

LIVING IN THE 'land of delight'

Glen Arbor attracts people from all walks of life for its breathtaking scenery, outdoor activities and slower pace.

BY MARLA R. MILLER

PERHAPS IT'S THE CALL OF THE WATER, the wilderness — the nearby wineries. Whatever it is, locals liken Glen Arbor and the surrounding area to a "little slice of heaven," a paradise where year-round residents have realized quality of life matters more than quantity of things.

The quaint village, a three-hour drive from Grand Rapids and a gateway community to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Park, is situated on scenic M-22 between Glen Lake and Sleeping Bear Bay. Though the year-round population is less than 1,000, that number explodes during the summer, when cottage dwellers and vacationers bring life to the village and money to the local economy.

Those who live in and around Glen Arbor bask in breathtaking views of Lake Michi-

gan and the Manitou Islands. The area offers spectacular scenery, outdoor adventure, water as blue as the Caribbean and national park appeal.

Long before "Good Morning America" dubbed Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore its No. 1 Most Beautiful Place in America in 2011, the Ojibway Indians named the land Leelanau, meaning "land of delight."

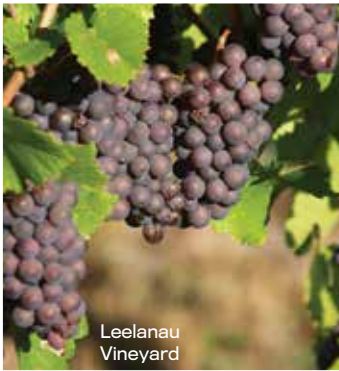
Georgia Gietzen, who moved to Glen Arbor with husband Jeff a few years ago, said she feels a special connection to nature. "I am immersed in beauty," said Gietzen. "Not a day goes by that I don't bow in gratitude for all that surrounds me."

Seasonal residents from Chicago, Detroit and other parts of Michigan know the secret, too. Many cottages on Big and Little Glen



Little Glen Lake
and Big Glen Lake

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Leelanau Vineyard



Thyme Inn
Bed & Breakfast



Art's Tavern, a Glen Arbor mainstay and local watering hole.



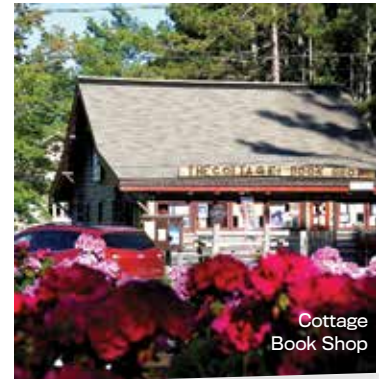
CLOCKWISE PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY: IPWINES.COM (TOP LEFT); MOLLY CONNOLLY/NORTH COAST DESIGN (CENTER AND BOTTOM LEFT); THE HOMESTEAD/2EBRIAN WALTERS PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTTOM RIGHT)

near & far

IN OUR BACK YARD / EXPLORING MICHIGAN



Crystal River Outfitters



Cottage Book Shop



Cherry Republic



Georgia and Jeff Gietzen

lakes have remained in families for 100 years. Summering here as youngsters has prompted many adults to become year-round residents.

"I fell in love with this area as a little girl," said Katie Rabidoux, innkeeper with husband Jeff of the Glen Arbor Bed & Breakfast. "There was something about Glen Arbor — the beauty, the lakes, the community itself."

The downtown business district includes restaurants, shops, bed and breakfasts, art galleries, and an active arts association that offers an artist-in-residence program, art classes, weekly exhibits and a summer music series. The best part: Almost everything is within walking distance. You can hit the beach on one end of Lake Street and boat at the other.

Year-round residents describe Glen Arbor as safe and serene, surrounded by majestic sand dunes, rolling hills, vine-

yards and orchards. Spared from commercialization, there's limited police presence, friendly people, good schools and respectful kids.

Eccentric and eclectic, townspeople come from all walks of life. The area seems to be a haven for entrepreneurs and artists, foodies and farmers, nature lovers and water enthusiasts, and people who want a simpler life.

Fresh faces flood the area in summer, when foreign travelers and millionaires mix with artists, farmers and shopkeepers. Most locals know each other by first name. They ride their bikes or walk to work, and honor the practice of buying local, giving back to the community and supporting their neighbors and friends.

