

Northern Michigan



Pick up a National Rental Car in scenic Traverse City, and revel in the magnificence of summertime in Northern Michigan. Enjoy infinite blue sky punctured by the occasional high cirrus cloud bank, endless fields of farmland, deep and dark stretches of emerald green hardwood, miles of glinting lakefront, the occasional farmhouse, roadhouse or craft store. From Traverse City to Frankfort, Big Rapids to Bellaire, Gaylord to Roscommon, all in pursuit of some of the finest summertime golf this nation has to offer.



Kingsley Club

Start at the [Kingsley Club](#), in the town of the same name just outside of Traverse City. Assuming you have a PGA Professional who can make a call to provide some access to this private club that welcomes visitors, this is an indelible experience for those who like their courses wild, woolly, fescue-framed and unconventional. The near-vertical steepness of the par-5 opening fairway is reminiscent of Fenway Park's "Green Monster," the Boston stadium's famed leftfield wall. The green's opening on the par-3 second is little wider than a supermarket aisle, with steep fall-offs on either side into either vegetation or bunkers. The landform, particularly on the opening nine, is rather extreme in terms of angles and steepness, made up of ridges, valleys and bowls left behind by glacial deposits. It's naturalistic and rough-hewn, with blowout bunkers framed by waving native grasses. The inward nine looks and plays a bit more conventionally, framed by hardwoods, with the elevation changes more subtle than severe. It's a wonderful counterpoint to the heaving nature of the opening nine, and the two nines taken as a whole make for one of the region's most compelling golf experiences.



Cedar River

Shanty Creek is a full-service resort facility in the town of Bellaire, with four courses on property, but none more compelling than Cedar River. Roomy fairways, plenty of elevation changes and deep stands of massive hardwoods on the periphery are hallmarks. Lots of mounding help contain errant drives, and players can run the ball up onto most greens as there aren't many forced carries. If you can survive the first half dozen holes intact, the course loosens its grip, but things start off with a bang. The namesake river itself comes into play midway through the back nine, a potentially drivable par-4, and the drop shot par-3 that follows. It's the most memorable stretch of the course.



Treetops Resort in Gaylord

Likely the most memorable par-3 golf course most players will ever set eyes upon is the cleverly named **Threetops**, at Treetops Resort in Gaylord. Built for a Billy goat, the terrain changes on this 9-hole curiosity range from 70 to 190 feet, some with severely sloping greens. Many golfers eschew par-3 courses, much preferring to whale away with driver wherever and whenever possible. But Threetops is an exception, and is an absolute “must-play” at Treetops, which boasts an additional 72 holes of full-scale, IE–driver friendly golf, in addition to the unique par-3 facility.

Forest Dunes in the tiny burgh of Roscommon, is a far-from-common experience, undoubtedly worthy of an overnight visit. The Tom Weiskopf design plays firm and fast, with thoughtful bunkering and a serene location. The front nine is more of a parkland setting, set through the woods. The back nine is more exposed, with numerous sand blowouts, and the conditioning on this housing-free facility is impeccable.



Forest Dunes

Forest Dunes is the epitome of destination golf, which becomes apparent on the miles-long, meandering drive off the county road that takes you to the facility. It's a full five-or-more minutes of anticipation as you circuitously close in on the 4,500 acre property. The course is top notch, but so is the handsome and welcoming clubhouse, the bar/restaurant, and well-appointed lodge with 14 rooms, sleeping 26 in total. Add in the half-dozen nearby cottages, and the total capacity for onsite accommodations is just below seventy. Once you park the car everything you need for a total golf (and as dusk falls, bocce ball) immersion is within fifty or a hundred yards.

There is plenty of room for a second course on property and native Michigander and acclaimed architect Tom Doak has been tapped for the project. Once it opens Forest Dunes will be elevated from a Michigan "must-play" to a destination that discriminating golfers from around the nation and beyond will be queuing up to visit. It's a picture book example of all the great golf experiences awaiting in marvelous northern Michigan.