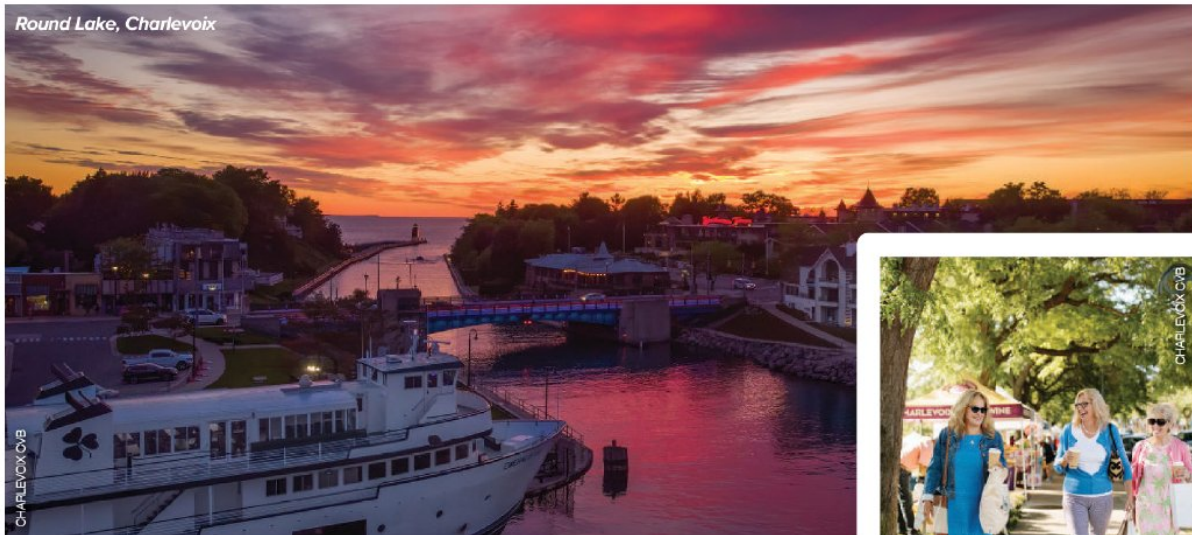


WEEKEND ESCAPES

GET AWAY FOR THE
Weekend!



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The quaint harbor towns along the Lake Michigan coastline have attracted Chicagoland travelers for generations. Once known as the West Michigan Pike, US-31 provides direct access to a wealth of experiences and memories.

CHARLEVOIX, MICHIGAN

375 MILES FROM CHICAGO

Tucked into the waterfront neighborhoods of Charlevoix is a collection of more than two dozen quaint stone structures designed nearly a century ago by famed architect Earl Young. These one-of-a-kind “Hobbit Homes” or “Mushroom Houses” boast unique features like curved eaves, arched doorways and expansive picture windows that let in tons of natural light. A self-guided map of Young’s many treasures is available, but for a deeper dive into the history and tidbits about the homes, the 50-minute guided **Mushroom House Tours** is a must.

Those wishing to elevate their experience should make reservations at the recently renovated 56-room boutique hotel, **The Earl**. Originally built by Young in 1959 as “The Lodge,” the three-story building has retained its signature “Witch’s Hat” peaks along with a new inviting lobby, elegant rooms, an indoor swimming pool complete with a ceiling waterfall and a popular rooftop deck with views of Round Lake and Lake Michigan. Across US-31, **Stafford’s Weathervane Inn** (completed by Young in 1955), is a casual yet classic eatery with an outdoor deck overlooking the Pine River Channel, ideal for observing the near-constant boat traffic.

Just southeast of town sits another stone beauty – **Castle Farms**, built in 1918 as a Sears model dairy farm inspired by barns in Normandy, France. During the ‘70s and ‘80s, the complex hosted some of the most memorable rock concerts – from The Beach Boys and Bon Jovi to Aerosmith and Iron Maiden. It is now an elegant wedding and event venue. Daily Guided Tours, as well as seasonal Tram Tours, provide visitors an intimate look at the Castle buildings, gardens and grounds. It is also home to **1918 Cellars Tasting Room**, one of 14 members of the Petoskey Wine Region.

Those who like rock-n-roll (and other genres) will enjoy the Tuesday Night City Band performances, “Live on the Lake” summer concert series on Thursday nights (June 30 to August 11) at the East Park Odmark Performance Pavilion as well as the musical line-up for the Venetian Festival in July. This annual celebration, first held in 1930, also includes the Bridge Street Block Party, beach volleyball

tournament, carnival, fireworks and evening Boat Parade on Round Lake featuring vessels of all shapes and sizes decked out with twinkling lights, decorations and music.

