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# See Mother Nature Dance

## Cross the Northern Lights off your bucket list

Witnessing the Northern Lights is a common bucket list item, and for good reason. The Northern Lights are a sensational natural phenomenon. We're fortunate that our northern location and clear, dark skies make it possible to see the Northern Lights right from our backyard in Tofte, MN.

Viewing the Northern Lights is an adventure you can do alone or with loved ones. That makes it an ideal socially distanced activity at a time when we could all use a dose of natural wonder and awe.

### What are the Northern Lights?

The Northern Lights, also known as the aurora borealis, occur through the interaction of solar wind. Specifically, they become visible when a stream of charged particles escapes the sun and enters Earth's atmosphere. The particles excite the gases in our atmosphere and make them glow brilliant shades of green, blue, violet and pink.

Viewing the light show feels other worldly and truly is something you will never forget.

### Tips for Viewing Northern Lights

The best time to spot the elusive show is during the early winter on a clear night. There are helpful websites which track the levels of geomagnetic activity in different areas, known as KP levels. The KP levels are on a scale of 0-9 and give you an idea of where you can go to see the auroras. To see them in Lutsen - Tofte, you'll be looking for a KP level of 4 or higher.

We recommend checking the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website: [swpc.noaa.gov](https://swpc.noaa.gov).

The easiest location to spot the Northern Lights from Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts is in front of the Bluefin Grille. The peninsula extends out into Lake Superior offering a view of the northern night sky in all its glory. Be sure to bring a flashlight so you can navigate the rocks carefully and please DON'T go out if the wind and waves are strong!

Another great spot for viewing is up the Sawbill Trail, about three miles from Bluefin Bay. There is a pull off on the left side of the road which features an expansive view of the northern sky.

Remember to face north (that one is important!) and to turn off any artificial lights nearby. Bundle up and good luck.



Photo Credit: Josiah Weitzel, Bluefin Northern Lights

## No Solar Storm? No Problem.

We know it's not always easy to plan your trip around when the Northern Lights are forecasted, but there is still plenty of natural beauty to be found above. Cook County has some of the darkest skies in the country, allowing for incredible viewing of the stars, planets and galaxy.

This year, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (located just 20 miles from Bluefin Bay) was designated a dark sky sanctuary by the International Dark Sky Association. It's one of only 13 such sanctuaries around the world!

So even if you miss the solar storm, you can still be awed by the visibility of the solar system.



Photo Credit: Tami Phillippi, Northern Night Sky over Cascade Lake





# CURE THE WINTER BLUES...

Dear Guests,

It's safe to say that 2020 will be a year most of us will remember – whether we want to or not! It has presented challenges few of us could have predicted, and it seems those challenges will prevail well into 2021.

Yet, we end this year with deep gratitude. We are beyond grateful for our guests – those who have returned year-after-year putting trust in us to be a safe home away from home, and the new guests who visited us for the first time this year.

We're grateful for our dedicated Bluefin Bay team and owner partners whose commitment to excellence, and perseverance amidst unparalleled challenges, makes us proud to be the Bluefin Bay family.

It's a privilege to share the beauty of our resorts and the North Shore with all of you. You can rest assured that this winter we'll redouble our efforts to provide a safe and memorable vacation experience.

As a token of our appreciation and a celebration of the majestic beauty of Lake Superior's North Shore, please enjoy the enclosed 26th Annual Bluefin Bay Calendar. We hope its images inspire happy memories of time spent in our area's breathtaking wilderness.



From all of us at Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, happy holidays and best wishes for a safe and healthy new year.

James Taylor,  
General Manager

## Tips for a healthy & safe winter getaway

We've been living in a global health pandemic for nine months and it appears the practices of social distancing and wearing face coverings, as well as words like "unprecedented" and "unpredictable" are likely to remain through this winter.

We want to thank those of you who have traveled to our resorts this year with patience and understanding as we navigate this new landscape together. To our loyal guests who have NOT been able to travel: We miss you and hope you are safe and healthy. We're here to welcome you back when you're ready.

As always, our commitment is to the health and safety of our guests, our employees and the community. This issue of the Fishwrapper will help you plan a safe and enjoyable winter vacation with us.

## What you can expect from us

Our team has worked carefully to welcome guests safely during the health pandemic, and we'll continue to do everything in our power to keep your confidence by providing:

- Safe and clean lakeside accommodations and amenities,
- A variety of dining spaces,
- Plenty of opportunities to enjoy area trails and connect with nature.



Please visit our Stay Safe page at [bluefinbay.com](https://bluefinbay.com) to learn more about our health and safety protocols, and service changes.

