

NORTHERN MICHIGAN GOLFER

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GAYLORD GOLF MECCA



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Edition

A SPECTACULAR COLLECTION OF 17 MICHIGAN GOLF COURSES

WHERE TO EAT · STAY · PLAY · SAVE · REPEAT

Welcome, Women!

By Susan R. Pollack*



Midway through their welcome reception, women taking lessons at Treetops Golf Academy divide into teams to play golf tic-tac-toe. Setting aside wine and snacks, they take turns putting onto grids on the practice green.

It's a fun icebreaker, a way to foster camaraderie and give instructors a glimpse into each woman's style of play for the lessons to come.

But it's typically not played in men's classes, says Kevin McKinley, assistant general manager of Treetops Resort in Gaylord.

"Most men want pure instruction, from hour one to hour seven," he says. "Women want social interaction, they want to

interact with each other, not always nose-to-the-grindstone. But the beauty is, we can do that, too, if that's what they want."

Delivering what women golfers want is a key mission of the Gaylord Golf Mecca.

Blessed with beautiful scenery and world-class courses set amid gentle hills, majestic trees and blue waters, the Mecca has rolled out the welcome mat for female golfers for years and now even more so during the current golf boom.

"We love our women golfers," says McKinley. "Every training session with rangers and starters I emphasize treating both genders the same. There's a taboo in golf that 'women play slow,'



which is far from the truth. Ladies do a very good job of keeping pace. Women are concerned about what's happening behind them and are a bit more conscious of their surroundings than men."

Beyond a warm welcome, the Gaylord Golf Mecca appeals to women golfers through its sheer variety of quality courses and multiple tee placements geared to a wide range of skill levels, from high-handicappers to more advanced players.

"Most Mecca courses feature multiple sets of tees that ladies at different ability levels would enjoy playing," says Judy Mason, a veteran instructor who is director of golf at Michaywe Pines Golf Course and the Mecca's current chairperson.

In addition to playability, available tee-times and affordable rates, Mason cites the Mecca's array of lodging options, plus the convenience of booking 'Stay & Play' packages geared to different budgets.

"Some golfers might prefer their own hotel room, others may want to rent a house, chalet or condo with a kitchen. We've got them all," Mason says. "Pine Cone Accommodations' rentals include some right on the water. Some of the ladies like to go for a kayak or SUP ride after golf."

The Mecca offers plenty to do beyond the fairways, such as spa time at Treetops. As Mason says: "Gaylord is a popular spot for groups of ladies to not only play golf but to enjoy outdoor activities—hiking and biking trails, lakes and watersports—as well as the shops and great little restaurants and bars in the area."

The Mecca's pro shops are catering increasingly to women, according to Mason. "At Michaywe, we try to make sure there's plenty of merchandise to choose from, and a nice span of sizes for all body shapes."

Golfers Connie Doughty and Tracy Clark of suburban Detroit vacationed at Garland Lodge & Golf Resort in Lewiston with their husbands last summer. "We just had such a great time," says Clark of their Mecca getaway. "I was very happy. ... The women's tees are up so much farther, they make you feel confident."

The couples played three 18-hole rounds in three days and enjoyed resort and nearby dining. They also shared cocktails at the resort's outdoor bar with firepit and on their balcony overlooking the putting green. "The bed was really comfortable, too—I slept very well," Clark recalls. "I'd love to go back when the trees turn colors in the fall."

*Susan R. Pollack is an award-winning travel writer – and improving golfer – in Metro Detroit. She came within six inches of a hole in one last fall and is eager to return to the Mecca.

Personally Speaking

Pro Tips from Susan, the Author

Personally, I recommend Happy Hour at Bennethum's Northern Inn (scratch-made items include an amazing chunky blue cheese dressing) and Big Buck Brewery with such novelties as dill pickle pizza, authentic Polish pierogis and beer flights served in racks hand-crafted from real antler sheds.

Shopping in Gaylord's Alpine-themed downtown is also a treat. Check out specialty kitchen items, including two walls of cookie cutters, at Isabella's Copper Pot; taste chocolate-covered potato chips at Alpine Chocolat Haus and grab a craft beer at Snowbelt Brewing Company.

Browse clothing at Woolly Buggers and outdoor gear at White Birch Outfitters. And don't miss Old Spud Warehouse, a wonderland of trendy fashion and home furnishings. Save time for the city's elk herd that roams, coincidentally, behind the Gaylord Elks Lodge.



Top: Woolly Buggers in Gaylord's quaint Alpine-themed downtown.
Bottom: The ever-eclectic Old Spud Warehouse.

