

Town is Michigan's midpoint

Travelers find that Clare is halfway to everywhere

Draw a north-south line from the Mackinac Bridge south to the Indiana-Ohio border. Draw an east-west line at right angles exactly halfway down the lower peninsula. The two lines will cross just south of the intersection of U.S. 10 and U.S. 27.

What you'll find at that intersection is the town of Clare, once the midway or overnight stopping place for travelers en route from one part of Michigan to another. It doesn't matter whether you are traveling from Detroit to Traverse City, Alpena to Benton Harbor or Cheboygan to Coldwater, Clare always seems to be the halfway point.

When Alfred James Doherty, a retired state senator, built the Doherty Hotel in 1924, he had a constant flow of commercial travelers and tourists to his table and his bedrooms. His grandson, A.J. Doherty II, still has a constant flow of travelers to his table, especially to his Sunday buffet, but Clare is an insider's destination now, and the insiders like to keep it to themselves.

What happened to Clare was Interstate-75, which now speeds us from Bay City to Grayling, totally bypassing Clare. Insiders slip off I-75 at Midland and take U.S. 10 into the small town set in its low nest of hills.

Most of them park in A.J.'s parking lot at the Doherty Hotel, which now has a newer motel wing and back-of-the-house banquet facilities that weren't there in the senator's time. A.J. recently uncovered old wall murals in the bar that have been there for decades, little green leprechauns and all.

YOU CAN REAT a room at the hotel from \$25 to \$40, but most of the visitors come for meals. They join the locals at their round table in the bar during lunch, have dinner or crowd the dining room and bar for the Sunday Groaning Board.

A.J.'s Sunday buffet, \$7.95 all-you-can-eat, is a masterpiece: huge juicy roast beef along with other savouries, a salad bar littered with loaves of fresh bread and highlighted by a huge bowl of crumbled blue cheese. A.J. doesn't like to even think about what that big bowl of expensive blue cheese costs him every Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8

p.m. when locals and tourists raid the buffet.

In winter, you will find a lot of people there in ski clothes. Being halfway to everywhere, Clare is a great stopping place for metro Detroiters going to any of the ski areas northwest towards Traverse City, including the Boynes.

About 45 ice fishermen crowd his rooms and his table every January, driving north from Clare to Flip-Up Town on Houghton Lake. (Held this year Jan. 15-16 and 22-23.) Winter lovers go ice fishing on Houghton Lake, snowmobiling in Harrison, and cross country skiing within five miles of town.

The rest of us, sluggards that we are, just like to visit Clare on a Sunday drive, watching the snow dripping off the barns along the way and letting the juices dribble down our chin when we get there.

You can reach A.J. at (517) 386-3441 if you want to join us. Consider also the dinner theater ("Annie Get Your Gun," Jan. 27-28 or Feb. 4-5), Big Band Night dinner dance Feb. 26 and the Irish Festival March 12.

A CANADIAN WINTER CARNIVAL worth thinking about is Winterlude, Feb. 4-13 in Ottawa. Canada's capital features 25 events on the historic Rideau Canal, the world's longest skating rink, which runs through downtown in the shadow of both the parliament buildings and the Chateau Laurier Hotel.



1-of-a-kind traveler Iris Jones contributing travel editor

You can take a sleigh to Dow's Lake for the Ice Dream, a musical village with nearly 100 ice sculptures in res-

dence. You can also enjoy bed races, barrel jumping, skating shows, frozen fireworks, marathons and lots of winter-partying.

Via Rail Canada has train packages for one or two nights ranging from \$84 to \$107 for one night, \$112 to \$157 for two nights, including round-trip transportation from Toronto to Ottawa and accommodations.

Contact your travel agent, the Canadian Government Office of Tourism (963-8585) or ViaRail (963-8037).