Getting out on the water is easy in Charlevoix. **Sunshine Charters** runs three trips a day during the summer on Lake Charlevoix, Round Lake and into Lake Michigan aboard a 29 passengers, 40-foot catamaran sailboat. The sunset cruise is especially enjoyable and passengers are even invited to pack a picnic, including a bottle of wine or other beverage, for a unique al fresco dining experience.

Last year, the **Charlevoix Cycle Pub** also launched its own “party barge” with a 14-passenger pedal powered charter boat operating on Lake Charlevoix. Don’t worry, if things get too physically exhausting, the captain is happy to turn on the motor for a more leisurely trip.

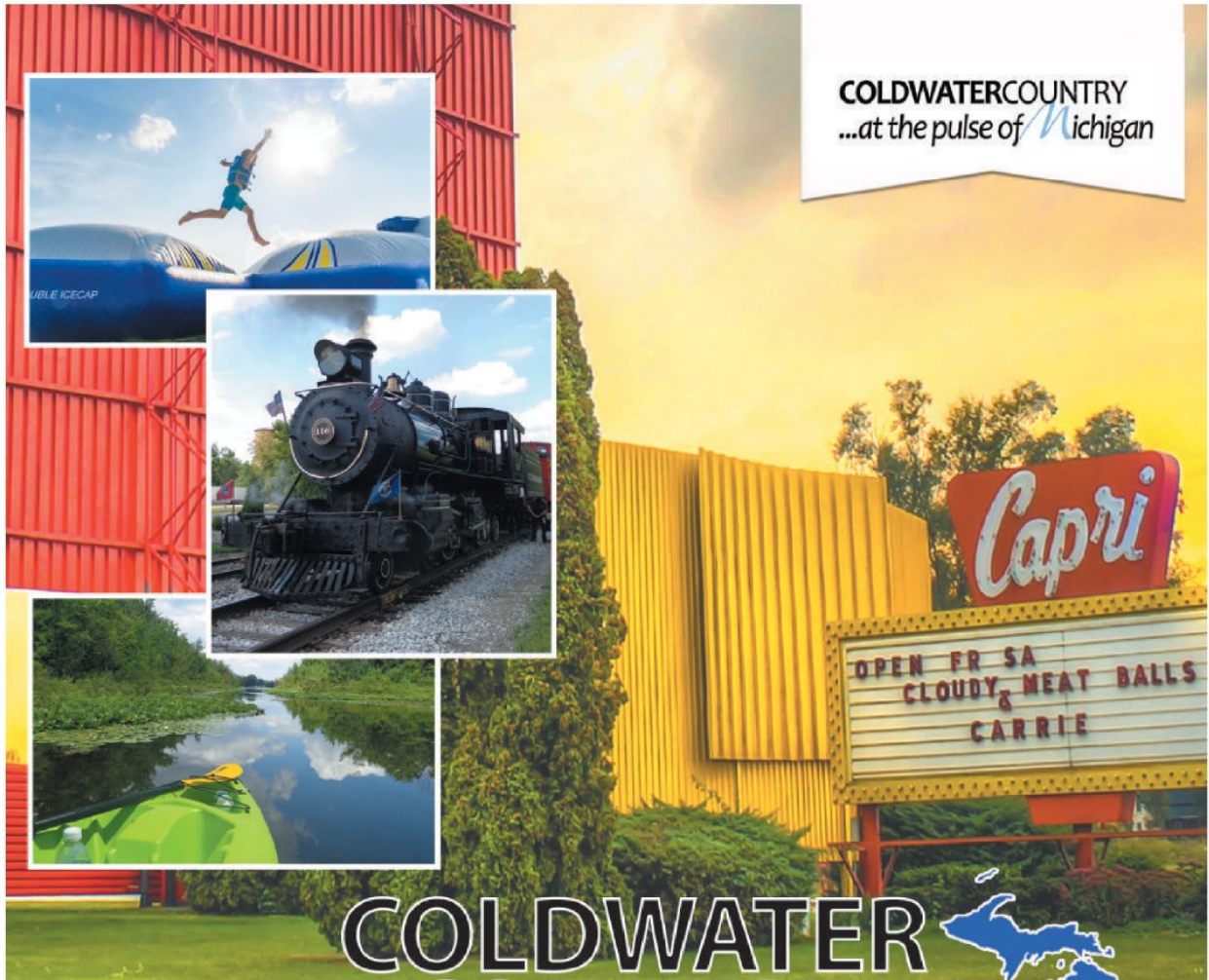
If pedaling on land is preferred, stop by **Revolution Bike** for half-day, overnight or weekly bike rentals and explore the city or hit the Little Traverse Wheelway – which stretches for 26 picturesque miles along Lake Michigan and Little Traverse Bay, between downtown Charlevoix, through Bay Harbor and Petoskey and up toward Harbor Springs.

