



# Great Lakes

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## Why Go?

Don't be fooled by all the corn. Behind it lurks surfing beaches and Tibetan temples, car-free islands and the green-draped night-lights of the aurora borealis. The Midwest takes its knocks for being middle-of-nowhere boring. So consider the moose-filled national parks, urban five-ways and Hemingway, Dylan and Vonnegut sites its little secret.

Roll call for the Midwest's cities starts with Chicago, which unfurls what is arguably the country's mightiest skyline. Milwaukee keeps the beer-and-Harley flame burning, while Minneapolis shines a hipster beacon out over the fields. Detroit rocks, plain and simple.

The Great Lakes themselves are huge, like inland seas, offering beaches, dunes, resort towns and lots of lighthouse-dotted scenery. Dairy farms and fruit orchards blanket the region, meaning that fresh pie and ice cream awaits road trippers. And when the Midwest does flatten out? There's always a goofball roadside attraction, like the meaty Spam museum or world's biggest ball of twine, to revive imaginations.

## Best Places to Eat

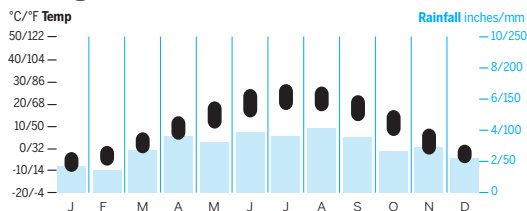
- » Zingerman's Roadhouse (p555)
- » Terry's Turf Club (p545)
- » Slows Bar BQ (p552)
- » Next (p518)
- » Bryant-Lake Bowl (p579)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Inn on Ferry Street (p551)
- » Hotel Burnham (p514)
- » Arbor House (p569)
- » Lighthouse B&B (p587)
- » Inn Serendipity (p571)

## When to Go

### Chicago



**Jan & Feb** Skiers and snowmobilers hit the trails.

**Jul & Aug** Ah, finally, it's warm! Beer gardens hop, beaches splash, and festivals rock most weekends.

**Sep & Oct** Fair weather, bountiful farm and orchard harvests, and shoulder-season bargains.

## Getting There & Around

Chicago's O'Hare International Airport (ORD) is the main air hub for the region. Detroit (DTW), Cleveland (CLE) and Minneapolis (MSP) also have busy airports.

A car is the easiest way to get around, especially if you want to head down Route 66 or dawdle on scenic backroads. Small change is useful for tollways such as the I-80 and I-90 through northern Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

**Greyhound** ([www.greyhound.com](http://www.greyhound.com)) connects many local cities and towns. Upstart **Megabus** ([www.megabus.com/us](http://www.megabus.com/us)) provides an efficient alternative between major Great Lakes cities. Note that Megabus has no terminals (drop-off and pick-up are at various street corners), and all purchases must be made in advance online (you cannot buy a ticket from the driver).

Amtrak's national rail network centers on Chicago. Trains depart at least once daily for San Francisco (*California Zephyr*), Seattle (*Empire Builder*), New York City (*Lake Shore Limited*), New Orleans (*City of New Orleans*) and San Antonio (*Texas Eagle*). Regional trains chug to Milwaukee (seven daily) and Detroit (three daily).

Two car/passenger ferries sail across Lake Michigan, providing a shortcut between Wisconsin and Michigan. The **Lake Express** ([www.lake-express.com](http://www.lake-express.com)) crosses between Milwaukee and Muskegon. The older **SS Badger** ([www.ssbadger.com](http://www.ssbadger.com)) crosses between Manitowoc and Ludington.

### TOP FIVE ACTIVITY HOT SPOTS

- » Boundary Waters (p588) Canoe where wolves and moose roam
- » Wisconsin's Rails to Trails (p565) Pedal through cow-dotted farmland
- » Apostle Islands (p573) Kayak through sea caves
- » New Buffalo (p557) Learn to surf in Harbor Country
- » Isle Royale (p563) Hike and camp in pristine back-country

## Pre-Planning

A couple of things to know before you go: pre-booking accommodation during summer is a good idea, especially in resort-orientated places such as Mackinac Island in Michigan, and the North Shore in Minnesota. It's also advised for festival-packed cities such as Milwaukee and Chicago.

Chowhounds who crave dinner at top-end restaurants such as Chicago's Alinea, Next or Frontera Grill/Topolobampo should make reservations six to eight weeks in advance.

Eyeing a nice beachfront campsite at one of the state parks? Better nab it early on; most parks take online reservations for a small fee.

Bring insect repellent, especially if you're heading to the Northwoods. The blackflies in spring and mosquitoes in summer can be brutal.

## DON'T MISS

Only in the Midwest can you fork into proper cheese curds (Wisconsin), deep-dish pizza (Chicago) and sugar cream pie (Indiana).

## Fast Facts

- » Hub cities: Chicago (population 2.8 million), Minneapolis (population 372,800)
- » Chicago to Minneapolis: 400 miles
- » Chicago to Detroit: 285 miles
- » Time zone: Eastern (IN, OH, MI), Central (IL, WI, MN)
- » States covered in this chapter: Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota

## Did You Know?

The Great Lakes possess about 20% of the earth's and 95% of America's fresh water.

## Resources

- » Midwest Microbrews ([www.midwestmicrobrews.com](http://www.midwestmicrobrews.com)) The sudsy lowdown
- » Great Lakes Information Network ([www.great-lakes.net](http://www.great-lakes.net)) Environmental news
- » Changing Gears ([www.changinggears.info](http://www.changinggears.info)) Rust Belt reinvention stories