

TRAVEL

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O&E Monday, September 2, 1991



Iris Jones

Leave summer behind at state fall festivals

The leaves are coming. In two weeks they will begin their crisp colorful descent across the Upper Peninsula. By the end of the month they will cross the Mackinac Bridge and begin to stain the ground around Mackinaw City and Traverse City.

By mid-October they will wrap their gold and green glory around Bay City and central Michigan, moving on south like a freight train of autumn color until they reach us in mid-October.

You can't stop them. Nature is in charge. They will roll down I-75 past Dayton and Cincinnati, through the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee, painting the world with their color and marking our calendars with the promise of winter to come.

For many of us, it is a favorite time of year, a time of autumn festivals and weekend getaways, with the kids in school and the heat of summer fading away.

You like festivals? Check out the action this weekend, Sept. 6-8, at either the Michigan Wine and Harvest Festival in Kalamazoo and Paw Paw or the Michigan Potato Festival in Posen and Edmore.

Or start at the western end of the UP with the Sept. 14-15 Oktoberfest in Copper Harbor, hit the Ewen Log-Jam-Boree Sept. 27-28 and end up Oct. 11-12 at either the Pumpkinfest in Bessemer or the Oktoberfest in Iron Mountain.

There's an Oct. 4-6 Red Planet Festival in Cedar Springs and an Oct. 11-13 Oktoberfest in Frankenth. Call toll-free (800) 542-YES for a booklet called Michigan Fall Secrets from the Michigan Travel Bureau.

It will tell you about the three Great Lakes circle tours posted around lakes Michigan, Huron or Superior.

Explore the Agawa Canyon color train out of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, which leaves daily at 8 a.m. for the 230-mile trek north into the autumn-leaf glory of Agawa Canyon.

Or the Southern Michigan Railroad trains that leave every weekend from Clinton and Tecumseh to Raisin Center, call (517) 423-7230.

Or the Bluewater Michigan Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, which runs a pair of fall color tours by special excursion train that run from Birmingham to the Thumb, a 200-mile circle, Oct. 19 and 20.

Ride a canoe or take one of the fall color tours offered Sept. 29 through Oct. 21 on the Au Sable River Queen. Take a hot air balloon above the trees at sunrise or sunset from Capt. Phogg Balloon Rides in Fenton.

Did somebody say cider mills? We've got a million of them, starting with Adrien and Armada and ending with Ypsilanti. Check the state book for addresses.

And if you'd rather hang out a sign that reads "gone fishin'" we've got a million fishing tournaments for you.

We like to think that nobody else in the world has color like Michigan's color, but you can follow it down Interstate 75 to the mountains north of Atlanta before it begins to fade. Call Kenney's "Color Fall line toll-free at (800) 225-TRIP for color dates, late September to early November, when the color peaks in the southeast.

To the lighthouse at Big Bay Point

By John Monaghan
special writer

When the sun sets on Lake Superior, you'll know where to find the guests of the Big Bay Point Lighthouse. In the lower, high among the bluffs, I joined in the show as the glowing orange ball bid another good night to the Upper Peninsula shoreline.



Photos by MICKY JONES

Big Bay Lighthouse is the only privately owned and operated lighthouse on the Great Lakes and the only one in the country where guests sleep right on the premises, according to the innkeepers.

I had arrived just an hour before to find a pink sheet of paper taped to my bedroom door. Innkeepers Buck and Marilyn Gotschall leave these for all overnight guests, a tongue-in-cheek description of duties while staying overnight. A button attached to the instructions distinguished me as a Keeper's Helper.

I didn't have to monitor weather

conditions or replace a lamp filament, but I did feel, for a night anyway, that I guided the mighty Great Lakes freighters as the Big Bay beam traveled out over the waves.

According to the innkeepers, Big Bay Lighthouse is the only privately owned and operated lighthouse on the Great Lakes and the only one in the country where guests sleep right on the premises. The Gotschalls bought the historic 1896 brick structure in 1986 and immediately opened it as an inn.

"Guests like the mile of shoreline," Buck said. "It's rocky and craggy and good for rock-hounding."

Buck is a great kisser who picked up tennis at age 50 and has since whipped players half his age in statewide tournaments. He's also an avid sailor and pilot with his own airstrip and plane 100 feet from the front door. Marilyn, meanwhile, is a world traveler.

The breakfast conversation, as a result, is especially fascinating. Stories about Italian vacations. About the bear who ran into the woods with a trash can. About Buck's growing-up years in the same Indiana town where James Dean lived.

Big Bay Lighthouse has all the warmth and friendliness you expect from a great bed and breakfast, but it's not a luxury stay. Like the craggy rocks on which it sits, the lighthouse is more than a little rough around the edges.

During my visit, tools and books were piled high on a stair landing. The honey, cluttered common rooms displayed postcards and T-shirts for sale. Some corners needed redecorating, others a simple straightening and dusting.

Six upstairs guest rooms, which command \$65 to \$155 per night, are sparsely decorated and comfortable. Some share bathrooms down the hall. The Tower Room, with its dramatic view of the lake, remains the most requested.

The guests gather after dark in the first-floor living room, where the great stone fireplace takes a bite out of the cold lake wind; the

wind can beat fiercely during a fall gale. Our conversation turned to William Pryor, the original Big Bay Point lighthouse keeper, who died under mysterious circumstances in 1901 and whose ghost reportedly roams the bluffs.

