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Charm Springs Eternal

Jane Ammeson; photography by Ed Wargin

Nightlife in Harbor Springs is little more than a great meal, lingering over a glass of wine, watching the sunset glitter pink across Little Traverse Bay or peering in shops housed in quaint buildings whose doors first opened more than a century ago.

Yes, it's a somewhat sleepy town—no fast food restaurants (banned from the city limits more than 30 years ago)—and traffic on the main road, a curving crescent that follows the bay, is often slowed as flocks of wild turkeys cross from the meadows to the woods. But besides the smell of pine needles, there's also more than a whiff of sophistication in this charming town on Lake Michigan, which features high-end restaurants, world-class shopping and a beautiful slice of nature.

CHECKING IN

Built more than a hundred years ago in a nearby town and then ferried across the ice by a team of horses, the **Veranda**, with its sweeping gables and five-sided cupola, is the ultimate Victorian luxury bed-and-breakfast. Set on Main Street in downtown and filled with original antiques, it's the perfect spot to soak up the Harbor Springs atmosphere.

FRIDAY

Breakfast: Indulge yourself with stuffed pecan French toast topped with Michigan maple syrup on the enclosed L-shaped veranda that overlooks the bay. Each room at the Veranda has its own table; for those who want to mingle, there's a large table in the dining room. It's okay to eat that second homemade cinnamon roll—it's going to be a busy day.

Take 15 Minutes: The culture and customs of Native Americans played an integral part of Harbor Springs's history. The road cutting through town, scenic M-119 Shore Drive, was once part of the old Mackinac Trail used by Native Americans. Learn about their customs, arts and language by taking a walk to the **Andrew Blackbird Museum**, where the Chamber of Commerce building is also located.

The Countryside: Harbor Springs is one of three historic resort communities that dot Little Traverse Bay. Follow M-119 south to nearby **Bayview**, a national historic landmark founded in 1875 as a Methodist summer Chautauquas. Comprised of Victorian and Gothic Revival-style cottages and lecture halls, the landmark is one of the few remaining Chautauquas in the country. Next stop is **Petoskey**, where Ernest Hemingway's family used to summer nearby (indeed, some of his relatives still live in town). A century ago, visitors arrived by train at the depot of the Chicago West Michigan line, now the Little Traverse History Museum Center, located at Bayfront Park. Museum executive director Candace Fitzsimons is an authority on Hemingway and has worked hard to make her museum a standout on this subject. Before heading out of town, stroll the old-fashioned gas lamp downtown which is on the National Historic Register, and stop by **Magnus Park Beach** to look for Petoskey stones—fossilized coral dating back more than 350 million years.

Lunch: Back in Harbor Springs, watch the boats glide across the bay while lunching outside on Dudley's Deck at **Stafford's Pier Restaurant**.

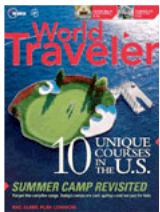
Beaches: If you brought Fido with you, **Zoll Street Beach** is the place. Kayakers and windsurfers will also like the easy accessibility to the bay. Kayak rentals are available at The Outfitter in downtown Harbor Springs. Nearby **Zorn Park** is a great place for kids to splash in the artesian-fed swimming area, dive from floating platforms in the water or hop on the swings at the playground. Added plusses: well-maintained restrooms and a lifeguard on duty in season.

Shopping: Ditch the wet clothes and go shopping in downtown Harbor Springs, just steps from the Veranda. **By the Bay** is the largest nautical art gallery in the Midwest. **Frivolous Sal's** specializes in unique women's clothing and shoes. **Patricia Wood & Co.** wins raves from home decorating magazines. But even for those looking for a small buy, there's plenty to choose from at her shop. Award-winning regional artist Paula McNamara features her own works (including jewelry), plus an eclectic blend of objects d'arte, European clothing, whimsical art and oil paintings, at the **Green Apple Blue Stem Gallery**. And **American Spoon**, a noted gourmet food store, specializes in products made from regional foods such as cherry salsa and rhubarb or gooseberry jams.

Dinner: Locals and tourists have been eating at Jailleret's since it first opened



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as a restaurant in 1895. Try the local specialty: planked white fish.

SATURDAY

Breakfast: Check your e-mails, read The New York Times online and get a cappuccino at **Woolly Bugger, Roaster of Fine Coffee & Internet Café**.

Saddle Up: Trot up and down rolling hills, through woods and fields. Stop for a breathtaking view of Lake Michigan. For riders of any experience aged 10 years and up, Birchwood Farms Equestrian Center offers one-hour guided trail rides. Customized trips are also available.

Pedal Power: If horseback riding isn't your thing, stop in at **The Outfitter** to rent a bike. Serious bikers might want to head north on M-119, which follows the coastline of Lake Michigan and is considered one of the most scenic roads in the country, to **Cross Village**, about 20 miles away. It's strictly side-of-the-road biking, but the benefit, besides a great workout, is the chance to sip one of 100 varieties of beer at the **Legs Inn** in Cross Village, well-known since opening in the 1920s for its authentic Polish cuisine, lush lakeside gardens and the whimsical nature of the restaurant's wood and stone architectural design.

Lunch: Feeling lazy? Skip the biking part and jump in the car heading up to the **Legs Inn**. For an initiation into Polish cuisine, try the Old World Sampler plate, a huge platter of bigos (hunter's stew), kabanosy (Polish sausage) and pierogis.

In the Sun: Head back to Harbor Springs and enjoy what's left of the day by hitting the links. There are plenty of golf courses in the area, each with its unique charms. My pick is **Boyne USA** because it offers so much for every ability level—practice facilities, an executive course and four championship courses.

Dinner: Winner of the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence 2002, **The New York Restaurant**, which opened in 1904, combines history and haute cuisine and is located a block from the pier in downtown Harbor Springs. Try the veal medallions topped with country ham, Gruyère cheese and a Marsala wine sauce.

SUNDAY

Checking Out: All good things come to an end. Stop at the Island Bean Company, grab a latte, and enjoy a last look at the town.

HOW TO GET THERE

Detroit has 600 daily departures.

Traverse City is served by Northwest from Detroit (7 daily flights) and Minneapolis/St. Paul (2 daily flights).

Pelston/Mackinac Island is served by Northwest with 6 daily nonstop flights.

Jane Ammeson specializes in food, travel and personalities. She writes for the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Life Magazine.

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