

CIRCLING Lake Michigan

25 Years of Circle Tour History Provided by West Michigan Tourist Association

INSET PHOTO COURTESY OF WEST MICHIGAN TOURIST ASSOCIATION

the Lake Michigan Circle Tour route is the culmination of innovation and hard work by visionary Jack Morgan of the Michigan Department of Transportation. Just 14 months after Morgan introduced his Circle Tour concept in 1987, agreement to designate and fund it was reached between the governors of Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana. In 1998, the route was mapped and signs were posted along all 1,100 miles of Lake Michigan's shoreline.

The West Michigan Tourist Association (WMTA) was there from the beginning. In 1988, it premiered the first and the only official Lake Michigan Circle Tour Guide. When the Chicago Tribune and Milwaukee Journal ran articles announcing publication of the colorful, 52-page Guide, no one on WMTA's staff anticipated public reaction. On Monday following the story, 150 callers from the Chicago area alone requested the new publication. Two days later, an overburdened mail carrier unloaded 700 requests for the Guide from Illinois and Wisconsin. The next day, more than 1,000 mail and phone requests poured in.

On its 10-year anniversary in 1998, the guide was rechristened the Lake Michigan Circle Tour & Lighthouse Guide. The locations of dozens of beacons were added to its Circle Tour map. The map index was expanded to include the year each light was constructed, whether it is active and whether it is accessible to the public. The publication identified 113 lighthouses and crib, tower and shoal lights around Lake Michigan. Its index also includes data on each light's original Fresnel lens order, tower height and state/national historic recognitions.

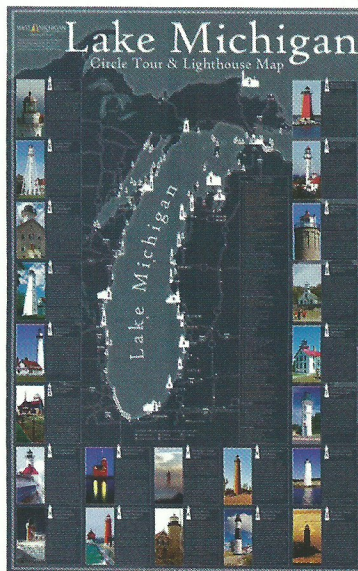
In 2000, Straits area lights were incorporated into the lighthouse map. Although some are located in Lake Huron, they can be viewed via excursion boats and Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry out of Mackinaw City. Once nearly impossible for the earth-bound traveler to see, these shoal and crib lights are now viewable from the water by anyone wishing to pay the fare.

WMTA created an online Lake Michigan Circle Tour & Lighthouse Guide in 2001. Far more comprehensive than the annual publications, each page on this section of the site includes lighthouse links, a glossary of terms and "Beacon Briefs" news stories. Each light has its own page complete with photographs, history, driving directions and contact information. The online Guide has been one of the "Top 10" pages viewed on WMTA's website since its inception.

In 2007, WMTA envisioned the Lake Michigan Circle Tour & Lighthouse Guide being changed into a map. The map would be the complete source for discovering the lighthouses that dot the Lake Michigan Shoreline. The map was introduced to travelers with rave reviews the following year and remains a keepsake for lighthouse enthusiasts. The map identifies with an icon of the lighthouses that

are along the Lake Michigan Circle Tour. Nearly two dozen lighthouses are also highlighted each year and contain additional structural details, accessibility information and special features of each selection.

To request your free copy of the 2013 Lake Michigan Circle Tour & Lighthouse Map, contact WMTA at 800-442-2084 or log onto www.wmta.org.



