

drive from Detroit (six from Chicago), has a history of innovation. The northwest Michigan ski resort claims the world's first quad, the first high-speed six-pack in the United States. Not bad for a place that opened in 1947 with one run serviced by an old Sun Valley double. Today, Boyne's 67 trails make up one of the Midwest's most-visited resorts. Best suited to beginners and intermediates, the ample green and blue terrain will satisfy families. Last season's newest upgrades, a collection of green cruisers off the backside, seem to swoop right down to the shores of Deer Lake. That's not to say that experts can't find a challenge: Over the past few years, front-side staples like McLouth, Hemlock, Aurora and Victor have been joined by newcomers such as Devil's Dive on Disciples Ridge, a double-black plummot.

What skiers of all abilities will now be able to find at Boyne is a little creature comfort. This season, the Solace Spa opened inside the new Mountain Grand Lodge. With 18,000 square feet and 19 treatment rooms, the spa is ensconced inside the 220-suite luxury hotel that's painstakingly themed after European ski chateaus. That, combined with Avalanche Bay (which sports the state's first simulator), represents \$74 million in what will eventually total a \$300 million rebirth. Next up: An update of the '70s-era base village, complete with Austrian-style pedestrian walkways and new shops, pubs and cafes.

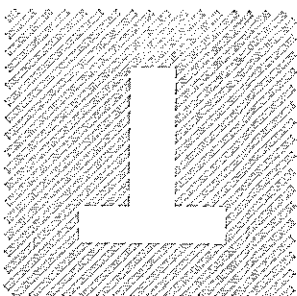
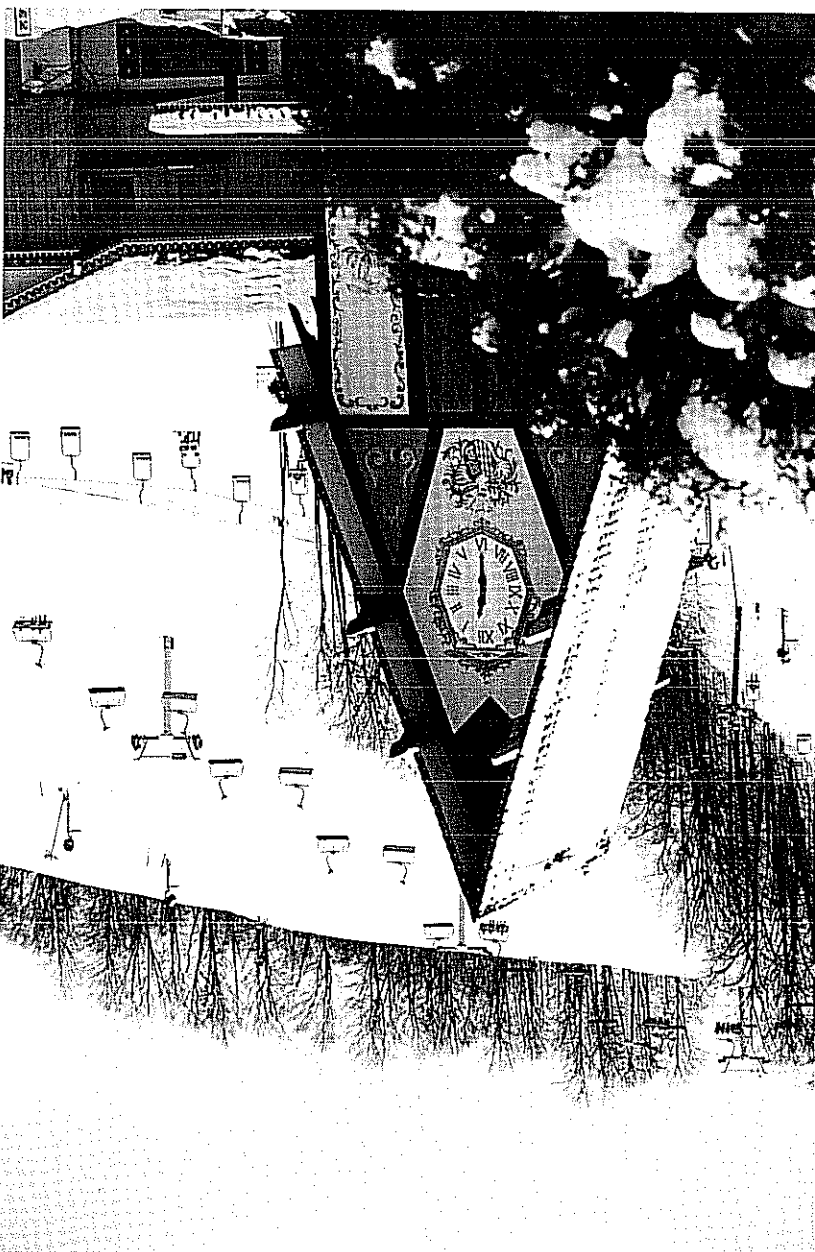
The Town