**Check-In & Check Out Times:** We've adjusted guest check-in time to 5 p.m. and check-out time to 11 a.m. to allow extra time for extra cleaning and sanitizing in our guest rooms between guests. This is important and we thank you for your understanding.

**Employee Health & Safety:** The health and safety of our team is critical. You'll see employees wearing masks and we've implemented a health screening protocol for employees before every work shift. Employees showing any symptoms are required to stay home.

**Resort Amenities:** The pools, hot tubs, fitness areas and Waves of Superior Spa reopened this summer under MN Dept. of Health requirements. Signage at each pool facility indicates its maximum capacity, and social distancing rules apply both on pool platforms and while in the water.





# ONE WAVE AT A TIME

Waves of Superior Spa is open at limited capacity, offering massage services only. Guests are asked to make appointments in advance as only guests with appointments are allowed in the spa area. Learn more at [BluefinBay.com/stay-safe-waves-spa](https://bluefinbay.com/stay-safe-waves-spa).

## What we expect from you

Ensuring a safe vacation experience is up to all of us. If you or anyone in your party becomes ill or shows any symptoms associated with Covid-19 before your trip, please stay home! We've adjusted our cancellation policy to provide a full refund if you need to cancel your trip due to COVID-19.

If you're already at the resort and become ill, we ask that you please return home immediately and we'll refund the remainder of your trip. Also, during your visit, masks are required in all public spaces.

For more information, visit [bluefinbay.com/stay-safe](https://bluefinbay.com/stay-safe).



## Dining at Bluefin Bay This Winter

We know that dining options are an important part of your decision to stay with us. Coho Café & Bakery and the Bluefin Grille are both open for takeout and limited indoor seating.

We've purchased HEPA Air Purifiers for both the Bluefin Grille and Coho Café and are also installing ionization technology in the existing ventilation systems, both of which will improve air quality and safety.

Coho Cafe is currently open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday. The Bluefin Grille is open daily from Noon to 10 p.m. and reservations are required for indoor seating. Guests can make indoor dining reservations at Open Table or by calling 218-663-6200.

Please note that winter hours are subject to change. Visit [bluefinbay.com/dine](https://bluefinbay.com/dine) for up to date hours and menus.



## A Winter Wonderland with Plenty of Space to Distance

There are many ways to enjoy a safe and socially distanced winter vacation at Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts – from spectacular downhill skiing at Lutsen Mountains, to snowshoeing through the snowy forest, to cross-country skiing the Sugarbush Trail, to enjoying a warm beverage by a cozy fire.

Here are some tips to help you plan and travel safely this winter.

## Know before you go

Whether your vacation includes shopping in Grand Marais or taking advantage of a Ski & Stay Package at Lutsen Mountains, the theme of this winter is "Know before you go."

Many of the small, local businesses are closed 1-2 days per week or have different hours to accommodate staffing shortages. If you're hoping to visit a certain establishment, we suggest you check out the Visit Cook County website for hours of operation before making plans. This online guide will help: [visitcookcounty.com/business-hours](https://visitcookcounty.com/business-hours).

## From the Cook County Chamber

*By Jim Boyd, Executive Director, Cook County Chamber of Commerce*

Cook County is fortunate to enter this winter season with few positive tests for COVID-19, with an economy generally in good shape and with a community committed to dealing responsibly with the continuing viral challenge it faces.

Everyone – visitors and temporary residents, weary but undaunted employers and workers, an army of selfless volunteers, a dedicated and proactive medical community, effective government leaders – all deserve praise for the care they have taken in responding to this virus. As we prepare for a busy winter under continued viral threat, let's congratulate each other for caring so well for our community and for each other.





# Embrace Winter With Both Mittens

This year more than ever, it will be pertinent to embrace outdoor winter adventures. It's been proven that getting outside helps lower anxiety and puts you in a happier state of mind. It also boosts creativity and the ability to focus. That sounds like something we could all use a little more of this winter!

Cook County boasts more than 400 km of groomed cross-country ski trails, 450 miles of snowmobile trails, and 1,000 acres of downhill skiing and snowboarding. With an average of 120 inches of annual snowfall, it's the perfect outdoor playground.

Our mission is to help you embrace it and enjoy it – whether you prefer full blown adventure or the quieter, cozy side.

Looking to try something new?  
Check out one of our guided tours

Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts has all the tools to help you make the most of this winter. If you're a beginner to cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, you can join one of our resort guided tours. Our activities crew will provide basic instruction and feedback, as well as all of the equipment.

