Compared to some other lakes

An over view of the area

HOW DOES THE SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE AREA COMPARE TO OTHER LAKES

Smith Mountain Lake is, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful places along the East Coast of the country. Realestate taxes are as low as 52 cents on the hundred, i.e. a $250,000 home would typically have a tax base of about $1,500. Electric rates are as low as 3.4 cents per kWh., i.e. a typical 3,000 sq. ft. home, total electric, would have a total utility bill, heat and lights, of between $55 spring and fall to maybe $120-130 summer and winter.

We are 30 miles from Roanoke, 95,000 people and 40 miles from Lynchburg, 80,000 people. Who cares, well let me tell you that anything over a couple of hours driving is too far for a "day trip to the lake" and we don't have any large populated places that plague places like Lake Anna, and Deep Creek. Fishing isn't what it used to be years ago but all lakes cool off after everything gets settled in. 25 pound stripers don't usually even make it into the local papers. Largest stripers are 45 - 55 pounds, muskies go up to maybe 30 pounds and small mouth bass can get up to 5+ pounds. This lake isn't as good for large mouth bass as Kerr and Gaston because it isn't as warm but 8-10 bass are still here.

Over the years I've done some searching and continued some comments started by the folks we bought our home from about lakes along the East Coast of the U.S. We don't have them all in here yet but at least it is a start.

Dale Hollow Lake, Celina, Tenn.

Very remote almost no visible homes other than summer cabins. Beautiful but there is almost nothing there in the way of a normal community. Water level very low, shoreline shows at least a 6-foot drop. Celina closest town, with a population of about 1,500 population and about two and one half hours from Nashville and one hour from Cookeville. Celina is a very old, poor, small town with no restaurants.

Nickajack Lake, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Water level fluctuates 2 feet, and is semi-clean. No residential development, however there is a trailer here and there. Body of water very extensive. The lake is beautiful, with its mountainous scenic beauty. No apparent year-round people live there, i.e. only tourists and a few locals. Part of navigable-waters of Tenn. Hoodlums gangs around lake who strip and steal everything when you try to build, according to local deputy.

Chicamauga Lake, Chattanooga, Tenn.

TVA owns all waterfront land/property. An expensive lot runs $50,000 - $60,000 but you don't own to the water. This lake is an industrial lake with huge plants and factories and various types, (Dupont, etc.). Nuclear power plant very close to city. Rise and fall of water 5 to 10 ft. is common. There is a gorgeous country club on the water with big, beautiful old mansions around it. This lake has no feel for what we want to do much too much industry, water not very clean, docks allowed in only a very few areas.

Lake Sidney Lanier, Gainesville, Ga.

Water level low pool, 852 and high (full) pool, 871 size 38,000 acres and very populated with homes etc. Lanier is over 50 years old and has been almost totally developed. Water not as clear as Smith Mountain Lake (SML). Housing is as nice and as good as at SML. Prices of homes one-half to two-thirds of at SML. Lot prices about the same as SML but here closer to a big city and civilization. There is no riprapping of shoreline Corps of Engineers owns shoreline. You cannot cut any trees down along the shore, the docks have to be OK'd by the Corps of Engineers, and they are all floating, just as ugly as they can be, steel and tin framing on Styrofoam, just awful. City water and sewer, metro phone system. Reminds us of Stamford, Conn. Business moving out around lake.

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Lake Hartwell, Anderson, S.C.

Full pool is 660; low point this summer was 644, a drop of 16-ft. This is a very large lake with about 950 miles of shoreline and some 59,000 acres of water. Nicest lots were $60,000- $100,000 an acre, but no very nice areas. Lake is more rural and backward than Smith Mountain Lake, however this may be what some people are looking for. All docks are of the floating type and the Corps of Engineers owns the shoreline. It is about forty minutes to Greenville, two hours to Atlanta and four hours to Charleston. The atmosphere here, around the lake, is very country, however the top land value is about $400,000.

