

TRAVEL

Great Lakes have islands for all seasons, tastes

By MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

Like people, islands possess distinct personalities. Some are laid back and carefree - others are lively and alluring. Let's take a peek at four different Great Lakes islands which lure visitors to their shores.

Beaver Island

On a wintry weekend last January, Ron Cabbie climbed into an 8-passenger plane in Charlevoix with a handful of other hunters. Fifteen minutes later, the plane landed on Beaver Island, the largest island in Lake Michigan.

"I went to hunt snowshoe hares," said Cabbie, as he

described his first visit to Michigan's most inhabited island.

"There was three feet of snow in the woods. The challenge (for us) was hunting white on white. We would see the hares for only a second," said the Livonia resident.

At weekend's end, Cabbie and crew counted 27 hares.

Beaver Island, measuring 53 square miles of mostly forested land, attracts more than hunters. Cross country skiing and ice fishing are popular winter sports.

Throughout October and into November, moderate temperatures remain. Fall tourists explore the glacier-carved terrain on foot, by bicycle or rented

car.

Past inhabitants of this isle represent a colorful mix. Native Americans, French voyageurs and Irish immigrants have called Beaver Island "home." Visit the Old Mormon Print Shop for some fascinating details on the life of James Jesse Strang, a Mormon who crowned himself "king" of the island in 1850. Other attractions include a marine museum and several lighthouses.

Mackinac Island

Mike Wozniak returned to Mackinac Island this past August for several reasons. "I was part of the (Boy Scout) Southeast Michigan Regional Contingent. I went to earn service hours and meet all the friends I made last year," said the Livonia resident.

Wozniak crossed the Straits of Mackinac to reach the island via ferry. Cars are not allowed on the three-mile-long isle.

He participated in a flag detail and also acted as a guide. His brother, Dan, attended last year. Both boys are members of St. Michael's Boy Scout Troop 271 in Livonia.

"We would raise the flags at the Fort, the Governor's Mansion, the visitors center, the Post Cemetery and all the historic homes on the island."

As a guide, his "favorite" duty was at the Biddle House, one of the island's oldest homes.

"There were always three crafters - one sewed and the other two would cook," said the Divino Child high schooler, as he recalled a yummy slice of apple pie from an 1800s recipe.

Put-in-Bay

The adventure to South Bass Island, more commonly called Put-in-Bay, begins with the ferry trip across Lake Erie.

"The boat ride was interesting. The seagulls followed us. Some of the passengers threw popcorn into the air and the seagulls would catch it," said Westland resident Barnadette Diroff.

Once you arrive on the island, located three miles north of the



Flag raisers: Mike Wozniak, of Livonia, right, facing forward, joins other Boy Scouts in raising the flag at Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island, the most popular of the Great Lakes islands.

PHOTO BY TOM WOODRICK

Ohio mainland, plan to explore on foot, by bicycle or via an electric cart. Automobiles are scarce.

"It was so much fun riding around all day in a golf cart. We drove to one end of the island as far as we could. My grandchildren stood on the shore and skipped rocks," said Diroff.

During the summer months, the Main Street scene fills with strollers, couples holding hands, shoppers and people watchers. Autumn weekends are less crowded and quieter.

Just minutes from downtown is Heineman's winery, an informal watering hole, which offers wine and grape juices by the glass or bottle. Bring a jacket (the temperatures average 50 degrees) and journey down into Heineman's Crystal Cave, the world's largest geode.

Meander across the road from Heineman's and check out Perry's Cave. Supplies and prisoners were kept in this cave during the War of 1812.

One more stop before you ram-

ble back to the boat dock - Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial. What a spectacular view from atop the structure of South Bass and her neighboring isles in Lake Erie!

Kelley's Island

A recent overnighter on Kelley's Island, the largest American island in Lake Erie, left this writer with a yearning to return. The island's downtown district delivers a short stretch of shops, plentiful ice cream choices, a toy museum, bicycle/cart rentals and boat docks.

Take the gang to the casual Bag the Moon Saloon for a lunch break or order a pitcher of frothy Brandy Alexanders at the Village Pump. Looking for an elegant eatery without a stuffy dress code? Then reserve a table at Kenny's Place.

Once you've rented a golf cart (my personal preference for cruising the four-mile isle), head inland to Kelley's Island Wine Company. Here you can sip a

glass of crisp Sunset Pink or nibble on bite-size pieces of cheese and apple slices.

Your next stop via the two-lane road takes you to the Glacial Grooves State Memorial.

Pretend you're an amateur geologist as you stroll the pathway surrounding this 440-foot-long by 35-foot-wide slab of limestone. You're looking at the world's largest display of glacial grooves.

Once you're back on the road head to the Butterfly Box. Wander into the "back" room to the colorful butterfly garden. Quiet please! The fluttering beauties like to rest on shoulders.

As daylight slowly slips away, return your cart and join the exiting crowd on a ferry back to Ohio's mainland.

Better yet, why not plan a sleepover? Options include cottages, condos, campground sites and rooms in a 19th century Victorian inn.

Mary Quinley is a Livonia freelance writer.

If you go

■ Beaver Island: The Beaver Island Boat Co. (616)547-2311 provides passenger, car and freight service to and from Charlevoix and Beaver Island from April to December. For a schedule of air travel between the island and the mainland call (800)524-6895. For information on accommodations, activities and car rentals, contact The Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 5, Beaver Island, MI 49782. (616)448-2505 or (616)547-2301.

■ Mackinac Island: Three boat lines provide ferry service to Mackinac Island: Arnold Transit, (800)542-8528 or (906)847-3351, Shepler's, (800)828-0157 or (616)435-5023 and Star Line, (800)638-9892 or (616)438-5045. Call the Mackinac Island Airport, (906)847-3231, for flight information regarding air travel. Contact the Mackinac Island Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, P.O. Box 451, Mackinac Island, MI 49757, (800)4-LILACS or (906)847-3783 for further information on the island.

■ Put-in-Bay: Transportation is provided by the following boat lines: Miller Boat Line, (419)285-2421 or (800)500-2421; City of Sandusky Boat Line, (419)627-0198 or (800)426-6286; Goodtime I Ferry, (419)625-9692 or (800)446-3140; Neuman Cruise & Ferry Line, (800)876-1907; Island Hopper, (800)90-FERRY; and Jet Express, (419)285-3491 or (800)245-JET. Island ferry services and an airline Griffing Flying Service, (419)734-3149 or (800)368-3743, run regularly scheduled daily trips.

For further information, contact the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 250, Put-in-Bay, Ohio 43456, (419)285-2832 or the Ottawa County Visitors Bureau, 109 Madison St., Port Clinton, Ohio 43452, (419)734-4386 or (800)441-1271.

■ Kelleys Island: Two boat companies depart from Marblehead, Ohio, for Kelleys Island, Neuman Cruise & Ferry Line, (800)876-1907 or (419)798-5800 and Kelleys Island Ferry Boat Lines, (419)798-9763. Ferry boats departing from Sandusky, the Goodtime I, (800)446-3140 or (419)625-9692, M/V City of Sandusky, (800)426-6286 or (419)627-0198 and the Emerald Express, (800)876-1907 or (419)626-5557. For further information, contact the Kelleys Island Chamber of Commerce, 130 Division St., P.O. Box 783, Dept. FF, Kelleys Island, OH 43438, (419)746-2360 or the Sandusky/Erie County Visitors & Convention Bureau, 231 W. Washington Row, Sandusky, OH 44870, (800)255-Erie or (419)625-2684.

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