

The Riverside Inn, a bed and breakfast in Leland, offers a scenic waterway view.

MICKY JONES

# Traverse reveals state's treasures

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
contributing travel editor

I am driving north on M-22, a two-lane road that follows the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay from Traverse City to the end of the Leelanau Peninsula and then turns south again, along Lake Michigan, to the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. They call this thrust of land the "little finger" because it pokes up in the northwest quadrant of the mitten-shaped Lower Peninsula.

Through the trees that border the road, I can see sailboats fluttering like white butterflies as they move up and down the bay from Traverse City to the open water of Lake Michigan, just as paddle wheelers did a century ago when this was the lumbering capital of Michigan.

NOW IT'S the cherry capital of Michigan. In spring, the cherry blossoms leave a glory of pink and white litter on the summer cottages, craft shops, farmyards and wineries that make a very low-rise skyline on both sides of the road.

If you want high-rise hotels and championship golf courses, you don't stay on the Leelanau; you stay in Traverse City or at the Grand Traverse Resort two miles beyond in Acme. The Leelanau Peninsula is another kind of natural and human landscape: villages tucked into tiny bays, inland lakes surrounded by summer cottages, fresh fruit and vegetables sold at the side of the road.

There are condominiums at The Homestead in Glen Arbor and a few low-rise hotels like the Leland Lodge in Leland. Otherwise, the Leelanau is cottage, bed-and-breakfast and roadside lodge country. There are a dozen private homes that offer bed-and-breakfast in Northport. The Jolli Lodge and the Riverside Inn are

highly recommended in Leland.

It is only about 60 miles up one side of the Leelanau Peninsula and down the other, but if you drive too fast you'll miss everything. For example, you will zoom right past the tall ship Malabar, which offers bed-and-breakfast cabins and shared toilets just out of Traverse City.

The interesting part of the Leelanau Peninsula begins with a sign set in a bed of yellow flowers: Suttons Bay, Founded 1854. Turn the corner and you will find one blue and one yellow antique shop on either side of the Suttons Bay House and the nearby sidewalk cafe.

FOLLOW THE restored buildings on the main street past the stripped awnings and the balloons tied to car antennas and then turn right to the beach. There you will find the village hall and the town library in restored houses set by the sea.

Hattie's Grill has the best fresh fish in town. Krys Dahlberg has moved the Epicure from a downtown building to her home, but the food is still wonderful. Ask about buying canned cherries to take home with you from the local canning factory and whether Chip Stulen is still handcrafting boats at Karing Design.

The main stop I make on my rare trips up this side of the Leelanau is at the Tamarack Craftsman Gallery, one of the finest galleries in the Midwest. In the tiny village of Omena, David and Sally Viskochil could have opened the Tamarack in Detroit or Chicago, but they prefer the end of the one block of "downtown" Omena, down the hill from Leelanau Wine Cellars, across M-22 from the sand beach and up the sidewalk from Omena Country Store. Ask to see Lynn Spitz-Nagel's soft sculpture or Craig Cary's crazy furniture.

Leave town slowly, past the historic white clapboard church and with at least a brief stop at the gambling casino and craft shop on the Peshawbestown Indian Reservation.

Before you get into the town of Northport, you will pass a small sign to Ben Bowen's Plum Lane Inn, a very simple private home up a long country lane. Ben is the one who recognized a simple fact: Northport might not be big enough to support many hotels, but it could certainly use a bed-and-breakfast association.

BOATERS WON'T have to wade through the parking lot to get to the shops and restaurants of Northport this year as they often do; Lake Michigan dropped 20 inches so there is more beach than usual all up and down the Lake Michigan shoreline.

M-22 turns south at Northport but other roads lead on past North Country Gardens Bakery and Tea Room, and the North Shore Inn, bed-and-breakfast accommodations on the lake, to Grand Traverse Lighthouse. If you won't be staying long enough to justify the state park fees, park just short of the entrance and walk in. And then go on to the Happy Hour, on M 22 between Northport and Leland. That's where all the local folks go for hamburgers, beer and the purest martini in the area. Even if you don't like mahogany bars, pool tables and country bar food, you should stop just to see the No Smoking section: two chairs on either side of a video game table.

Leland was built where the river runs into the lake. The Indians called it "Mich-mi-go-bing," the place where the canoes run up the river because there is no harbor. Lelanders call the restored waterside area Fishtown, because the shops are built in old fishermen's shacks below the waterfall spanned by The Cove Restaurant and Falling Waters hotel. Ferries to North and South Manitou Islands leave from Leland.

The best fish in the northwest is in Leland. Buy the whitefish or the smoked chub from Carlson's Inn Fishtown and eat it on the dock. Or go to the Bluebird Restaurant and Bar, where they lightly bread and saute the fish the way fishermen have always done it. If you were smart enough to reserve ahead, or lucky enough to get bed and breakfast at the Riverside Inn.

IF YOU ARE going back to Traverse City, M-204 shortcuts back around Lake Leelanau to Suttons Bay. Good Harbor Vineyards, which makes the popular Trillium wine, is on this route; so is Boskydel Vineyard. Hawkey's is in Suttons Bay. (The best wine in the area is probably from Grand Traverse Vineyard on the Old Mission Peninsula, which divides the east and west arms of Grand Traverse Bay at Traverse City.)

