

# Pure Michigan Sunrise Side Bus Bash 2008

## Setting New Bus Bash Records

by Larry Plachno

A major feature of this Bus Bash is the opportunity to join the Elk Viewing experience at Thunder Bay Resort. After boarding these carriages, you ride over the river and through the woods to the Elk Reserve where you can see and photograph live elk. From there you go to the Antler Cabin for a gourmet dinner and a wine tasting experience. THUNDER BAY RESORT.



**P**ure Michigan Sunrise Side Bus Bash 2008 will take place from May 23-May 26, 2008 with activities centered in Hillman and Alpena, Michigan. It will be the 49th Bus Bash event in the ongoing series that was founded by the late Bob Redden in 1979. It will also be the second Bus Bash in the State of Michigan.

This event has the longest name ever used for a Bus Bash – we are still trying to figure out what to do about getting this long name on the trophies for the Sunday awards. It also sets new records and breaks new ground in several areas. It becomes the longest Bus Bash to date since events continue through Monday with an optional golf outing. It offers the widest range of accommodations of any Bus Bash yet with conventional motel rooms as well as suites, villas and chalets with multiple bedrooms, and even full RV hook-ups for the converted coach people. It also expands on previous traditions with the addition of a Tour Marketplace in conjunction with the Flea Mar-

ket on Sunday. Tour planners and group leaders are particularly encouraged to attend.

What makes this Bus Bash particularly appealing is the value for your registration fee. In addition to all of the usual activities, meals and events, Bus Bash participants will be given the opportunity to sign up for two additional and very impressive attractions. As a result, your \$50 registration fee entitles you to activities, meals and events that carry a value of between \$250 and \$300.

All of this combines to make this one of the most extensive and involved Bus Bash events ever. You are encouraged to register early to get the best pick of the accommodations and options. You are also encouraged to register by phone with the Thunder Bay Resort staff because they can walk you through and help you with all of the options and extras available at this Bus Bash. To reach the Thunder Bay staff phone (800) 729-9375 from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. any day.

### Pure Michigan – Sunrise Side

The words “Pure Michigan – Sunrise Side” comes from the name given to the northeast region of Lower Michigan. For those who think of Lower Michigan as a mitten, this would be the upper part of your index and middle fingers, effectively covering the area between Interstate 75 and Lake Huron. Many people consider this a very pretty area known for its woods, scenery and maritime heritage.

Many Bus Bashes have been planned in areas that buses come from. This is the opposite situation since this area has become increasingly popular with incoming bus and group tours. In addition to its own local attractions, the Sunrise Side is blessed with being located on the way to several major tourist areas including Mackinac Island, Sault Ste. Marie and Tahquamenon Falls. Hence, a major goal of this Bus Bash is to introduce the Sunrise Side area to bus oper-



Accommodations available at Thunder Bay Resort include deluxe and whirlpool suites for two to six guests, two-bedroom villas for 4-8 guests and there-bedroom chalets for 6-8 guests. Staying at Thunder Bay Resort puts you near the evening and Sunday activities. THUNDER BAY RESORT.



The Alpena Holiday Inn offers traditional motel rooms and is located a mile north of downtown Alpena. It also has a Holidome Indoor Recreation Center, wireless Internet and a dining room. Staying at the Holiday Inn puts you near the Saturday tours. THUNDER BAY RESORT.

ators, bus tour planners, group leaders and others in the bus industry.

### Bus Bash Hosts

Your primary host for this event is Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman, Michigan. It was originally founded by Jack Matthias in 1971 who wanted to build a get-away on the banks of the Thunder Bay River. Increasingly popular with group tours, the resort has 34 lodging units – large suites, villas and chalets – plus an 18-hole championship golf course. It is located on rolling terrain carved from the woods with numerous ponds and marshes, two restaurants, a small RV park, an Elk Antler Cabin, a 4,000-square foot Quilting Barn, and an Elk Preserve with 120 elk and 30 white tail deer, all located on about 550 acres.

Bus and group tours come to Thunder Bay Resort for their signature Elk Viewing Carriage/Sleigh Ride, gourmet dinners, and wine tastings in summer, fall and winter. Bus operators and tour planners bring groups to Thunder Bay for quilting retreats. They also provide space for special events.