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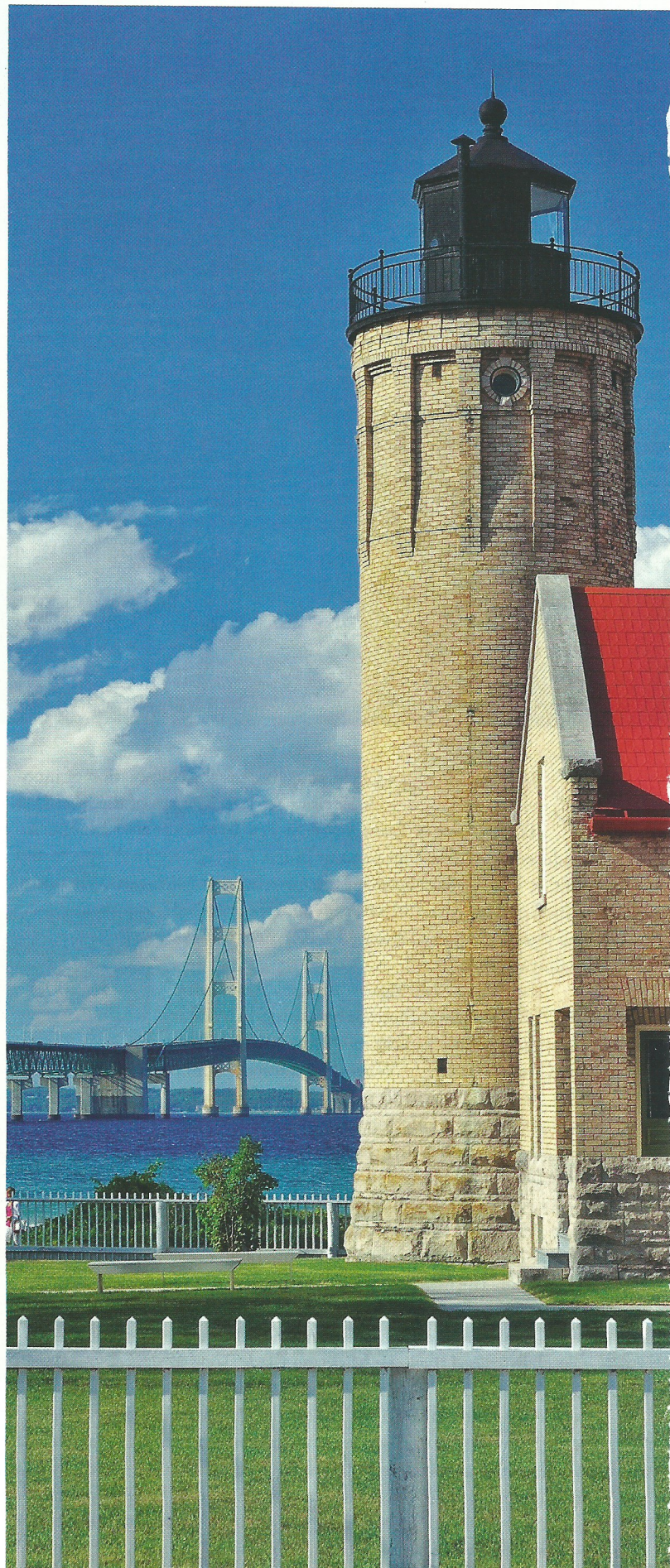


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CIRCLE TOUR *Highlights*

a BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

lthough lighthouses and historic maritime sites are a primary focus of the Lake Michigan Circle Tour (there are nearly 115 lights found along the four-state shoreline, and on the various islands scattered throughout this inland lake), there are dozens of other unique attractions and tidbits of information to be found while on this route.

Famed authors have retreated to the Great Lakes region for its quiet solitude and tranquil environment. Carl Sandburg wrote his award-winning series on Abraham Lincoln at his home in Harbort (in southwest Michigan's Harbor Country). L. Frank Baum spent his summers with his grandfather in Macatawa (near Holland) and it said that it was there he drew his inspiration for his acclaimed Wizard of Oz series from the nearby Castle Park. Jim Harrison penned his famed book (turned movie) *Legends of the Fall* while holed up for nine days at Jolli Lodge in Lake Ann on the Leelanau Peninsula. Ernest Hemingway, who grew up in Oak Park, IL, found solace in the Petoskey area.

The Muskegon's Actor's Colony was part of a neighborhood known as Bluffton—a summer home for vaudeville performers, most notably Joseph Frank "Buster" Keaton. This American comic actor, filmmaker, producer and writer was best known for his silent films, in which his trademark was physical comedy with a consistently deadpan expression, earning him the nickname "The Great Stone Face."

Dune rides started in the Silver Lake Sand Dunes area in 1930, when Mac Wood owned and operated Flora-Dale Resort. He began offering rides to entertain his neighbors, family and guests. The first Dune Scooter was designed from a Model A Ford and carried four passengers—with a fare of 25 cents! Today's scooters are four-wheel drive vehicles with aircraft tiers, carrying 20 passengers per trip (and thousands each season).

Beaver Island is home to Michigan's only "King." James Jesse Strang (1813-1856) was an American religious leader, politician and self-proclaimed monarch who founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He reigned for six years before being murdered in 1856.

Just two miles west of downtown Mackinaw City is one of Michigan's best kept secrets. The 600-acre Headlands stretches for 2.5 miles along the Lake Michigan shoreline, making it the ideal star gazing setting. In 2011, this property was awarded International Dark Sky Park designation—one of only six such parks in the United States and nine in the world.


The five-mile Mackinac Bridge, completed in 1957, connects Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas. Learn more about this modern marvel by touring the Mackinac Bridge Museum above Mama Mia's Pizzeria in downtown Mackinaw City.

Just off US2 in the Upper Peninsula, settled on the Garden Peninsula, is the historic townsite of Fayette—a representation of a once bustling industrial community that operated from 1864 until 1891. In addition to the town, the Jackson Iron Ore Company also owned 20,000 acres of hardwood forests used for the making of pig iron. Fayette became a state park in 1959.

Did you know that Wisconsin's Door County Peninsula boasts more lighthouses, more state parks and more miles of shoreline (250-plus miles) than any other county in the United States? Here you'll find

10 historic beacons, two of which are lighthouse museums.

Milwaukee has several claims to fame—like beer, baseball and circus clowns! Each year, this town commemorates turn-of-the-century circus parades with a horse-drawn processional that feature more than 100 units over a 3-mile route. Held each July, it boasts more than 50 historic circus wagons, 700 horses, 1,000 musicians, 2,000 costumed participants, 100 clowns, exotic animals and a 40-horse hitch.