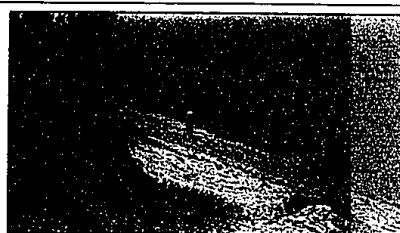
If you are on your way south there are still a few of those wonderful little things to do on your way. Stop at Manitou Farm Market and Bakery two miles south of Leland on M-22. If you missed the Happy Hour, try Art's Bar in Glen Arbor. If you love flowers, stop at a florist shop called the Wildflower in Glen Arbor and

order a beautiful arrangement of fresh wildflowers in a basket. Have dinner at La Becasse in Burdickville. Best of all, saved for the last, is Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. According to Chippewa Indian Legend, a mother bear and two cubs swam across Lake Michigan 10,000 years ago while fleeing from a forest fire on the other side of the lake. Momma bear made land and became the Sleeping Bear Dune, waiting forever for her cubs. The cubs didn't make it; look offshore and you will see them out there in the shape of North and South Manitou Islands.

If you have any energy left after doing that, mosey-and-poke down M-22 through the Leelanau, you can use it at the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. Canoe up the Platte River. Climb the great dune along with all the other big and little kids and slide down. Stroll the wooden walkways over the great mountains of sand.

There are all kinds of things to do on the way home. Stop at Presscraft Papers near Benzonia; that's where Gwen Frostie hand-prints her wonderful handmade papers. Take a 24-hour break at the couples rooms created by Kirk Lorenz at the Brookside Inn, Baulah or the Hotel Frankfort, Frankfort. Visit the Platte River Fish Hatchery. Detour for an overnight at Interlochen National Music Camp. Take the ferry to Wisconsin from Ludington.

On second thought, maybe you should just contact the Michigan Travel Bureau at (800) 543-YES for a list.



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This view is what you'll see atop the Sleeping Bear Dunes along the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive.

## Sand wall stirs mirage

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
staff writer

Come on, get out of the car. There it is in front of you, a great golden wall of sand, the biggest sand beach you have ever seen, tipped at a 45 degree angle and leading straight up to a summer blue sky.

So you've got other places to go, other things to do, get on your feet and get out of the car. This is the Dune Climb at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore; people all over the country come here to do this.

Ten feet into the Great Wall of Sand you take off your shoes. "Is the sand hot?" "Naw, it's OK."

Your feet sink in and sand squeaks between your toes. A third of the way up you slow down, look back and say, "Do I really want to do this?"

You have seen movies of the last man on earth climbing desert ridges. This is it, leg muscles straining, eyes focused on the haze of sun and sand shimmering at the top edge against the blue.

An Arab should come over that ridge on a camel, but no, it's a kid, two kids, in red T-shirts and caps. They climbed over the mountain to see what they could

see, and what they saw was more sand.

"What are you sitting down for?"

"The sand's getting hot."

"Yeah, let's run!"

"Are you kidding?"

The pianist! Where's the piano! On a plateau of sand. Beyond that, trees.

"The lake is a mile and a half away, you know. You want to go to the lake?"

"You must be kidding!"

Turn around and head down. Now you are the figure heading over the lip of sand, staring down like Lawrence of Arabia at seagulls making soaring bird shadows over the dunes.

"Sit down."

"No, you can't slide that way."

"Run!"

"Hey!"

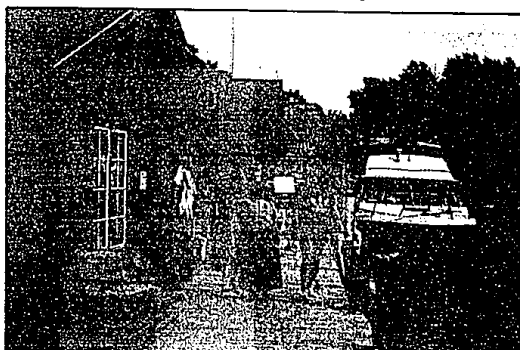
So there you go running, waving your arms, leaping into the air, galloping faster and faster, straight down the hill. Don't slow down or you will fall flat on your face in the sand.

You arrive at the bottom, back at your shoes, laughing like a maniac.

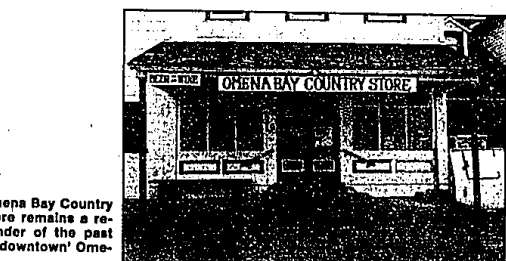
"Was that fun?"

"Yeah!"

Isn't you glad you got out of the car?



Fishtown earns its name from the shops built in old fishermen's shacks.



Omena Bay Country Store remains a reminder of the past in 'downtown' Omena.

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