It is about community, spirit, natural beauty, and a touch of magic.

Fueled by a deep desire to reconnect with my creativity, coupled with a longing to meet like-minded souls — individuals who also spend their most joyful moments surrounded by yarn, fabric, paper, and paste — I signed up for my first art retreat in June of 2009. The community that I came to discover at SAW has drawn me back for two subsequent retreats. For each time the weekend draws to a close, I find my creative fires further stoked and I feel as though I have once again found a group of people who truly understand the joy that comes from making and creating.

Uninterrupted Days

There is something about SAW that makes you feel as though you imagined the entire amazing weekend; for how often does life allow us uninterrupted days devoted entirely to creating art in a setting as gorgeous as the lush countryside of New England? Perched on the serene, wooded shores of Squam Lake in Holderness, New Hampshire, Rockywold-Deephaven Camp, a family camp with a rich, century-old history,



plays host to SAW. The setting is breathtaking, let alone all that goes along with it.

Let me Take you Along on the Journey ...

Snuggled in the most comfortable down bed, you awake to find a picturesque view of Squam Lake outside the window of your rustic, yet cozy, log cabin. If you are lucky, in the early morning with the fog still lifting off at the lake, you will hear the haunting call of the loon, a reminder that this is indeed a special place.

You and your cabinmates make your way down winding forest paths to the dining hall where a gorgeous breakfast has been prepared. You could have waffles (oh yes, there is a homemade waffle station), eggs, cereal, French toast, oatmeal, homemade sticky buns, or a plethora of other treats. And no doing the dishes either!

As breakfast wraps up, you again set off through the woods in search of your lakeside cabin where, inside, renowned teachers wait to share their magic. Embroidery, sewing, painting, book making, block printing, knitting ... you can try your hand at just about anything. The best part is everyone there shares your undying passion towards creating. Where else can you tell a knitting joke and have people actually respond with laughter and not just pitying looks? Where else can you have a group discussion about favorite brands of embroidery thread?





Class is interrupted only for lunch and dinner, both fabulous spreads that rival breakfast. When the day winds down, there is time to sit on the porch, gaze out at the lake, and engage in stimulating, refreshing conversation with new friends. Evening activities include musical performances, special guest speakers, and a rousing craft fair full of handmade goodies for sale. As night falls, you retire to your cabin to share a bottle of wine with your cabinmates and dissect all that you learned during the day, comparing class notes like eager students. When you finally say goodnight and hit the pillow, you can't help but smile ... for tomorrow will hold more of the same.

This is Squam Art Workshops — the people, the place, the spirit, and the magic — and this is why I am always pulled back for more.

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