

# MIDWESTERN TRAIPISE ACROSS NORTH MICHIGAN

SURROUNDED BY TWO OF THE GREAT LAKES AND ON THE SAME LATITUDE AS NOVA SCOTIA OR OREGON, THE CLIMATE HERE AT NORTH MICHIGAN IS PERFECT FOR GOLF, AS ARE ITS VARIOUS TRACTS. PICTURES AND WORDS BY DAVID J. WHYTE

Traverse City is the ideal access point, its 'Cherry Capital Airport' linking to international hubs such as Detroit or Chicago. This is a bright, lively lakeside community on the shores of Grand Traverse Bay with long sandy beaches and lots of bracing waterfront action. The city has cultural leanings also with museums, art galleries and the nearby Interlochan Centre for the Arts. But the one thing that really sets Traverse City apart is its food. There is a host of excellent restaurants throughout town, so much so that Traverse City has recently been voted the 'No. 1 Foodie Town' in the USA.

This is also Michigan's primary wine-producing region with a sandy sub-soil and good drainage that produces some remarkably fresh, clean-tasting, highly drinkable wines. Such conditions are also ideal for building golf courses.

A significant golf boom started here in the mid-1980's with designers such as Robert Trent Jones Sr., Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus leading the way to make this one of the US's finest - if perhaps lesser known - golf get-away.

## OTSEGO CLUB

One fine port of call here is a summer golf and winter ski resort called the Otsego Club. You find a lot of this on the gently rolling hillsides of Northern Michigan; resorts that cater for skiers through the wintertime that around mid-April magically transform themselves into great golf resorts.

The Otsego Club is home to 36



golf holes comprising of the "Classic" and "Tribute" courses. We played the Tribute, a good introduction to the nature of Northern Michigan golf. There is no shortage of variety here on holes that rise and fall sometimes quite dramatically hugging the rolling landscape. Also nearby is the inimitable Black Forest Golf Club, designed by local legend, Tom Doak.

## TREETOPS RESORT & SPA

In the same vicinity, you'll find the diverse 81 holes that make up Treetops Resort & Spa. Designers Robert Trent Jones, Sr., Tom Fazio and Rick Smith had a similar canvas to work on, rolling inland contours - but each came up with his own, entirely unique design.

Start with a round at the Par-3 Threetops Course, which is probably the most famous of its kind in the United States. In 2001, during the ESPN Par 3 Annual Shootout, Lee Trevino recorded an ace on the 7th hole earning him a

total of \$1,090,000 - the single most lucrative golf shot in history.

Rick Smith's Signature Course brings everything back to normal proportions. The Signature is a great driving course, blasting the ball from high tees down to curvaceous, gathering fairways. There is an old-fashioned flavour to Rick Smith's design with a touch of Sunningdale here in Middle America. Phil Mickelson is a big fan saying, "The Signature is one of my all-time favorite courses. The risk-reward situations make it so much fun to play."

## ARCADIA BLUFFS

Close to Crystal Mountain is Arcadia Bluffs, a remarkable piece of golf terrain overlooking Lake Michigan and certainly the most visually-striking course in this area. Arcadia Bluffs is designed to resemble a Scottish links sitting high on the bluffs and dramatically dropping towards the water.

The fairways are quite generous off the tee but it's the greens that catch you out. Always large with undulations that are perhaps a touch over exaggerated, they take a lot of getting used to but they can also be a lot of fun.

It is worth noting that Arcadia Bluffs offers an excellent standard of dining and 15 comfortable guest rooms.

Whether you stay over or not, you most

INSET: Otsego Club - Classic Course.  
MAIN PICTURE (RIGHT PAGE) TOP TO  
BOTTOM: Threetops Resort & Spa - Par  
3 Course; Arcadia Bluffs -Par 4, 14th hole.



definitely want to hang around for the main event of the day, which is the sun setting across Lake Michigan. Pull up an Adirondack chair with a glass of whisky in hand and enjoy the show.

### CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN

About 30 miles southwest of Traverse City is Crystal Mountain - rated as the No 1 Resort in the Midwest. This is the perfect escape for golfers who want to vacation with their families. Crystal Mountain's array of exciting activities makes it ideal for everyone. Its two courses, Betsie Valley and Mountain Ridge are easy-going with plenty of room for family golfers although there's challenge enough for more experienced players. The feel about Crystal Mountain can only be described as 'happy'. The staff is happy and the guests are clearly happy to be here - unless of course they carve one into the woods.

