

MICHIGAN'S SUMMER OASIS FOR GOLFERS

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ho would have thought that Home Improvement wasn't the peak of Tim Allen's career? Although the affable Michigander has put out some watchable films (Toy Story comes to mind) since the hit show, his most compelling performance has been as the voice behind the "Pure Michigan" campaign. His low, soothing utterances describe picturesque Michigan landscapes that hypnotize unsuspecting viewers into firing up Travelocity and booking a flight to an underrated, freshwater oasis of world-class golf in and around Petoskey.

And while some "golf destinations" relegate non-golfing travelers to overpriced carnival rides, processed dinners at Applebee's, smoky casinos,

THERE'S ENOUGH
GOLF TO KEEP
YOU BUSY FOR A
MONTH, ENOUGH OF
EVERYTHING ELSE TO
KEEP YOU BUSY FOR
A SEASON.

Bay Harbor Golf Club - The
Quarry No. 3, 5, and 6

and cramped theaters screening the latest Channing Tatum debacle, northwest Michigan stands on its own as a destination even without the golf. Along the blinding, blue water of Lake Michigan awaits a mash-up of breathtaking pastoral beauty and quaint small-town charm, featuring world-class fishing, hiking, exquisite dining, brew-pubbing, horseback riding, zip-lining, and anything else people with pulses enjoy. There's a reason Ernest Hemingway devoted an entire collection of short stories to the Petoskey area. That guy, tortured though he may have been, knew how to have a good time.

But if it's just golf you're looking for, this is also your place: *Golf* magazine ranked the area as the #2 destination in the country for "concentrated golf quality." Boyne Highlands is the ideal base camp from which to attack the array of golf gems; clean, cozy, and doubling as a ski resort, its Bavarian charm complements the surrounding on-site golf majesty, specifically The Ross Memorial, The Heather, The Hills, and The Moor.

When Donald Ross professed, "It has been my good fortune to bring happiness to many men... and great trouble to many men," he probably didn't expect someone to replicate 18 of his most famous holes and put them in one place. In the case of the Ross Memorial course, we can take comfort in the fact that happiness trumps trouble and enjoyment trumps frustration. Though difficult to highlight a signature hole on a signature-hole-filled course, the 434 yard par-4 4th, which mimics the #14 at Pinehurst #2, is a good place to start. Like many of Ross' holes, it's longer than it looks and the green is more dramatic than it looks. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the course is that while each hole is so much different from the next, the serene, north woods horizon provides cohesion, resulting in a true golf course rather than merely a gimmicky collection of holes. Playing this track is like going to a dinner party where every appetizer—Seminole Golf Club, Oakland Hills, Oak Hill, Inverness, Aronimink (to name a few)—is delicious. The entrée is #10, a replica of the 14th at Royal Dornoch in Scotland, a course to which Tom Watson referred as "the most fun I've ever had playing golf."

While the Ross playing experience inspires awe, The Heather inspires white knuckles. With a 141 slope from the back tees at 7,154 yards, this course—the first at Boyne—baits you with wide fairways, then beats you with sand, water, and wetlands in places that you just can't help but hit. Even if you hold it together on the back, 18 is a 454-yard beast that, even with a bombed drive, requires a 170-200-ish all-carry strike to a slim, slippery green. It's a finishing hole that can quickly morph you into Kyle Stanley, Robert Garrigus, or (insert name of PGA

tour player who has gagged on himself on the last hole to close out a minor tournament that you're only watching because you happened to wake up from a two-hour nap).

If 18 ruins your round at the Heather, make the easy jaunt to The Hills for an equally demanding but no less enjoyable test. Arthur Hills is to risk-reward what Ben Crane is to slow play; it's just who he is. The fairways are wide and inviting but if you happen to miss one, bring your beach towel; apparently Hills liked the Sleeping Bear Dunes so much that he decided to bring them to his course. The yellow splotches (bunkers, waste areas) on the yardage guides seem to be as prevalent as the striped green splotches (fairways). A weak cut off the tee should be fine most of the time, but if you start to spray or hook it even a little, you'll be looking at 165 out of the sand, up a hill, and onto a green that's burying an elephant.

A short drive from Boyne, Bay Harbor—love child of links golf, parkland golf, and Golden Tee 2014—melds dramatic scenery with world-class design. Three distinct 9s—The Links, The Preserve, and The Quarry—meander through thick woods, over a quarry, and alongside the blue abyss of Lake Michigan. While fairways are wide-ish on most holes, the wind can make going after pins a reckless proposition, especially on the par 3s. At best you carom off a rock into Lake Michigan, at worst you end up in the living room of a million-dollar summer home. But it's hard to get frustrated with majestic, crystal blue Lake Michigan peering at you from all sides. In case



Boyne Highlands Hills



Bay Harbor Golf Club - The Links No. 7



Harbor Springs



The Heather



Belvedere GC Hole No. 16

the aforementioned tracks don't whet your appetite, the Petoskey area hosts a bevy of other courses with a range of design difficulty: the classic, rolling Moor at Boyne Highlands; the aptly named Crooked Tree across the street from Bay Harbor (soon to be redesigned by Arthur Hills to be a bit less "crooked"); the classic, understated throwback Belvedere Country Club in Charlevoix where the greens and the freshly-made burgers are equally immaculate.

So make the trip to Petoskey and Harbor Springs and you won't need Tim Allen to tell you what you're missing. There's enough golf to keep you busy for a month, enough of everything else to keep you busy for a season.

Boyne Highlands (The Ross, The Moor, The Heather, The Hills)

600 Highlands Drive, Harbor Springs, MI
800-GO-BOYNE
www.boyne.com

Bay Harbor Golf Club

US 31, Bay Harbor, MI
800-GO-BOYNE
www.boyne.com

Crooked Tree Golf Club

600 Crooked Tree Drive, Petoskey, MI
800-GO-BOYNE
www.boyne.com

Boyne Mountain (The Alpine, The Monument)

One Boyne Mountain Road, Boyne Falls, MI
800-GO-BOYNE
www.boyne.com

Belvedere Golf Club

5731 Marion Center Road, Charlevoix, MI
866-547-2611
www.belvederegolfclub.com