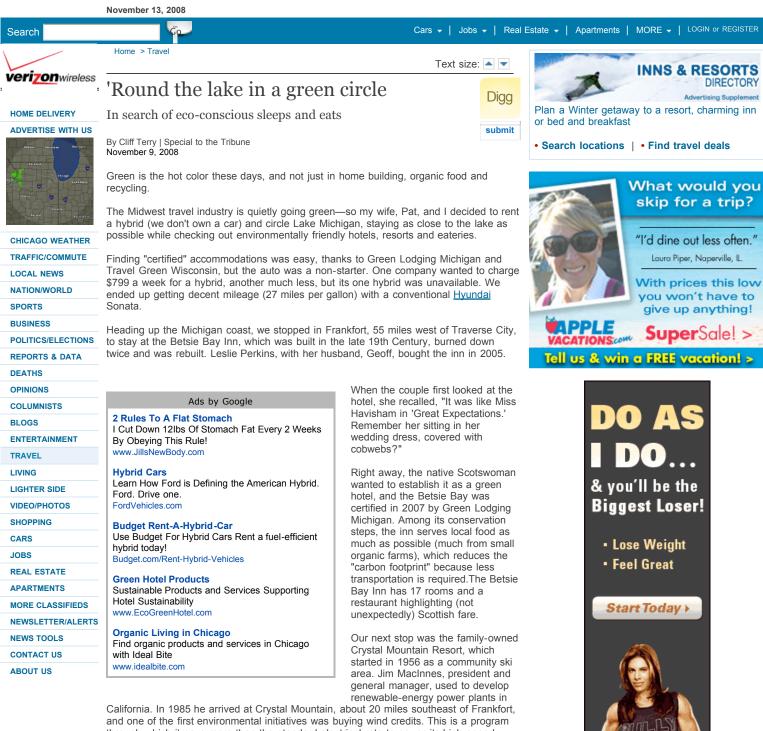
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and one of the first environmental initiatives was buying wind credits. This is a program through which it pays more than the standard electrical rate to power its high-speed chairlift in order to promote wind energy elsewhere in the country.

"There are two main initiatives we try to promote," MacInnes said. "The first is a healthy lifestyle for our staff and guests, which is why we're building a new spa. The second is energy and resource conservation. We're doing it because we think it's really important for the planet.

"In our new spa, we're putting in extra, non-toxic insulation as a huge energy saver. And we've had good success with installing compact fluorescent lights throughout the resort. We've saved more than 4 million kilowatt-hours and will save hundreds of thousands of dollars."

The resort offers year-round outdoor recreation, including four nine-hole golf courses, tennis, downhill and cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking. For dining, its restaurant offers such local food (some organic) as blueberries, asparagus and corn and

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From there we were off to the 1899 Stafford's Perry Hotel in Petoskey, about 100 miles north, in the upper Lower Peninsula. "It was made out of yellow brick, and it was not built for efficiency," said David Marvin, business manager of Stafford's Hospitality Inc. "One of our favorite lines is: "If we can turn a 109-year-old yellow brick building 'green,' anybody can do it."

"One of my employees said he had seen a flier about Green Lodging Michigan being better for the environment. I told him we'd explore it. At the time I was driving a big SUV, and, of course, some people kidded me."

Green Lodging had a list of 100 ways hotels could be more energy efficient and reduce environmental impact, and the Perry was already doing 59 of them, such as recycling and using low-flow faucets. One simple way the hotel lessens environmental impact is turning off computers at the end of the day, Marvin said. One study reported that one computer left on throughout the night costs an extra \$110 a year on your electric bill.

Later, crossing over to Michigan's Upper Peninsula via the Mackinac Bridge, we briefly switched lakes, taking a Lake Superior cruise (out of Munising, Mich.) along the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, site of marvelous colored, layered sandstone cliffs

Heading into Wisconsin, we sought out the Blacksmith Inn on the Shore in Baileys Harbor, Door County. Containing seven guest rooms, the inn originally was a private house, finished in 1912, next to the still-extant blacksmith shop. Today Joan Holliday, a former inn manager, and her husband, Bryan Nelson, own the Blacksmith, as well as the Harbor House, which they built in 2000, and the newest acquisition, the Orchard House.

The Blacksmith Inn, part of Travel Green Wisconsin's pilot program, was certified in spring 2006. "We've never used pesticides on the property, we've always used organic fertilizer and we've bought locally where we can," she said. "We also find products that come in reusable containers, such as milk in glass bottles. And we bought a Toyota Prius-50 percent less gas right off the bat."

November and December, as expected, are quieter times. "There certainly aren't as many entertainment options, " Holliday noted, adding with a laugh, "So we always suggest to people that it's good to be a self-entertainment personality in the winter time. And a lot of guests who come that time of year want exactly that-to decompress a little bit. Sleep in, read that book, go for a hike."

The last destination before Chicago was just north of Kohler, where in 2003 Craig Harms, Dave Platz and Brian Grimm purchased a run-down brick farmhouse and later launched the seven-acre Restoration Gardens, now specializing in rare and unique plants and shrubs. In September 2007, the owners opened the Brickhouse Bistro, the only restaurant in Sheboygan County with its own vegetable and fruit garden.

Restoration Gardens and Brickhouse Bistro were certified by Travel Green Wisconsin this past summer. "We already had been composting coffee grounds, eggshells, kitchen scraps in the bistro and changed fixtures, appliances and windows," Harms recalled. "Probably our most important Travel Green score resulted from using local produce and growing our own produce."

The bistro also is proud of belonging to Slow Food, USA (www.slowfoodusa.org), which, Harms said with a laugh, does not emphasize tardy service. It focuses on small-scale food production that results in high quality and taste as food is grown and harvested with methods that have a positive impact on ecosystems and biodiversity.

"The basic premise is people slowing down and enjoying their meals and getting away from all the deep-fried and high-fat food," he said. "We're trying to push that everyone should be enjoying their meal and not just inhaling it."

Harms added that he and his partners had known each other for years and all had been in the landscape business. "Our wives all work at other jobs," he noted, then laughs again. "They make the real money, and we're allowed to come here and play every day."

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