

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR YOUR GENERATION

# LIVING WELL *50 Plus*

ENTERTAINMENT • HEALTH • BARGAINS • LIFESTYLE

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Like the changing demographics of social media

The number of users aged 55 and older has grown from 950,000 to 5.9 million in just six months

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# TRAVEL

## Cruising Lake Michigan

Magical tour leaves Chicago to hit hot spots of the great lake



A small-ship cruise on Lake Michigan takes you to charming locations such as Mackinac Island.



by Jan Ross,  
Staff Writer

We are huge fans of cruising, but when you factor in

the cost of airline tickets, even a very reasonably priced cruise can get pretty expensive. So I started looking for ports that were within driving distance of Lexington and stumbled upon something I never even knew existed – cruises of Lake Michigan. Not only were the cruises reasonably priced (they often have two-for specials), but Blount Small Ship Adventures has several cruises that leave from Navy Pier in Chicago, an easy drive for us.

Magical Lake Michigan is a week-long cruise that traverses the lake, stopping in big cities such as Milwaukee, out-of-the-way locales such as Beaver Island and famous Michigan towns such as Holland. All meals and snacks are included in the fare and the company offers shore excursions at every port for a small extra charge that is much less than the large cruise lines. Alcohol is served at several small cocktail

parties onboard but there is not a bar that is constantly open. Instead, cruisers are encouraged to bring their own alcohol. The crew will store it for you and even provide mixers and snacks to go with it. There are also soft drinks and coffee available whenever anyone wants some – just help yourself.

The staterooms on the *Grande Mariner* are not as large as some of those on the large cruise ships, but they are very comfortable and have plenty of storage space. Many have windows and some have a door that directly accesses the outside walkway. The staterooms do not have televisions, so bring plenty of books and other forms of entertainment for the evenings onboard. There is free Wi-Fi on the ship but it's not strong enough to watch movies on an iPad, so bring your laptop and either download some movies or bring your own DVDs. There is a large lounge area with plenty of comfortable seating and a large, flat-screen television where movies are shown nightly.

Because of weather, we were not

able to make it to all the ports on our itinerary, but one we especially loved was Mackinac Island. The site of the Grand Hotel made famous by the movie "Somewhere in Time," the island is charming. No cars are allowed so transportation is by horseback, horse-drawn carriages, bikes or walking. We enjoyed a carriage tour of the island and spent a lazy afternoon bicycling the seven-mile path that runs around the entire island.

Before we leave on a cruise, we always like to spend at least one

night in the port city, just in case a complication arises. We certainly don't want the ship to sail without us! I highly recommend the Hyatt at McCormick Place. Catch a bus that stops right in front of the hotel to access any of Chicago's tourist sites. You can easily get to the lake for a stroll along the lakefront. Try to book one of the executive suites on the corner; you'll have an incredible view of the city and the lake. Be sure to have dinner at *Shor*, the restaurant in the hotel, which offers a variety of delicious items.

