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Fly fishing at Beavers Bend
photo by Chris Fritchie

Escape to the Hills or 'Round the Bend

By Linda Haschke & Beth Robinson

HAVE YOU HEARD this summer's new buzzword? It's "staycation," meaning "staying close to home and enjoying the events and attractions in our own backyard, or within a short distance from home, in exchange for the traditional summer vacation." As gasoline prices cross the \$4.00 per gallon mark and air travel becomes more restrictive than ever, this summer may be the perfect time to enjoy a staycation.

As we continue our summer series on vacation opportunities, let's fill up for a one tank, long weekend escape. We've chosen two locations, each approximately two-three hours

away, one north and one south as our selections for decompressing and a well-deserved break from the routine.

BEAVERS BEND STATE PARK

It's summertime and if you like your livin' easy and your fish jumpin', head north three hours to Beavers Bend State Park on the shores of Broken Bow Lake in the far southeastern corner of Oklahoma.

According to Park Manager Jim Miller, nearly 70 percent of Beaver Bend's annual 1.1 million visitors are from Texas. "We really like you guys," says Mr. Miller, who has managed the facility

for 22 years. "We have facilities for families and groups and just about every activity you can imagine, so our parking lot is usually full of Texas tags every weekend."

Located 170 miles northeast of Frisco, Beavers Bend is in the heart of Oklahoma's Kiamichi Mountains region, where thick forests and crystal clear waters make it almost impossible to believe you're only a few hours from the DFW Metroplex. The star attraction is water: Beavers Bend is situated on Broken Bow Lake and the Mountain Fork River and is an angler's paradise. Trout fishing is available throughout the year, made possible by the park's local trout hatchery that stocks the river every two weeks with 10" to 12" Browns and Rainbows. The park has a fly shop that offers fly fishing clinics as well as gear. You can pick up an Oklahoma fishing license and trout stamp at the park; the creek limit is six per day.

When you tire of fly casting, you can drop a line in the clear waters of Broken Bow Lake for bass (large and smallmouth, plus sand bass), walleye, crappie and catfish. Beavers Bend Marina offers a fishing guide service and has a full line of watercraft for rent – bass boats, ski boats, pontoon boats, house boats and jet skis – as well as slip rentals for those who BYOB (bring your own boat). Broken Bow Lake is a 14,000-acre deep-water lake with no residential or commercial development, so it's easy to imagine yourself in a pristine wilderness....until your kids start begging to go tubing. If you didn't bring any tubes, you can rent them at the marina as well. Scuba diving is also a popular activity due to the depth and clarity of the lake.

Once you've worn yourself out on the water, there are plenty of land-based activities to grab your attention, including the Cedar Creek Golf Course. Carved from the McCurtin County



Exhilaration on the zip line at Rough Creek Lodge

photo provided by Rough Creek Lodge

Wilderness Area, this 18-hole course's attributes include lush stands of pine, oak and hickory and abundant wildlife sightings. The par-72 course features a pro shop, resident pro, golf club and cart rentals, and is open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Mr. Miller noted that one of the most popular attractions for kids is the Beaver Bend Nature Center, which offers campfire programs on the banks of the river, nature hikes, arts and crafts classes and nature films. The park also has a children's train that runs throughout the day, bumper boat rides, four miles of mountain bike trails, sandy beaches with roped off swimming areas and river canoeing and kayaking. The onsite Forest Heritage Center Museum has displays and materials on the history of forestry.

Accommodations at Beavers Bend run from the primitive to the posh, including:

RV and Tent Camping – For \$8 a day, you can pitch your tent in one of the 15 "primitive" areas of the park. You can park the RV at "semi-modern" sites that

include water and electricity for \$15/day, and "modern" sites that include water, electricity and sewer for \$18/day. All sites have toilet facilities; some have full comfort station/shower facilities.

Our goal is to provide sophisticated country service to each guest by anticipating their every need and calling everyone by name.

Cabins – Beavers Bend has 48 cabins overlooking the river that come fully equipped with kitchen equipment and utensils, refrigerator, linens and air conditioning. The cabins range in size, from a studio that sleeps two to the two-bedroom/two bath models that sleep eight. No TV or telephone.