### SLEEPING BEAR DUNES

In its own modest, Midwestern way, Northern Michigan is an area of outstanding beauty. Sleeping Bear Dunes is one of the most popular

natural attractions in the area. Voted by ABC's "Good Morning America" as the 'Most Beautiful Place in America', you can try climbing these massive dunes to get a better look at the lake or take a much easier option, which is a scenic drive which stops at a dozen easy-to-get-to overlooks.

Otherwise, Northern Michigan is miles upon miles of forest, lakes, rivers and shoreline. Crystal clear lakes make it a haven for trout fishing, boating or simply sitting enjoying the views.

### BELVEDERE GOLF CLUB

Close to the charming town of Charlevoix, Belvedere Golf Club is one of the earliest courses in this area founded in 1925. Its leafy fairways would not be out of place in English home counties. Scottish designer, Willie Watson initially mapped the course out. Today, it retains naturally flowing fairways with rather challenging par fours and reachable par fives.

Many of golf's greats have brokered a visit to Belvedere, including Bobby Jones, Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen and Sam Snead. Legendary American golfer Tom Watson spent his youthful golf

holidays here and remains a member to this day. The course is semi-private but welcomes visitors after 1pm and we highly recommend adding Belvedere to your plans.

### BOYNE HIGHLANDS

Boyne Highlands was one of the first ski resorts to embrace golf during the summer months. There are plenty of activities surrounding the Lodge including mountain biking and zip-lining but with no less than 180 holes of golf connected with the resort, there's not much time for anything else.

The principal course is the old Heather track, a Robert Trent Jones Snr. classic parkland layout with long sweeping fairways, several strong doglegs and stretching Par fives. The Country Club of Boyne is a five-minute drive away, a more modern facility surrounded by three distinctly different courses: the Arthur Hills, The Donald Ross Memorial Course and The Moor.

Probably the most challenging among them is The Donald Ross Memorial. A great course in its own right and well worth playing not only to see how it emulates Ross's finer

moments in golf design but also how the natural terrain comes into play.

The Arthur Hills layout is more modern, tree-lined and well-bunkered. The front nine is fairly flat and forgiving. At the 12th, the land starts to rise to one of the highest prospects in North Michigan. The 13th is a steep drop back to ground level, a long par 5 but with a tailwind and a great drive you could reach it in two.

### THE INN AT BAY HARBOR

Just south of the pretty town of Petoskey, the place to stay is the Inn at Bay Harbor, a magnificent, luxurious hotel with uninterrupted views across the lake. The highlight of the day is a sunset dinner. Attached to The Inn and indeed a sister operation to Boyne Highlands are the 27 holes of Bay Harbor Golf Club.

You can generally pick your combination of nine holes but everyone will tell you, the Quarry and the Links are the most favoured. What's fascinating about this stunning set of golf holes is that not so long ago, this area was an industrial disaster zone, and for decades, the site of major cement works.

Now, out of the rubble has risen an all season luxury resort community, a world-class deep water harbour and the 27-hole Bay Harbor Golf Club. The Links section is a great golfing layout but for thrills there are few that can equal the Quarry.

### THE MAGIC OF MACKINAC ISLAND

From the mainland port of Mackinac City, ferries load up and make their way across the strait between the mainland and Mackinac Island. Mackinac Island preserves a bygone era when 'car culture' did not dominate. There are no motorised vehicles allowed on the island; everyone uses pedal power, horsepower or that much-neglected means of human transport - legs.

Stepping off the ferry and into Mackinac's Main Street, one of the first things you notice is the smell, which is a mélange of fudge and horse dung. This odd combination gives off a unique presence to the place but can be easily explained. There are dozens of fudge shops along Main Street with all of them making slabs of the gooey stuff on the premises. And 700

horses. Mackinac Island depends on horsepower for everything from taxis to furniture removals. If riding on an animal does not suit you, bicycles are also big and you can rent one at almost every other shop.

Overlooking the Straits of Mackinac, The Grand Hotel is one of the iconic hotels of America. Visited by presidents, heads of states, authors and entertainers, The Grand was built in 1887 and its front porch is reputed to be the longest in the world. Now it's a National Historic Landmark and still as elegant and vivacious as ever.

Across the road is an 18-hole course called the Jewel, owned by The Grand. Guests' golf clubs are transported from the dock by horse and cart and await at the clubhouse. The only thing that puzzles on this car-free island is that there are ride-on golf carts available and everyone uses them.

EXTREME LEFT FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Crystal Mountain 12th hole; Sleeping Bear Dunes. MAIN PICTURE: Belvedere Golf Club. EXTREME RIGHT FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Boyne Highlands 13th hole; The Inn at Bay Harbor.