The co-sponsor is Michigan Sunrise Tours, a receptive tour operator set up by Bob and Karen Wiltse, who own the Charity Island Dinner Cruise, and Heidi Zanner Dewald to promote the Sunrise Side Region. Heidi has extensive experience in the group tour, hotel and CVB areas. The Charity Island Dinner Cruise is a special additional attraction at this Bus Bash and will be mentioned later.

### Accommodations

Bus Bash activities will take place in both Alpena and Hillman, Michigan. Accommodations are available at both locations.

Those seeking traditional hotel rooms should consider the Alpena Holiday Inn. Located about a mile north of downtown

Alpena on U.S. 23, the Holiday Inn is close to Lake Besser and not far from the Besser Museum and Planetarium, the Island Park Wildfowl Sanctuary, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and the Great Lakes Heritage Center. Features include a dining room as well as a Holidome Indoor Recreation Center. The Holiday Inn also has wireless Internet and direct dial phones with voice mail. Bus Bash rates are \$75 per night for one or two guests and \$85 per night for three or four guests. Tax is additional

Thunder Bay Resort is located on the east side of Hillman just before the big curve where Highway 32 swings south after coming west from Alpena. Accommodations here are ideal for larger groups and families. The Deluxe and Whirlpool Suites will accommodate 2-6 guests and go for \$89-\$99 per night. With two bedrooms, the Villa has

room for 4-8 guests and is priced at \$119 per night. Available also are three-bedroom Chalets for 6-8 guests at \$149 per night. Tax is additional. More information and diagrams of these accommodations can be found at [www.thunderbaygolf.com](http://www.thunderbaygolf.com).

Those who want to live in their converted coach or RV can get full service pull-through sites at the Thunder Bay RV park at \$35 per night. Dry camping, with access to water and a dump station, is \$15 per night.

### Schedule of Events

Activities will follow the standard Bus Bash Schedule of Events but there will be additional attractions included in your registration. These will be explained below. The Saturday tours will center on Alpena while the Friday reception, Saturday evening func-

**LaFarge North America recently celebrated their 100th anniversary. It is the largest diversified supplier of construction materials in the United States and Canada. LaFarge will be included as a stop on the Saturday tours.** GERRY GROSINSKY.





Overlooking the site of the old Fletcher Paper Company, the Fletcher Street Brewing Company offers several delightful brews including non-alcoholic beverages such as RipSaw Root Beer. GERRY GROSINSKY.



Another stop on the Saturday tour is the Fletcher Street Brewing Company. Bus Bash attendees will be able to see how the beer is made and brewed and perhaps sample the products. GERRY GROSINSKY.

tion, and Sunday bus display will be at Thunder Bay in Hillman.

The Bus Bash Registration and Information Desk will be open at Thunder Bay in Hillman on Friday afternoon and evening. Those staying at the Holiday Inn at Alpena can check in after riding the shuttle bus to Hillman for the reception. A Registration and Information Desk will be open for late arrivals in the Alpena Holiday Inn on Saturday morning prior to the departure of the tours.

Breakfast will be available at Thunder Bay in Hillman and the Holiday Inn in Alpena on Saturday morning. Tours will depart from the Alpena Holiday Inn after the arrival of the shuttle bus from Hillman. The fam tour will depart at 9 a.m. Stops include the National Marine Sanctuary, the Besser Museum, the Fletcher Street Brewery, the LaFarge Cement Plant and the Stoney Acres Winery Tasting Room. Due to the lack of bus garages in Alpena, the second tour is called the Mechanical Tour. It will stop at most of the locations on the fam tour plus the equipment repair facility and mammoth excavating equipment at the LaFarge Quarry and Cement Plant, one of the largest cement plants in the world.

- The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary was established to protect a nationally significant collection of more than 200 shipwrecks that span more than a century of Great Lakes shipping history. It is the first Great Lakes sanctuary and the first sanctuary to be located entirely in state waters. The adjacent Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center includes numerous state-of-the-art and Great Lakes exhibits.

- Located in Alpena, the Besser Museum offers an impressive list of exhibits and attractions. Those who appreciate art will be delighted to see a Picasso as well as two paintings by Renoir. History buffs will be impressed with a display of Indian artifacts, a water pumper that fought the great fires

of Chicago and Alpena, and a colorful 1890s Avenue of Shops. The museum also has a remarkable collection of Michigan mammals and its own planetarium.

