



Warming up to winter

After a day of sweeping down an array of white-capped terrain, slip into a plush robe and settle down to unwind in Michigan's scenic resort destinations.

BY TAI ALEXANDER AND LISA M. JENSEN



Tucked into the wooded hillside just east of Harbor Springs, **Boyne Highlands** (boyne.com) tallies the most skiable acres in Michigan on its 55 downhill runs — including one of the Lower Peninsula's longest. The property also features a snowboard terrain park, miles of cross-country ski trails, zip-lining, horseback riding, dog-sledding, and — earlier in 2011 — the Highlands opened The Spa.

Try it: This boutique facility's signature treatment, a Bamboo Massage, employs heated bamboo rods to work deep into nooks and crannies of muscles while providing even pressure to relieve tension and rejuvenating warmth.

Or, kick back for The Highlands Foot Ritual. From knees to toes, legs and feet are gently massaged before being wrapped with hot herbal-infused towels, soothed in a volcanic clay mask and cooled with a restorative arnica cream.

Boyne Mountain Resort (boyne.com) in Boyne Falls has been welcoming visitors since 1947. The acclaimed destination — which offers 59 downhill runs, 12 lifts and ski in/ski-out mountainside cabins — opened its family-friendly Mountain

Grand Lodge & Avalanche Bay Waterpark in 2005. Inside, Solace Spa delivers its own rejuvenating splashes.

Treat yourself: The Hot Toddy for the Body features a vanilla- and cinnamon-scented scrub, renewing chai soy mud mask and soothing scalp massage. The final touch: a hydrating vanilla bean lotion. But if your ski limbs are craving something more, treat them to a Hot Stone Treatment. At Solace Spa, basalt and fossil stones found only in northern Michigan are heated and strategically placed with aromatic oils to penetrate tight, sore muscles.

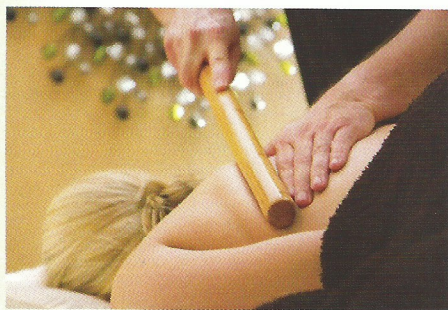
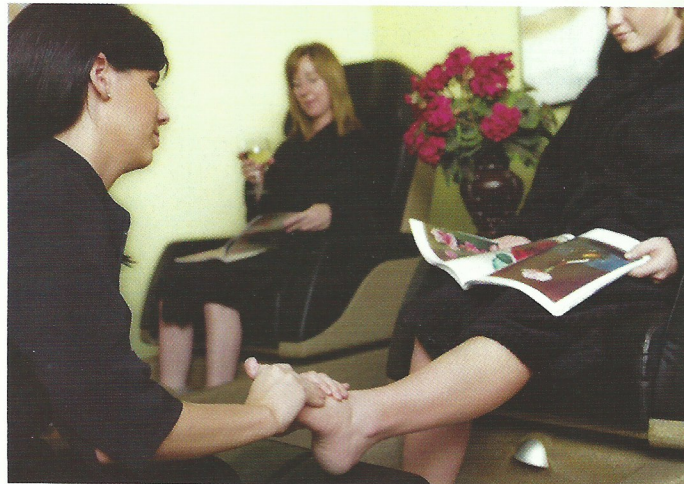
Offering a menu of 45 slopes — 27 of which shine bright for night skiing — **Crystal Mountain Resort** (crystallmountain.com) in Thompsonville also boasts northern Michigan's fastest lift, the Crystal Clipper, powered by renewable wind energy. The 18,500-square foot Crystal Spa also powers its own energy as Michigan's "Green" Spa Destination, one of only six LEED-certified facilities nationwide.

Scandinavian inspiration: Crystal Spa's Signature Evergreen Renewal piques the senses with natural elements like citrus and sea salt and taps into

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY BOYNE RESORTS (TOP LEFT); TREETOPS RESORT (CENTER TOP); CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN (TOP RIGHT); GRAND TRAVERSE RESORT AND SPA (BOTTOM)

the healing powers of water. After a gentle exfoliation, skin is soothed by a seaweed wrap infused with Icelandic moss extracts and refreshed by a gentle rain shower. Last but not least, savor a fragrant evergreen massage from head-to-toe.

