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Muskoka, Ontario

THE SKINNY Muskoka is best known as cottage country approximately two hours north of Toronto. Set in an area that has 1,600 lakes, it spans more than 6,000 km from Georgian Bay to the tip of Lake Couchiching. About 60,000 people live there full time but that can almost double during the summer. The area is also peppered with great golf options thanks to a flurry of courses — both private and public — built over the past decade.

➤ **WHERE TO PLAY** The Bob Cupp/Tom McBroom-designed Deerhurst Highlands was the first in a new wave of courses in Muskoka and it remains among the very best. The course weaves up and down and through hardwood forests. Taboo, near Gravenhurst, is a Ron Garl creation that features rocky, Canadian Shield outcroppings and 18 wonderful holes. You'll need to take the boat over to Bigwin Island, a Doug Carrick course that has

limited public play. It has stunning vistas and is a very playable design. Three ClubLink courses — Rocky Crest, the Lake Joseph Club and Grandview's Mark O'Meara course — are all accessible if you stay at one of the resorts. Rocky Crest is easily the best option.

➤ **WHERE ELSE TO PLAY** After opening to poor reviews, The Rock, a Nick Faldo design, closed for a year and re-jigged its holes. While

it's still not easy, it's a much better course and deserves a second look. The historic Diamond In The Ruff is a fun nine-holer that shouldn't be missed. Muskoka Highlands has a links feel to its course and is an enjoyable and inexpensive place to play.



For more great travel destinations click on Golf Course Guide at scoregolf.com

➤ WHERE TO STAY

There are lots of great accommodation options in the area, from resorts to cottages. Deerhurst Resort, Rocky Crest and Taboo all offer wonderful rooms and a full load of amenities, dining and water-side attractions. The historic Cleveland's House has more than a century of history behind it and continues to build on that. National Geographic named the JW Marriott The Rosseau Muskoka as having one of the 10 best resort views. The rest of the facility is equally remarkable.

➤ WHAT ELSE TO DO

If you're not golfing, you should probably be on the water. Swimming, kayaking, water-skiing, tubing... the options are almost endless. You can also take a trip on North America's oldest operating steamship, the RMS Segwun. At night, a trip to the historic Kee to Bala to see live music is a tradition. Everyone from Count Basie and Duke Ellington to Blue Rodeo and Snoop Dogg has performed there.

➤ WHERE TO EAT

There are plenty of world-class chefs working throughout Muskoka and it's hard to leave here feeling hungry. The Water's Edge Wine Bar and Grill at the Lake Joseph Club is excellent for any meal. Dining at The Boathouse Bar & Grill at Taboo while watching the sunset is a perfect ending to a day. Other options include One Fifty Five in Bracebridge, where owners Michael and Marlene Rickard use vegetables from their own garden. For a fun, family style casual meal, try That Little Place By The Lights in Huntsville. And on your way up to Muskoka, it's worth a stop at Weber's on Highway 11. It's hard to miss and the burgers are worth the wait.