Lake Keowee, Greenville, S.C.

Seneca & Clemson are the nearby towns. The population seems to be about 65% retirement 35% active and the average age of 52 is coming down as time goes on. Has a nuclear plant and 316 miles of shoreline, only 1/3 of which ever be development. Located in "Golden Corner" of South Carolina Keowee full pool is 804, low pool, 790 with a fluctuation average of about two feet. George Cobb designed gold course in Keowee Key. This pristine lake area has 18,500 acres and 1,800 homes with absolutely gorgeous water views, probably equal if not better than views at Smith Mountain Lake. There seem to be more people from the northern portion of the area. Quite steep terrain and lots in developments are generally small in size, typical for prime waterfront areas.

Lake Norman, Charlotte, N.C.

Lake has both floating and permanent type docks. Nuclear power and steam station that burns coal. Homes here are very similar to Lake Lanier homes. No elevation surrounds lake. This lake looks like any other - could be anywhere, nothing special about it that we've seen. Some well built homes and trailers. The lake is located about twenty miles outside of Charlotte. Don't know rise and fall.

Kerr Lake (Buggs Island), Clarksville VA

Large lake with approximately 800 miles of shoreline, and it is about 50,000 acres in size. There is little or no riprapping of shoreline. Corps of Engineers owns shoreline and up to the 320 contour. You cannot cut any trees down along the shore, the docks have to be OK'd by the Corps of Engineers, and they are all floating docks. Full pond is 300 feet, lows are about 295 in normal summer months and highs are 310-325 in spring. Very muddy in spring, especially in the upper section, due to farm runoff. Very little residential development and almost no homes are seen from the water. This is a typical flatland lake depth about 100 feet at dam.

Watuaga Lake, Elizabethon, Tenn.

Extremely steep terrain, beautiful small to medium sized cold water lake. Very little residential development and almost no building codes in Carter County. Water extremely clean and clear, very deep. This is the first or highest lake on TVA system. Very remote and water level somewhat seasonal with normal 20 foot draw down during drought and or heavy use in TVA system.

Deep Creek Lake, Oakland, MD

Deep Creek is the center of Garrett County's recreational attractions, an ideal spot for year round vacationing. The lake is 12 miles in length with a shoreline of 65 miles covering nearly 3,900 acres sitting in the heart of the Allegheny Mountains. This little lake gets extremely crowded, especially on weekends and mostly on the northern half of the lake. During the day in the summer, fishing is almost impossible. However in the winter there is plenty of skiing to be had. Wisp Ski Resort offering 23 ski slopes and trails totaling 14 miles on 80 acres. Available activities include boating, water skiing, fishing, golfing, hiking, picnicking, whitewater rafting, sailing, downhill and cross country skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding and mountain biking.

Lake Gaston, Littleton, NC

Is located between South Hill, Virginia and Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. The lake is about 30 miles long and features 325 miles of shoreline and about 20,000 acres in size. Housing conditions are somewhat questionable in some areas, i.e. sub-standard. Lake Gaston is well stocked with game fish, including striped bass or rockfish, large mouth bass, crappie, sunfish and several varieties of catfish. Since the beginning of the Mosquito Insect Control program, bugs haven't been as much of a problem as before. In the late 1980s Gaston made local news when the controversial $150 million Lake Gaston water supply project, one of Virginia's largest and most fought over water utility projects, has ended the decades-long threat of crippling water shortages in Southside Hampton Roads by providing a new source of water to meet present and future needs. In 1985 it was discovered that hydrilla weed infestation was a problem on this lake. In 1994 A survey by VA/NC Power and NCSU showed that hydrilla had infested about 2,500 acres and in 1995 20,000 grass carp were added to the lake. The control seems to be working somewhat but it is still too early to tell. The Aquatic Nuisance Plant Control, Inc. is the contractor hired by the Council to control the growth of hydrilla in Lake Gaston. The ANPC is a fully integrated aquatic rescue management operation staffed by experts who have distinguished themselves over the years of local consulting and practical water resource management experience.