Those wishing to cross the lake have two options—the Lake Express (which connects Muskegon and Milwaukee) and the Lake Michigan Carferry (connecting Ludington and Manitowoc). Creative travelers can develop unique patterns to explore the Circle Tour using these ferry services. 

Dianna Stampfler first began researching the Lake Michigan Circle Tour while working at the West Michigan Tourist Association from 1997-2004.

CIRCLE TOUR EATS

Agriculture and food are a highlight of any tour, and those circling Lake Michigan will not be disappointed. The shoreline creates a great environment for the growing of mouth-watering fruits and vegetables while retro eateries, like the Dog 'n Suds in Montague, Cherry Hut in Beulah, Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant in Sister Bay, WI and the first McDonald's in Des Plaines, IL (circa 1955), await visitors just as they have for generations.

OTHER CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS:

St. Joseph—The First Peach Planting. In the 1780s, William Burnett planted Michigan's first peach tree along the banks of the St. Joseph River. The noted "Redhaven" peach was developed by Stanley Johnson of South Haven and now Michigan ranks third nationally for peach production—with 47 million pounds harvested annually (primarily from Berrien, Van Buren and Oceana counties).

South Haven—The Blueberry Capital of the World. Michigan is the number one state for blueberry production, with 600-plus farms on 19,000-plus acres harvesting more than 100 million pounds and generating \$130 million annually.

Hart/Shelby—The Asparagus Capital. Michigan ranks third in the nation for asparagus production, harvesting up to 25 million pounds annually (11,000 acres). This area of Oceana County is the area with the greatest volume of production. Some 25 percent of the harvest is sold as fresh asparagus in the vegetable section of the grocery store or at roadside markets, while 75 percent of the crop is sold to processors to be frozen or canned.

Traverse City—The Cherry Capital of the World. Peter Dougherty, a Presbyterian missionary and the first European settler in the area, also became the first cherry grower when he planted an orchard on Old Mission Peninsula in 1852. Most of Michigan's sweet cherry production is concentrated in the Traverse City area, with many of the golden sweet varieties made into maraschinos. In July and early August, the nearby countryside is dotted with stands, markets and U-pick signs offering cartons of sweet, dark cherries.



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Mackinac Island—The Fudge Capital. There are a dozen or so fudge shops on Mackinac Island, some dating back more than 125 years. "Fudge: Mackinac's Sweet Souvenir" by historian Phil Porter, published in 2001 by the Mackinac State Historic Parks. The book highlights the personalities that molded the business over the years.

Upper Peninsula—The Pastie Capital of the U.S. Brought to the area by Cornish miners working in industrial towns, pasties remain vital to the Yooper culture. This baked pastry is filled with minced beef, onion, potato and swede (or turnip) with light peppery seasonings, with crimped edges to make a portable pie of sorts. The miners would warm their pasties in the inside chest pockets of their coats, thus providing sustenance throughout the work day.

Two Rivers, WI—Home of the Ice Cream Sundae. In 1881, George Hallauer asked Ed Berner—owner of a soda fountain—to top his dish of ice cream with chocolate sauce, previously used only for ice cream sodas. It became a popular concoction, but was only sold on Sundays until one day, a little girl asked for one saying they could just pretend it was Sunday. Voila—the ice cream sundae (the spelling is attributed to a mistranscription on the check).

Sheboygan, WI—The Bratwurst Capital of the World! In 1945, Ralph F. and Alice Stayer opened a butcher shop and named it after their quaint hometown. The sausage made in their butcher shop came from an old family recipe, which made its way down the family tree from 19th-century Austria.

Racine, WI—The Kringle Capital of the world! Kringles are thin, delicate pastries imported by Danish bakers when they immigrated to this town in the 1880s. Making the pastries is a time-honored procedure involving layer upon layer of fresh butter folded and rolled into pastry dough 140 times over. The edges of the dough are stretched, shaped, folded and tucked into an oval shape and then baked. Fruit is often included.

RESOURCES

West Michigan Tourist Association, www.wmta.org

Pure Michigan, www.Michigan.org

Michigan Department of Transportation, www.michigan.gov/mdot

Travel Wisconsin, www.travelwisconsin.com

Great Lakes Information Network, www.great-lakes.net

Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association, www.gllka.com

Seeing the Light, www.terrypepper.com

Circling Lake Michigan: 1,100 Miles of History, Arts & Culture

Vacationers have been looping the lake for generations — but the official "Lake Michigan Circle Tour" route wasn't established until the 1980s when the Michigan Department of Transportation teamed up with West Michigan Tourist Association (WMTA) to create the route and its official guidebook. Along the way, find more than 100 lighthouses, countless islands, unique attractions, parks and natural areas, miles of glorious beaches, quaint harbor towns, an internationally-recognized urban center and one "modern marvel" — the Mackinac Bridge. You are invited to take a virtual tour to some of the Lake Michigan Circle Tour's well-known destinations and its best kept secrets with Dianna Stampfler, who worked for seven years at WMTA as a primary researcher and promoter of the route. For information on scheduling this presentation, visit PromoteMichigan.com.