- George Nichols Fletcher founded Alpena in 1856 and was highly involved in the lumber trade, the wood pulping business and the Fletcher Paper Company. The founders of the Fletcher Street Brewing company worked at Fletcher Paper Company as did their fathers. Instead of making paper, they now make some delightful local brews. Five percent of their profits are given to local charities. The youngsters are not forgotten since they also offer non-alcoholic beverages including their popular RipSaw Root Beer.

- LaFarge North America is the largest diversified supplier of construction materi-

als in the United States and Canada. The company produces and sells cement, ready-mixed concrete, gypsum wallboard, aggregates, asphalt and related products and services. Plans are to provide a tour of the impressive LaFarge Cement Plant and quarry in Alpena. The mechanical tour will also have an opportunity to see their equipment repair facility and huge excavating equipment.

- Stoney Acres Winery is a boutique winery in Alpena. It is a small, family operation and the first winery in the region. Instead of wines made from grapes, Stoney Acres specializes in wines made from locally grown fruits. They offer several varieties of wines made from raspberries, pears, apples, cherries, blueberries, blackberries and strawberries. Most of their wines are offered in

Located on Lake Huron, Alpena has a strong marine heritage. Saturday's tours will include a stop at the National Marine Sanctuary and Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center. Those on the tour will be able to see numerous state-of-the-art and Great Lakes exhibits. THUNDER BAY RESORT.





**Besser Museum is another stop on the Saturday tour. The wide range of exhibits include antique cars, early tools, paintings, Indian artifacts and an interesting collection of Michigan mammals.** GERRY GROSINSKY.



**Stoney Acres Winery is the first winery in the area. This family-operated business specializes in wines made from locally-grown fruits including raspberries, pears, apples, cherries, blueberries and strawberries.** GERRY GROSINSKY.

dry, semi-dry and semi-sweet versions. More than 30 varieties of wines are offered including red wines from Merlot grapes and white wines from Reising grapes imported from outside of the region.

Shuttle buses will bring Bus Bash registrants from Alpena to Hillman on Saturday evening. A cash bar will be open and we are promised great entertainment following dinner. Additional shuttles will be provided for the return to Alpena for those who would like to stay later.

Breakfast will be available at both Thunder Bay in Hillman and at the Holiday Inn in Alpena on Sunday morning. The Flea Market and Travel Marketplace will be inside the Hillman Community Center near

the Thunder Bay Resort. The public bus display will be located immediately adjacent in the parking lot.

As usual, ballots will be made available by the NATIONAL BUS TRADER staff so attendees can vote on their favorite buses in four different categories: Antique Bus, Modern Charter and Tour Bus, Converted Coach, and Manufacturer Demo coach. There will be first- and second-place trophies awarded in the Antique, Modern Bus and Conversion categories, a plaque for the Demo coach getting the most votes and an additional trophy for the display coach coming the greatest distance.

After the awards presentation, there will be a short bus parade in the Hillman area.

However, Bus Bash activities will continue with extra attractions and an optional Monday golf outing.

### Extra Attractions

Bus Bash registrants will be able to experience two additional outstanding attractions. This includes the Elk Viewing, Carriage Ride, Gourmet Dinner and Wine Tasting in Hillman, Michigan and the Charity Island Dinner Cruise that originates from the dock in Au Gres, Michigan.

The Elk Viewing experience has been praised by numerous travel editors including U.S.A. Today. Starting from the Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman, you board a carriage pulled by Percheron or Belgian draft horses. This same tour operates in the winter months using sleighs. A delightful ride takes you across the river and through the woods to the 160-acre Elk Preserve. Your tour guide fills the ride with interesting facts about the Elk and will make stops for photographs.

Following the Elk Viewing, the horses will pull your carriage to the charming Antler Cabin where culinary master Jan Matthias prepares a gourmet dinner for you on 100-year-old wood cook stoves. In addition to the five-course gourmet dinner, you can also join in a wine tasting. Optional times for this experience include 11:30 a.m. or 4 p.m. on Friday, 6 p.m. on Saturday, 6 p.m. on Sunday, and 11 a.m. on Monday.

