

GOLF

Tee off for less money

Early-season golf bargains abound in region

BY MIKE TERRELL

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TRAVERSE CITY — Northwestern Lower Michigan has long been thought of as one of America's golfing meccas, with some of the finest courses in the world in the region.

And spring is a great time to play golf in northern Michigan. Courses are less crowded, more affordable and, if you need a lesson after a long winter layoff, the teaching pros have more time.

Following is a sampling of some of the early-season deals that can be found. Most of these bargains will be around only about as long as the morel mushroom season, through early May. All rates are per person unless otherwise indicated.

The Grand Traverse Resort and Spa has early-season rates in effect through May 13. Weekends on the Jack Nicklaus-designed Bear and Gary Player's Wolverine will be \$95 for 18 holes with cart, midweek is \$80 and twilight golf, which begins at 3 p.m., is \$50. The Spruce Run course is \$60 on weekends, \$50 weekdays and \$35 twilight. Call 938-2100.

Elmbrook, celebrating its 40th year in business this season, will be offering an early-season special through June 10. Nine holes will be \$25 with a cart and \$15 for walkers, and 18 holes are, respectively, \$39 and \$23.

As part of the birthday celebration, head pro Roger Putman said that Elmbrook is offering free greens fees on golfers' birthdays all season long. Winter birthdays merit half-price greens fees on the day that would correspond six months later during golf season. For details, call 946-9180.

The Crown Golf Course has an opening special through Memorial Day, which is 18 holes with cart for \$39 per person and a 9-hole rate for \$26. Greens fees only, for those who

wish to walk, are \$24 for 18 holes and \$18 for 9 holes. Twilight rates, which begin at 3 p.m., are \$29 for 18 holes with cart.

High Pointe Golf Club likes to keep it simple, according to golf pro Ben Croftchik. Through May 13, the rate is \$37 for 18 holes with cart. After that, normal summertime rates will be in effect. Call 267-9900.

A-Ga-Ming Golf Club north of Elk Rapids is offering an opening-season special of \$34 for 18-holes with cart through May 19.

At Hawkseye Golf Course near Bellaire, it's \$69 for 18 holes with art through Memorial Day; after 2 p.m., the price drops to \$55. Regular summer rates apply after Memorial Day. For tee times, call 533-4295.

Its twin course, the Chief, located directly across from Shanty Creek, is open in May with a special of \$59 for 18 holes and cart all month. The rate drops to \$39 at 2 p.m. Call 533-9000.

Shanty Creek is offering a variety of spring specials through May 27 at its four courses. The Summit's rates will be \$30 for 18 holes with cart Monday through Thursday and \$40 Friday to Sunday. The Schuss Course is \$50 midweek and \$55 weekends, and Arnold Palmer's Legend and Tom Weiskopf's Cedar River are \$70 midweek and \$75 on weekends. Twilight rates begin at 2 p.m. in May and are the same as the midweek rates. Call (800) 678-4111.

The Leelanau Club at Bahle Farms is once again offering its Fabulous Foursome — four play for the price of three — on selected days. Call 271-2020 to find out when it's available.

King's Challenge, located next to idle Sugar Loaf in Leelanau County, is bringing back its popular Steak 'n Play package. On Sunday through



Record-Eagle/Doug Tesner

Golfers take advantage of a spring day at Mitchell Creek Golf Course in Traverse City.

Thursday, it matches an 18-hole round including cart with a steak dinner for just \$39. That offer is good through May 27, when the price rises to \$49 through June 30. Call (888) 228-0121.

Crystal Mountain brings back its "fill a foursome" through summer. On Monday through Thursday, four can play the resort's Betsie Valley Course for \$99 and its Mountain Course for \$139. Call (800) 968-7686.

Pincroft and Championhill, Lee Stone's twin courses located above Honor and Beulah in Benzie County, is offering a spring foursome special through May 28. Four people with carts play for \$112. For individuals, a twilight rate of \$28 with cart is available after 3 p.m. Call 882-9200.

Boyne USA is introducing Family Fun Days. Mom plays free on a Sunday afternoon when accompanied by kids 17 and under paying a cart fee only. Family Fun is available Sundays starting at 4 p.m. on The Moor Course at the Highlands, the Alpine and Monument Courses at the Mountain and Crooked Tree Golf Course, and after 5 p.m. at Bay Harbor.

Most of these courses — except for Bay Harbor — have midweek twilight rates starting at 2 p.m. for \$29 with cart for 18 holes through early June.

For information or to schedule a tee time, call (800) GOBOYNE.

Manitou

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"You just expect long hours."

Once the ship is ready to sail, the schooner is utilized for several purposes. Inland Seas Education Association, an educational resource in Suttons Bay, charters the ship to provide hands-on instruction to fifth- and sixth-grade students every spring.

On Memorial Day weekend, the passenger trips begin. Passengers have an option to assist with sailing, and children can take a turn at "steering." Cruises that sail during mealtimes include a picnic. Drinks, including alcohol, are available.

New this year is a wine-tasting cruise on scheduled nights in July and August with Leelanau Cellars' wines and the Silver Swan catering. Song of the Lakes will play aboard the ship on Wednesday nights in July and August.

"They have been playing on the ship since the business was established," McGinnis said.

The ship also offers overnight stays, with breakfast made from scratch by chef Wendy Foss.

"It's bunk-style," said McGinnis. "We're trying to give a rustic experience."

McGinnis believes that the objective is to allow people to get out and enjoy a good sail.

"The purpose is to try to give people a sense of the history of vessels like this and what it might have been like to sail on one a hundred years ago," he said.

"For two hours, we want them to be able to step away from the modern world."