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SPRING/SUMMER 2017

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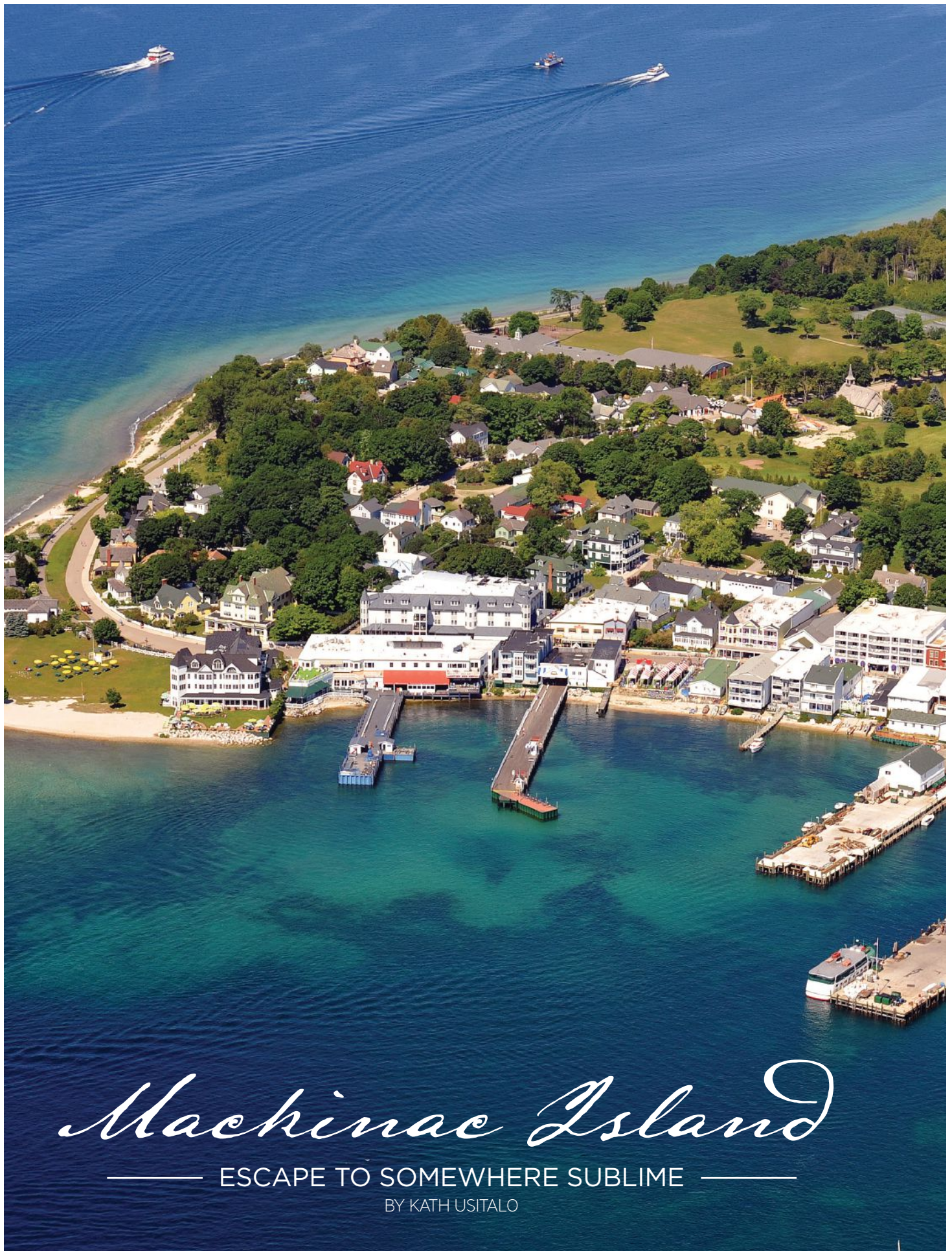
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MICHIGAN'S  
MOST  
HIDDEN  
ISLAND**







