



THE FAMILY THAT ROADTRIPS 2GETHER, STAYS 2GETHER

30 Ways to Have Fun at Crystal Springs Resort in New Jersey

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A note about traveling during a still present pandemic: We spent extensive time researching safe places in states which have decreasing cases of COVID19 at the time of our visit. I knew Crystal Springs had hundreds (literally) of things to do outside while respecting social distancing practices. The resort did a very good job of clearly stating expectations and policies, consistently cleaning common areas and surfaces, and providing plenty of space between parties in common areas like pool decks. While we would "normally" explore a new town by visiting local sites and shops, we chose to stay on resort property.

[Crystal Springs Resort](#), the largest golf resort in the Northeast, offers so much more than "just" golf for families, couples, and friends who vacation together. Located in the northern part of New Jersey, an hour from Manhattan, the resort includes two resorts, situated three miles apart: *Grand Cascades Lodge* and *Minerals*. The resorts feature six golf courses (4 courses with 18 holes and 2 courses with 9 holes); 10 restaurants, bistros, and grills; three pool complexes; and hundreds (literally!) of ways to [have fun](#). I spent a wonderful weekend at *Grand Cascades Lodge* two years ago with college friends and have wanted to bring my family back ever since that visit.

[Grand Cascades Lodge](#), the larger of the two resorts, includes 250 guest rooms and suites, two pool complexes, golf courses, country club, 18 hole putting course, spa, wine cellar, and several restaurants and grills. [Minerals](#) includes 175 guest rooms and suites that feature views of the mountains, golf course, or pool. *Minerals* also includes a Sports Club, spa, golf course, indoor and outdoor pool complex, and 4 indoor and outdoor dining options.

Lodging at both resorts include traditional rooms, and one or two bedroom suites. Suites include separate bedrooms and bathrooms, full kitchen with appliances, living room with fireplace and pull out sofa, dining area, washer and dryer units, and outdoor balconies, many of which also have fireplaces. More information about *Grand Cascades Lodge* options can found [here](#) and information about *Minerals* can be found [here](#). We were hosted in a one bedroom [Long Pond Hearth Suite](#) at *Grand Cascades Lodge*, which is a one bedroom, one bathroom suite with a fireplace deck and it was the perfect fit.

Guests at both resorts receive reciprocity at the other resort and there is a shuttle that runs between the resorts and makes stops at the various golf courses. *Note: Due to state restrictions in summer 2020, guests are not allowed to visit the other resort and the shuttle is running. My family was able to explore the pool complex at Minerals Hotel for inclusion in this feature.*

Crystal Springs offers so many activities, workshops, and classes that it's impossible to do it all in one visit (perfect excuse for return visits!). We're sharing some of the activities we did (I am including some activities I did during my first visit) and some of the activities we witnessed while on property. While we divided it up by age, we know that everyone, regardless of age, will want to do just about everything! **A note about activities:** *Several activities are complimentary for resort guests; some activities require reservations and additional fees apply. Check [here](#) for the full list.*

10 Things Little Kids Will Want to Do:

1. **Slide down waterslides** at either the [Biosphere](#) pool or [Vista 180](#) pool at *Grand Cascades Lodge*. The pools range in depth from three feet to four feet. Both pool entrances offer several shallow steps that the toddler crew will enjoy, and one pool at the Vista 180 complex has a seated ledge around the perimeter.
2. **Practice putting** on the 18 hole grass putting course, located to the right of the main lobby of *Grand Cascades Lodge*. The course is the perfect size for beginner golfers.
3. **Watch a movie IN the pool** at *Grand Cascades Lodge*. During summer months, the Biosphere indoor pool hosts nightly viewings of popular animated films. Movies are also offered nightly at *Minerals*.
4. **Complete the photo scavenger hunt** by finding 16 images located throughout the resort. Each resort has its own scavenger hunt.

5. **Go round and round in the whirlpool** in the [Vista 180](#) complex. The smaller pool with the water slide has a separate whirlpool area that kids will love. Keep a close eye, however, as the current is strong! (There are two lifeguards attending to just the whirlpool and slide at all times.)
7. **Count the fish in the tanks** at both the Biosphere tank at *Grand Cascades Lodge* and the 6,000 gallon tank at the indoor pool complex at *Minerals*. Participate in the daily feeding of the Koi fish at *Grand Cascades Lodge*.
8. **Visit the farm animals**, which visit with Farmer Keith of Appalachian Animal Experience in nearby Vernon. Guests can visit with baby goats, bunnies, ducks, and chickens each day from 10am-2pm at *Grand Cascades Lodge* and on the weekends at *Minerals*.
9. **Run through the sprinklers** at the Splash Pad at *Minerals*.
10. **Create an arts and crafts project**, like decorating a succulent plant container or painting mandala rocks in the summer, decorating pumpkins in the fall, and decorating gingerbread houses in the winter.

10 Things Teenagers Will Want to Do:

1. **Practice archery or fishing skills** at the [Grand Cascades Quarry](#). Sign up for a semi- private archery lesson (offered daily in season) or fish in the 35,00 square foot catch and release pond.
2. **Play Glow Golf at night**. Both the golf balls and 9 tees on the putting green course glow in the dark. Guests are welcome to play until 10pm each night at *Grand Cascades Lodge*.
3. **Jump off the 13-foot ledge** at the *Minerals* main outdoor pool. Make sure to check out the views of the massive pool and surrounding grounds. (There are two lifeguards attending to just the ledge.)
4. **Play ping pong** on the deck of the *Grand Cascades Lodge* or by the indoor pool at *Minerals*. There is also an outdoor pool table and lawn games at *Grand Cascades Lodge*.
5. **Play FootGolf** on one of the golf courses at either resort. Using a soccer ball, participants must kick the ball into an oversized hole to score. Plan on 2+ hours to complete the 9-hole course.
6. **Play basketball** on the indoor court at *Minerals*.
7. **Listen to music** at the Moonshine at *Minerals*. The outdoor grill offers a great BBQ [menu](#) and live music on the weekends.
8. **Check out the Adventure Center** for options including goat yoga at *Minerals* and golf clinics at *Grand Cascades Lodge*.

