

An Island Getaway

Lynne Konstantin | Arts & Life Editor



A horse-drawn carriage guides visitors through the historic streets of Mackinac Island.

There are few places you can travel to that grace you with the feeling of being in a specific and special place on the globe. Take a walk or a bike ride, and the bridge beyond — connecting two pieces of land distinct from your island — reinforces your disconnect from the rest of the world. On Mackinac Island, you're not Up North — you're away, secluded, yet also standing in the middle of an entirely open, spacious blue land of its own. And it's only a four-hour drive from Metro Detroit.

Home to Native Americans before 17th-century European exploration, the 3.8-square-mile island in the Straits of Mackinac, where Lake Huron and Lake Michigan meet, is all about its impressive and gorgeous history while still catering to its modern visitors.

A vital hub of trade along the Great Lakes, the island became a summer tourist destination in the 19th century. The entire island is a National Historic Landmark, with more than 80 percent of it preserved as the Mackinac Island State Park. It is also notable for its prohibition, since 1898, of motor vehicles — meaning visitors are required to explore its exquisite shoreline with pristine blue waters, lush forests, fur-trade era homes and shops and grand Victorian cottages by foot, bicycle or horse-drawn carriage. It also means an island vacation can be as energetic or laid-back, romantic or family-friendly as you choose.

WHAT TO DO

Visit **Fort Mackinac**, established by the British in 1780, for a tour of its 14 original buildings led by

guides in period costume. Stroll **Downtown Mackinac Island's** boutiques, galleries — and world-famous fudge shops, a tradition since the late 19th century. **Ride the trails** on a horse from Cindy's Riding Stable, **drive a carriage** from Jack's Livery Stable or take a **private or group carriage tour** of Mackinac State Park with narrated tours of Surrey Hills, Arch Rock and more. Have some **watery fun**: Rent a kayak or paddleboard, charter a fishing boat, take a sailing tour or parasail. Take in historic paintings, maps and photographs and Native American art at the **Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum**, housed in the historic Indian Dormitory.

WHERE TO STAY

Sprawling across 18 bucolic acres, **Mission Point Resort** offers an

upscale yet relaxed experience, in the spirit of an old-school summer camp.

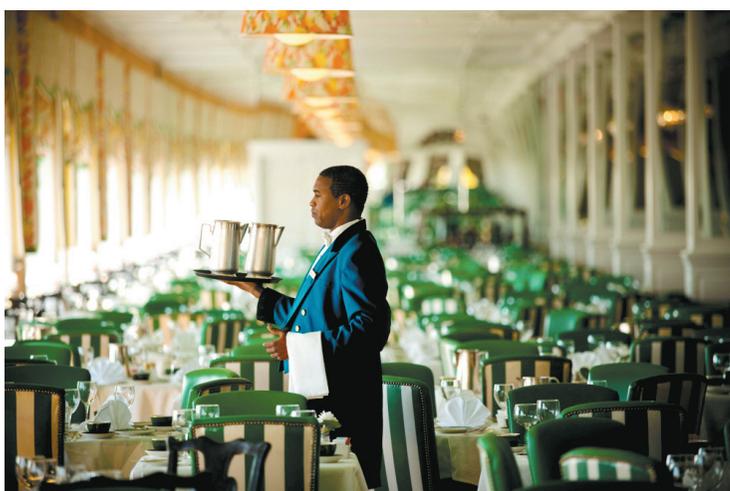
The resort's original structure, Mission House, was built by a Protestant missionary to house and teach Native American children (later, he established Mission Church, one of the Midwest's first Protestant churches). As a result, the entire southeast end of Mackinac Island became known as Mission Point.

In the 1950s, the property was built up, adding a still-used theater with 50-foot trusses made of Norway Pine from nearby Bois Blanc island, a main lodge with a five-foot marble-encased fireplace — and a movie-production sound stage, which Universal Studios leased for the 1979 summer season to produce the dreamily iconic film *Somewhere in Time*. The entire cast and crew were hosted at the resort,

then called the Inn on Mackinac.

In 2014, current owners Dennert and Suzanne Ware purchased the resort and embarked on a multi-million-dollar renovation and upgrade — completed just in time for this season's visitors. Along with a massive facelift, Mission Point Resort now includes a fitness center and the Lakeside Spa & Salon (try the Lilac Facial & Body Treatment, using the island's historic varieties of lilacs, or a Great Lakes Stone Massage).

