

Here's a list of some of our favorite things to do in and around Mackinaw City:

First – Mackinaw Historic Parks include:

- Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City (1770's fur trading village)
- Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in Mackinaw City (located down by the bridge)
- Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island
- Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum on Mackinac Island
- Historic Downtown Mackinac on Mackinac Island
- Mill Creek Discovery Center (just south of Mackinaw City on US 23)

You can purchase family passes for all venues which will save you money if you intend to visit them all. The normal prices are about \$10 per person per venue. We love the Forts and go to Mill Creek frequently to hike. Mill Creek has a zipline, a rock climbing wall, a canopy bridge, active beaver dams and a nice interactive exhibit. All of the parks are very nice, fun and educational.

Mackinac Island is a great family adventure. You can ride horses, take a buggy ride, golf, bike around the Island, go to the Butterfly House, shop, hike, go to the Fort. There are a lot of nice restaurants to choose from. Our favorites are the Pink Pony, The Village Inn and Brunch at the Grand Hotel! There are no motorized vehicles allowed on the island so make sure you wear comfy shoes!

We recommend Sheplers Ferry at the end of Central Avenue to get to the Island. The prices are pretty much the same on all the Ferries – you can save a few \$\$ if you order your tickets on line.

Best places to eat?

Pizza – [Pizza Palace](#) or [Mama Mia's](#) both downtown on Central Ave.

Breakfast – [Audies](#) on Nicolet; Darrows on Louvigny or [Levering Restaurant](#) – on 31 South (can't miss it – it has a big chicken on the roof)... great "Northern Michigan breakfast".

[Small Town Restaurant](#) – located in Pellston – small but really good food!

[Chippewa Room](#) (next to Audies) . 4-star quality restaurant.

[Douglas Lake Steak House](#) on Douglas Lake Rd., off 31 South just before the airport in Pellston. Excellent food, old-time northern tavern. Sits right on the lake and has a great view – make reservations and ask for patio seating. They offer early-bird pricing.

The Barrel Back in Walloon Lake – great food and amazing views of the Lake and well worth the drive.

Best Beaches

Closest sandy beach – go out to Central Avenue and head west. Take it until it ends and go left – take that until it ends and go right. You will drive straight into the parking lot. This is [Trails End Beach](#). It is

open to the public but rarely crowded. It's a nice sandy beach with a sand bottom. It's shallow for a long way out so it's great for kids. Nice place to kayak as well. This beach has bathrooms (outhouse type).

Nicest sandy beach – Sturgeon Bay Beach. This is, in our opinion, the most beautiful beach in Northern Michigan. It is crystal clear, sandy bottom and the beach is a nice “sugar sand”. Great place to pack a picnic and spend the day. The only down side is there are no restrooms at this beach. But there are woods ☺. Take 31 South out of MC, make a right on Gil Rd near Carp Lake. This is about 10 miles and will take you to the Lakeshore. You will make a hard left and then in about a mile, you will come up to some sand dunes. There is a small parking lot towards the end of the dunes on the right. Cross over the dunes and you are there. Crystal clear water, beautiful sandy beach (however, water is high this year so the beach isn't as deep as normal). It's rather shallow so great for kids.

Petoskey State Park – located in Petoskey. Another amazing sandy beach.

Best Hiking/Biking Trails

The closest hiking trails are at the Headlands. Go west on Central (as you would to get to Trails End Beach) – make a left at the end of Central and it's just a few hundred feet beyond that – on the right hand side of the road. It's public and the trails are well marked. There are 4 trails to choose from – different lengths and all very nice. The Headlands also contains the International Dark Sky Park. This is a must see for a night time adventure. It's free and the star-gazing is spectacular!

Mill Creek Discovery Center – which is one of the Mackinac Historic Parks – is located on 23 about 3 miles south of Mackinaw City. There are very nice, well-groomed trails and I think the longest is maybe 3 miles round trip. There are active beaver dams on the creek and we've been lucky enough to see them. You need to be very quiet and go early in the morning or at dusk to increase your chance of seeing them.

Wilderness State Park – great park with lots of trails to choose from. They are well marked and provide a great hike for all fitness levels. They also have a nice beach. You will need to purchase a car sticker for Michigan State Parks if you don't already have one. You can also use it to get in to Tahquamenon Falls.

Cheboygan State Park – multiple trails to choose from that are also used for cross country and snowshoeing in the winter.

There is a bike trail that starts behind Burger King on Nicolet in Mackinaw City and goes for miles and miles in either direction. If you go to the right – its paved for a mile or so then becomes more suited for mountain bikes. If you go to the left, it's a fine gravel and fine for any type of bike. This is also used for snowmobiling in the winter.

