

Hotel Bookings, Ferry Traffic Show Early Promise for 2007 Tourism Season

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Parks is also promoting the Mackinaw Infinity Package, which provides unlimited admission for three days to Thunderfalls Family Waterpark, Colonial Michilimackinac, Historic Mill Creek, and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in Mackinaw City, and Fort Mackinac on the Island, plus ferry service. Tickets are \$79.95 for adults, less for children.

"Everything is going to change from year to year, with the economy and gas prices, but we will continue to keep our heads above water and try and get more people to come to the Straits area," Mr. Brown said.

Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry Vice President Chris Shepler said ticket sales were very impressive in May, compared to last year at the same time.

"It's the first time things have been that rosy in quite some time," he said. "The jury is still out for June and the Lilac Festival, but things are definitely looking OK. The thing is, four good days could boost it, while four bad days could throw it in the dumpster. We'll have to wait and see, but for now, I'm not worried."

Shepler's also listens to its customers. The company surveyed 3,000 visitors last year, asking such questions as, How many days do you travel? Do you travel with family? Did you drive to get here? How many days are you in the Mackinac area in one year?

"We digested all of this information and already put together things that guests wanted," Mr. Shepler said.

This season, every morning at 10 a.m., after June 20, boats departing the mainland will swing over to the Mackinac

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Island Ferry

Bridge for an eight to nine minute narration of the bridge, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this summer. Mac-and-Back passes were also developed, providing unlimited ferry service for either one, two, or three days, depending on what fits one's schedule best. Special cruises have also been added every Wednesday, which take visitors on an hour-long narrated tour of the Straits, including the Mackinac Bridge, Mission Point Resort, the lighthouses, and the cottages along the West Bluff. Boats leave at 3 p.m. from Mackinaw City and 4:30 p.m. from St. Ignace, \$15 for adults and \$7.50 for children.

Mr. Shepler said it's important to change it up and keep things new.

Star Line ferry General Manager Tom Pfeiffelmann said traffic is looking similar to last year and that there isn't a magic answer to automatically make people start coming to Mackinac. He believes that the economy, gas prices, and new state-of-the-art attractions are drawing people away from Mackinac.

The ferry service has developed packages for families as well, with an all-in-one package deal. With their package, a family can pick and choose their activities they want, and it will be priced accordingly. If they want to rent bicycles and see the fort, but don't want to visit the Butterfly House, then they can do just that, without being charged for it. Every Monday for \$15 for adults and \$10 for children are sunset cruises, which have been added recently. Soft drinks and other refreshments are available on board.

"We're really trying to get people on the Island and to stay another night than they originally planned," Mr. Pfeiffelmann said. "We're just trying to develop ways to keep people here longer. The packaging deal is one answer to keep them busy over there on the Island. They, hopefully, won't be in a big hurry to stay here for a couple hours and leave. We want to get them to get a hotel room and stay and have fun."

Brad Chambers, the treasurer of Mackinac Island Carriage Tours, said his business is a little bit better than a year ago, nothing spectacular, but holding, despite the economy. In addition to package deals with the boat companies and other businesses, Carriage Tours is distributing discount coupons to hotels, restaurants, and ferry docks.

"We want people to make up their minds before they even come to the Island," he said of the package promotions. "They can purchase these packages online and realize that they can afford to come to Mackinac

Island." Arrowhead Carriages, which provides customized tours of Mackinac Island, is finding conditions similar to last year. This isn't a bad thing, however, because last year was a good year, said owner Joe Plaza.

"It's just about the same, give or take a percentage or two," he said. "We can't do much, because people come to us and ask about the tour. We will have larger tour groups and weddings, but other than that, we're here for the public. I haven't raised the price in four years. I anticipated it being slower, so there was no use scaring anyone away with higher prices. We're doing just fine."

Bicycle rentals are another popular business on Mackinac Island, and Jim Fisher, owner of Mackinac Wheels, says that rentals have been solid in the morning hours, but the afternoons and evenings seem to slow down quite a bit. He believes that not as many people are staying overnight.

It is hard to predict a summer from early season business, however, since steady, heavy traffic doesn't appear on the Island until the Fourth of July weekend.

One of the prime indicators that business will be good is hotel bookings. Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau President Bob Benser says that advance bookings for hotels are up, compared to last year.

"The Tourism Bureau and the business owners on Mackinac Island are doing what they can to feature the Island on a more regional and national level, as

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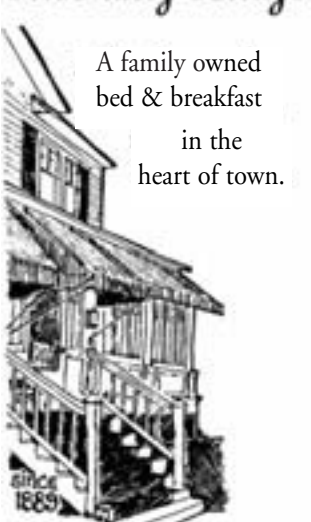
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ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE
JUNE 22 - 28

Grand Hotel
Daily entertainment at the following venues:
Lunch Buffet – Piano 12-2 p.m.
Afternoon Tea – Classical Harp 3:30-5 p.m.
Cupola Bar – Piano Bar 5:30-7:30 and 8:30-11 p.m.
Jockey Club – Piano Bar 6-10 p.m.
Woods – Piano 6-10 p.m.
Main Dining Room – Jazz 6-9 p.m.
Demitasse – Parlor/Classical Harp 8-9:30 p.m.
Terrace Room – Grand Hotel Orchestra 9:30-11:30 p.m.
Gate House – Live music Friday and Saturday, Karaoke Sundays, Ladies Night Mondays, and Jazz Tuesdays. All entertainment begins at 9:30 p.m.

Mission Point Resort
Piano music in The Eupicurean, 6-10 p.m. with John Kissane Tuesday-Sunday and Marilyn Putz on Mondays.
Bistro on the Greens:
June 23.....Kurt Strauss
June 25-27.....Nelson Olstrom
June 28-30....Angela Predhomme

Horn's Gaslight Bar and Grill
Entertainment begins at 10 p.m.
June 22-23.....Tricky Dickey
June 24.....Jamaican DJ Night
June 25-26.....Chip Christy
June 27.....DJ Night with Brevin
June 28.....Mike Ridley

The Pink Pony
Entertainment tentatively begins at 9:30 p.m.
June 20-23.....Myk Rise
June 24-25.....Doug Thomas and Michelle Noirot
June 26-30.....Myk Rise

Patrick Sinclair's Irish Pub
Entertainment from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
June 22-23.....Pub Runners
June 27.....Karaoke Night
June 28.....Seventies Night

Lilac Tree Hotel
Entertainment begins 9 p.m.
June 22-24.....Stu Stewart, comedian
June 27-28.....Stu Stewart, comedian