



Open-air wall tents provide campers with privacy.

Enchanting island escape

Lake Michigan's largest island is a haven for nature lovers and recreationalists seeking to paddle the shoreline, fish the inland lakes, pedal the gravel roads or simply enjoy an evening under the stars. But visitors to the "Emerald Isle" now can find one-of-a-kind, safari-style overnight accommodations at Beaver Island Retreat (beaverislandretreat.com), which opened last summer.

According to owners Maria Dal Pra and Brian Vaeth, it is one of only two such "glamping" facilities located on an island in the continental United States. Situated just off King's Highway (named for the island's most notorious resident, self-proclaimed Mormon "King" James Strang), the resort

currently offers 10 safari-style tents spread out over 10 wooded acres.

"The layout of the campground was designed to allow for the greatest outdoor experience with as much privacy as possible," said Dal Pra. "Sites are more than twice the requirement by law, totaling over 2,500-square-feet with some sites up to 5,000-square-feet."

Sitting atop a custom-built platform, each 16x11.5-foot tent features a queen log bed with a memory foam mattress and bamboo sheets, bath towels, lanterns and flashlights, Bluetooth speaker, custom-built chairs and clothing rack. A covered porch offers seating for two, as well as a kitchen cart with plates, cups and uten-

sils. Each site also includes its own grill, a fire ring, picnic table, hammock and just about anything else one needs to enjoy a rustic getaway.

"It was a spur of the moment decision to take a trip to Beaver Island and it was the best decision we made all year," said Kim Howe of Rochester Hills, who visited in 2019. "Our experience was exceptional from start to finish — both Brian and Maria are so dedicated to providing the best experience for their guests."

Common areas like the laundry facility, fully stocked kitchen, covered cedar log pavilion and private bath houses give a home-away-from-home feel. Visitors are provided unlimited ice, water, firewood



Above: After spending a delightful evening under the stars, lighting helps campers find their airy abode.

and charcoal, as well as all-natural soaps, a welcome bottle of wine and morning coffee. Add-on packages cover shuttle service, vehicle rental and grocery delivery.

This year, four tents are expected to be outfitted with solar power to provide lighting, run laptops and charge cell phones. A small guest garden with herbs and select vegetables, retractable clothing lines and an enhanced bar area within the pavilion also are among the new amenities.

Open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, Beaver Island Retreat is kid- and pet-friendly, as well as ADA compliant. Beaver Island is accessible via ferry or air service out of Charlevoix. ≈

— *Dianna Stampfler*

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MARIA DAL PRA



Above and Top Right: Visitors to Beaver Island Retreat enjoy a variety of comforts including a covered porch, Bluetooth speaker, bamboo sheets and a complimentary bottle of wine.