

## National Travel & Tourism Week Kicks Off Summer Season



*L-R: Paul Beachnau and Dave Lorenz, Vice President of Pure Michigan*

*By Paul Beachnau*

It sure seems that the month of April lasted at least a year! Without jinxing our forecast, it appears that consistent warm temperatures and sunny days are on the horizon as we move into May. Along with the warmer temperatures and our creep toward summer, we annually celebrate National Travel and Tourism Week the first week in May.

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending the Pure Michigan Tourism Conference in Traverse City. It was refreshing and exciting to have tourism industry professionals come together in person finally to talk about new and innovative trends in travel and tourism. We had some of the best and brightest experts in our industry share their expertise and forecast for the upcoming summer season. The excitement within the group for the future of the tourism industry in Michigan was palpable.

While Gaylord is blessed with a four season travel industry, unlike many other areas of Michigan, the summer travel season is easily the largest in terms of visits and dollars expended in our area. For example, 44% of room sales for our area lodging members takes place in the months of June, July and August. Our golf industry shows an even higher reliance on the summer season, with 64% of our golf rounds and revenue taking place in the same 3 months.

Some of the encouraging trends we learned are that travelers are going to continue seeking outdoor destinations, they are going to rely on their vehicles as the primary means of visiting their destinations, and they will most likely stay a little closer to home due to the increasing cost of gasoline. These trends typically benefit Northern Michigan and Gaylord. We are within 6-7 hours of the largest metropolitan areas of the Midwest, specifically Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Toronto, Canada.

As we move toward summer, our Tourism Bureau is pleased to host our annual State of the Tourism Industry Luncheon to kick-off our upcoming summer season, share our successes and plans with our partners and recognize those individuals and organizations who go above and beyond to make this region a better tourism destination.

While it seems that we have put the most dire circumstances of Covid behind us and we can look forward to a vibrant summer season, it is important that we do not take our tourism industry here in Gaylord for granted. The Tourism Bureau continues to enthusiastically advocate for improvements in our infrastructure and implement aggressive marketing programs to strengthen our tourism economy and benefit the many businesses and individuals who rely on our success.