



Great Lakes

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Little Goat (p533)
- ➔ Tucker's (p563)
- ➔ Old Fashioned (p587)
- ➔ Zingerman's Roadhouse (p572)
- ➔ Bryant-Lake Bowl (p597)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Inn on Ferry Street (p568)
- ➔ Acme Hotel (p529)
- ➔ Brewhouse Inn & Suites (p583)
- ➔ Cleveland Hostel (p553)
- ➔ Lighthouse B&B (p605)

Why Go?

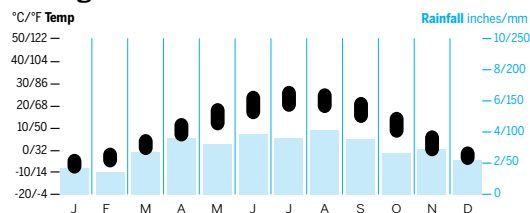
Don't be fooled by all the corn. Behind it lurk surfing beaches and Tibetan temples, car-free islands and the green-draped night-lights of the aurora borealis. The Midwest takes its knocks for being middle-of-nowhere boring; so consider the moose-filled national parks, urban five-ways and Hemingway,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

When to Go

Chicago



Jan & Feb Skiers and snowmobilers hit the trails.

Jul & Aug 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. Quarters and dollar bills are useful for tollways.

Greyhound (www.greyhound.com) connects many local cities and towns. Upstart **Megabus** (www.megabus.com/us) provides an efficient alternative between major Great Lakes cities; it 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, Seattle, New York City, New Orleans and San Antonio. Regional trains chug to Milwaukee (seven daily) and Detroit (three daily).

The **Lake Express** (www.lake-express.com) car/passenger ferry provides a shortcut between Wisconsin and Michigan. It sails across Lake Michigan between Milwaukee and Muskegon.

PLANNING

A couple of things to know before you go: prebooking 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 or Minneapolis' Butcher & the Boar should reserve in advance (for Alinea, start looking online a good two months prior).

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 black flies 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 2.7 million), Minneapolis (population 393,000), Detroit (population 701,000)
- ➔ **Time zone** Eastern (IN, OH, MI), Central (IL, WI, MN)
- ➔ **Amount of cheese Wisconsin produces annually** 2.5 billion pounds (25% of America's hunks)

Did You Know?

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

Resources

- ➔ **Chicago Reader** (www.chicagoreader.com) Arts and entertainment listings.
- ➔ **Great Lakes Information Network** (www.great-lakes.net) Environmental news.
- ➔ **Midwest Microbrews** (www.midwestmicrobrews.com) The sudsy lowdown.

Top Five Activity Hot Spots

- ➔ **Boundary Waters** (p605) Canoe where wolves and moose roam
- ➔ **Wisconsin's Rails to Trails** (p582) Pedal through cow-dotted farmland
- ➔ **Apostle Islands** (p591) Kayak through sea caves
- ➔ **New Buffalo** (p574) Learn to surf in Harbor Country
- ➔ **Isle Royale** (p580) Hike and camp in pristine backcountry