9. **Have your picture taken with sparklers** at night at *Grand Cascades Lodge*. Each week, the resort hires local photographers who will capture guests spelling out messages with sparklers.

10. **Roast marshmallows** at both resorts, offered daily to all guests. Note: The amphitheater at *Grand Cascades Lodge* has a large open fire pit- great for s'mores but keep a very close eye on little ones.

10 Things Adults Will Want to Do:

1. **Play golf** on one of six courses located on resort property. Guests can also take a lesson from the [Leadbetter Golf Academy](#) or practice their swing at the driving range located near the Vista 180 complex. There is also a large pro shop that rents clubs and sells various merchandise and supplies.

2. **Swing a paddle or racket** on the courts at *Minerals*. The resort features 2 racquet ball courts and 2 tennis courts that guests can reserve. *Minerals Hotel* also offers daily fitness [classes](#) in cardio, aqua aerobics, yoga, self-defense, and spinning. *Note: Due to state restrictions for summer 2020, these classes are not currently offered.*

3. **Create a keepsake** from your visit with a Paint and Sip class or painting class at either resort.

4. **Watch the sunset** from any of the patios located throughout *Grand Cascades Lodge*. There are several tiers of patios that look at the Kittatinny Mountain Range. Each patio has fireplaces and fire pits with lots of options for lounging (outdoor sofas, lounge chairs, and even canopied daybeds). The views are great from *Minerals*, too!

5. **Take a tour of the wine cellar** in the lower level of the *Grand Cascades Lodge*. Climb down the spiral staircase (there is handicap accessibility via elevator) and enjoy private dining or a wine tasting class with the resident sommelier.

6. **Hone your bartending skills in a mixology class or wine tasting** with the resort sommelier at *Grand Cascades Lodge*. Mixology classes are offered on Saturday afternoons and wine classes are offered on Sunday afternoons in the wine cellar- both with tastings included. *Note: Due to state restrictions for summer 2020, these classes are not currently offered. I took a class the last time I visited Crystal Springs and loved it!*

7. **Explore the Chef's Garden** next to the amphitheater at *Grand Cascades Lodge*. The owner of Crystal Springs personally grows over 75 types of vegetables, herbs, and fruits that are used in the resort's restaurants.

8. **Walk the three mile Nature Trail** at *Grand Cascades Lodge* or hike the trail from the *Minerals Hotel*

to the Mountaintop Lake recreational area. There are also several hiking options at the nearby Appalachian Trail.

9. **Relax in either the indoor or outdoor hot tub** in the Biosphere at *Grand Cascades Lodge* or in the indoor hot tub at *Minerals*. Both resorts also offer saunas and steam rooms. *Note: Due to state restrictions for summer 2020, these areas are not currently open.*

10. **Be pampered** at either the [Reflections Spa](#) at *Grand Cascades Lodge* or the [Elements Spa](#) at *Minerals*. Both spas offer a wide variety of services- check [here](#) for more information and availability.

Some additional notes about activities at Crystal Springs Resort:

- A complete lists of 250+ activities assembled by the resort can be found [here](#).
- While we visited the resort in the summer, there are TONS of seasonal events, so it's worth a return visit to Crystal Springs every season. Check out special packages [here](#).
- The [Mountaintop Experience](#) deserves its own day when visiting Crystal Springs. Guests can take a shuttle (or drive) to the private, 100 acre lakeside area and enjoy activities such as archery, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, hiking, and horseback riding. We plan on checking this out on our next visit.

Dining at Crystal Springs: There are 10 options for dining at both the *Grand Cascades Lodge* and *Minerals* - find the complete list and details [here](#). While some restaurants were closed for summer 2020 due to state regulations, we were able to enjoy:

- Biosphere Café for grab and go salads, sandwiches, snacks, and frozen drinks. There are tables for eating that overlook the indoor pool. *Grand Cascades Lodge*
- [Vista 180 Grill](#) for burgers, hot dogs, snacks, and frozen drinks. There are outdoor tables for eating that overlook the pool complex. *Grand Cascades Lodge*
- [Crystal Tavern](#) for a variety of American fare and beautiful views of the resort. For summer 2020, the tavern has moved outdoors to the rotunda- we loved it! The tavern also offers take out options including eight different family meals. We loved this "feed the family" plan, as it had "kid friendly" options, was reasonably priced, and provided so much food, we had leftovers for lunch the following day. *Grand Cascades Lodge*

- Moonshine and [The Farmstand](#) for BBQ and all the fixings (and kids options too!) *Minerals*

Find the complete list of dining options for summer 2020 with details and dates [here](#).

A note about breakfast: Guests at both resorts can sample a wide variety of homemade pastries, scones, breads and granola; muffins, cereal, and fruit cups, and juices and coffee each morning. The homemade lavender bread was my absolute favorite (I took two loaves home to freeze!). Staff provide to go boxes for breakfast items and guests are welcome to enjoy breakfast outside throughout the property, or back in their rooms. This was by far the nicest, and tastiest, “continental breakfast” I have ever seen.

While we didn’t explore the local area, or eat off property, this [map](#) and this [list](#) (back pages) of local farms, breweries, wineries, and distilleries looks like a lot of fun.

Disclosure: My family was hosted by Crystal Springs Resort. All opinions expressed are my own.