

An Outdoor Paradise Awaits
By Bob Holzhei

The Turtle Flambeau Flowage located near Mercer, Wisconsin is one of 200 pristine bodies of water within a 30-mile radius of town. With 300 miles of trout streams, 377,900 acres of forest, the memory of visiting this place will echo enticing you to return.



On a return trip to Mercer my wife Shirley and I arrived at the Gateway Lodge where the memories of elegant restaurants, log cabins and cottages resurfaced from a previous visit. This full-service lodge offers a dining experience second to none. From burgers, fish fries, nightly specials, weekend prime rib, steaks, and ribs; the menu is certain to make your taste buds do jumping jacks. A Saturday night special was elk filets; enough to bring tears to my eyes.

Owners Wayne and his wife Missy Riebe have owned the lodge for 11 years and continue to make modern improvements each year.

Packages are available designed to offer guests the best pricing at one of the log cabins and homes.

Fishing the Turtle Flambeau Flowage for walleye and big crappie was my goal on this trip. The bail on my reel was opened and the jig floated towards the bottom, however before it got there the rod bent double and a fish was on. I wasn't disappointed when I landed an 18 ½ inch small mouth bass that tipped the scales at 5 ½ pounds. A 15 ½ inch smallmouth followed and both trophies were released back into the flowage.

Mike Sabec has operated Doc's Guide Service for 25 years and knows the flowage and where various species of fish are located. Sabec began fishing the Turtle Flambeau with his father when he was 12 years old. He charts from 150-200 fishing trips each year. Sabec specializes in fishing for walleye, small mouth bass, spring jumbo perch, and fall slab crappie. We fished from a comfortable deep V 19-foot Lowe boat.

The strategy was jigging the bottom with number 2-8ounce lead headed jigs, baited with a minnow underneath the mouth to allow the minnow to remain active. Sabec's company, Invasion Jigs makes six different colors of the jigs, which he uses on his 150-200 charters each year. The mud bottom has tea colored water and bouncing bottom announced that bait was awaiting a strike.

The Flambeau Flowage is known as the "Crown Jewel of the North," and was purchased by the State of Wisconsin in 1990, "to preserve the natural character and scenic value of the area.

In 1889 travel by rail began when the first train reached the Mercer Depot. Now a museum the Depot was restored and offers visitors a step back in time when Native Americans, Voyageurs and first settlers traveled the Flambeau Trail.

In 1926 the Chippewa and Flambeau Improvement Project built a Dam on the Flambeau river to generate electricity.

Bob Holzhei 3601 Avery St. Johns, Michigan 48879 cell 989 640-0867