Lodge – The Beavers Bend Lodge is

a 40-room facility on a hill overlooking Broken Bow Lake. Each room features a balcony or patio with a lake view, cable TV and in-room coffee service. A complimentary breakfast is served each morning in the Lodge's Great Room overlooking the lake.

The park also features a full service restaurant and there are other dining choices available in nearby Broken Bow.

ROUGH CREEK LODGE

Next, We'll go south to Rough Creek Lodge in Glen Rose, Texas – only about 150 miles from Frisco.

Rough Creek Lodge opened ten years ago as an exclusive and luxurious men's hunting lodge, conference center and resort featuring 5-star dining. Numerous awards and accolades attest to the success of the original plan. In the last six years Rough Creek Lodge has expanded its appeal to include couples' weekend getaways, destination weddings and the best family escape and outdoor experience.

General Manager Paul Boccafogli

is like a proud parent describing the 11,000-acre property with its four lakes, oak trees, wildlife and rolling hills. "Our goal is to provide sophisticated country service to each guest by anticipating their every need and calling everyone by name," Mr. Boccafogli explained. "We want each guest to have the best experience possible in this intimate venue and visit us again and again."

The Lodge uses as its center an exquisite 40-foot Texas limestone fireplace that separates the Dining Room from the Great Room and lounge area. Oversized leather chairs welcome guests into the large rooms yet convey an intimate ambiance and rustic elegance. The wall of windows in the Lodge overlooks Mallard Lake, the largest of the lakes on the property. The relaxing view over the lake can be enjoyed while dining or from the Lodge's verandas, patios and private balconies in each guest room.

"After our recent expansion we now have 57 rooms, 18 of which are suites and four private cabins and two guest houses," Mr. Boccafogli said. "In the last round of spring storms we lost our rustic safari style tents but are replacing them with even better ones."

Frisco residents Betsy and Rex Lowe are repeat guests at Rough Creek and are hard pressed to pick a favorite amenity.

"After discovering Rough Creek we come several times a year to relax," said Mrs. Lowe. "My husband and I both enjoy shooting and the spa treatments. We were so pleased to find something this elegant and secluded yet so close to Frisco. And the food is wonderfully prepared and beautifully presented."

Executive Chef Gerard Thompson is the original chef for Rough Creek and has developed signature dishes like the Sherry Maple Glaze Texas Quail



Rough Creek Lodge Boathouse (top); Mesquite Grilled Texas Quail Appetizer (bottom) photos by Marc Chapman

Appetizer that has been on the menu since its inception. Other spectacular dishes include a main course of Oak Grilled "Akaushi" Petite Tender of Beef and Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp as a finale.

As a family resort Rough Creek offers much more than the expected swimming

and tennis. Outdoor entertainment includes a 300-yard driving range, horseback riding, fishing, paintball and more exotic activities like four-wheeling and zip lines. True to its beginnings as a hunting retreat, seasonal hunting for Upland birds including quail, pheasant, Chukar and turkey is offered. Wild boar, whitetail deer and elk are also available as guided hunts.

"Quail are native to this area but because of natural predators like red-tail hawks who take about eight percent of our birds, we stock 10,000 birds per month during the hunting season of October through March," Mr. Boccafogli stated. "We like to ensure our guests have a successful hunt."

Specific locations on the property also offer different types of shooting including sporting clays, a rifle range and archery.

"Women are particularly good at shooting because of their excellent hand-eye coordination," Mr. Boccafogli. "We see it as one of the fastest growing sports."

Women are also drawn to Rough Creek for a completely different reason – the opportunity for a unique destination wedding. The Chapel at Rough Creek can accommodate 230 guests in the intimate little white church. With the option of reserving the entire Lodge for the event Rough Creek's 100 employees can create an elegant and memorable celebration.

Reasonable distance, reasonable cost; to avoid having to make a decision and successfully satisfying all the

family members, maybe you should experience each location and enjoy two staycations this summer.

Lynda Haschke is a freelance writer living in Little Elm. Beth Robinson is the editor of Frisco STYLE Magazine. Website references are also on page 94.