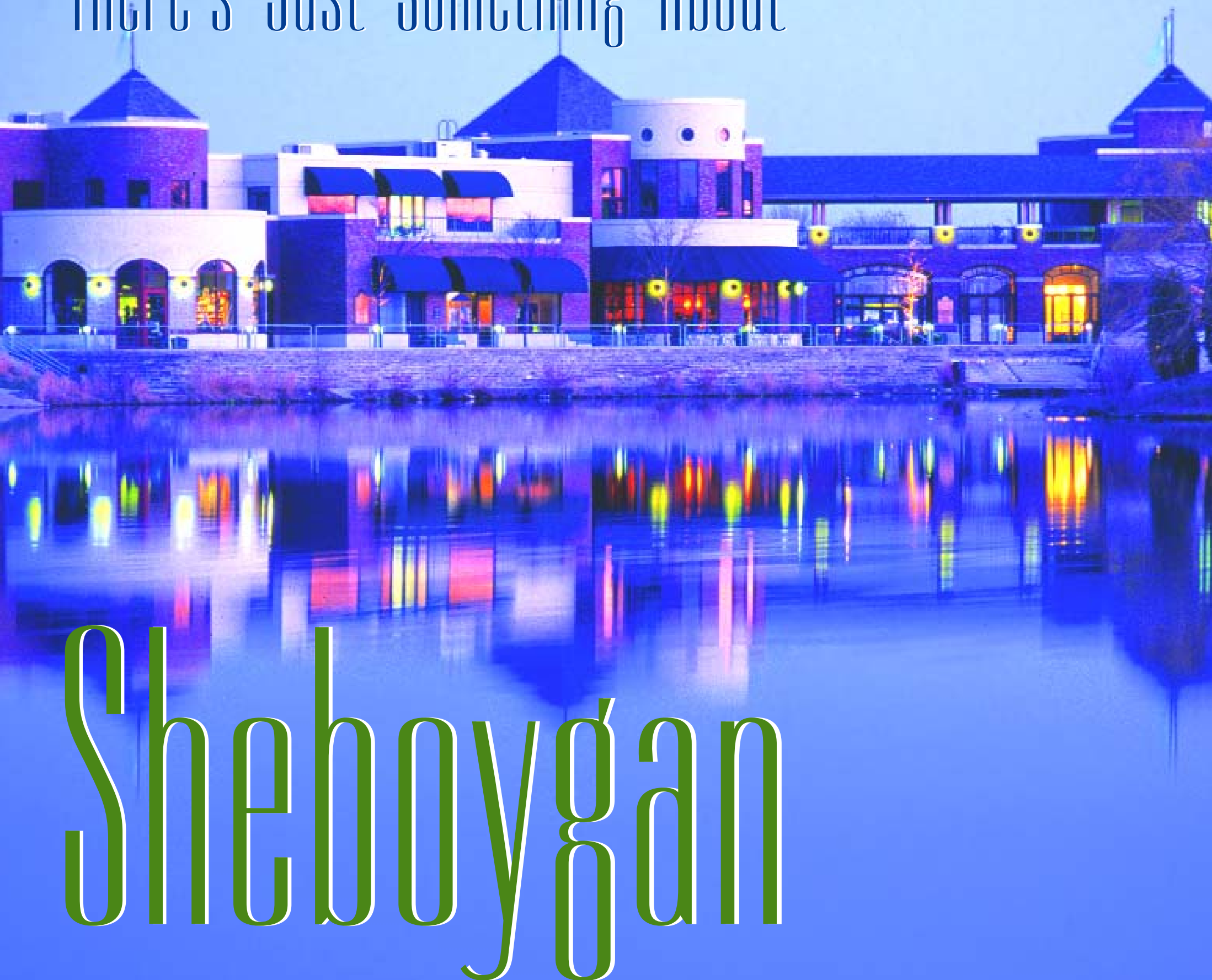


There's Just Something About



Sheboygan



One of the best hometowns in the U.S.

- The Power of Place, epodunk.com

Is it winter's annual Polar Bear Swim among the ice floes of Lake Michigan that make it "the best place in the country to retire"? Is it the annual Brat Fry in the park that makes it "the best place in the USA to raise a family"? Perhaps it's the Sausagefest. The Polka Mass. The ice bowling, shipwreck diving, or maybe the Ducktona 500. Here in Sheboygan, Wisconsin whatever it is – and it's something – there's a whole lotta fun going on.



