

## For the Love of Travel



Aaron Leventhal

### 12th annual Traverse City Film Festival

Mount Pleasant, South C “One of the 25 coolest film festivals in the world for warmth, energy, supportive atmosphere and awesome offerings” - Movie Maker Magazine 2015

Oscar and Emmy-winning director Michael Moore was born and raised in economically depressed Flint, Mich. As a drop-out of the University of Michigan-Flint, Moore pursued an impressive career as a liberal political activist in the 1970s and 80s.

In 1989, he kicked off his award-winning documentary film career by writing and directing *Roger and Me*, a scathing portrayal of General Motors CEO Roger B. Smith. This was followed by commercial box office successes *Bowling for Columbine* and 2005 Academy Award winning *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the highest grossing documentary of all time.

Time magazine that year named Moore “one of the world’s 100 most influential people.”

Moore has gone on to write screenplays and direct films such as *Sicko* (a diatribe on the American health and pharmaceutical industry) and *Capitalism: A Love Story* about the financial meltdown of the late 2000s. He also has written eight non-fiction books and acted in movies and TV series.

However, Moore’s artistic passion in the past dozen years has been focused on

his renowned Traverse City Film Festival (TCFF), which he founded in 2005 after moving to Traverse City, in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula along Lake Michigan. He volunteers his time, money and energy for a singular purpose: to “show great movies.”

In 2007, he and some of his neighbors funded the restoration of the historic State Theater, a large, ornate 1940s Art Deco gem that had not shown movies for 20 years. Today it has



Travel writer Aaron Leventhal with Captain Chien Nowland on his Nauti-Cat Catamaran for Movies on a Boat on the bay. (photo by Beth Ervin Leventhal)

been recognized by the Motion Picture Association of America as the “#1 movie theater in the world to see movies” and is a focal point for the festival.

Moore has assembled an impressive board of distinguished international filmmakers and artists to provide guidance and support for the festival, includ-

ing Michigan natives Jeff Daniels and Christine Lahti, Larry Charles of *Borat* fame and Terry George, Irish creator of *Hotel Rwanda*. Moore serves as the board president and chief festival programmer. His efforts have significantly contributed to Traverse City’s creative and economic renaissance.

In 2016, the Traverse City Film Festival will run from Tuesday, July 26-Sunday July 31 with more than 200 films, including documentaries, LGBT, fiction, foreign films and American classics at the State Theater, City Opera House, Old Town Playhouse and Bijou by the Bay. In addition, films are shown nightly on a gigantic, 100-foot outdoor screen in the Open Space by the Bay.

Films are just one piece of this unique festival. There are numerous fun-packed events, beginning with a celebratory Opening Night Street Party, and many opportunities to experience major filmmakers and professionals discussing films and interacting with the

audience. A Film School is held twice daily with sessions at North Western Michigan College. Film Panels take place daily at 9:30 a.m., and Cinema Salons with discussions following selected screenings are held free of charge on the patio at Clinch Park. Free live music is presented at festival sites.

A complete 2016 schedule will be on the website by mid-June at [www.traversecityfilmfest.org](http://www.traversecityfilmfest.org).

#### Exploring Northern Michigan

Growing up in Cleveland and attending The Ohio

dining, golf, spa and casino; Sleeping Bear Dunes; Bryant Park Beach; Boardman Lake Trail, an easy, two-mile bike trail; nearby Interlochen Center for the Arts with blockbuster concerts all summer.



Opening Night Street Party Tuesday, July 26

State University, my head echoed with the refrain, “I don’t give a damn about the whole state of Michigan, I’m from O-HI-O.”

So, with the exception of several memorable stays at the legendary Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, I largely avoided Michigan as a vacation getaway.

However, a week-long trip last September to Lake Michigan’s pristine shoreline along the Lower Peninsula from Traverse City to Petoskey completely altered my point of view. The region has shaken off its Rust Belt personae and emerged as a popular resort destination.

And why not? It excels in scenic beauty with broad sandy beaches along crystal clear lake waters ideal for sailing, boating and fishing. Hiking and bike trails are plentiful, along with golf courses, fine dining, arts and entertainment wineries and microbreweries.

#### Traverse City

Attractions: Old Mission Peninsula Wineries with tasting rooms, vineyard tours, shops and refreshments; Nauti-Cat Cruises on the largest commercial sailing catamaran on the Great Lakes; Grand Traverse Resort for shopping

Dining: Favorites include Apache Trout Grill on West Bayshore Drive; Mission Table on Old Mission Peninsula for local produce and fresh fish; Sleder’s Tavern, locals’ hang-out since 1882; Trattoria Stella for Italian fare in the Village Commons.

Where to Stay: Pointes North Beachfront Resort Hotel is within 15 minutes of all downtown attractions and TCFF venues. Features include private, sandy beach, outdoor pool, complimentary breakfast, private terraces and in-room Jacuzzi spas. [www.pointesnorth.com](http://www.pointesnorth.com). Also check out [www.traversecitylodging.com](http://www.traversecitylodging.com).

For more information: 800-678-3416 or [www.traversecity.com](http://www.traversecity.com).

#### Charlevoix.

Drive 50 miles north from Traverse City along the lakeshore to a vibrant downtown filled with an eclectic mix of locally owned boutiques, galleries and restaurants lining Bridge Street. The quaint, small town has a bustling marina and Waterfront Park along Little Traverse Bay, with outdoor concerts throughout the summer. It’s worth a visit just to tour Earl Young’s “Mushroom

Houses,” a collection of unusual architectural stone structures. A summer outdoor farmers’ market is open on Thursdays.

For more information: 800-367-8557 or [www.visitcharlevoix.com](http://www.visitcharlevoix.com).

#### Petoskey

Just a short drive north of Charlevoix, Petoskey is a charming resort community with elegant Victorian neighborhoods; historic downtown Gaslight District; sandy beaches along Little Traverse Bay; more than a dozen beautiful public golf courses, many with panoramic views of Lake Michigan; and scenic hiking and biking trails. Nearby Bay Harbor and Harbor Springs boast quality shopping and dining along the Bay. Bay View is a Chautauqua historic landmark with stately homes and a summer series of concerts and lectures. My favorites include hunting for fossilized Petoskey stones at Petoskey State Park; devouring homemade ice cream at Mooner’s; taking a self-guided tour of author Ernest Hemingway’s haunts, including his bar seat at City Park Grill; and riding the free downtown shuttle on weekends.

Where to stay: The 1899 Stafford’s Perry Hotel in the Gaslight District has stunning bay views, dining on the veranda in the Rose Garden, live entertainment on weekends in the Noggin Room; and full breakfasts included. [www.staffords.com/perry-hotel/](http://www.staffords.com/perry-hotel/)

For more information: 800-845-2828 or [www.petoskeyarea.com](http://www.petoskeyarea.com).

Travel writer Aaron Leventhal has organized a trip to this year’s Traverse City Film Festival including a stay at Pointes North Hotel, film tickets and a cruise on the Nauti-Cat Movie on a Boat Cruise. Interested persons should visit [leventhaltravel.com](http://leventhaltravel.com) or call Aaron at 614-506-9666.