The only caveat for surviving the off-season: You'd better like winter and enjoy outdoor activities. The seasonal residents go home, the shops close down, the snow

falls and stays, and all that is left is the pristine beauty of nature.

"People are surprised people really live here," said Kim Guilbeau, a year-round resident since 2009 whose family ties go back three generations. "It's compact, but it's a big small town. You do have to love nature to be here. You need to like to go outside in the winter."

While its national park campgrounds, locally owned hotels and small B&B's make it an affordable place to vacation, Guilbeau said, "I can't say enough about the people who live here year-round. It's a great place to raise kids. The school is really great."

Gietzen, who was owner of Grand River Grocery in Ada for many years, said she enjoys the seasonality of things — the ebb and flow of visitors, the hustle and bustle of summer and the slower pace in winter. She and Jeff vacationed in the area and visited regularly while their daughter attended

The Leelanau School.

They definitely live a different lifestyle now, but moving didn't mean retirement. The Gietzens own Northwoods Hardware, one of a few year-round businesses, and they are in process of renovating the village's only gas station. While businesses flourish in the summer, Geitzen said, "People really struggle to make ends meet during the winter months. It's about a quality of living versus a quantity of things."

In the world of real estate, the Glen Arbor area earns high marks for location and lakefront living. Being surrounded by preserved federal land in a county with 21,000 residents and more than 20 wineries makes private property a hot commodity. Real estate values held their own during the economic downturn, with most waterfront homes selling for more than \$1 million, said Rob Serbin, a real estate agent and president of the local chamber.

Serbin settled in the area in 1973 and said it has something to offer everyone: clean beaches, wineries, beautiful inland lakes, farmers markets, fine dining, shopping and small town charm.

"It's a safe area and it's not pretentious," he said.

With little industry, most permanent residents are either retired, commute to work in Traverse City 30 minutes away, operate seasonal businesses, work in the hospitality industry, or have a couple of part-time jobs.

"There's an interesting dynamic here," Rabadoux said. "Most people who live here year-round wear many hats. I waited tables, cleaned houses, worked a lot of jobs."

Rabadoux, 44, left her life in the Benton Harbor area 11 years ago to return to the place to which she felt most connected. This is her fourth season managing the Glen Arbor B&B. "It's a lot of work, but it's very rewarding," she said. "You meet a lot of interesting people. People from all over the country and globe stay with us."

Most year-round residents appreciate the outdoors and enjoy being active. They hike and bike the trails during the off season. The first phase of a 27-mile paved bike trail connecting Glen Arbor to Sleeping Bear Dunes opened last summer and has been a big hit with locals and vacationers, Gietzen said.

Matt and Katy Wiesen, a young couple in their 30s, operate three businesses devoted to outdoor adventure and tourism: Crystal River Outfitters, M-22 Shop and



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"It's a very small town," Katy said. "Everybody knows everybody. We work hard and play hard."

The scenic beauty provides a great backdrop for painters, photographers and writers. Glen Arbor has a vibrant arts community, supported by the Glen Arbor Art

Association, which operates two sites: an arts center in the village and Thoreson Farm in the national park.

"It's a very lively and intelligent community," said Peg McCarty, director. "It's a beautiful, beautiful area. It's just inspirational to people."

Every summer, the association organizes the Manitou Music Festival, an outdoor concert series featuring national and regional performers of classical, jazz and folk music in idyllic settings and family-friendly locations. This includes a free

concert every July that draws thousands to the national park's popular Dune Climb. This year, the Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra performed as people picnicked with friends. More concerts take place throughout August, frequently on the stage in the backyard of Lake Street Studios, a renovated 1930's car garage in the heart of Glen Arbor.

Lake Street also includes Cottage Book Shop, Glen Lake Artists Gallery and Becky Thatcher Designs.

Sisters Cherie Stege and Beth Bricker, along with another partner, took over Lake Street Studios from their parents and have lived in the area for years. Their family cottage on Glen Lake dates to 1918. After living in Kalamazoo and Suttons Bay, Stege moved to Glen Arbor full time because it's "where my heart was," she said. She built a house with her husband near her grandparents' original cottage in 2006.

"I wanted to move back to the real community I felt a part of," she said. "Driving here into town, I can see Lake Michigan with the islands in the distance. There's always something beautiful to look at."

Many people also make a living by farming in the summer and working on orchards and vineyards. Beyond the dunes and rolling countryside left by glacial formations, farm stands and wineries dot the landscape throughout Leelanau County.