"He whispers to me in the spring to go fishing," Buck said. "I go, because I don't want a mad ghost around, but Marilyn doesn't hear him and she is getting suspicious!"

The second-floor library leads to a circular staircase and up to the tower, 120 feet above the water, where the light casts its beam. The current lighting apparatus is considerably smaller than the original Fresnel lens, which is on display in the foghouse.

Buck notes that it came from Paris with a list of 52 lighting instructions.

Breakfast is in two shifts, six guests each, during busy summer mornings, and it emphasizes the healthy and homegrown. We started with a whipped fruit drink of peaches, pears, apples, red raspberries and a touch of yogurt. Homemade muffins came next, followed by delicious yogurt/buttermilk waffles. They serve white-

fish or brook trout in season.

The innkeepers suggest (and so do I) the 4 1/2 hour \$25 tour of Big Bay with friend and neighbor Jeff Ten Eyck. He guides the adventurous to favorite spots, hopping stone-to-stone over rushing water or scaling medium-sized cliffs. Jeff caters to any guest, including the elderly or disabled, who wants to journey by van to hiking sites and enjoy a trail lunch of U.P. pasties.

The innkeepers have blazed a pleasant trail that begins as a tree-lined path, then ends in meadows along the Lake Superior bluffs, so you can hike around the property. Explore the town restaurants and the spots made familiar by "Anatomy of a Murderer," the 1959 movie which was filmed here and in nearby Marquette.

For more information, contact Big Bay Point Lighthouse, No. 3 Lighthouse Road, Big Bay, Mich. 49808, (806) 345-9957. There's a two-day minimum on the weekend. During your second breakfast, you'll be upgraded to Senior Helper, but your only real responsibilities will be to relax and enjoy one of the country's most unusual bed-and-breakfast experiences.



A fireplace at Big Bay Lighthouse bed and breakfast takes the bite out of the cold lake wind.

travel notes

● DESTINATION USA

● Washington, D.C.'s 200th birthday will be celebrated in grand style on Pennsylvania Avenue from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday and Monday Oct. 13-14. Columbus Day Weekend, when the city's first Taste-DC festival is held. A quarter million people are expected to attend, with foods available from 30 of D.C.'s top restaurants.

● The Chattanooga Choo-choo's Golden Anniversary Special tour leaves New York's Pennsylvania Station and whistle-stops through eight states before arriving in Chattanooga, Tenn. on Sept. 10.

● The Choo-choo celebrates the 50th anniversary of the well-known Ben Miller recording and follows its route. The number of seats has been doubled from 200 to 400, so rates have been reduced to \$225 single or \$385 a couple.

● That's a great deal more than anybody paid 50 years ago, but it includes air fare on Delta to New York City and back from Chattanooga plus hotels at either end. If you think that nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina in the morning, call the Chattanooga Convention and Visitors Bureau at (615) 756-8887.

● The National Civil Rights Museum opens Labor Day weekend in Memphis, Tenn., making it the first civil rights museum in the country. There are mixed reviews on this 10,000-square-foot museum built on the site of the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King Jr. was killed on April 4, 1968.

The museum will have 15 interac-

tive exhibits highlighting significant events and places in the movement. A laser beam traces the path of the bullet shot from across Mulberry Street.

● The Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale may not sound like a world-shaking event but quilt-lovers wait for it all year. It takes places 6 a.m. to mid-afternoon Sept. 28 at the 411 Fairgrounds in Goshen, Ind.

The quilt auction is at 8 a.m., antique auction at 8:30 a.m. and the new and used auction and 9 a.m. There's an open house 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sept. 27 if you want to look at what's coming up. Free admission and parking.

The sale is a means of raising funds for the Worldwide Relief Program of the Mennonite Central Committee, now in its 72nd year. This is the highlight event of the year in Indiana Amish country.

clarification

An incorrect area code for information on Shaker Village was printed on the Observer & Eccentric Travel page. The correct area code and phone number is 606-734-5411.

The Napa Valley Wine Train route is 36 miles.

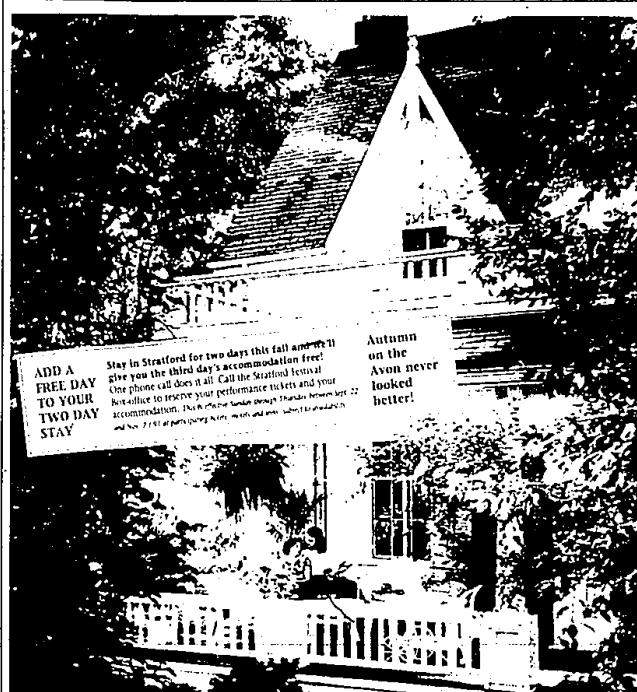
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