# *Mackinac Island*

— ESCAPE TO SOMEWHERE SUBLIME —

BY KATH USITALO





"Come back to me," beckons actress Elise McKenna (played by Jane Seymour) to Chicago playwright Richard Collier (Christopher Reeve), in the 1980 romantic film "Somewhere in Time." The tearjerker about time-travel challenged lovers was filmed largely on Mackinac Island which, with its Victorian architecture and reliance on horses, carriages and bicycles for transportation, was ready for its 1912-era movie close-ups. Most of the sentimental story takes place in and around Grand Hotel, the sparkling white summertime resort hotel that dates back to 1887 and affords sweeping views of the Straits of Mackinac from its bluff-top position above the Great Lakes waterway between Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas.

Mackinac Island was first a sacred place for the Anishinaabe-Ojibwa people who called it Michilimackinac, Land of the Great Turtle. With the arrival of French voyageurs and explorers in the 1600s, it became a fur trading post, a strategic location fought over by the British and Americans, and finally, by the late 1800s, a destination for city dwellers seeking relief from hot air choked with foul odors and skies darkened by pollution. Steamships and trains took vacationers to scenic spots to stay for several weeks at hotels and resorts constructed by the transportation companies.

"That's why Grand Hotel is here," says Bob Tagatz, historian at the landmark resort. Northern Michigan was a desirable and even exotic Victorian era destination, he explains at one of the talks he conducts for hotel guests. He cites promotional materials that encouraged tourism by touting the island's Fort Mackinac, Indian culture, clean water and clean air. "The transportation companies desperately needed the hotel, so they built it themselves."

Today, with its pastel-colored hotels, shops, grand "cottages" and historic and scenic sites, Mackinac (pronounced MACK-in-awe) Island is still a gathering place, a special destination year-round, but especially from May through October. While there are plenty of family-friendly

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## ROMANCE PACKAGES

The **Grand Hotel Honeymoon/Anniversary package** wraps up a three-night stay with full breakfast and dinner daily, a fresh flower arrangement, champagne and house-made fudge in the room, afternoon tea in the Parlor and a one-hour private carriage ride. Bonus: a 10 percent discount on the same package in the future. [grandhotel.com](http://grandhotel.com), (800) 334-7263 or (906) 847-3331

**Mission Point Resort's Island Romance two-night package** includes dinner with a bottle of wine at the wonderful Chianti restaurant, breakfast each morning at the Round Island Bar & Grill, wine and cheese welcome plate in room, half day bike rentals and ferry tickets. [missionpoint.com](http://missionpoint.com), (800) 833-7711 or (906) 847-3000

activities, the island is, as seen in “Somewhere in Time,” a romantic retreat for couples, as well.

## MAKE TIME TO UNWIND

Plan to spend at least two to three nights to give yourselves a chance to settle into the slower pace of the place where motorized vehicles are banned and tourism traffic is measured by the blasts of horns announcing the first and last ferries of the day. Most visitors arrive by passenger ferries that shuttle between St. Ignace in the Upper Peninsula and Mackinaw (yes, the spelling is different) City at the tip of the Lower Peninsula, but there is air service and a modern marina for boaters.

Ferry docks lead directly to bustling Main Street of the island's downtown area, where it's impossible to avoid the aroma or the freely given samples of Mackinac's signature souvenir, freshly made fudge. But who'd want to? Main Street and the parallel Market Street are home to most of the restaurants, pubs, shops, bike rentals, cozy inns and historic buildings. It's a Disney-esque scene, with horse-drawn buggies and wagons clip-clopping past 19th-century hotels and storefronts selling a mix of souvenirs, fine art, clothing, jewelry, moccasins, delicate teapots, T-shirts and—thanks to Northern Michigan's unpredictable temperatures—sweatshirts all summer long.

Depending on whether you choose to stay at a bed and breakfast, one of the historic downtown hotels, the full-service Mission Point Resort on the “sunrise side” of the island, or Grand Hotel, you may decide to stroll to your accommodations or take a hotel-provided carriage ride or horse-drawn taxi.