Grapes, cherries and apples grow a plenty near the 45th parallel. Cherry Republic, headquartered in Glen Arbor,

Places to visit when in Glen Arbor!

The Glen Arbor area has been a popular vacation destination since Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore became a national park in 1970. The big draws include the Lake Michigan beaches, boating and water sports on Big and Little Glen Lake, and fishing and canoeing on the Crystal River.

● SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE (sleepingbeardunes.com)

Points of interest include the Dune Climb, Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, Philip A. Hart Visitor Center, the restored logging village of Glen Haven, and dune overlooks at Sleeping Bear, Empire and Pyramid Point bluffs about 400 feet above Lake Michigan. Activities include sightseeing, camping, canoe trips,

100 miles of hiking trails, along with Lake Michigan's magical sunsets.

● SLEEPING BEAR HERITAGE TRAIL (nps.gov/sibe/planyourvisit/sbht.htm)

The new Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail provides more than four miles of paved trails for biking and walking and is groomed for cross-country skiing in the winter. When completed, it will be a 27-mile, multi-use trail connecting the village of Empire, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Glen Arbor and Port Oneida.

● GLEN ARBOR ART ASSOCIATION (glenarborart.org)

Aug. 2-3 is the fifth annual Plein Air Paint Out weekend (see website for details). The association also offers frequent gallery shows, plus art

classes and workshops taught by professional artists at its Thoreson Farm location.

● PORT ONEIDA RURAL AND CULTURAL FAIR (leelanau.com/fair)

Aug. 9-10: A celebration of rural arts and culture in the Port Oneida Historic Farm District within Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Exhibits and demonstrations take place at five farms and the Port Oneida Schoolhouse.

● LEELANAU PENINSULA WINE TRAIL (lpwines.com)

With 25 wineries on Leelanau Peninsula, visitors can spend the day tasting wine and enjoying the scenery. Three new loops make it easier to plan tours. Brochures with a

handy map are online at lpwines.com and at each winery. A free iPhone app can be downloaded for easy access to Leelanau wineries, lodging, restaurants and more. The annual Harvest Stompede is Sept. 7-8 this year. It starts with a race/walk through the vineyards, followed by a self-guided tour of 23 Leelanau Peninsula Vintners Association wineries offering food pairings and wine tastings.

● OTHER HELPFUL WEBSITES:

visitglenarbor.com
empirechamber.com
leelanauchamber.com
lelandmi.com
suttonsbayarea.com
leelanau.com/glenlake

offers gourmet cherry products, gifts, baked goods and wine at its Lake Street store.

The Glen Arbor area also offers unique places to dine. Trattoria Funistrada serves authentic Italian dishes, and La Bécasse features French country cuisine, both near Big Glen Lake in Burdickville. In the village, the upscale Blu specializes in contemporary American fare with flavors from around the world and views of Sleeping Bear Bay.

Looking for a casual spot with good burgers and beer? Art's Tavern, a Glen Arbor mainstay and local watering hole, has been in operation under various names since before prohibition. It is one of the few eateries open in the winter, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner 360 days a year from 7 a.m. until the regulars leave.

Art's features tavern fare with a twist, said owner Tim Barr. The kitchen staff grounds the hamburger on site and makes soups in house, using local ingredients when possible. The bread comes from a local bakery and the fish from 18 miles down the road.

Barr and his wife, Bonnie Nescot, bought Art's in July 2000 after managing the establishment for years. People with summer homes often stop in Art's Tavern on Friday to see what is going on and stop in for breakfast on Sunday before going home, Barr said.

Another popular draw is The Homestead Resort, a short drive out of town on M-22 as you head up the peninsula toward Michigan's wine coast.

Former Grand Rapids resident Dave Thomasma got his first taste of quiet village life during the winter this year, but said he's extremely happy he made the move. His daughter lives in Traverse City. "It was a little eye opener, but Traverse City is only a half hour away," he said. "It's a very friendly town, a very friendly area."

Like so many others, Thomasma grew up coming to the area and spending summers at his grandparents' cottage on Glen Lake. He bought Synchronicity – Gallery of Michigan Art on M-22 in spring 2012 and lives in an apartment attached to the business. He was looking for a change.

"It's just such a unique area," he said. "We have spectacular inland lakes, countryside, a lot of wineries, and a lot of summer and winter sports. The air is fresh and clean. It just feels good to be here." **GR**

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