



Bus Bash Returns to Michigan in 2008

by Larry Plachno

One of the major features of this Bus Bash event is its location in an area with great natural beauty. Bus Bash participants will have a unique opportunity to participate in the much-acclaimed Thunder Bay Elk Viewing and Gourmet Dinner. This inhabitant of the elk preserve likes to watch the tourists as they watch the wildlife. THUNDER BAY RESORT.

We have been receiving reader inquiries about the forthcoming Bus Bash scheduled to take place in Michigan over Memorial Day Weekend in 2008. While the Schedule of Events and details have not yet been finalized, we already have substantial preliminary information that we can pass on at this time.

This Bus Bash is scheduled over the Memorial Day Weekend, Friday, May 23 through Sunday, May 25, 2008. The official name of the event is Pure Michigan - Sunrise Side Bus Bash 2008. "Sunrise Side" is a name given to the northeast region of Lower Michigan, a very pretty area bordering Lake Huron on the east. This will be the 49th Bus Bash since it was founded in 1979 and will

also be the second Bus Bash event to be held in Michigan.

Activities will center on Hillman and Alpena, Michigan. They are located almost directly north of Detroit and Bay City. Popular Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island are located approximately 90 miles northwest of here.



Accommodations at Thunder Bay Resort include spacious chalets, attractive villas and deluxe whirlpool suites for groups of two through 10. This chalet is located in a peaceful, rustic area. THUNDER BAY RESORT.



In addition to dry camping, Thunder Bay Resort offers an attractive campground. This Prevost pulling a Hummer is in a pull-through site with full hook-ups including water, sewer and electric. THUNDER BAY RESORT.

This area is increasingly becoming popular with tourists and bus tour groups looking for something different than big cities. Much of the area is very scenic and wooded. Alpena, located on Lake Huron, offers beautiful lake views and has a traditional maritime heritage. There is even an Amish community located about 35 minutes south of Hillman.

Hosts and Accommodations

The primary host for this event is Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman. Increasingly popular with groups, Thunder Bay Resort offers several venues including golf, wine tasting, elk viewing and gourmet dinners. Accommodations include spacious chalets, villas and deluxe and whirlpool suites with one to three bedrooms that are suitable for groups of two through 10. Owners of converted coaches will be delighted with Thunder Bay Resort. In addition to offering space for dry camping, Thunder Bay also has a nice campground with full hook-ups. The converted coach people will not only be right in the heart of things but will also have the option of hooking up to water, sewer and electricity while at Bus Bash.

Accommodations will also be available at the Alpena Holiday Inn. Located about a mile northwest of downtown Alpena on US 23, the Holiday Inn is close to Lake Besser, and not far from the Besser Museum and Planetarium, the Island Park Wildfowl Sanctuary, and the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the Great Lakes Heritage Center. Hotel features include a Holidome Indoor Recreation Center, wireless Internet, and direct dial phones with voice mail. CW's dining room is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Special Events

This Bus Bash will follow the traditional Schedule of Events with a Welcome Reception on Friday evening, tours on Saturday,

a meal on Saturday evening, and the public bus display, flea market, trophies and parade on Sunday. However, what makes this Bus Bash different and a particularly good value for those attending is the addition of four special events or opportunities.

In addition to the flea market on Sunday, plans are well underway to provide a mini travel marketplace. Those who plan tours and arrange group trips will be able to meet with and obtain information from Sunrise Side attractions and destination marketing organizations. This will encourage you to plan or encourage bus and group tours to the area.

In what we think is a first for Bus Bash, a golf outing is planned on Monday morning, Memorial Day. This will take place at the popular Thunder Bay Golf Course in Hillman. Participants will be able to play 18 holes and have lunch. Prizes will be awarded.

Included in your Bus Bash registration will be an opportunity to take Thunder Bay Resort's award-winning elk viewing Dinner Ride. Due to space limitations on each ride, it became impossible to include this in the regular Bus Bash Schedule of Events. However, Bus Bash participants will be given their choice of several optional tours before, during or after Bus Bash.

Praised by numerous travel publications including *USA Today*, your Elk Viewing experience starts when you board one of several carriages, drawn by teams of massive Percheron and Belgian draft horses. The same tour also operates in winter time but uses sleighs. The horses will then pull your carriage over the river and through the woods to the 160-acre Elk Preserve. Your tour guide will provide information and point out the elk and deer. Stops will be made for the photographers in the crowd.

Following the elk viewing, your horses will take you to the rustic Elk Antler Cabin

The Holiday Inn at Alpena, Michigan is also a host hotel for this Bus Bash event. It is located on US 23, the main north-south road through Alpena, and has a Holidome. Other features include a dining room, wireless Internet and proximity to several attractions. ALPENA HOLIDAY INN.





Bus Bash participants will be invited to participate in the Charity Island Dinner Cruise that starts with a boat ride from Au Gres, Michigan. Small groups cross Saginaw Bay to Big Charity Island, the site of an old lighthouse and a rebuilt light keeper's house. Here, you will dine on an isolated island while enjoying a magnificent view of Saginaw Bay and three lighthouses. CHARITY ISLAND DINNER CRUISE.



Bus Bash participants will also have an opportunity to participate in the Thunder Bay Resort Elk Viewing and Gourmet Dinner. Your group will ride in a carriage to the elk preserve where they will have an opportunity to view and photograph these animals. Then the tour moves here, to the Elk Antler Cabin, where you will be served a five-course dinner cooked on wood stoves. THUNDER BAY RESORT.

where culinary artist Jan Matthias prepares food on 100-year-old wood cook stoves. You will be served a superb five-course gourmet dinner and can join in a wine tasting.

