

BEACH GUIDE

Bring a float and relax at your favorite beach

BY SARAH HENRY
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Few can resist the combination of sun, sand and surf that northern Lower

Michigan beaches offer. Zane Balks-Russell and John Russell of Okemos sure can't.

The pair enjoy summers on the shores of Higgins

Lake, then venture to their time share in Traverse City for one week each summer for a change of scenery.

Balks-Russell said her favorite beach is at the tip of Old Mission Peninsula.

"It's pretty stony now, but I like it because you can walk way out," she said. "I like how the light reflection changes on the water when you stay for a couple hours."

Russell's favorite beach is at Pinestead Reef on East Bay, adjacent to the state park.

"I think we're beach professionals," Russell said. "We've been coming here 25 years at least, using that beach."

Both agree that as far as sunsets go, the scenery at Higgins Lake can't be beat.

"It's nice because you can watch as the sunsets change over the different seasons," Balks-Russell said.

Their most memorable beach moment, however, occurred in East Bay.



Record-Eagle/Sarah Henry

Ethan Kinney, 1, sits on the beach at Traverse City State Park beach with his parents.

"About 20 years ago we had a Hobie-Cat sailboat and we were sailing in East Bay," Balks-Russell said. "John was doing the navigating and I was holding our infant son, who was asleep."

"We tipped over, and we were about two miles out. The wind was going faster than we could swim, so the boat drifted into Acme. Our

infant screamed (when he hit the water)."

The family eventually reached the beach, where they were greeted by concerned police and a search and rescue team.

Stacey Partak of Traverse City enjoys visiting Traverse City State Park Beach with her two daughters, Madison, 4, and Avery, 2. But her favorite spot will always be Lighthouse Point — that same beach at the tip of the Old Mission Peninsula.

"It's kind of secluded in a way," she said. "It's not overcrowded and it's just beautiful. Plus, the view getting there is really nice."

Partak said she has avoided East Bay this year, because of the low water level.

"You'd have to go out for miles to get it above your ankles," she said.

Mike and Louise Simon of Berkley favor the Traverse City State Park Beach.

"We used to go camping in Petoskey, but this is just so much nicer," Louise said. "Petoskey is so rocky. The sand here is so nice and clean, and you don't have to fight for a spot. We bring a float boat and relax."

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