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A Monthly e-Digest for the Busy Tour Planner

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[Current Issue > Article Detail](#)



Somewhere in time

Article from Spotlight, Vol. 506

A visit to the historic Gaslight District in downtown Petoskey is always special, but when coupled with a stay at the Perry Hotel, groups are in for a treat.

A tour of the region sets the tone — charming Victorian cottages with elaborate gingerbread trim, panoramic views of the sparkling water of Little Traverse Bay, manicured landscapes of summer homes that have been in the family for generations, and even the gaslights themselves. However, nothing prepares travelers for their first sight of

the large yellow 79-room Perry gleaming like a beacon high above the bay.

A warm welcome and kindly gestures from the well-trained staff starts at the front desk and transports guests to a time when manners were paramount. Lucky visitors will be checked in by Vickey, who is so accommodating that guests will want to pinch themselves that they haven't entered the Wayback Machine to an earlier era. Though the hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites and proudly showcases its antiques within a Victorian backdrop, it has been extensively restored and equipped with modern amenities like Internet access, hot tub, and an espresso bar in the cozy lobby.

"This is part of the traditional hotel experience, to enjoy the lobby and the fireplace and to sit back and relax," said Reg Smith, general manager of this historic 1899 landmark.

And Reg Smith is no ordinary general manager; his father Stafford Smith began his career as an innkeeper at the Bay View Inn, now the flagship property of Stafford's Hospitality, which purchased the Perry in 1989. Reg learned the tourism hospitality business while working on the properties and just recently added carpet designer to his illustrious resume. Reg takes his job of caretaker seriously and along with his creative wife Lori has developed special events and innovative programs to keep guests returning for more. The Titanic weekend, now going on its fifth year next April, is always a success. Guests dress in period costume, and relive that mysterious fatal night along with a special dinner resembling the one onboard the ship, and a historical presentation with treasured *Titanic* artifacts by *Titanic* historian, David Kaplan. Shopping packages and wine pairings are a few of the innovative offerings, while Lori is busy developing even more dinner theater packages. There are four dining options at the hotel.



Tour buses find easy parking right out the door and passengers can easily stroll to Petoskey's downtown shops, restaurants, and waterfront for a glorious sunset.

Stafford's Gallery of Art and History is the company's latest accomplishment. Located next to the Perry Hotel, this former icehouse is filled with treasures from antiques to one-of-a-kind pieces by local artists, and Stafford's collection of historical photos are also on display.

Groups traveling through Charlevoix should add Stafford's Weathervane to the itinerary. Originally built as a gristmill, the converted restaurant offers waterfront dining along with regional specialties. The restaurant was named to the Best in 2010 in Northern Michigan list and handily accommodates groups.

Stafford's Perry Hotel
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Petoskey, MI 49770
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