If you'd rather venture out on your own, we provide trail information, tips and complimentary equipment.

As a reminder, these are some the activities that are included in your stay at Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts:

### Complimentary Equipment

- Snowshoes
- Cross-Country Skis
- Ice Trekkers
- Hockey & Figure Skates
- Hockey Sticks & Pucks



### Guided Tours

- Snowshoe Hikes
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Bonfire Hikes

### Other

- Yoga
- Kids Adventures & Activities
- NEW - Craft classes – see below

[Click here](#) for the full schedule of resort activities, as well as online event sign up and safety protocols.

## Express Yourself Creatively & Learn a New Skill

At Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, we're continuously coming up with fresh activities to inspire our guests. Here are two of our new activities this winter.



### Guided wood burning class

Wood burning isn't just for fireplaces. This activity takes you through everything you need to know about this unique craft. We'll be using hot irons to burn fun designs into round slices of wood. Whether you want a fun souvenir, or a gift for a someone, we'll provide the tools and teaching to get you up and running.



### Guided painting class

We're introducing a brand-new activity this year that's sure to bring out your inner artist. In this class, we'll be painting a 3" by 4" canvas. If you've never tried guided painting, no worries, we'll focus on a simple North Shore landscape and we're going to teach you all the tips and tricks you need to succeed.



### Sign up and learn more about our safety protocols

Pre-registration is advised for resort-scheduled activities to ensure your space and learn more about our health and safety protocols. To see the full schedule of winter activities, go to [bluefinbay.com](http://bluefinbay.com), click on Play, Resort Activities & Events.





## Play on the Mountain, Stay on the Lake

This year will be the perfect opportunity to dust off the ski boots and bring the family to Lutsen Mountains Ski Resort to get the blood pumping. The key to a successful ski vacation this year is to “know before you go” and plan ahead. There are some changes at Lutsen Mountains designed to help keep guests safe.

The biggest change is that the ski hill will be implementing a daily capacity limit on skier visits during the 2020-21 season. This will create a number of sold-out days, so advance online reservations are strongly recommended to ensure your space on the mountain.

We advise all Bluefin Bay guests to plan ahead, book early, and review the Lutsen Mountains website for details on Covid-19 operational protocols.

### Here are a few tips to ensure that you have a stellar time on the slopes.

- **Bundle lodging and lift tickets.** This will be the best way to reserve lift tickets on days that might otherwise sell out.
- **Try to avoid peak times.** Lutsen Mountains has a calendar on the website that highlights days that are likely to sell out. [lutsen.com/winter/lift-tickets/online-calendar](https://lutsen.com/winter/lift-tickets/online-calendar)
- **Your car is your base lodge.** Drive to Lutsen Mountains yourself and use your car as your home base – a place to eat lunch, put on your ski boots on and take breaks. The chalets will be open and serving food, but will have limited capacity and hosted seating.
- **Consider travel insurance.** Lutsen Mountains has partnered with a travel insurance company to offer trip protection if you are unable to visit as planned.
- **Pack your patience.** This will be a new way of doing things for our friends at Lutsen Mountains. Pack your patience as we navigate this season together!

## Ski & Stay Packages offer the best deal for skiing fun

If you LOVE to downhill ski and stay lakeside at the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, you'll want to book a Ski & Stay Package for the best deal.

Due to the safety guidelines and logistics on transporting guests, we've decided not to offer shuttles to Lutsen Mountains this year. Instead, we are recommending that guests drive to the Mountain and use their car as a home base.

To learn more about Ski & Stay Packages, visit [bluefinbay.com/offers](https://bluefinbay.com/offers), click on Ski & Stay Packages. Or, call Bluefin Bay Guest Services for assistance booking your ski vacation.



Photo Credit: Jonathan Mortenson

## Great Waves, Great People

We're thrilled to provide our guests with warm and friendly hospitality, something we couldn't do without an exceptional staff. This column features the faces behind the great service at the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts.

### Peter Hastings, Recreation and Activities Coordinator



**Hometown:** Anoka, Minnesota

**What brought you to Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts?** I was finishing my contract at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center and learned of a job opening at Bluefin Bay. I was stoked that I could continue to use my skills as a naturalist, guide paddling trips, and meet new people in one of my favorite places.

### My favorite thing about Bluefin Bay

**Family of Resorts is...** Creating positive outdoor experiences for people of all ages and inviting them to enjoy the natural beauty of the North Shore.

**My Favorite spot at Bluefin is...** Definitely Tofte Cove. Listening to the waves and looking out to vastness of Lake Superior makes the Cove my oasis from the hustle and bustle of working at a busy resort.

