

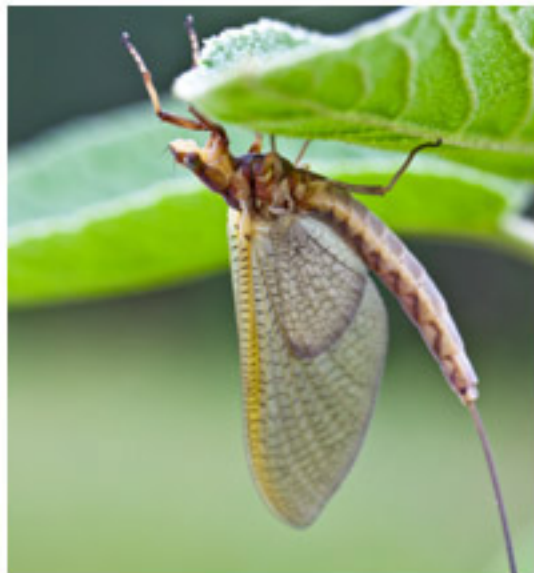
45th PARALLEL

THE QUIANT TOWNS THAT COMPRISE NORTHWESTERN LOWER MICHIGAN ARE LOCATED ALONG THE 45TH PARALLEL, HALF-WAY BETWEEN THE EQUATOR AND THE NORTH POLE. TRAVERSE CITY IS THE EPICENTER OF BOTH CITY LIVING AND PEOPLE LIVING OFF THE GRID, ALL WITHIN A TWENTY MINUTE DRIVE.

Story by Brian Pitser
Photos: Jon Ray







For some reason unknown to me, I was never able to leave the area. As a stopover on the way to law school, being a fly fishing guide sounded like a fun idea and a great way to pass a couple of years on my way to “growing up.” Many life-changing events and sixteen years later, I am still living in Northern Michigan, running my fly shop and guiding, with no intentions of leaving. I never made it to law school.



The Belize 43 catamaran built by Fountaine Pajot of France. (Right)

PETER PAN

TO MAKE WHAT YOU LOVE INTO
A CAREER, AND TO SPEND
TIME DOING WHAT YOU LOVE.

This was an ultimate Peter Pan move: to make what you love into a career, and to spend time doing what you love. As a rep in the fly-fishing industry, I have had the opportunity to travel to some great destinations throughout the country. I enjoy everywhere I have fished, but I am always glad to come home to the Northwoods of Michigan and the welcome sight of watching the sunset over the bay. My passion for fishing and my family brought me to this

point of contentment and they both will likely keep me in Northern Michigan for many years to come. Living in the Traverse City area is like being in an all-consuming vacuum that seems to make time stand still while offering up four seasons of piscatorial pursuits.

The quaint towns that comprise northwestern Lower Michigan are located along the 45th parallel, half-way between the equator and the North Pole. Traverse City is

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the epicenter of both city living and people living off the grid, all within a twenty minute drive. TC offers great fishing and outdoor recreation within an hour's drive in virtually every direction. Numerous rivers, freshwater lakes, cold flowing creeks and, of course, Grand Traverse Bay, make Traverse City one of the top places to pursue trout, salmon, steelhead, bass, muskie, pike, carp, and panfish with a fly. You may have heard that just last fall the pending world-



NUMEROUS RIVERS, FRESHWATER LAKES, COLD FLOWING CREEKS AND, OF COURSE, GRAND TRAVERSE BAY, MAKE TRAVERSE CITY ONE OF THE TOP PLACES TO PURSUE TROUT, SALMON, STEELHEAD, BASS, MUSKIE, PIKE, CARP, AND PAN-FISH WITH A FLY.

record brown trout was caught on the Mansitee River. The new state record Muskie was caught within 20 minutes of the city limits on Lake Skegemog. This is just the tip of the iceberg of what this area has to offer the angler pursuing fins with a fly. Maybe this is why I have been unable to break away from this area because it always offers a fresh something to pursue on a fly.

January and February are not for the faint of heart in Northern Michigan. This is the time most trout bums are inside tying flies, organizing gear, surfing the net for warm-weather travel deals to St. Somewhere to pursue bonefish, permit, or tarpon in a tropical climate. However,

the Boardman, Betsie, Platte, Pere Marquette, or Manistee can satisfy any fishing-Jones in search of winter steelhead. These hearty fish are in the area rivers after the fall rush of salmon, feasting on their eggs and waiting to spawn in the first warm days of spring. Armed with a Spey rod, or fishing float lines with indicators, these winter fish are hard earned, but worth every ounce of effort and pending frostbite. Subtle warming trends and breaks in the winter weather offer some prime winter steelheading opportunities. A great way to spend a winter's day is to head to area rivers on snowshoes, or take a peaceful float down a snow-packed stream.