Shopping

Mackinaw City has a lot of small cute shops – lots of fudge and ice cream! Mackinac Island has some really unique shops and galleries. The Village of Harbor Springs is a picturesque waterfront village with

lots of nice shops, galleries and restaurants. Petoskey has fine shopping in a great downtown area and all the usual big box stores (Walmarts, Lowes, Home Depot, etc) if you need anything.

Groceries – there are Glen’s Markets in CheyboGAN, Petoskey and Gaylord. There is also one in St. Ignace just across the bridge. Other than that, the Mackinaw Market on Nicolet and Central has most of your last minute needs. There is a great fresh fish market just south of Mackinaw City on US-23 called Big Stone Bay. They have the best whitefish – fresh daily. Just don’t mind the grumpy owner 😊.

Antiquing is abundant in the area. Some of our favorite places are in Cedarville and Hessel. Take I-75 across the bridge to 134. It runs along the northern shore of Lake Huron and they are both very quaint little harbor towns. Or you can take the drive down 31 towards Petoskey. There are several antique shops along the way. CheyboGAN also hosts several antique and consignment shops.

Day trip ideas

Take a drive down M119 through the “Tunnel of Trees”. It’s a 14 mile route along Lake Michigan from Cross Village to Harbor Springs. It’s a very narrow road with lots of curves but offers beautiful views of the Lake. It’s especially nice in the autumn. Stop half way in the little town of Good Hart. There’s a lovely tea shop and a general store that makes incredible baked goods. Then just before you get to Harbor Springs, you’ll find the Pond Hill Farm & Winery. It’s an organic farm, they grow all their own produce and raise their meat. You can have a nice (gourmet) lunch in the big barn and the kids can enjoy feeding the farm animals.

Tahquamenon Falls/Whitefish Point

Head north on I-75, cross the bridge and take that north to 123. It takes about 60 – 90 minutes to get to Paradise and follow that to Whitefish Point. That’s where the “Edmund Fitzgerald” went down and they have a great shipwreck museum there. You can hike along Lake Superior and swim if you’re brave! The water is always cold!! Lots of great picking for rockhounds. It is also a major resting place for birds on their way to and from Canada so you’re likely to see all kinds. Birders come from all over the country to witness the hawk migration in the spring and fall. I will recommend that you pack a picnic – there aren’t a lot of choices for restaurants in the area.

From there, head to Tahquamenon Falls. It’s very picturesque and there are great hiking trails there as well. We especially like the Upper Falls hiking trail. (There are 2 falls – Upper and Lower).

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore -This is one of Michigan’s best kept secrets. It’s a good 2 hour drive north but it is well worth it. The scenery on Lake Superior is spectacular. There are boat cruises and kayak trips available or you can just take one of the numerous hiking trails. Climb the dunes or just relax on the beach. Just beautiful.

Oswald Bear Ranch – we would highly recommend this for kids of all ages. The owner has been rescuing bears for years and he takes very good care of them. If you’re lucky – they may have cubs. He will allow you to pet them and have your picture taken with them. Truly a treat.

Pigeon River State Forest – is located off I-75 at the Indian River exit. You can get the most up to date information on the Elk heard from the chamber of commerce in town. Get a map and drive into the interior of the forest. The best viewing is in September during rutting season. There are a few viewing areas that have rustic benches – you’ll know you’re in the right spot because there are usually a few other cars of people hoping to get a glimpse of an elk or two. We’ve seen them during all seasons but it’s hearing them bugle that is so amazing.

Pond Hill Farm – located on M-119. They sell their own produce and meat and have a very nice café in the barn as well as a winery.

Boyne Mountain/Highlands -Boyne Mountain and Boyne Highlands are in Petoskey/Harbor Springs area and they have lots going on all year there. They now have a 2.5 hour adventure tour (10 zip lines) and they claim “all thrill – no skill” . They also offer horseback riding, golf, cross country and downhill skiing. It’s quite beautiful.

We’ve been coming to the area for over 20 years and every time we come, we find yet another fun thing to do. Here’s some other things you might want to try:

-Visit the Mackinaw Icebreaker Maritime Museum in Mackinaw City

-Go Parasailing in Mackinaw City

-Take an adventure with Woods and Water Ecotours in Hessel. They are guides and will take beginners to advanced levels kayaking, biking, hiking, birding, skiing, dog sledding, snowshoeing, etc. Call Jessie at 906-484-4157 for pricing.

-Golf

-Kayak

-Big Bear Adventures in Indian River – you can kayak, tube or canoe the Sturgeon River.

-Sault Ste Marie – visit the Locks or take the Agawa Canyon Train Ride. You will need your passport to cross into Canada. They also have a few Pow Wows in Sault Ste Marie. Very cool.