LODGE-TO-SKING is also a great attraction in Canada, specifically in our neighbouring province of Ontario. A ski package allows you to ski groomed trails between O-Pee-Chee

Lake Lodge 40 miles north of North Bay, Ravencroft Lodge on Jumping Caribou Lake 12 miles away and White Gables Lodge on Temagami Lake 18 miles beyond that. Each lodge has a network of additional cross country ski trails circling the lodge itself.

The package offers six nights, (two in each lodge) including all meals and recreational facilities and accommodations in winterized and equipped house-keeping cabins for \$359 per skier. Lodges accessible via Highway 17 from Ottawa or Highway 11 and Northlander rail service from Toronto.

Contact Lodge-to-lodge skiing, P.O. Box 21, Temagami, Ontario P0H 2H0 or phone (705) 569-3755.



Bill Evans of W 3 Adventure (left) and two adventurous ski touring guests sit atop a quinzee snow house in western Quebec. The quinzee is a comfortable and secure overnight shelter for winter campers.

House of snow offers winter shelter

By Tony Sloan special writer

The cone-shaped piles of snow rose ever higher in the late afternoon sun. It was getting steadily colder and one wondered if this sleeping overnight in a quinzee was such a good idea after all.

There were 12 of us out there in the woods, somewhere along the Canadian Ski Marathon Trail near Calumet, Quebec. Calumet is about halfway between Montreal and Ottawa, on Highway 148.

We had left the cozy confines of the W 3 Adventure base camp (Riviere Rough Motel and Restaurant) and after skiling with full trail packs for several hours, had proceeded to make camp for the night.

W 3 Adventure is a year-round outdoor recreational instruction and holiday center that specializes in Nordic ski touring, camping and survival and rescue training in winter while running, hiking, mountain climbing, kayaking and wild water river rafting expeditions in the Rough River Valley in summer.

The unusual feature of our camp in the wilderness was the quinzees. There were four of them under construction, each designed to sleep three skiers.

In more physical terms, it means clearing or at least disturbing the snow in a circular area

approximately 16 feet in diameter and then proceeding to pile it back in the center. The snow is piled to a height of 7 feet. This takes between one and two hours depending on the enthusiasm of the shovelers.

Once the desired height is attained — the shape forms automatically — the snow is allowed to set or crystallize and bond for an hour or more. A ground-level doorway, just large enough to admit a person on hands and knees, is carved out, and the excavator proceeds to hollow out the interior.

A 7-foot-high quinzee will sleep three adults.

Bill Evans and Malcolm Cox of W 3 Adventure maintained close supervision on the tricky hollowing out procedure.

A special insulating pad placed under the sleeping bag protects the camper from the cold ground. Both pad and bag are then encased in a waterproof "Bivo" sack which protects the sleeping compartment from moisture from the floor or melted snow.

The temperature inside the quinzee was a degree or two below freezing and quite comfortable.

Candle light flickered on the silver-domed ceiling, and the cold breeze whispered harmlessly outside the low entrance way. It was not only secure and snug, our snow shelter was quite beautiful in a simplistic sort of way.

The shelter's snow crystals continued to bond ever stronger during the night. By morning, ten people were able to sit or stand on the roof of the quinzee to prove the strength of the structure; in fact, the walls had to be cut through with shovels to collapse the roofs prior to our departure.

Quinzee camping while ski touring is a fairly rugged experience since it involves hours of intensive shoveling.

The huts can be used for a maximum of three nights before they have to be scaled or de-iced. The ice glaze that forms on the inside walls eliminates the porosity of the snow and the quinzee becomes too cold for comfort.

The three principals in W 3 Adventure, Bill Evans, Keith Wilkinson and Bill Powney, are all certified ski instructors and experienced river rafters.

The winter instructional programs revolve around cross country skiing. They offer certificates in first aid and winter rescue, as well as professional guide level qualifications and leadership skills for Nordic ski tours.

Anyone wishing to acquire a new outdoor skill, expand their current knowledge or just have a pleasant outdoor adventure, should contact W 3 Adventure, C.P. 553, Succ. Westmount, Quebec H3Z 2T6 or call (514) 933-0801.

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