How else do you explain a recent Roper Center poll that concluded this lakeside, cheese-making Midwestern city ranks tops – tops – in kid-raising desirability? And the 2002 *Money* magazine survey that cites low crime, clean air, reasonable taxes – not to mention world-class golf and notable restaurants – as the reason this “small town with everything” is the nation’s idea of the hottest retirement paradise?

Must be the Slovenian picnics.

Must be the Hollandfest klompen dancing.

Must be the Harvest Moon Ball.

Sheesh. Sheboygan sure knows how to tempt an airborne adventurer its way, so yours truly Pilot Michael is wheels-down at the Sheboygan County Memorial Airport (SBM) and now finds himself smack in Sheboygan-land. Only the native Winnebagoes and Pottawatomies of yore who skirted the shore of Lake Michigan and trod the path from Milwaukee to Green Bay, could feel as astonished as I at the beauty of former *Schwab-we-way-kum*, or “great noise underground” for the rushing sound of upstream falls, that is this place by the mouth of the Sheboygan River.

Now wonder early English trappers settled here. No wonder German, Dutch and Irish dairymen by 1875 had up to 116 factories churning out 2,000,000 pounds of cheese annually. No wonder flour- and sawmills flourished, with woodworking of windmills, wagons, sashes and spokes the township’s pride. Sheboygan County is as pretty as the main thoroughfare of the city of Sheboygan Falls, past winner of a Great American Main Street award that declared it one of the five best-looking downtowns in the entire nation.

There are those who will pooh-pooh pretty. Give me *substance*, they say. Give me wit. Give me above all a Good Time. I hear you, demanding travelers, loud and clear.

That’s why I’m on my way to the fabulously restored, 100-year-old buildings of downtown Sheboygan. Why, here there are chic offices and shops in the old carriage factory. Sleek new apartments in the old shoe factory. A deli made from a turn-of-the-century apothecary, and a courtyard art gallery

from an ancient iron works building. *Quel* ingenuity! At the snazzy John Michael Kohler Performing Arts Center, a thriving visual and performing arts complex, *The Rhinestone Cowboy & Beautiful Holy Jewel Home* exhibit details the life and faux gem-embellished everything – clothes to home to Cadillac – of a certain kooky cowboy of renown. At the 1928 movie palace a’glitter with chandeliers, the Sheboygan Theatre, the beautifully restored “Spanish Castle” décor sets the stage for a series of gospel music concerts. And on the Riverfront Boardwalk, once-weathered fishermen’s shanties today are super-cool restaurants, galleries, shops – as well as a popular prelude to a day of Lake Michigan sportfishing for salmon and trout. Simply charter a boat like *Sorry Charlie* that is ever ready to go.

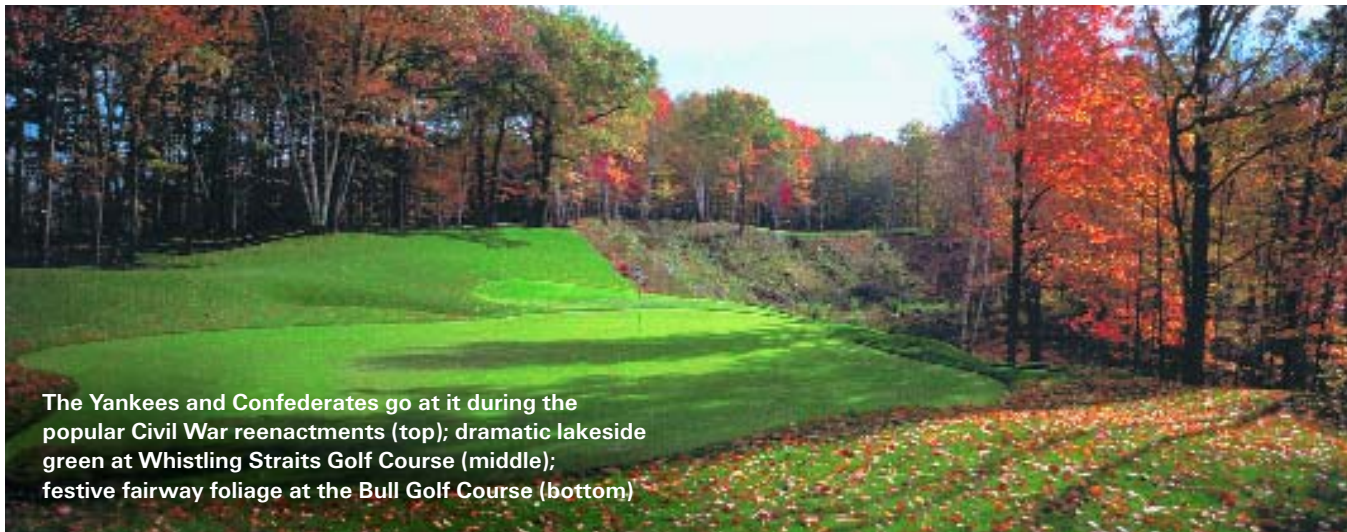
Sure seems like Sheboygan knows how to keep a pilot packing it in during his or her visit. But really, what *really* goes on here that makes for all the raves? Your Pilot Michael wants to know. So. I get word of a flurry of weekend festivals: Sawmill Days, where local woodworkers’ techniques are celebrated; Bratwurst Day, where the “guest of honor” in this realm where sausage is king, is the bratwurst; the “Chicken and All That Jazz” Dixieland barbecue; German Night, with its beer garden in overflow mode.