Smith Mountain Lake, Moneta, VA

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Is located half way between Roanoke and Lynchburg Virginia. Smith Mountain Lake is an impressive and picturesque man-made lake, about 30 minutes east of Roanoke and 45 minutes west of Lynchburg Virginia, covering some 20,000 acres of land within its 40 miles of length. The lake was created by the damming of the Roanoke River at Smith Mountain Gap and was completed in 1966. Smith Mountain was the first major pumped-storage electric generation facility built in the United States. Water held in the lower reservoir (Leesville) is pumped back into the upper reservoir (Smith Mountain) during off-peak hours for use in generating electricity during peak demand hours. The system can be held in standby and brought into full production in 15 minutes. Recreational activities include boating, fishing, restaurants, golfing and a state park with beaches and camping. Some of the 500 miles of shoreline has been developed with houses, townhomes, and condominiums, while other areas remain undeveloped and pristine making the lake a premiere resort and retirement area. Because the lake usually varies less than one foot fishing is more stable than on flood control type facilities. The lake contains large and small mouth bass, spotted bass, landlocked striped bass (stripers), walleye, muskellunge, yellow perch (ring perch), crappie (silver perch), bluegill (bream) and other sunfish, rock bass (redeye) and catfish.

Leesville Lake, Gretna, VA

Leesville Lake is part of the Smith Mountain Lake power system. Operation of the project makes maximum use of one of our natural resources - water - through a process called pumped storage. Water stored in Smith Mountain Lake first drops through the turbine generators in the Smith Mountain Dam powerhouse to produce electricity. Instead of allowing all of the spent water to run away downstream, much is caught and held by Leesville Dam, the lower dam in the project, to be pumped back into Smith Mountain Lake later for re-use. A portion of the water goes through turbine-generators at Leesville, generating additional electricity. Smith Mountain is a pumped storage project that utilizes an upper reservoir (Smith Mountain Lake) and a lower reservoir (Leesville Lake.) The water that is stored in Smith Mountain Lake first passes through turbine-generators in the powerhouse to produce electricity and is then discharged into Leesville Lake. Most of this water is retained in the Leesville Lake and is pumped back into the Smith Mountain Lake for re-use. A portion of the water goes through the turbine-generators at the Leesville powerhouse to generate additional electricity and to meet the minimum discharge requirements of the project's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license.

The Smith Mountain development utilizes a two-foot power pool. This means that when Smith Mountain generates power by passing water through the turbines, the Smith Mountain lake level can fluctuate up to two feet before the Leesville Lake becomes full. In other words, a two-foot decrease in Smith Mountain results in Leesville Lake increasing thirteen (13) feet or from a minimum elevation of 600 feet to maximum elevation of 613 feet. Once Leesville is full, power cannot be produced at Smith Mountain until some portion of the water is pumped back to Smith Mountain Lake.

There is no set schedule for operating the project. Generation generally takes place when the demand for electricity is high and water from the lower reservoir is pumped back into the upper reservoir when the demand for power is low. The operation of the project can change on an hourly basis depending on system demand.

The normal full pond elevation at Smith Mountain is 795 feet but the normal operating range under full pond conditions is considered to be between 793 feet and 795 feet because of the two-foot power pool. Normal operating range for Leesville is between 600 feet and 613 feet. Under low in-flow conditions, the pond elevation at Smith Mountain can fall below 793 feet.

Lake Anna, Fredericksburg, VA

This lake is located between Richmond and Fredericksburg and about 15 miles off I-95. The lake is about 20 miles long, with about 14,000 acres, and is a Nuclear power facility. One half of the impoundment is used as a cooling pond for the power plant. The lake becomes extremely crowded, especially on weekends, because it is a little too close to heavily populated area of Washington D.C. and Richmond VA. Fishing is extremely good in the wintertime because of the warming effects of the power plant. Summer time fishing is hard because of all the water activities and temperature.