Bus Bash registrants will also be able to experience the Charity Island Dinner Cruise. This leaves from the dock at Au Gres, Michigan, which is located about two hours drive south of Alpena on U.S. 23. At the dock you board a boat that will take you out to Big Charity Island in the middle of Saginaw Bay. Your hosts Karen and Bob Wiltse will show you to their rebuilt lighthouse keepers Cape Cod house next to the old light house. Here you will enjoy a meal of Great Lakes perch or beef tenderloin tips as you dine on an iso-

**Bus Bash participants will be able to experience the Charity Island Dinner Cruise. Leaving from the dock in Au Gres, Michigan, you ride a boat to this rebuilt lighthouse keeper's house on Big Charity Island in Saginaw Bay. Here, you will enjoy a meal on an isolated island while enjoying the view of three lighthouses and the passing boats.** CHARITY ISLAND DINNER CRUISE.





Other attractions in the area include Brush Creek Mill in Hillman. Located near the Thunder Bay Resort, the Brush Creek Mill is a community center with historical and changing museum displays. BRUSH CREEK MILLS.



Converted coach owners will be able to make reservations for pull-through sites with full hook-ups at the Thunder Bay RV park. This will put you right in the middle of the evening and Sunday activities. THUNDER BAY RESORT.

lated island while enjoying the view of three lighthouses and the passing boats.

Participants can also take a tour of the house and hear the the story behind moving materials to build the house and creating a harbor on the island. Optional times for the Charity Island Dinner Cruise include 10 a.m., 12 noon, and 2:30 p.m. on Friday, 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, and 10 a.m., 12 noon and 3 p.m. on Monday.

#### Even More

This is the first Bus Bash to include golf. Those interested will be able to play Thunder Bay's award-winning 18-hole golf course on Monday morning. The golf outing starts at 8:30 a.m. and includes 18 holes with a cart, lunch and prizes. The fee is \$59 per player.

Bus Bash participants will also be able to visit the delightful Brush Creek Mill in Hillman, located at the corner of State Street and Pleasant Valley Road just north of Thunder Bay Resort. Today it serves as a community learning center and has historical and changing museum displays.

#### Registration

The registration fee for Bus Bash is \$50 for adults and \$35 for children age 12 and under. This includes the Friday evening reception, the Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner, the Saturday tour, Sunday breakfast, and the opportunity to join one of the Elk Viewing and the Charity Island Dinner Cruise schedules. A registration form will be provided on the inside back wrapper that can be mailed to Thunder Bay Resort. Due to the multitude of options, it is highly recommended that you register for Bus Bash by phone with the Thunder Bay Staff at (800) 729-9375. Due to the fact some of the accommodations are limited and there are limitations on the tours, it is highly recommended that you register as early as possible.

#### Coach Servicing

Standard wash and lav dump is available from Coastal Coach and Tours, 3585 M.32 W, Alpena, Michigan. They are in a new steel building just east of a large pond approximately four miles west of Alpena and approximately 18-19 miles east of Hillman. Phone (989) 358-6600 for information. A bus wash facility is also located about one mile north of the Holiday Inn on U.S. 23.

#### Transportation

Scheduled air service is available into the Alpena (APN) airport. Courtesy bus service to and from the airport is provided by the Alpena Holiday Inn. You can also fly into Detroit or Tri-Cities (Midland, Bay City, Saginaw) and drive from there. Indian Trails Route 1485 operates daily service between Bay City and St. Ignace via Alpena. Both

northbound and southbound buses make a stop at Mancino's Pizza in Alpena.

#### Future Bus Bash Events

Birmingham Bus Bash 2008 will be held in Birmingham, Alabama from Friday, August 29 through Sunday, August 31, 2008. Your host company is Thrasher Brothers Trailways and a feature of this event will be a tour of the legendary Vulcan Coach conversion facility. Details will be available in the near future and on the Internet: [www.busmag.com](http://www.busmag.com) and then click on the Bus Bash tab.

For information on becoming a host company for a future Bus Bash event, you can visit the Web site above, phone (815) 946-2341, or write to Bus Bash, Inc., 9698 W. Judson Road, Polo, Illinois 61064. □

**An additional unique activity at this Bus Bash is the optional Monday morning golf outing. Participants will play the 18-hole Thunder Bay Golf Course starting at 8:30 a.m. on Monday. The \$59 fee includes cart, lunch and prizes. THUNDER BAY RESORT.**