The lion's share of Boyne skiers opt to stay in the village—which consists of direct lodges, a few restaurants and shops, an outdoor swimming pool and a cafeteria—although two nearby towns offer some interesting options. This is Hemingway country, described in some of Papa's Nick Adams stories, and both towns retain some of that era's charm. Boyne City, 10 minutes northwest of the mountain, is a summer destination, so the small motels and locally flavored shops are less frenetic

HE SUPER G AT BOYNE IS ONE WILD RIDE. Slippery, steep and super-fast, you'd better know how to turn 'em, because this course is curvier than a pair of '70s stretch pants. And you might want to trade that Gore-Tex for Spandex. The Super G's finish line isn't on snow—it's in a pool. At least it's a heated pool. OK, so the Super G isn't a ski run. It's a slide at Boyne's new winter-themed indoor water park, Avalanche Bay, the first such operation at the base of a ski hill in the country. But then Boyne, a four-hour

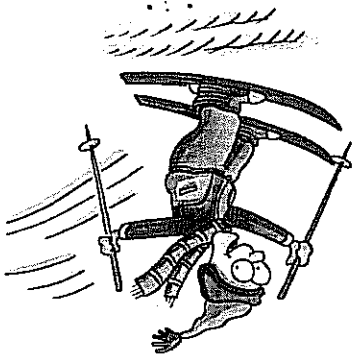
The surfs up this winter at Michigan's Boyne Mountain. *By Jim Neff*

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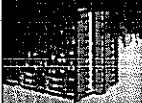
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in winter. Several restaurants and a 1960s-style movie house draw skiers looking for dinner and a movie. Petoskey, 25 minutes north, centers around a bustling Victorian gaslight shopping district, lots of turn-of-the-century architecture, and a few places that can truly proclaim, "Hemingway was here."

Where to Stay

Mountain Grand Lodge and Spa in the base village, this new luxury hotel features one-to-four-bedroom suites with kitchens, plasma TVs and vintage ski artwork on the walls. The suites designed for families are equipped with bunk beds and kid-friendly décor. From \$135 per night; 800-462-6963; mountaingrandlodge.com

NEXT UP: A NEW BASE VILLAGE, WITH AUSTRIAN STYLE PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS, NEW SHOPS AND CAFES.

Boyer Mountain Main Lodge With a heated, slope-side pool and modern, well-appointed rooms, the Main Lodge reigns as the prime spot to stay for ski-in/ski-out convenience. Rates are from \$85 per person, per night for lift-and-lodging packages; 800-462-6963; boyermountain.com

Starfator's Perry Hotel Located in Petoskey's gaslight district, the historic Perry has 79 rooms, some with balconies overlooking Little Traverse Bay, a restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, a fitness center, a hot tub and room service. Rates range from \$79-\$149; 800-737-1899; diepernyhotel.com

Where to Eat

Everett's Boyne's newest restaurant, named after resort founder Everett Kircher, is off the main lobby in the Mountain Grand. The bill of fare is influenced by Kircher's passion for hunting and fishing, with dishes featuring native fish and game. Be sure to hoist an Elk ale, a custom-brewed Boyne specialty. 800-462-6963; mountaingrandlodge.com

Red Mesa Grill Latin American influences blend with Michigan favorites, such as corn roasted waffles, at this Boyne City eatery, but another major attraction is an extensive tequila bar, with 107 varieties. 231-582-0049

Garrett's On Water Street Also in Boyne City, Garrett's, which has both a formal dining room and an authentic Irish pub, is consistently ranked among the best restaurants in the state. Try the seared sea scallops in sweet red pepper cream. 231-582-1111; garrettsonwaterstreet.com

Where to Play

Avananche Bay Climb the giant Splash-erhorn peak and brave its 800-gallon simulated avalanche, or fly down the Super C on a slippery mat. Full-day \$39, half-day \$29; 800-462-6963; avalancheby.com

Solace Spa The new spa in the Mountain Grand has men's and women's saunas and hot tubs, 19 treatment rooms, personal trainers, a juice bar and a state-of-the-art fitness center. 800-462-6963; mountaingrandlodge.com

Boyer Mountain River Brewing Company Housed in what resembles an old fisherman's shack, Boyne River is a local hangout with the best brews in Boyne County and full menu of munchies to go with them. 231-582-9001; boyneriverbrewery.com

Signpost

Boyer Mountain Resort 416 skiable acres, 500 vertical feet, 120 annual inches, 67 runs, 10 lifts, including a high-speed six-pack. Tickets: adults \$47; seniors/youth \$41; children 8 and under and seniors 70 and over ski free. Getting there From southeastern Michigan, take I-75 to Exit 282, go west onto M-32 for 13 miles. At US 131, turn right and continue for seven miles. The entrance to Boyne Mountain is just south of Boyne Falls. Information Boyne Mountain: 800-462-6963; boynemountain.com