



Great Wolf Lodge

Fort MacKenzie at Great Wolf Lodge in Traverse City.

Water parks splash into area

BY MELANIE BOLTHOUSE
Summer Guide editor

This summer, a new wave will wash over northern Lower Michigan — literally.

Three new water parks are slated to open in the region, with two promising fun to tourists and natives alike this summer.

The most noticeable uprising of brightly colored tubes

is along I-75 in Mackinaw City. Tentatively scheduled to open June 12, Thunder Falls covers 20 acres and will include 12 waterslides.

The owners of Thunder Falls chose Mackinaw because they identified a need for that type of attraction, said Sandy MacDonald, group sales manager.

"It'll be the only outdoor water park in northern Michigan of its size," she

said. "It's going to offer a completely different experience compared to indoor water parks."

The park's primary target is families. It offers a variety of attractions for all ages, MacDonald said, including a 550-person wave pool, a lazy river and interactive children's play areas.

To the south, and on a much smaller scale, another outdoor facility is in the

works. Crystal Mountain is planning to open The Park by Water's Edge in July.

Joan O'Neill, Crystal's communication director, said what makes the park unique is that it is not huge like Thunder Falls.

"We didn't feel a large-scale water park fit in (Benzie County)," she said.

The one-acre complex will include a 15-person hot tub, a zero-depth entry pool with slides for children and adults, a sand play area and the Mountain Venture Center. Crystal chose to add the water park to enhance its summer offerings.

"In the wintertime, we've been named the top family resort in the Midwest by readers of Ski Magazine," O'Neill said. "What we really felt we needed was something to round out the family atmosphere in the summer."

At the base of another ski hill, construction on North America's largest indoor water park is underway.

Avalanche Bay at Boyne Mountain is an 88,000-square-foot complex that will be completed in time

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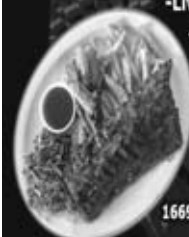
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