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DISCOVER BEAUTIFUL BEACHES AND CLEAR,
BLUE WATER ALONG LAKE MICHIGAN'S LAKESHORE.

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& SURF

MICHIGAN

PICTURE YOURSELF LOUNGING lakeside, with your toes dug into the wet sand and the waves lapping at the shoreline. Above you, the sun radiates. In front of you, a glorious lake reaches for miles and miles before disappearing into the distance. To your left and right, the beach extends beyond sight. This is summer along Lake Michigan.

To experience the hundreds of miles of beautiful Michigan beaches and clear, blue water, begin in southwest Michigan and drive north. Along this route, you will find the following points of interest, in addition to many others.

Southwest

Michigan
The pristine Lake Michigan shoreline is the pride of Harbor Country in extreme southwest Michigan. This collection of eight small towns stretches from Michiana north to Sawyer. The town of New Buffalo offers a popular beach, complete with a boardwalk, and is within walking distance of the downtown shopping district.

In addition to the many local township and county parks and beaches, this area is home to Warren Dunes State Park. Located 2½ miles south of Bridgman, it is rated among Michigan's best beaches. With more than two miles of shoreline and rugged dune formations that rise 240 feet above the lake, it has been a haven for summer vacationers for generations.

Three noteworthy beaches can be found in St. Joseph, including Tiscornia Park, Lions Park Beach and Silver Beach, which boasts 1,600 feet of beach below the bluff in downtown St. Joseph.

Traveling northward to Van Buren County, near South Haven, you'll find one of the hidden gems of the Michigan State Park system—Van Buren State Park. It features high dune formations along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The park also offers hiking trails, horseback riding trails and a modern campground.

Further up into the city of South Haven are three beaches. The pier and its 1904 lighthouse separate South Beach and Riverfront Park from North Beach. Both offer conces-

sion stands, picnic tables and restrooms, and are within walking distance to Downtown. Around the curve of the shoreline is Packard Park Beach.

The only beach in Michigan to be recognized as one of the best in the country by Condé Nast's *Traveler Magazine* and MTV is Oval Beach in Saugatuck. Even "Dr. Beach" (Stephen Leatherman) included this sandy oasis on his 2003 list of "87 Best American Beaches" published in *National Geographic Traveler* magazine.

West Central

Michigan
The "Big Red" Lighthouse graces Holland State Park and one of Michigan's most noted beaches. Just north of town is the 22-acre Tunnel Park, named for the 65-foot-long concrete tunnel that stretches under the dunes.

Continue north and you'll arrive in Grand Haven, voted in 2005 as one of the top five family-friendly beaches by "Good Morning America's" Travel Mom, Emily Kaufman. You'll find beaches at Kirk Park, as well as Grand Haven City Beach and Grand Haven State Park, which has been billed "Michigan's No. 1 State Park" by AAA.

North of Grand Haven in Ferrysburg is North Beach Park, another popular sunbathing location. Enjoy a picnic lunch under the covered pavilion and then work off that meal by hiking the dune climb stairway for

the rewarding view.

The highlight of the PJ Hoffmaster State Park on Pontaluna Road in Muskegon is the Gillette Visitor Center. It's here that you can learn about the ecological zones of the dune environment and see seasonal exhibits and public programs about the dunes and beaches. The park itself features three miles of Lake Michigan shoreline—considered one of the finest stretches in the country.

Four miles west of North Muskegon is Muskegon State Park, with two miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan and more than a mile on Muskegon Lake. The 145-acre Pioneer County Park offers swimming, sunbathing and other recreational activities. It is the largest and most popular park in Muskegon County, with 2,000 feet of sugar sand Lake Michigan beach.

The world famous Silver Lake Sand Dunes is the only place in Michigan where you can drive an off-road vehicle directly across the sand. The 3,000-acre Silver Lake State Park features 1,200 acres designated exclusively for off road vehicles, whether you bring your own or rent one nearby. Those looking for less-adventurous activities will enjoy the large sandy beach area for swimming and sunbathing.

Charles Mears State Park is located in the northern part of the county, in the quaint village of Pentwater. Paved campsites are surrounded by fine sand and a swimming beach is adjacent to the harbor pier.

Northwest *Michigan*

As you follow Highway 10 west toward Lake Michigan in Ludington, you'll see Stearns Park spread out before you. The park, with its half-mile stretch of beach, is free to the public. The North Breakwater Light stands guard over the pier and the channel, which lead to the marinas nearby.

In all, Ludington boasts more than seven miles of beaches. As you travel Lakeshore Drive Highway M-116 toward the state park, you'll find plenty of places to pull off the road so you can run up and over the dunes toward the beach and the water beyond.

