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 Last Updated: 7:09 am | Sunday, July 29, 2007

Wake up to Sleeping Bear

BY PAMELA FISHER | THE ENQUIRER

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If there's a more inspiring spot from which to explore Michigan's classic "up north" beach towns than the Leelanau Peninsula, this native Michigander has yet to find it.

The dune-sculpted coast is legendary for its beauty and steeped in myth. Rising 400 feet above an aqua shoreline, the sandy monoliths rise rounded over the Manitou Straits.

Local tribal lore tells of a forefather carried through a great flood; his canoe ran aground on the summit of the mountain called Sleeping Bear.

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According to Chippewa tribal legend, the dunes formed when Mishe Mokwa and her cubs swam Lake Michigan, fleeing a wildfire. Mama bear climbed a bluff to wait for the cubs and still lies waiting for them beneath the sands.

The best base for exploring the Leelanau is the Homestead, a family resort of 122 rooms and 700 cottages and condominiums set in the National Lakeshore Park, created when Congress bought 25 miles of pristine Lake Michigan coastline in 1970.

Three decades later, it still has that traditional "up north" vibe - red pine forests and miles of big, sandy Great Lakes beaches.

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Photo: Zoom | D / SLEEPING BEAR DUNES VISITORS BUREAU

The Homestead resort of Glen Arbor overlooks Lake Michigan and the Sleeping Bear Dunes. The 435-acre resort is a great base for day-tripping to Lake Michigan's beach towns and islands, from Hemingway country in Petoskey, to Mackinac and the Manitou islands.

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