## EASY ADVENTURING

Horses are a constant presence on the island, whether they're transporting visitors, conveying goods, or pulling the personal buggies of residents. Mackinac Island Carriage Tours provide a good overview and history to significant points of interest of the 3.8-square-mile island, including several sites that contribute to its designation as a National Historic Landmark. A more romantic option is a private, customized Gough Livery Carriage tour, or a drive-your-own surrey with a fringe on top from Jack's Livery Stables.





©KATH USITALO

## Quiet Pursuits

When on Mackinac Island, it's time to partake in old fashioned pastimes:

- Gaze at the views from a rocking chair on the 660-foot-long Grand Hotel porch
- Admire the artwork and artifacts related to Mackinac Island, from Native American and Victorian era decorative art pieces to fascinating historic photos and 17th and 18th century maps at the Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, housed in the circa 1838 Indian Dormitory
- Sip afternoon tea and champagne accompanied by harp music in the Grand Hotel Parlor
- Settle into a chair with a book, play bocce ball, or fly a kite on Mission Point Resort's broad Lakefront Lawn
- Tap a croquet ball on the manicured Grand Hotel lawn, or stroll its extensive gardens
- Play a round at Wawashkamo Golf Club or Grand Hotel's Jewel Golf Course
- Schedule a pampering spa treatment at Mission Point Resort, the Lilac Tree or Grand Hotel
- View the sunset over a cocktail at the Cupola Bar atop Grand Hotel
- Linger over dinner at the lovely, lake-side Hotel Iroquois, in the dining room or on the waterfront veranda
- Enjoy live music at one of the quiet hotel lounges or lively downtown pubs, or dancing to the Grand Hotel orchestra each evening



### A GRAND FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Get away from it all and plan your family's summer vacation to Grand Hotel during our 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season. Experience America's Summer Place at a very special rate during Family Added Value Days on select dates in July and August.

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- Outdoor movies in the Tea Garden on select nights

Plus enjoy all the fine amenities of Grand Hotel including lawn games in the Tea Garden, swimming in the Esther Williams Swimming Pool, visiting Grand Stables, FootGolf on the Jewel, and everything Mackinac Island has to offer.

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Bicycling the island is a must—where else can you pedal a car-free state highway? Bring your own wheels or rent a single-speed, mountain bike or tandem bicycle built for two. Pack a picnic and follow the officially named M-185, the eight-mile paved lakeshore route around the island's perimeter to natural formations like the limestone Arch Rock, views of the Mackinac Bridge and quiet (but stony) beaches.

The fit and adventurous will want to head to the interior of the island and over 70 miles of trails for biking, hiking and horseback riding. More than 80 percent of Mackinac's 2,200 acres constitute a state park with a diverse ecosystem of meadows, forests, marshes, swamps, limestone caves and formations. Make your way to the highest point on the island, site of the recreated Fort Holmes, for miles-wide views of the Straits of Mackinac. You can get out on that waterway on guided or self-guided kayak tours or stand up paddleboard lessons, set sail on a charter outing, or relax on a lighthouse, sunset or fireworks cruise. [em](http://em)

*Kath Usitalo lives in the U.P. at the northernmost point of Lake Michigan, where she writes about the Great Lakes State and just completed the book 100 Things to Do in the Upper Peninsula Before You Die.*

## GETTING THERE

Mackinaw City, a ferry departure point to Mackinac Island, is about 415 miles northeast of Chicago. Ferries also depart from St. Ignace, at the northern end of the five-mile-long Mackinac Bridge in the Upper Peninsula.

Delta Airlines services Pellston Regional Airport in the northern Lower Peninsula. There are ground shuttle services from the airport to the Mackinaw City ferry docks, about 15 miles away: [pellstonairport.com](http://pellstonairport.com)

It's a seven-minute flight on Great Lakes Air from St. Ignace in the Upper Peninsula to the airstrip on Mackinac Island: [greatlakesair.net](http://greatlakesair.net)

Mackinac Island Visitor Information:  
[mackinacisland.org](http://mackinacisland.org), (906) 847-3783