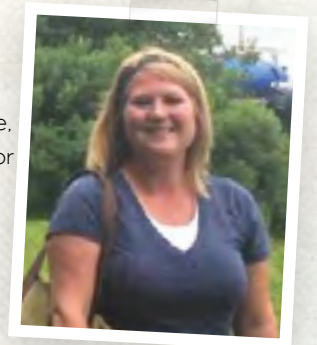
**My favorite thing to do when I'm not working is...** Kayak on the Big Lake. There are so many cool places to go on the shore – sea caves or waterfalls going into the lake – that make for a fun adventure.

**I want readers to know...** There's so much to explore here. Whether that's checking out a new trail or creating new memories at a familiar place. There's always a place for adventure up here.

### Jessica Carlson, Quality Control Manager

**Hometown:** South Minneapolis

**What brought you here?** My mom worked in Grand Marais after high school and eventually my parents took yearly trips to the North Shore, bringing us kids along. This turned into a love for the area, and I vowed that if my husband and I stayed in MN we would eventually make this area our home.



### My favorite thing about working at Bluefin

**Bay Family of Resorts is...** Being able to work on the shores of Lake Superior and listening to the waves crashing. When the day is done being so close to amazing outdoor activities without having to make the drive up here. Everything is right in our backyard.

**What is your favorite spot at the Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts?** The rocky beach at the cove is a great place to relax and stare out at the lake.

**My favorite thing to do when I am not working is...** Canoe the many routes in the Boundary Waters with my husband or work in my garden.

**I want readers to know...** I've been in Interior Design for the past 20 years, and am passionate about making sure we provide a relaxing “home away from home” spot for each stay.



# A New Ownership Duo for Our Beloved Resorts

Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts is under new ownership. North Shore native, Joe Swanson, and his business partner, Pipasu Soni, purchased the resort on June 30th from co-founder and 36-year owner, Dennis Rysdahl.

Joe Swanson is a 401K business advisor in the Twin Cities and Pipasu Soni serves as Chief Financial Officer for NFI Group, a Winnipeg-based bus and coach manufacturer. Both are committed to carrying on Bluefin Bay’s legacy of providing guests with upscale accommodations and amenities, and friendly hospitality.

Dennis Rysdahl will remain in a leadership and advising role until his official retirement in 2021-22. He continues to work with the new owners and the Bluefin Bay management team to ensure a successful transition.

“We’ve had great success over the last two years building a capable and committed leadership team in preparation for an eventual sale and the new owners will retain that team,” Dennis said. “I’m confident that the operation of the resorts will continue to thrive and the focus will remain on creating memorable vacation experiences for our guests.”

Joe Swanson echoed that sentiment. “We’re deeply committed to advancing the culture and reputation of Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts developed by Dennis and his team,” he said. “The Bluefin Bay team is the best I’ve ever met! That’s a tribute to Dennis’ leadership and hard work to create a culture, and an experience, loved by so many.”

## A friendship & partnership committed to Bluefin’s legacy

For Joe Swanson owning Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts is a dream come true. Joe grew up in Silver Bay and worked at Bluefin Bay for seven years, learning the ropes in housekeeping, dining and maintenance.

Joe describes with pride the “*feeling*” that is Bluefin Bay. “It



New owners, Joe Swanson & Pipasu Soni

restores people, relaxes people, and allows them to enjoy the natural beauty of the area,” he said. “I’m honored to be part of that feeling, and just love hearing positive feedback and stories from guests.”

Joe built a successful career working with small businesses and individuals on retirement and investment planning. He and his wife, Zoe, and their two children, Adah (age 11) and Grant (age 9), live in Plymouth, MN.



When Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts was listed for sale, Joe immediately contacted his friend and business partner. Joe and Pipasu met through their 11-year old daughters, who attended school together. Their wives became friends first, and their friendship followed. About three years ago, they became real estate business partners. Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts is their third joint venture.

Pipasu is a certified management accountant with the Institute of Management Accountants and has held strategy and leadership roles in financial planning and analysis, global finance, and business transformation in the UK as well as several states in the U.S.

Now located in Winnipeg, Canada, Pipasu and his wife Christi have three kids – Emma (age 14), Abigail (age 12), and Jag (age five), plus two dogs, a cat, and a rabbit. “Yes, our house is a local zoo,” Pipasu chuckles.

When asked what they love most about Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts, each owner cited the sense of community and family that is the culture at Bluefin Bay and the team of employees that make it so special.