Rock hunters will also find plenty of places around Charlevoix to search for Petoskey stones, Michigan’s state stone. Locals recommend searching for these elusive fossilized corals at Fisherman’s Island State Park, McSauba Recreation Area and Michigan Beach adjacent to the Charlevoix Pier Lighthouse. For a guaranteed score, visit one of the handful of locally owned shops downtown and purchase Petoskey stone jewelry or home décor.

A fun day trip or extended rustic experience can be found with a jaunt over to Beaver Island, Michigan’s famed Emerald Isle. **The Beaver Island Boat Company** provides daily service to Lake Michigan’s largest island (at 13 miles long and six miles wide). Once there, visitors will find plenty of opportunities to hike, bike or paddle around this historic island.



TRAVEL TIP: When traveling along US-31 in Charlevoix, be advised the downtown drawbridge goes up at the top and bottom of every hour to allow boats access to and from Round Lake/Lake Michigan.



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Holland Lighthouse



Nelis' Dutch Village



Holland Windmill

HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

150 MILES FROM CHICAGO

Each spring, more than four million colorful tulips line the downtown streets of Holland – home to the annual Tulip Time Festival, first held in 1929. This community celebration draws crowds from around the world for eight days of festivities, concerts and family activities – including three notable parades. The first, the Volksparade, proudly features residents and local celebrities dressed in traditional Dutch costumes (including the signature wooden shoes) scrubbing the streets before the theatrical procession begins.

Holland's Dutch hospitality remains long after the blossoms have faded, with countless attractions and experiences. This spring, the 56-room boutique **Tulyp** hotel (formerly CityFlats) rebranded to pay tribute to that heritage. In addition to recent first floor renovations, Tulyp now features the **1867 Lounge** (named for the year Holland, Michigan was founded), the **Koffie Café** (the Dutch spelling for coffee) and the 150-person special event space **Piek Events** ("top" in Dutch) from where guests can see Lake Macatawa, Windmill Island and downtown Holland.

The centerpiece of Windmill Island Park is the de Zwaan (the swan) Windmill – the only authentic, working Dutch windmill in the United States. At 125 feet, it was constructed in the Netherlands in 1761 and moved to its current home in 1964. Today, visitors can climb up five levels and observe the mechanisms that grind wheat into flour and walk out on the Gallery Deck for panoramic views of the 36-acre park with its antique kids' carousel, gardens, walking trails and other Dutch-inspired displays.

Just a short drive from downtown Nelis' Dutch Village sits on 10 acres just off US-31. Step in and try some easy folk dances, watch as carvers turn blocks of poplar into wooden shoes, see how farmhouse cheese is made the old-fashioned way, listen to the De Gouden Engel (The Golden Angel Street Organ) and sample mouth-watering Stroopwafel cookies. Touring the Kolean Museum, Old Dutch Schoolhouse and de Waaggenbouw (weigh house) are like taking a trip back in time to the old country. Popular souvenirs and gifts

include wooden shoes, hand-painted Delftware pottery, decorated Delftware tiles, German cuckoo clocks, wooden tulips, garden décor and other Dutch-themed items.

Lake Macatawa, which flows into Lake Michigan at Holland State Park, has a rich history and remains a popular waterfront locale. The Holland Harbor "Big Red" Lighthouse sits on the south side of the channel while the city's noted Ottawa Beach spreads out for 750 feet north of the pier.

Perched on the southeast side of the lake, **Boatwerks Waterfront Restaurant** serves up amazing food, cocktails and stellar views from its large seasonal patio. From tuna nachos and hand-tossed pizzas to brisket mac & cheese and grilled Faroe Island salmon with its cranberry apricot pepper relish, you shouldn't leave hungry. Be sure to save room for key lime pie or the warm, gooey cookie skillet, topped with vanilla bean ice cream.

Among Lake Macatawa's early summer residents was L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz* – it is believed that this area inspired the classic tale. To honor that legacy, the Holland Oz Project features bronze sculptures of the book's characters standing proudly outside the Herrick Library as well as a "Yellow Brick Road" which winds through Centennial Park leading to a larger-than-life open Oz book designed with more than 6,000 live plants.

Street performers – including musicians, face painters, jugglers and caricature artists – entertain downtown crowds on Thursday evenings throughout the summer. On Wednesdays and Saturdays (mid-May through late October), the **Holland Farmers Market** comes alive with nearly 100 vendors selling fresh produce as well as cheeses, condiments, meats, baked goods and other edibles. Flowers, home décor, soaps and jewelry can also be found. Delicious breakfast and lunch items, snacks, teas and fresh lemonade can be purchased at the seasonal food court.

One of the newer additions to downtown is the 11-screen **Sperry Moviehouse**. From their heated, massaging recliner chairs, guests scan a QR code to order food from six distinct restaurants which are then delivered right to their seats.