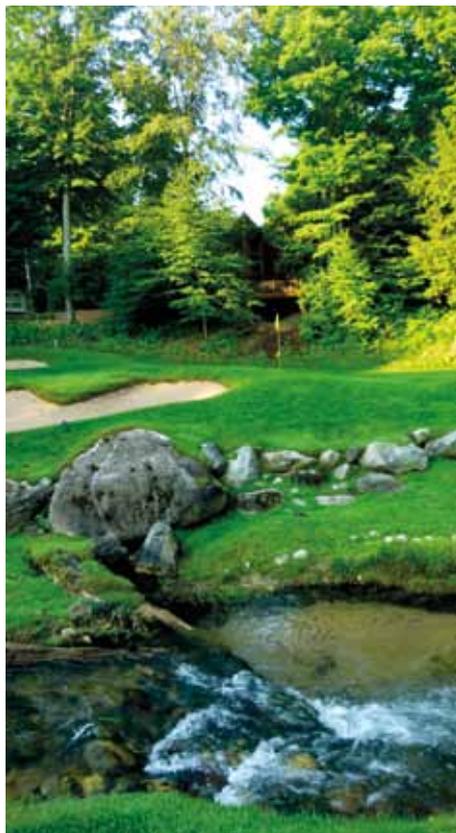




## Useful Links

Traverse City - [www.traversecity.com](http://www.traversecity.com)  
 The Otsego Club -  
 Treetops Resort - [www.treetops.com](http://www.treetops.com)  
 Crystal Mountain Resort - [www.crystalmountain.com](http://www.crystalmountain.com)  
 Arcadia Bluffs Golf Club - [www.arcadiabluffs.com](http://www.arcadiabluffs.com)  
 Belvedere Golf Club - [www.belvederegolfclub.com](http://www.belvederegolfclub.com)  
 Boyne Highlands - [www.boyne.com/BoyneHighlands](http://www.boyne.com/BoyneHighlands)  
 Inn at Bay Harbor - [www.innatbayharbor.com](http://www.innatbayharbor.com)  
 Bay Harbour Golf Club- [www.bayharborgolf.com](http://www.bayharborgolf.com)  
 Mackinac Island - [www.mackinacisland.org](http://www.mackinacisland.org)  
 Mission Point Resort - [www.missionpoint.com](http://www.missionpoint.com)  
 Wawashkamo Golf Club - [www.wawashkamo.com](http://www.wawashkamo.com)  
 Shanty Creek Resort - [www.shantycreek.com](http://www.shantycreek.com)  
 Kingsley Club - [www.kingsleyclub.com](http://www.kingsleyclub.com)  
 Michigan golf - [www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Mackinac Island, The Grand Hotel; Main street in Mackinac Island; Kingsley Club; Shanty Creek, The Legend.



offers four fabulous golf courses dotted throughout the property. Cedar River is surely one of the best playing courses in the area.

Tom Weiskopf designed this tight, twisting test through thick woods and over rolling terrain with the occasional stretch of water coming into play. The 7th and 8th are excellent examples. Holes 13 and 14 are also memorable on the back 9 with the 14th playing into an unusual, well-bunkered bowl. The Legend is also a fine test inviting downhill drives onto finely shaped fairways.

## KINGSLEY CLUB

To select a course to end the North Michigan experience is a hard thing, especially with so many captivating courses peppered throughout but if one is hard pressed, it would have to be the Kingsley Club, a private members club not far from Traverse City. If you write to them in advance, you can arrange a tee time.

This is a wild, tantalising ride through unforgettable terrain. It has a touch of hilly, seaside links combined with the spontaneity of a highland heath course. The turf is surprisingly firm which is great to hit off. From start to finish, this course is a joy, a microcosm of the experience one gets when visiting North Michigan.

**CREDIT:**  
*David J Whyte flew from Scotland to Northern Michigan with KLM and Delta Airlines.*

*You can view David J Whyte's exclusive video feature on 'Golfing in Northern Michigan' at [www.Go-Golf.TV](http://www.Go-Golf.TV)*

A more authentic golfing experience in terms of golfing tradition can be found at Wawashkamo Golf Club in the middle of the island. One has to walk to get there and although golf carts are available, you may also rent a set of hickory clubs and walk.

'Wawashkamo' was the local Indian name for the game they saw being played over this fairly flat ground. It translates as 'Walks a Crooked Trail'. Doesn't that say it all? The course is a

gorgeous little 9-hole layout with 18 different tee boxes set amongst trees and long swathes of wafting grass. Alex Smith from Carnoustie laid it out in 1898 so it's the oldest continuously played golf course in Michigan.

## SHANTY CREEK

Back on the mainland, Shanty Creek, about 90 miles south of Mackinaw City and 50 miles north-east of Traverse City