South of Manistee is the Lake Michigan Recreation Area, located inside the Manistee National Forest. It connects to beautiful Lake Michigan beaches on the west and the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area to the south. It features a mile-long beach with picnic facilities and gravel hiking/biking trails.

Whether you're looking for a family-friendly beach setting or one that is more peaceful and quiet, you'll find miles of shoreline waiting for you right here in West Michigan.



The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has been called the "mother of all beaches" in Michigan. With towering sand dunes and miles of beaches, this sandy playground extends 35 miles from Benzie County north to Leelanau County. Popular spots include Good Harbor Bay, Pyramid Point and Glen Haven beaches. Empire Beach includes a beach on South Bar Lake, as well as one on Lake Michigan.

The Traverse City region has more than 180 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline with countless beaches that hug both West and East Grand Traverse Bay.

Families enjoy Clinch Park Beach on West Grand Traverse Bay, between Clinch Park Marina and the mouth of the Boardman River. It is the most populated and most popular beach in the city with more than 1,500 feet of sand. Boaters frequently anchor and then swim to shore to explore the downtown area, which is within walking distance.

At the base of the Old Mission Peninsula is East Bay Park Beach, with a boat launch,

playground, picnic area and restrooms. Haserot Beach, in the community of Old Mission on East Grand Traverse Bay, and Bowers Harbor Beach, which overlooks West Grand Traverse Bay at Power Island, are also found here. At the northern tip of the peninsula, along Highway 37, is the Lighthouse Park. The beach area here is noted for its large boulders, which grace the shoreline.

The Traverse City State Park is located adjacent to Highway 31, across from the state park campground, and is accessible by an elevated walkway. The water deepens gradually, making it ideal for kids. While a state park pass is required to park beachside, there is no charge for those accessing by foot.

South of Charlevoix is Fisherman's Island State Park, with seven miles of undeveloped beach and a one-mile stretch for swimming and sunbathing. The beach is located around Inwood Creek, just three miles inside

the park's main entrance. The actual island is just offshore of the park.

Adjacent to the south pier near Downton Charlevoix is a popular Lake Michigan beach with recreational offerings such as basketball, volleyball, shuffleboard and a playground.

The search for Petoskey stones is the task of choice in the city that bears the same name. Magnus City Park Beach in downtown Petoskey is a great place to find the Hexagonaria Peracarinata—commonly known as the Petoskey stone.

In Harbor Springs, Zorn Park offers access to Little Traverse Bay. Artesian springs here mean the water is, well ... cold ... albeit refreshing.

As you travel Highway M-119, "Tunnel of Trees" toward Cross Village, you'll find miles of beach including Goodhart Beach and Readmond Beach, both in Good Hart; Bliss Beach north of Cross Village, and the sandy and shallow waters of Wilderness State Park.

There are many public areas along the

Mackinaw City shoreline where you can hang your feet in the water and gaze at the 5-mile Mackinac Bridge. The miles of sugar-sand beaches are perfect for soaking in the breathtaking views of St. Helena Island, Round Island and the famed Mackinac Island, which sit amid the sparkling emerald waters of the Straits of Mackinac.

Mackinac Island, itself, offers several beach opportunities, although swimming shoes or sandals are recommended for the rocky shore. The east side of the island is best for children, as the water is shallow. The more experienced swimmers may prefer the south side of the island, where the current and the waves provide more of a workout.

Upper Peninsula *Michigan*

Crossing the Mackinac Bridge into Michigan's Upper Peninsula you'll continue to find places to stop and dip your toes into Lake Michigan. The boardwalk in Manistique follows the Lake Michigan shoreline for about two miles from the Manistique Harbor. Along the way, you'll find public beaches and spectacular views of the pier lighthouse.

The Indian Lake State Park, just west of Manistique, offers a clean, sandy beach as well as a beach house for changing. Nearby, in Fayette on Big Bay De Noc, Fayette State Park offers a half-mile of beach near the campground.

At Ludington State Park in Escanaba, sandy beaches extend along Aronson Island. The municipal beach house is undergoing renovations and will include new restrooms, showers, changing rooms, a family changing room, first aid and lifeguard station and new sidewalks.

Before exiting the Upper Peninsula—and Michigan for that matter—check out Wells State Park in Cedar River. The public beach is inviting to swimmers. A beach house, restrooms, picnic area and playground are also found here.

Whether you're looking for a family-friendly beach setting or one that is more peaceful and quiet, you'll find miles of shoreline waiting for you right here in West Michigan. Access to any of the Michigan state parks does require a day-use or annual permit, available through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Many city, township and county beaches also charge admission. Check with the visitor bureau, tourist council or chamber of commerce in the community you wish to visit for specific information. ▲