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ST. JOSEPH, MICHIGAN

95 MILES FROM CHICAGO

Although less than 90-minutes from downtown Chicago, a trip to Warren Dunes State Park is always a refreshing escape. With more than 3 miles of shoreline and 6 miles of hiking trails, the park's nearly 2,000 acres of natural wonders make you feel as though you have discovered a wilderness paradise close to home. You'll find fantastic views from the rugged sand dunes which rise 260 feet above the lake, kayak, paddleboard, and sand board rentals, plus three wheelchair accessible paths to the water, Warren Dunes is the perfect beach day escape. You can even bring your dog—the north end of the beach is pet friendly. Though, of course, Fido must be on leash! Michigan Recreation Passport or Daily Fee required. You can purchase in advance at mdnr-elicense.com.

Perched on a bluff overlooking the crystal blue waters of Lake Michigan, downtown St. Joe (as it is affectionately called) offers plenty of activities to fill your weekend itinerary. At the heart of the city is **The Boulevard Inn & Bistro**, a charming 86-room boutique-style hotel and restaurant within walking distance of cafes, shops and historic attractions.

Among the iconic sites is the 1907 St. Joseph North Pier Range Lights – among 129 lighthouses in Michigan (more than any other state) – connected by a cement pier and elevated catwalk, adjacent to Tiscornia Park. On the south side of the St. Joseph River Silver Beach County Park, with nearly 1,600 feet of Lake Michigan frontage dedicate to public swimming. The area is also popular for kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding and even surfing – with equipment and lessons available from **Third Coast Surf Shop**.

The crown jewel of the park is the Silver Beach Carousel, constructed in 2010 as a replica of the original which entertained visitors a century prior. This whimsical ride features 48 unique figures – including horses, lions, peacocks, giraffes and two wheelchair-accessible sea serpent chariots – in addition to a thousand twinkling lights and a montage of colorful historic photos of the area.

A fun way to explore St. Joe is by pedaling your way around town. **Scooter Joe's Wheel and Water Rentals** rents beach bikes, electric bikes, fat tire bikes and covered surrey bikes which can accommodate up to 11 people. They also offer boat and kayak rentals for added water adventures.

A free water taxi travels along the St. Joseph River on weekends between Memorial Day and Labor Day (weather permitting), making four stops between St. Joe and its sister city, Benton Harbor. This

vintage-looking 6-person boat is reminiscent of early steam launches which transported visitors to their summer cottages and resorts generations ago.

Dig further into the city's history at the Heritage Museum and Cultural Center downtown, or pop into **Forever Books** for a great beach read. If you're lucky, your visit will coincide with one of their regular author book signings. Musical entertainment – big band, jazz and classic performances – are held on the third Friday of the month (June through September) as part of the Summer Concert Series. A Public Art Scavenger Hunt encourages the discovery of and discussions about public art installations at the Margaret B. Upton Arboretum, Silver Beach and the Krasl Art Center.

The city's cooperative art scene means you're sure to find unique souvenirs, home accessories and one-of-a-kind gifts. **The Candlestick Maker** features trendy beach glass jewelry, nautical décor, lighthouse prints and the largest selection of candles around. **Chartreuse Art Gallery** offers custom works from local artists, along with demonstrations and classes in a variety of mediums including wood working, fiber, ceramics and glass.

For additional hands-on experiences, the **Culinary Cottage** presents chef-led cooking classes like French Bistro Brunch, Little Italy Pasta and Thai Inspiration. Housed inside **The Market** – a 9,000-square-foot indoor farmers market (open year-round, seven days a week) – it joins other foodie finds like **The Cheese Lady**, **The Tea Annex**, **Infusco Coffee** and **Community Tap Room**.

White Pine Winery (named for Michigan's state tree) is one a dozen-plus wineries that make up the Lake Michigan Shore Wine Trail. Winemaker David Miller opened this tasting room in 2010 and his growing number of award-winning wines are helping put the Great Lakes State on the map as a wine destination. From riesling and pinot grigio to merlot and cab franc, you're sure to find a style that excites your palate – including sweet ice wine. St. Joe also offers a Downtown Social District, which means you can purchase a glass of wine and sip it while you stroll the sidewalks within a defined area.

When hunger strikes, global offerings like Italian fare at **Tosi's**, authentic Mexican dishes at **Azul Tequila Bar & Grill**, New Orleans cuisine at **Nola Roux** and Asian influenced meals at **Chan's Garden** are sure to satisfy. For great food, drinks and sunset views, the rooftop deck at **RyeBelles Restaurant & Bar** is the place to be. There are plenty of places to find sweet treats as well, from baked goods, candy, fudge, ice cream to other mouth-watering desserts. ●