The fourth special event for this Bus Bash is the Charity Island Dinner Cruise. Since the starting point for the cruise is in Au Gres, Michigan, this had to be excluded from the regular Bus Bash Schedule of Events because of distance. Au Gres is located about two hours south of Alpena on US 23, the primary north-south highway along the lake. However, Bus Bash participants will have an opportunity to enjoy this unique experience either before or after the regularly scheduled Bus Bash events.

You start from a dock in Au Gres on Saginaw Bay. Here, you board a boat that takes you out to Big Charity Island in the center of Saginaw Bay. Karen and Bob Wiltse will

show you to their rebuilt lighthouse keepers Cape Cod house next to the old light house. The staff will serve you a meal of Great Lakes perch or beef tenderloin tips as you dine on an isolated island while enjoying the view of three lighthouses and passing boats. You will also be offered a tour of the house and the story behind moving materials to build the house and their tribulations in building a harbor on the island.

Saturday Tour Attractions

Current plans are to include several attractions on one or both of the Bus Bash Saturday tours. All are in the Alpena or Hillman areas.

- The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary was established to protect a nationally significant collection of more than 200 shipwrecks that span more than a cen-

tury of Great Lakes shipping history. It is the first Great Lakes sanctuary and the first sanctuary to be located entirely in state waters. The adjacent Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center includes numerous state-of-the-art and Great Lakes exhibits.

- Located in Alpena, the Besser Museum offers an impressive list of exhibits and attractions. Those who appreciate art will be delighted to see a Picasso as well as two paintings by Renoir. History buffs will be impressed with a display of Indian artifacts, a water pumper that fought the great fires of Chicago and Alpena, and a colorful 1890s Avenue of Shops. The museum also has a remarkable collection of Michigan mammals and its own planetarium.

- George Nichols Fletcher founded Alpena in 1856 and was highly involved in the lumber trade, the wood pulping business and the Fletcher Paper Company. The founders of the Fletcher Street Brewing company worked at Fletcher Paper Company as did their fathers. Instead of making paper, they now make some delightful local brews. Five percent of their profits are given to local charities. The youngsters are not forgotten since they also offer non-alcoholic beverages including their popular RipSaw Root Beer.

- LaFarge North America is the largest diversified supplier of construction materials in the United States and Canada. The company produces and sells cement, ready-mixed concrete, gypsum wallboard, aggregates, asphalt and related products and services. Plans are to provide a tour of the impressive LaFarge Cement Plant and quarry in Alpena. We will hopefully also have an opportunity to see their impressive equipment repair facility.

- Stoney Acres Winery is a boutique winery in Alpena. It is a small, family oper-

One of the Saturday tours will include a stop at Stoney Acres Winery in Alpena. This family business is the first winery in the area and specializes in wines made from fruits. Several varieties of wines are offered including dry, semi-dry and semi-sweet as well as red and white wines made from grapes grown in other areas. STONEY CREEK WINERY.





A first for Bus Bash will be a golf outing on Monday morning. Bus Bash participants staying over on Monday will be able to play 18 holes and have lunch at the Thunder Bay Golf Course. THUNDER BAY RESORT.



Another interesting stop on one of Saturday's tours will be the National Marine Sanctuary and the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center. This group is looking at the Sciencesphere on display. NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY.

ation and the first winery in the region. Instead of wines made from grapes, Stoney Acres specializes in wines made from locally grown fruits. They offer several varieties of wines made from raspberries, pears, apples, cherries, blueberries, blackberries and strawberries. Most of their wines are offered in dry, semi-dry and semi-sweet versions. More than 30 varieties of wines are offered including red wines from Merlot grapes and white wines from Reisling grapes imported from outside of the region.

- Bus Bash participants will also be able to visit the Brush Creek Mill in Hillman. Located on the banks of the Thunder Bay River, the mill was named for Brush Creek that joins at this location and flows from Atlanta to Alpena. This modern-era mill uses a 22-foot stainless steel wheel to generate power from the river and has solar panels to generate electricity. Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Hillman Area Historical Society are located at the mill.

Other Events and Transportation

The Saturday evening dinner and entertainment will be held at the Hillman Community Center. Sunday's public bus display will be held in the Hillman Community Center parking lot while the flea market will set up inside the Community Center itself. As usual, ballots will be passed out to the public allowing them to vote on their favorite display buses in several categories including Antique Bus, Modern Coach, Converted Coach and Manufacturer Demonstrator. Trophies will be awarded in the afternoon followed by a bus parade.

If you are considering arriving on public transportation, you might note that there is scheduled air service into the Alpena (APN) airport. Courtesy bus service to and from the airport is provided by the Alpena Holiday Inn. Indian Trails Route 1485 operates daily service between Bay City and St. Ignace via Alpena. Both northbound and southbound buses make a stop at Mancino's Pizza in Alpena.

Regular events start on Friday evening with the reception and end on Sunday afternoon with the traditional bus parade. However, we strongly suggest that you schedule additional time so that you can schedule the Elk Viewing/Gourmet Dinner, the Charity Island Dinner Cruise, and the Monday Golf outing either before or after regular Bus Bash activities.

As additional information, a Schedule of Events and a Registration Form becomes available for Pure Michigan Sunrise Side Bus Bash 2008, it will be printed in NATIONAL BUS TRADER. Information will also be made available on the Internet. Go to www.busmag.com and then click on the Bus Bash tab. □

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