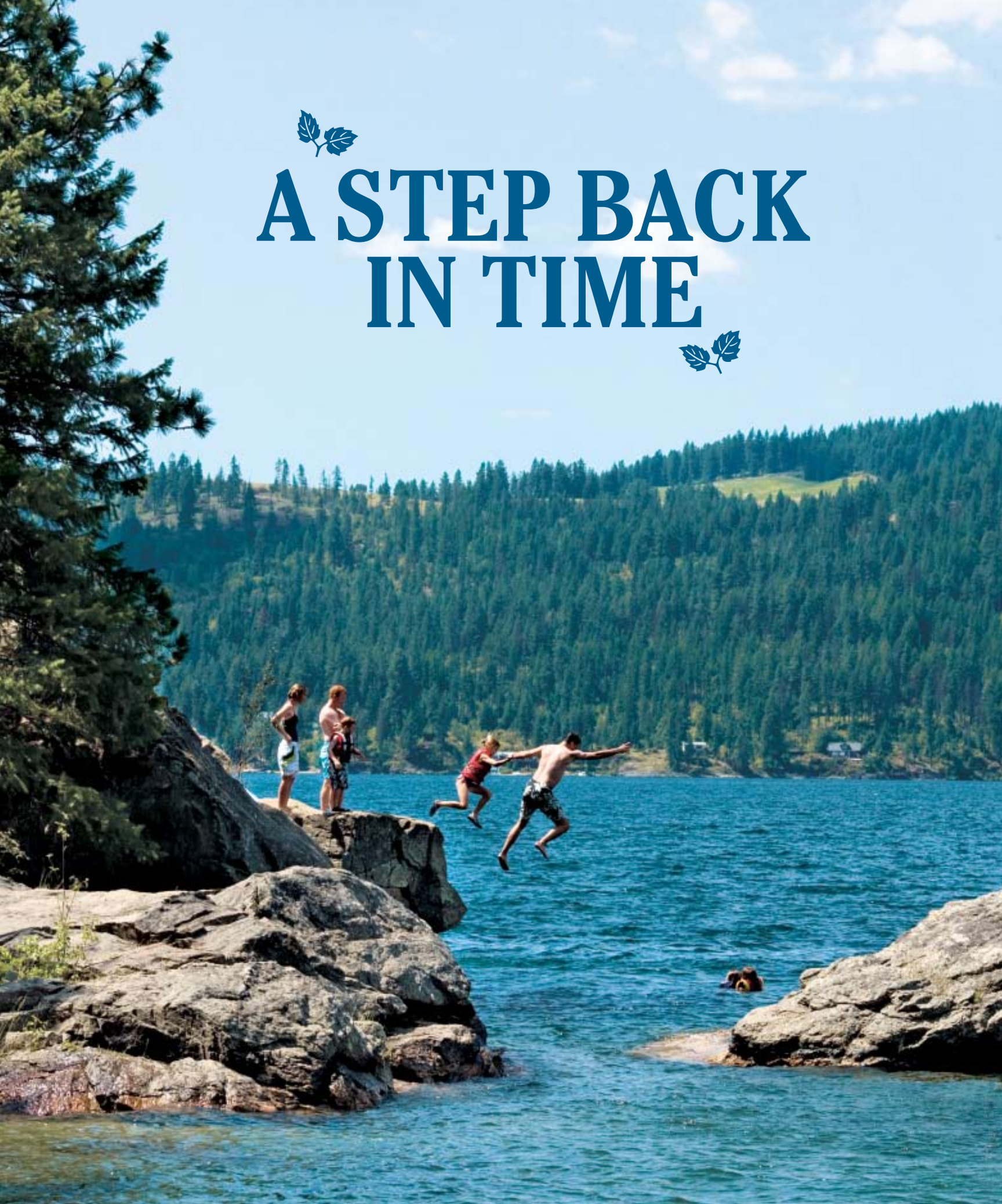




A STEP BACK IN TIME

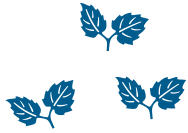




A slice of the old-fashioned life at Gozzer Ranch Golf & Lake Club in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Opposite page: A secluded corner of Lake Coeur d'Alene provides relief from the summer heat.

Gozzer Ranch: A Place of Norman Rockwell Charm BY SCOTT RESCH





IT'S JUST BEFORE 8:00 AM ON A SUNNY

July morning, and my kayak is knifing along the glass-like surface of Lake Coeur d'Alene. In about an hour or so, the scene will change, as WaveRunners and ski boats enter this water sports playground surrounded by a 109-mile shoreline. But for now, this little slice of Northern Idaho heaven is all mine.

Well, almost all mine. My fiancée, Claire, is just ahead, leading the way along a shoreline dotted with family cabins and tall ponderosa pines. But it's what is about 30 feet directly above her—soaring through the air with an unmistakable elegance—that has our attention.

"Look!" she shouts. "A bald eagle!"

I drift for a minute, neck tilted back, staring up at the marvel. It's so quiet I can hear myself think.

How do you top this moment?

I don't have to wait long for an answer because we are approaching Gozzer Ranch, a 650-acre Discovery Land Company community that pairs experiences like the morning's slice of Americana with the finest of life's luxuries.

The man for whom the development was named, John Gozzer, would have liked that idea. He lived off this piece of land east of Spokane, Washington, until the day he died. But even an independent spirit appreciates a massage or gourmet-cooked meal now and again, and Gozzer offers such services in spades.