“Our owners and guests understand that we’re creating a special place that takes both a great location and great people,” Pipasu said. “We appreciate our guests, our owners and our team.”

# Fun Facts About Our New Bluefin Bay Owners

Fact	Which Owner?
Grew up in Etowah, Tennessee, pop. 3,500	Pipasu Soni
Has never fished on Lake Superior	Pipasu Soni & Joe Swanson (even though he grew up on the North Shore!)
Still remembers the first time he ate at Bluefin Grille (scallops in champagne sauce)	Joe Swanson
Self-prescribed outdoor adventurer who has hiked Philmont in New Mexico (& former Eagle Scout)	Pipasu Soni
Learned how to tie a fisherman's knot in his son's cub scout camp (last week)	Joe Swanson
Rafted the Colorado River	Pipasu Soni
Secretly feeds his daughter's bunny (Evie) carrots so it likes him best	Joe Swanson
Has worked for Ingersoll-Rand, Honeywell, Pentair and US Steel	Pipasu Soni
Is taking flying lessons with the hope of being able to fly up to Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts	Joe Swanson



# The Way We See It

## Favorite socially distanced activity

### Cross-Country Skiing at Britton Peak

My favorite winter activity is to grab a pair of cross-country skis and head to the Britton Peak Trailhead with my favorite pup. This location offers an out and back pet friendly trail for cross-country skiing and you can bring a pair of snowshoes to hike at the end. It's a refreshing workout and always fun to watch the pups in the snow! – Ana Koch, HR Manager

### Yoga By the Lake

I love practicing yoga on chilly winter mornings! It feels so nice to get all the muscles warmed up and stretched out before starting my day. Bluefin Bay Resorts offers classes in the ballroom at Surfside with plenty of room for spreading out and social distancing. Classes are held every morning except Wednesdays and Fridays. Join me. – Jessica Hinrichs, Yoga Instructor

### Snowshoeing/Hiking Onion River Canyon

The Onion River Canyon is such a hidden gem and is so cool to explore in the winter! You must be careful and wait until later in the winter when the ice is solid. But once it's traversable, it's like you're in another world. The frozen ground allows you to go places that you wouldn't otherwise be able to see. Make sure to bring snowshoes. Did I mention, wait until late in the season and be careful? – Ross Sherman, Director of Lodging



## Give the Gift of Bluefin Bay Resorts

This holiday, give a gift that will keep on giving long after it is unwrapped. So many of our guests can't travel this year, so gift cards are the perfect option for your favorite Bluefin Bay lover. Gift cards can be purchased in any dollar amount and used for lodging, restaurants, gift shops and the Waves of Superior Spa.

Visit [bluefinbay.com](https://bluefinbay.com) or call 1-800-BLUEFIN (258-3346) to order your gift cards today.



## HOT WINTER DEALS

Connect with us for more on Bluefin Bay events and specials:



800.BLUEFIN (258-3346)

### January Winter Adventure @ 50% Off

Valid Jan. 1-31, 2021 (excluding MLK Weekend)

This is your winter adventure call to action. Stay three nights during January at any of our Bluefin Bay Family of Resorts and receive one of those nights (midweek) at 50% off.

### Winter 4 for 3 Special

Valid Jan. 1- March 21, 2021 (excluding MLK & President's Day Weekends)

This is winter at its best! Stay four nights during winter peak and receive one of those nights completely FREE!

### March Weekends at Midweek Rates

Valid March 5-21, 2021

Enjoy the snowiest month on the North Shore! Stay three nights or more and receive weekends in March at midweek rates — that's 20-40% OFF!

### Extended Stay Special

Valid all year

Extended stays are looking pretty good right now and the longer you stay, the more you save. Stay 4 nights @ 5% off, 5 nights @ 10% off, 6 nights @ 15%, 7-9 nights @ 20% off, and 10 or more nights @ 25% off!

### Ski & Stay Packages

If you love to ski and stay lakeside at Bluefin Bay Resorts, these packages offer the best deal on lodging and skiing. For details and the best deal during your stay, visit [bluefinbay.com/offer/ski-stay-packages](https://bluefinbay.com/offer/ski-stay-packages).

### Romance and Honeymoon Packages

Crashing waves, a moonlit lake, romantic suites: no wonder Bluefin Bay Resorts is consistently named Minnesota's "Most Romantic Resort." For the ultimate romantic winter getaway, check out our Honeymoon and Romantic Retreat packages at [bluefinbay.com/offers](https://bluefinbay.com/offers).

Visit [BluefinBay.com/offers](https://BluefinBay.com/offers) for current deals and packages.