The Belize 43 catamaran built by Fountaine Pajot of France. (Right)



The Belize 43 calamaran built by Fountains Pajot of France. (Right)

THE TROUT SEASON

WORSHIPED BY THOSE CHASING BROWNS, BROOKIES, AND RAINBOW TROUT, THIS MARKS THE TIME WHEN TROUT FISHERMEN START FOLLOWING THE HATCHES



March and April mark the first signs that you will actually survive a Midwestern winter. It is time to wrap up the tying you put off until the last minute and get out to chase the spring run steelhead. St. Patty's Day brings green beer and the bad boys of spring. These spring fish show up hormone-charged and waiting for the ladies while they scope out the runs and holes behind the gravel bars that will support the spring spawning process. This is the time when the egg flies, buggers, stone fly nymphs, and caddis fool the

wary steelies and make you happy to be alive and well. Spring steelhead fishing is a great time when most anglers of Northern Michigan get out and pursue some spring fishing. Being on the stream in this weather will make you understand what makes boot foot waders and Windstopper fingerless gloves top sellers in the Midwestern market.

The trout season opening on the last Saturday in April is met with the fervor of a holiday. Worshiped by those chasing browns, brookies,

and rainbow trout, this marks the time when trout fishermen start following the hatches, as well as chasing trout with streamers. Hendricksons and black caddis will start to get the trout to look up. May is one of the best months to live in this area. Spring has arrived and, although I have witnessed snow on Mother's Day, anglers can spread out and pursue fish on lakes: ice-out pike, blue gills, pre-spawn bass, and the Great Lakes bonefish (a.k.a., carp). This is the perfect time to float a river with a sinking







TROUT HAUNT

CAST RODENTS ON THE SURFACE UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS TO ENTICE A MARAUDING BROWN OVER 20-INCHES TO CHASE DOWN A BIG, FURRY FLY.

Fresh sashimi and grilled tuna steaks on the back of Destiny 2 (Right)



WITH THE EVENING HATCHES, THIS IS THE PERFECT TIME TO WADE THE FLATS OF GRAND TRAVERSE BAY FOR CARP AND SMALLMOUTH BASS IN THE LATE MORNING TO AROUND DINNER-TIME

CHASE THE BUGS

THE HUM IS IN THE AIR AND FISHERMEN PROTECT THEIR HATCH HOTSPOTS

line, a big meaty streamer, and a couple of good buddies looking to rope a "toad" on the Manistee, AuSable, or Pere Marquette rivers. Sulphurs, various caddis, and stoneflies pop on area streams just as the first beers of summer appear on the local menus. Anglers ponder which lake, river, or species to go after with hook and feather.

June is the granddaddy of the summer months, with the anticipation of the "hex" hatch towards the end of the month. There will be great fishing throughout this month, whether you are after smallmouth and carp on the bay or area lakes. The peak of area rivers give up their bounty to those willing to pay their dues and put some time in to

chase the bugs (that sometimes choose not to show up) that provide a magical time for anglers in Michigan. I may sell more carp flies in one day, and the next day turn around and sell out of an especially "hot" mayfly pattern, based on someone's fishing report. The hum is in the air and fishermen protect their hatch hotspots, but share enough information so that everyone knows what is happening where. Brown drakes, isonymphs, and stoneflies lead up to the night moves of the hexagenia limbata. These hatches that happen in the evening hours and just after dark get the big, nocturnal browns out on the prowl and provide those willing to put in the time a chance at some truly monster trout. With the evening hatches, this is the perfect time to wade the flats of Grand Traverse Bay for carp

45

Parallel
Traverse City, MI



Fresh sashimi and grilled tuna steaks on the back of Destiny 2 (Right)



DAYS SPENT PURSUING STEEL-HEAD IN LATE FALL ARE WHAT KEEP AREA ANGLERS' HOPES HIGH THROUGHOUT THE COLD WINTER MONTHS AND INSPIRE US TO DEVELOP AND TIE SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S TOP PATTERNS.

and smallmouth bass in the late morning to around dinnertime and then head to your local trout haunt for the evening action.

July and August are prime time for terrestrials and the opportunity to catch a great trout on a size-22 trico. This is also a great time for bass on poppers on area lakes. My favorite activity in these two months of summer is to float on area rivers and cast rodents on the surface under the cover of darkness to entice a marauding brown over 20-inches to chase

down a big, furry fly. Summer fun is chillin' by the beach and watching the salmon boats trolling in front of the river mouth as the first salmon start their run up the rivers to begin spawning. September in the Northwoods is a great time for terrestrials. Streamer fishing for trout is in solitude while the masses chase the King and Coho salmon that run all the area rivers that feed into Lake Michigan. Hoards of anglers make the fish runs on the Manistee, Pere Marquette, and Betsie Rivers, which are famous throughout

fishing circles around the country.

The autumn color change is as fantastic as the fish of fall when October gives up the season's runs of steelhead. These are the Mack Daddy of Michigan fish. They show up in our area streams to consume salmon eggs. There are times when you can watch the eggs float down with the current and dance along the sand and gravel, bottom feeding the trout and steelhead that await these tasty morsels. October to December is the



dance along the sand and gravel, bottom feeding the trout and steelhead that await these tasty morsels. October to December is the time to chase these chrome beauties and, the later in the fall, the better time for swinging flies with a two-handed rod, or switch rod. Days spent pursuing steelhead in late fall are what keep area anglers' hopes high throughout the cold winter months and inspire us to develop and tie some of the country's top patterns.



If you wish to pursue a large variety of freshwater species in virtually every season, surrounded by sand dunes, and the cold, clean water of Lake Michigan you may want to try Traverse City. Bring your appetite for trying something different; grab some great local microbrews and head out to the area waters to chase fish in any direction from our city limits. You will be surprised with what northern Michigan has to offer!