

MICHIGAN PARKS

A PURE MICHIGAN EXPERIENCE

BY DIANNA STAMPFLER



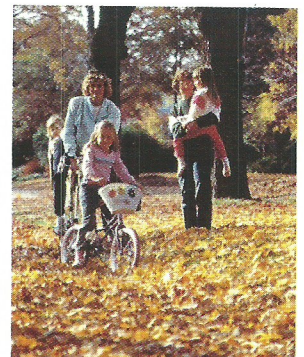
MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (MEDC)

Michigan -- the Great Lake State -- is a four-season camping paradise. From the far reaches of the Upper Peninsula to the outskirts of the Metro Detroit area, there is a privately owned campground, county, state or national park waiting to be explored.

Camping is the number one outdoor vacation activity in America and without a doubt, fall is the most colorful -- and some would argue the most special -- season to pitch a tent or set up a camper or RV for a pure outdoor Michigan experience.

Did you know that you are never more than a half hour from a Michigan State Park, State Forest Campground, State Recreation Area or State trail system? Officially created by the legislature in 1919, a year-long 90th anniversary celebration is planned to showcase Michigan's 97 state parks.

The physical isolation and primitive wilderness of Michigan's Isle Royale National Park in northern Lake Superior and the charming coastal shoreline of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, stretching





dunes, or feast your eyes on the towering sandstone cliffs and untouched wilderness, all from the seat of your bicycle. In the winter months, these trails are transformed into the ideal setting for cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

If you prefer trail riding on the back of a horse, then the Michigan Shore-to-Shore Trail (also known as the Michigan Riding and Hiking Trail) may be of interest. This 220-mile trail traverses Northern Michigan from Oscoda on the Lake Huron shoreline to Empire on the Lake Michigan coastline. Developed in 1962, the route travels through mixed hardwood and conifer forests, through the Boardman River valley and follows the AuSable River for about 50 miles. A number of private campgrounds are located along the route as well.

Not many states can claim island hopping as a recreational activity -- but Michigan certainly can. Mackinac is without a doubt the state's most famous isle (although camping is not allowed on the island itself). Other islands of note include Drummond Island in Northern Lake Huron and both the North and South Manitou Islands (both offering rustic camping), in Lake Michigan with transportation aboard the Manitou Island Transit, out of Leland.

Beaver Island, also in Northern Lake Michigan and accessible

via ferry boat or airplane from Charlevoix, features two rustic campgrounds owned and operated by the Island Townships and open from April 1 to the end of November. There are no reservations at either and primitive sites are available on a first-come, first serve basis. Beaver Island's 18-island archipelago (a chain or cluster of islands) is an ecotourism destination waiting to be explored.

Did you know that you are never more than a half hour from a Michigan State Park, State Forest Campground, State Recreation Area or State trail system?

The Les Cheneaux Islands are a group of 36 small islands, along a dozen miles of Lake Huron shoreline about 30 miles north and east of the Straits of Mackinac. The islands are a paddler's paradise, adjacent to the communities of Hessel and Cedarville -- where two campgrounds can be found.

A simple color tour along Michigan's highways and byways provides the ultimate autumn excursion. With 19 million acres of woods slowing exploding into a frenzy of color, there's no better place to see the dynamic colors of a trillion trees aflame than along the miles of "old road" cut through forests of hardwoods and pines on the various state-designated scenic routes. Be on the lookout for the covered bridges, farm markets and historic one room schoolhouses that dot the landscape.

While viewing by car is the most common way to check out the fall colors in Michigan, don't miss out on the opportunities to see them