Just beyond downtown Traverse City in Acme, **Grand Traverse Resort and Spa** (grandtraverseresort.com) invites cross-country skiing within its own scenic 900 acres, while two community-based, downhill ski



While heated bamboo is used as an extension of the therapist's hands to reach into muscle tissue more deeply at The Spa at Boyne Highlands, feet take a break from sweeping slopes at Treetops Resort.

Want to really recharge for the slopes? Succumb to natural elements at resort spa destinations.

areas — Mt. Holiday and Hickory Hills — can be reached in less than a half-hour. Even closer is Pere Marquette State Forest's multi-loop VASA Pathway.

After a day in the great outdoors, transition to nature-inspired Spa Grand Traverse, the resort's two-level, 7,000-square-foot sanctuary.

Regional bliss: A fresh mix of local cherry concentrate and sugar, the Cherry Honey Glow exfoliates and polishes skin. After a rhythmic Vichy shower rinse, hydrating cherry lotion is up next to soften and renew skin's appearance. Need more pampering? Enjoy a Cherry-Infused Manicure or Massage, or, opt for the seasonal Winter Body Polish.

Nestled high in the heart of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, **The Homestead Resort** (thehomestead.com) arguably delivers the "most beautiful" mountain-top views. With 15 runs, three chair lifts and a terrain park, this serene resort enhances its scenery with ample recreational outlets.

Emerge renewed: Overlooking the Manitou Islands, more intimately-sized Spa Amira can enhance your well-being with a transformative De-Stress Aromatherapy Cocoon. Applied warm, pure essential oils soothe senses and release stress before your entire body is enveloped in a warm wrap, and hands and feet are lavished in paraffin. Want to really recharge for the slopes?

Inhale earthy notes of Arabica coffee and other scents of revival during an Espresso Mud Body Scrub.

Situated along Little Traverse Bay between Petoskey and Charlevoix, the **Inn at Bay Harbor** (innatbayharbor.com) is a close neighbor to three major ski nirvanas (Boyne Highlands, Boyne Mountain and Nub's Nub). After a blustery day on these slopes, slip over for a Sporting Foot Treatment, an enhanced pedicure for fatigued feet. Trimming, polishing and a warm-mud mask leave toes relieved and ready for more action on the slopes.

Or, from toes to head, opt for the spa's Awakening Treatment featuring your choice of Swedish Massage or Couture Facial (a skin-nourishing escape combining natural botanicals, vitamins, antioxidants and plant-derived proteins with lauded lifting affects), plus a reviving manicure and pedicure.

The 45,000-acre **Shanty Creek Resort** (shantycreek.com) in Bellaire is home to Schuss Mountain and Shanty Creek, collectively offering 53 downhill ski runs, five terrain parks, and a 300-foot half-pipe. On average, some 175 inches of snow fall here each winter, mak-

ing the 450-foot vertical drop especially memorable.

More than a handful of northern-inspired treatments evoke memories inside at Shanty's Spa, as well — including the Skier's Massage, which targets major muscle groups used tearing up the slopes with a deep-tissue treatment, trigger point therapy and passive stretching intended to improve flexibility and endurance.

Or, succumb to the elements with a Northern Exposure session. Beginning with the signature Micro Buff Body Polish — an exfoliating, hydrating hot towel treatment, followed by a warm, hydrating lavender-infused white clay wrap and finished with a Swedish massage utilizing warm body butter.

Last but not least, nearly two dozen ski slopes and three chair lifts can be found at **Treetops Resort** (treetops.com) in Gaylord, where abundant snowfall and high elevation combine for unparalleled scenic beauty that extends out for miles in all directions.

Step off the chair lift and head for straight for the massage chair for 15 minutes of respite. Releasing tension in the upper back, neck and shoulders, this quick session will have you back hitting the runs in no time.

The Tension Reliving Massage is more targeted, using Swedish techniques to calm nerves and relieve tension. A series of long, slow, rhythmic strokes allow for a more intense experience for up to 90 minutes.

For more information on Michigan skiing and spas, log onto Michigan.org.

Tai Alexander is a West Michigan-based freelance writer. Lisa M. Jensen is editor of Michigan BLUE Magazine.