

Michigan - The Great Lakes State



One of Michigan's Many Lakes

Introduction

Michigan is a little-known state located in the Midwest region of America, situated close to the Canadian border. It is often called the “Great Lakes State”, and for good reason as 4 of the 5 Great Lakes border Michigan. The name ‘Michigan’ actually comes from the Ojibwe word *mishigami*, meaning ‘large water’ or ‘large lake’. In addition to being surrounded by 4 of the 5 Great Lakes, Michigan also has many other smaller lakes (over 11,000). Nearly anywhere you go in Michigan you will find lakes, beaches, or rivers. The Upper Peninsula is also abundant in nature and is a popular location for people looking to take a break from city life.

Geography & Climate

Michigan is mostly known for the Great Lakes. It is bordered by 4 of the Great Lakes: Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, Lake Erie, and Lake Huron. Having many smaller lakes, beaches, and rivers as well, Michigan is a great location for people to enjoy swimming, fishing, etc. Actually, no matter where you are in Michigan, you are never more than 6 miles from a body of water!

However, while Michigan may be known mainly for the Great Lakes, it also has many other natural elements such as mountains, sand dunes, and many forests, especially in the Upper Peninsula.

Michigan is the only state in America to be divided into two peninsulas: the Upper Peninsula and the Lower Peninsula, which are connected by the Mackinac Bridge.



Bear Sanctuary in the
Upper Peninsula

While both peninsulas make up Michigan, there are some distinct differences between them. The land of the Lower Peninsula is flatter than that of the Upper, and the Lower Peninsula is also much more urban. While the largest city of the Lower Peninsula, Detroit, has a population of roughly 670,000 people, the largest city of the Upper Peninsula, Marquette, only has a population of roughly 20,000 people. The Upper Peninsula is a much more rural place, with small towns and vast nature. As such, there are also a variety of interesting wildlife that live in the Upper Peninsula such as bears, moose, coyotes, wolves, bobcats, otters, etc. There are even places such as a bear sanctuary where you can see some of these bears for yourself and feed them apples!

Seasons:

Michigan experiences all 4 seasons, so throughout the year there are a variety of things to try and enjoy.

Spring

Although spring is relatively short compared to the other seasons, you can enjoy the pleasant weather and visit some of the flower or fruit festivals that are held each year. You can also find plenty of fresh produce at one of the many farmer's markets found throughout the state.

Summer

Summers are quite hot, but a great chance to enjoy the various beaches and lakes found throughout Michigan. Many people take this chance to go on vacations with their family. People from the Lower Peninsula often like to head to the Upper peninsula to enjoy activities such as camping, fishing, swimming, etc.

Autumn

When autumn comes around it starts to get quite chilly in Michigan, however, many families and couples take this chance to go apple picking and take a hayride. Apple cider and doughnuts are particularly tasty, and are popular foods of autumn.

Winter

Winters in Michigan are very cold, and there tends to be a lot of snow. There's even a snow/ice festival that, although not as famous, is a bit similar to the one in Sapporo! Although very cold outside, sporty type people like to take this chance to engage in some winter sports such as skiing, sledding, or snowboarding. You can try out ice fishing or dog sledding as well.

A Michigan Winter



Industries & Specialties

Alongside the Great Lakes, Michigan is also well known for its automotive companies, which are deeply ingrained in the history of the state. There's even a famous car show held annually in the city of Flint named 'Back to the Bricks', which attracts people from both within and outside of the state.

However, on the opposite side of the automotive industry, agriculture is another industry that is important to Michigan. The various farms across Michigan produce over 300 different agricultural products which include blueberries, apples, cherries, peaches, corn, tomatoes, and many, many other products. Fittingly, there are also festivals relating to these products throughout the state, such as the Cherry Festival in Traverse City, or the Blueberry Festival in Paradise Michigan. Interestingly, Michigan is also one of the top producers of Christmas trees in the nation.

With all of these agricultural products, it should be no surprise that Michigan also has one of the highest number of local farmer markets in the nation, which are always packed with fresh, locally grown produce. Some are even open throughout the entire year.



Blueberries Harvested in Michigan

Tourism

Michigan is a place that has something to offer to just about anyone. The most obvious is the vast amounts of nature and opportunities for sports. Many people visit Michigan to swim in and enjoy the gorgeous view of the Great Lakes. Michigan is also more than 50% forest, so it's not a rare site to see families visiting one of the many camping sites across the state in the warmer months. Both visitors and locals alike also enjoy hunting and fishing.

For those that aren't as interested in outdoor activities, there are many other interesting things to choose from. Detroit, Michigan's largest city, is known for its art, music, and culture, and as such there are a variety of museums you can choose from when perusing the city streets. Frankenmuth, or "Michigan's little Bavaria" as it's also called, is a city filled with quaint shops, horse-drawn carriages, museums and buildings with German roots, and many other interesting things to see and experience year-round.