I’m tipped-off to the glorious golf: There



Mood Mozart.
A magical evening of music at the Well Center outdoor theater (left); Wisconsin wacky happens at the annual Cardboat Boat Regatta and baseball game Bed Races (right); eye-popping tilework of the Art Center restroom (below)





is Blackwolf Run, with its Pete Dye-designed challenge – two championship 18-hole courses, one of which, the River Course, overlooks sweeping views of the dramatic, glacier-carved Sheboygan River Valley; play here is a date with deep ravines, meadow plains, abundant lakes. There is also Whistling Straits, home of this year's prestigious PGA Championship (August 9-15). Here, Dye's "bit of Ireland and a touch of Scotland" incorporates, he says, "every trick I ever learned" in its open, rugged, windswept terrain along the Lake Michigan shore; the golf game here is said to be inspired. Among a number of other wonderful courses, there is even The Bull at Pinehurst Farms, Jack Nicklaus's seduction among the lakes, wetlands and river-rich terrain of a Holstein cattle dairy farm.

For all their outhouse races (for real) at the lush Cedar Lake Resort, and Kitty Cat competitions (dare we ask?) at that CART/motorcycle road racing facility 'o thrills known as Road America, Sheboyganers (Sheboyganites?) certainly don't lack for class. No less than 13 local performing arts groups prove that when it comes to culture, this is a town boppin' to Big Band, swinging to jazz, singing along with choral concerts and otherwise raising the roof with theatrical and musical things to do on a Saturday night. Or a Monday or Tuesday, what have you.

So, sure! I'll swing by the thriving

Stephanie H. Weill Center for the Performing Arts, maybe catch the annual Barbershop show, or the Russian Folk Orchestra as they perform Tchaikovsky on balalaikas; I'll hit the Sheboygan Museum to steep myself in whatever the wacky history is that makes this town, if you please, the Bratwurst Capital of the World. Yes, I'll be good and I'll be earnest; I'll get to know the city's more serious, culturally superior sights. Because behind the beauty and beneath the savvy, Sheboygan's got something – and I want at it – that has to explain the Polar Bear Swim and baseball game "bed races" and the rest of the happy, wacky happenings going on day in day out, year-round.

One local in the know calls it Sheboygan's "Gemütlichkeit."

Is that a Wisconsin synonym for fun?

For details on these and other Sheboygan delights, explore www.sheboygan.org or call 800.457.9497.



Surfing? In Sheboygan? Sure!

SHEBOYGAN (WI) COUNTY MEMORIAL AIRPORT (SBM)

AIRPORT DATA

Elevation: 754'
 Runways: 13/31 5000' 3/21 5399'
 Approaches: GPS RNAV ILS NDB VOR
 ATIS / ASOS: 877.ANY.AWOS (269.2967)

FIXED BASE OPERATIONS / FUEL / SERVICES

West Shore Aviation, Inc. 920.467.6151

TRANSPORTATION

Taxi - City 920.457.3030, 920.457.3232
 Taxi - Yellow 920.457.7777
 Rental Cars available thru FBO 920.467.6151

AIRPORT RESTAURANTS

Pine Lodge 2 mi 920.467.4568
 Bushwood 3 mi 920.459.8040
 American Club 4 mi 920.457.8888

AIRPORT LODGING

Inn on Woodlake (8 min.) 920.452.7800
 Baymont Inn (15 min.) 800.428.3438
 920.457.2321

