

# RAYSTOWN LAKE...

I did most of my growing up near Raystown Lake. My family relocated to Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania in 1993 and has remained here since. Before that, we came from a very busy suburb of Philadelphia on the Jersey side, so you can image my surprise when I had to call up two more friends to come join me in my first adventure to the local movie theatre. It was the theatre's policy to only show the movie for six or more people. There were four of us.

Thankfully, my charm convinced my other buds and their understanding chauffeurs to drive down to see the show. Where would we be without moms?

It was a time for pulling out all of the stops though. This was a movie I HAD to see. This was a movie that I would graciously give up my hard-earned four dollars of allowance. This was Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*. I was eleven and you can imagine the excitement I felt when I first saw these digital dinos come to life.

Do you remember the movie? Do you remember riding in the helicopter? You enter the canyon and slowly descend into a world that is not at all like you are used to. As you exit the 'copter you transfer your gear into the Jeep Wrangler, equipped for the off road environment. This truly has become an adventure.

Then, as promised your Wrangler slides to a halt and you find yourself taken back millions of years as you stare at this epic creature. "I can't believe I am seeing this," is what went through my eleven-year-old imaginative mind. For those that are unwilling to suspend their disbelief and admit these creatures are real... "I can't believe Spielberg can make them *seem* so real!"

I go into such nostalgic cinematic detail because it is the best analogy I can come up with to describe my first adventure to Raystown Lake. "It's like 37 miles long," my friends tried to prepare me. I eventually found out its more like 30, but still you have to admit that's impressive and I wanted to see it.

Packed in our minivan, my family and I followed the winding roads toward our version of the prehistoric giant. Passing fields of corn and cow, I am starting to realize that I truly am in a new environment, but strangely, I begin to appreciate the pace, the smells, and most importantly the views.

We ascend the last hill and the lake reveals itself, slowly, majestically. It is as if I am back in that Jeep staring at this enormous gentle creature proud to exist and determined to stay. I gasp in disbelief. "It's even bigger than I imagined."

# “TAKE ONE”

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I wanted it all to myself when I first got there, but I guess that's how the lake presents itself. You see nothing but an expanse of water and trees that welcome you to the endless Allegheny Mountains.

“I can't believe I am seeing this,” I think to myself. However my disbelief is suspended as I learn that Raystown has its own Spielberg. The lake is a man made lake, but to its credit, it is the largest man made lake East of the Mississippi River.

Today I work in an office that overlooks Raystown Lake. In fact, I am privileged to do so. The reality is that my office is located on the 2% developed lands around the 118 miles of shoreline. As I read about other lakes that claim to be natural, I visit to compare. In fact they are the opposite. I see house on top of house, hotels everywhere, and private docks with no admittance. I think of how Raystown Lake today has maintained this impeccable balance between being man made, developed, and recreational and preserving the ecology of this environment. Many efforts have been taken to bring back native species that were once threatened. Nationally recognized trails have been built for bird watchers, nature enthusiasts and people who just like to exercise. Lands are public and everyone should feel welcome.

My job is simply to get people to come visit the Raystown Lake Region and while they are here, get them as excited about it as I am. The second part of my job is simple. When people are here the landscape has that thought-provoking element to it. I consider this article as an accomplishment of the first aspect of my job.

Consider this an invitation to the area. I am inviting you to step aboard that helicopter and escape your everyday lives. Take the winding roads that lead you to your ultimate destination. You will not need the perspective of an eleven-year-old boy watching dinosaurs to get you excited for what you are about to see. Whether it be the immediate beauty of the beast that captures you or the outstanding craftsmanship of our Spielberg, I can tell you your first glimpse of Raystown and its surrounding communities will stay in your minds and hearts for many years.

For more information on the Raystown Lake Region call **1-888-RAYSTOWN** or visit **www. Raystown.org**.

