



Vineyard Ventures

Black Star Farms mixes outdoor adventures and wines in its new discovery package

By Dianna Stampfler

Nestled against the backdrop of sloping rows of grape vines and overlooking expansive horse paddocks, Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay has been one of the Leelanau Peninsula's premier agritourism destinations since it welcomed its first guest in 1998.

Located 12 miles north of downtown Traverse City — along scenic M-22, which skirts the freshwater coastline of West Grand Traverse Bay — this winery also boasts a 10-room boutique inn that exudes elegance and invites relaxation. Each distinctly designed room is named for various stars in the sky, and some offer cozy

fireplaces, soaking tubs, outdoor patios, or quiet sitting areas that beg guests to linger just a little longer with a good book, a cup of coffee, or a glass of wine.

As if the accommodations, views, and award-winning wines weren't enough, two years ago Black Star Farms introduced its Outdoor Adventure Package as a way to encourage overnight guests to explore the scenic countryside and shorelines at their leisure.

"This package has definitely brought us new guests and it's fun to see parents with young adult kids coming to the inn because of it," says Sherri Campbell Fenton, managing owner of Black Star Farms.

"We recently had three rooms booked from the same family — parents and three 20-something kids. It gives families an opportunity to do something together that will appeal to them all."

After a refreshing night's sleep and a hearty breakfast, guests can step out the back door of the inn and hop on a bicycle (or an e-bike) and pedal the short distance west on Revold Road to the Leelanau Trail (a 17-mile TART Trail route), which ends in Suttons Bay just three miles to the north. There, locally owned shops and galleries line the streets like a scene out of a painting.

When hunger strikes, riders stop in

Suttons Bay to pick up their picnic lunch from Black Star's Hearth & Vine Café, and then meander across the street to the Suttons Bay beach for an al fresco experience.

During the afternoon, it's time to hit the water. Package participants can choose between a stand-up paddle board or kayak to enjoy the bay, with the village as a backdrop and the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay all around.

After these adventures, guests return to the inn in time to freshen up for hospitality hour, which features select wines and small bites served indoors or on the covered patio or front porch.

Black Star Farm's seasonal café welcomes guests for lunch and dinner May through October, and there are numerous other dinner options within a short drive. Another option is to pre-order an artisan charcuterie board to go and head to Leland, to the west along Lake Michigan,

and end the day with a stunning sunset.

"We were struggling to find something to do for our anniversary that was active, to fit our lifestyle, and the Outdoor Adventure Package checked all our boxes," says Kim Bolt, of Grand Rapids, who stayed at the inn with her husband, David, last August. "We so enjoyed our bike ride on the trail, as well as our paddle-boarding and kayaking in the bay. Our picnic lunch was delicious and carefully prepared to accommodate our vegetarian needs."

The Outdoor Adventure Package is available to inn guests only. Advanced reservations are required, either online or by calling 231-944-1251 to schedule. The cost is \$140 per person, plus room charges, with an upcharge for e-bikes. The package includes equipment rental, bike helmets, life jackets, a brief paddle board or kayak lesson, picnic lunch delivery, and a souvenir water bottle, as well as roadside assis-

tance and transportation service if needed.

For something different, Black Star Farms also offers a Winter Adventure Package with snowshoeing and fat-tire biking activities. ☺

PLAN IT!

Black Star Farms
blackstarfarms.com

This page: Participants in the Black Star Farms Outdoor Adventure Package can bike the backroads around Suttons Bay or explore the 17-mile-long Leelanau Trail. **Opposite page:** Guests sample wines after an action-packed day.

