

Dunes offer scenic views by foot or car

By MARY BEVANS GILLET
Special to the Record-Eagle

If the thought of Lake Michigan dunes conjurs up strictly summer memories, look again. An autumn visit to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore promises an unparalleled view of scenic vistas, shifting sands and nature walks during the area's most colorful season.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, located about 30 miles west of Traverse City, stretches 33 miles along Lake Michigan's northwestern lower peninsula shore. Operated by the National Park Service, the lakeshore's 71,000-acre park extends as far south as Frankfort and as far north as Good Harbor Bay.

The Dunes are a product of several glacial assaults on the area 11,000 years ago that left a legacy of rock, sand and silt. Bluffs rise as high as 480 feet above the lake and often lead through "ghost forests" of ancient trees once covered by advancing dunes.

The name Sleeping Bear comes from a Chippewa Indian legend that tells of a bear and her two cubs who swam across Lake Michigan to escape a forest fire. The mother rerached the shore safely and climbed to the top of a dune to await the cubs who never arrived. Today she maintains her watch in the form of a dark hill atop a plateau, while her cubs have become the North and South Manitou Islands.

Whether you prefer to enjoy the area by foot or car, the Dunes offers a range of options to appeal to visitors of all ages. The Philip A. Hart Visitor Center, located on M-109 three miles north of Empire and two miles south of the Dune Climb, is open daily through October and on most week ends throughout the year. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Rangers on duty will explain the natural and cultural history of the area, distribute trail maps and provide visitor assistance. The center houses historical and nature exhibits, a large relief map and publications on the park. An orientation slide presentation and selected movies are shown in the center auditorium.

One of the most popular activities is the Dune Climb, five miles north of Empire on M-109. Since the early 1900's, visitors have been making the 130-foot trek from the base of the dunes to the top of the steep sand hill. From the top, climbers can enjoy an outstanding view of Glen Lake. More adventurous hikers can continue their walk two miles across the dune covered glacial plateau to the high bluffs overlooking Lake Michigan.

The Dunes Trail at Sleeping Bear Point, north on M-109 near Glen Haven, provides hikers with quick and easy access to the dune world without the climb required at the Dune Climb. Visitors will find the dunes to be more "dune-like" here than on the high Sleeping Bear plateau to the south.

Hikers can also take advantage of approximately 24 miles of walking trails throughout the heavily wooded park extending along the lakeshore. Seven walking trails, which double as cross country ski trails in the winter, stretch throughout the park and include beginner, intermediate and advanced loops. The footpaths pass through forests and meadows filled with the season's last wildflowers, migrating birds and vivid leaves. Several lead to magnificent overlooks like those at Empire Bluff and Pyramid Point. Trail maps are available at all trail heads and at the Visitors Center.

If you prefer scenic drives, several routes will offer a variety of enjoyable trips. One of the more popular ones, the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive near the Sleeping Bear Plateau, is closed for the rest of the year for roadway reconstruction and repair. The drive is slated for reopening by Summer 1987.

All remaining drives are in operation. These include routes to Good Harbor Bay, Miller Hill Overlook, Inspiration Point and through the Port Oneida-Pyramid Point Historic Farm District and Glen Haven Village. Each provides its own picturesque taste of the dune area including views of Glen Lake, the Manitou Islands, Sleeping Bear Bay and Good Harbor Bay as well as natural beauty of autumn forests and the charm of quaint villages and rural lanes of the historic districts. Maps for the scenic drives are available at the Visitors Center.

History buffs will enjoy passing through Glen Haven Village, six miles north of Empire on M-109. Entered in the National Register of Historic Places, the village was settled in 1860 and is an excellent example of a turn of the century company town. The Sleeping Bear Inn, built during the 1860's, is noted as a rare example of a "frontier hotel." Other sites include the "ALOHA," a Great Lakes Fishing tug, the Glen Haven Cannery Building and the old village post office-general store.

Also of historical interest is the Sleeping Bear Point Coast Guard Station Maritime Museum, located 1/2 mile west of Glen Haven Village. The Maritime Museum tells the story of the U.S. Lifesaving Service, the U.S. Lighthouse Service and their successor, the U.S. Coast Guard. A completely restored and equipped boathouse contains all the rescue equipment a 1910 lifesaver would need to make a rescue. The main museum building is housed in the old station residence and contains many interesting exhibits on the area maritime history. There is also a full-sized mock-up of a ship's pilot house and a restored lifesaving service crew's bunkhouse to visit.

For more information on the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, contact the Philip A. Hart Visitors Center at (616) 334-4017.

Joggers, bikers are welcome

TRAVERSE CITY — The traveler toting his jogging shoes along will find special areas such as the Grand Traverse Civic Center.

There also are a number of quiet streets and byways and area beaches on which to jog along and enjoy the color season.

For bikers, there are several designated bikeways in the region and many quiet sideroads.

More information is available at area motels, hotels, the tourism bureau and the Chamber of Commerce.

WHIMSICALITY

GREAT GIFTS / TREASURES / INTERIOR DESIGN

MON-SAT 9:30-5:30 502 East Front — Traverse City OPEN SUNDAYS 12:00-4:00

MICHIGAN RSCUP

Hotel / Motel / B&B
Reservations
616-947-1166

Traverse Area
One call does it all!

Expressing the qualities of the north in objects for the home environment

Home Elements

The Candle Factory

Along Traverse City's West Bay Waterfront