Many of the 239 rooms and suites offer Jacuzzis and grand views of Lake Huron. With four on-site restaurants to choose from — kids 12 and under eat free at Round Island Bar & Grill or Bistro on the Greens — Mission Point has created a comprehensive farm- and water-to-table menu, using local Native American fisheries for its signature whitefish. Try the



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Mackinac's Grand Hotel

Main Lodge at Mission Point, including the elegant Chianti restaurant in the left bay

An aerial view of Mission Point Resort

Sadie's ice-cream shop is in the foyer of the Grand Hotel

Grand Hotel's 660-foot porch is the longest in the world.

The Grand's massive Main Dining Room

crafted-on-property frozen fudge and check out weekly culinary events, including the DIY Cocktail Program in the Cocktail Garden.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

Mission Point Resort offers every imaginable activity: Lounge on the beach, take in a movie at its historic theater, a dip in the pool or play a round of golf, croquet, bocce or tennis. Relax on the expansive lakefront Great Lawn with a picnic basket prepared by the property's Cafe or catch a film under the stars. Rent Mission Point's bikes for the whole family, play a nighttime game of glow golf, or join the Sun-Up Sessions for a light group hike to view the sunrise over Lake Huron, followed by a picnic breakfast of whitefish benedict and house-made croissants with Michigan peach jam. Rates start at \$229. Missionpoint.com.

ANOTHER OPTION

Lush, luxurious — and very grand — the **Grand Hotel** is steeped in elegant history.

Towering majestically on a bluff overlooking the Straits of Mackinac, the hotel's famous 660-foot porch beckons to visitors approaching the island by ferry.

Since opening the summer of 1887, when vacationers from Chicago, Montreal, Detroit and across the continent arrived by lake steamer or rail for a \$3 per night stay, the Grand Hotel has delighted visitors with its opulence and still-impeccable service provided by 700 staff members. In 1919, W. Stewart Woodfill was hired as a desk clerk; in 1933, he became the hotel's owner. Woodfill appointed staff member (and nephew) R.D. (Dan) Musser president of

the Grand Hotel in 1960 — the Musser family has owned the hotel since 1979.

The Grand Hotel offers 390 guest rooms and suites, each uniquely designed by the famed Carleton Varney, the president of Dorothy Draper & Co., the oldest established interior-design firm in the country. Varney's credits include New York's Plaza Hotel and the Breakers in Palm Beach. Who has rested their head in the hotel's vibrantly colored, floral-patterned rooms? Since Mark Twain lectured in the casino in 1895, the Grand Hotel has hosted the luminous likes of Thomas Edison, Jack Benny, Rosemary Clooney, John F. Kennedy, Hillary Clinton, Robert De Niro and Madonna.

A shining highlight of the Grand guest experience is dining. Among the multiple on-site

restaurants is the 1,000-seat Main Dining Room overlooking the picturesque porch, where guests (men require a jacket and tie) sup on a five-course dinner served on the hotel's gold-trimmed signature china. Or venture into the wooded interior of the island by horse-and-carriage to Grand-owned Woods, a Tudor mansion dressed in opulent Bavarian-lodge fashion. Save room for a thick shake or built-to-share sundae served in a dog bone-shaped bowl at Sadie's, named after the Mussers' Best in Show Scottie.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

In addition to lawn games including bocce ball and croquet, guests can try their hand at a round of Pickleball on the only clay court in Michigan, duck pin bowling, saddle

horses, golf on the 18-hole Jewel course plus FootGolf on the Grand nine. Cool off with a poolside snow cone at the serpentine-shaped Esther Williams Swimming Pool, named after the bathing beauty who filmed *This Time for Keeps* with Jimmy Durante at the Grand Hotel in 1947. Partake in the Grand Hotel's 100-year tradition of Afternoon Tea, with fresh-baked scones, sherry and champagne, petite finger sandwiches and tea served in the Parlor. And, of course, take in some of the legend that is *Somewhere in Time*, starring Christopher Reeve, Jane Seymour and Christopher Plummer and filmed on location at the Grand Hotel and around the island. Rates start at \$304 per person; kids 12 and under stay and eat for free. Grandhotel.com. *