Yet it's an Old West aura—that sense of being in a place that still revels in the Rockwellian spirit of family and truly enjoying life's simple pleasures—that makes Gozzer Ranch special. Here, one can spend a day doing everything from churning butter and picking huckleberries to playing horseshoes and listening to live music on the lawn. After all, Discovery's dedication to authenticity inspires the developer's mission at Gozzer Ranch, and the property closely emulates the rustic beauty that Lewis and Clark experienced in the early 1800s when they spent more than 100 days in Idaho.

"What we're doing here is embracing lifestyle amenities that have historically brought families together," says Mike Meldman, CEO of Discovery Land Company. "We want members' experiences to create memories that will last a lifetime."

Evidence of that can be found on the Tom Fazio-designed golf course, where fescue-fringed bunkers and jackleg fencing help to

create an atmosphere akin to the first golf courses ever constructed. And that's to say nothing of the cast-iron kettle range buckets, the penny press on the first tee, and the old-fashioned water pump behind the 18th green—which comes in quite handy when the huckleberry popsicle you've been offered after putting begins to drip onto your fingers.

These particulars were not lost on me or my playing partner, former PGA Tour pro and current Gozzer golf ambassador Andrew Magee. This attention to detail was even more apparent after specially crafted cocktails were delivered to us on the 11th hole.

And then there are the breathtaking views. To get a sense of Gozzer's layout, picture this: a large pine forest on top of an enormous rock that slopes severely on most sides down to a sparkling blue lake, rimmed in the distance by yet more pine forest. Thus every fairway—except perhaps for the few that drop 100 feet or so from the tee box—feels as if it's on top of the world.

The food, on the other hand, is simply out of this world. In the traditional ranch kitchen, much is created from what's found on the land around it—the game, the fruits, the herbs. Gozzer exalts the land by using it, and putting an expert's touch on the natural wonders.

One night, I tried it all. I started with the watermelon and goat cheese salad drizzled with lemon oil and garnished with mint, and I ended with Kokanee-braised ribs in a chokecherry barbecue sauce. But in between, I nibbled on small portions of other mainstays, such as roasted venison cooked in a blackberry glaze and a double-bone smoked pork chop.

"I try to imagine what the Gozzers would have been eating in the 1920s," says executive chef Robbie Douglas, who grows a lot of what's incorporated into the dishes in his own garden. "We serve it in a fun family style, and I think members get a real kick out of it."

As Gozzer Ranch defers to the area's history for its nostalgia, the community defers to Meldman and Discovery for its level of luxury. Meldman believes the Gozzer experience is in the details, and that service—from arranging for driveway snow removal to classic wooden boat transportation to and from quaint Coeur d'Alene—is an integral part of that.

"It comes down to wanting to improve and giving members more than they expect," he says. "Our StanCraft boats are a great





Clockwise: Three great ways to enjoy Lake Coeur d'Alene—on the 15th hole, atop a wakeboard, and aboard *Discovery II*, one of three StanCraft boats in Gozzer's fleet. Opposite page, from left to right: Kid's Camp on the lake with Outdoor Pursuits staff; enjoying a candied apple on Independence Day; and Hutton's fully stocked general store.



example of that. They are beautiful, handcrafted wooden vessels that are very traditional, elegant and classy. We could have chosen regular speedboats, but the StanCrafts are authentic to Idaho. They make you feel good just riding in one.”

The list of thrills offered for kids is almost endless. From the Outdoor Pursuits Center, youngsters can receive individual instruction in water sports by national champion wakeboarders, take part in teepee tent sleepovers with reality TV show themes, or grab a hand-packed ice cream and wood-fired pizza at Hutton's, which has the look and feel of a 1930s general store, right down to the specialty goods and penny candy sold out of mason jars.

Next summer, though, the attention could shift when the Gozzer Homestead is complete, and children can play tennis and basketball, learn various arts and crafts, watch movies and play video games, or even play sandlot baseball right on the property.

But here at Gozzer, water sports will always reign. And it's no wonder—for where there is a lake, there is a source of elation. “Oftentimes you'll have one family member wakeboarding while another is sailing and yet another is fishing,” says Mike Ryan, general manager of Gozzer Ranch. “There's really no limit to the activities kids—and even adults—can participate in. Gozzer is the best place for families to create memories together.”

And if a family wants to pile into a single golf cart, that's cool too. After I finished my round with Magee, I witnessed Steve Adel-

son, a partner in *Discovery*, do just that—take the wheel and head down the first fairway, his four boys all riding shotgun. It didn't seem unnatural, either. After being on the property for 24 hours, one thing was obvious: The atmosphere at Gozzer is as relaxed as they come, harkening back to a simpler time. And if fathers and sons could bond like this everywhere, the world would be a better place.

During my stay, members came and went from the ranch, often just to tip back a Centennial Ale or two at Eddie's—a popular public restaurant owned by the Gozzer Ranch folks in the *Discovery* marina, and just a stone's throw below the Gozzer property—or spend a few hours amid the small-town hustle and bustle of Sherman Avenue, Coeur d'Alene's main thoroughfare. Around the Fourth of July, kids show up here in droves to get their faces painted and participate in the annual Independence Day parade. But that kind of patriotic spirit exists year-round in Coeur d'Alene, where brick buildings, antique stores and sidewalk vendors evoke images from Rockwell's covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Claire and I ventured to places like that, but we also made a point to explore Gozzer and the area spilling down from around its axis in true Lewis and Clark spirit. We wandered around tree-lined avenues, beaches hidden by boulders and nooks in the lake accessible only by kayak. And all the while it felt as if we'd been whisked back in time, to a place that was still raw and solely ours.

Well, almost solely ours. Do bald eagles count as company?