

## Michigan 2025

Every year, this desert rat makes her way to the midwestern state of Michigan. Not only is Michigan (Detroit specifically) the home of my all time favorite band, The White Stripes, but I also have family who reside there and who I have the pleasure of staying with each year during my travels. Read on to learn more about my solo journey to the snow-covered, mitten-shaped state that holds a special place in my heart.

My familial connection to MI comes from my maternal grandma's youngest sister, who moved there decades ago when she married her late husband. My great aunt has three daughters of her own and six grandchildren. Because I have very little family left in AZ, it's nice spending time in MI and being reminded of my family in far away places. My great aunt also reminds me a great deal of my own grandma who passed away just a couple of years ago, so to me, she is more than just a great aunt and more of a grandmother. And because I visit MI at least once a year, and always have a place to stay, MI feels like my home away from home.

Apart from visiting with family during my stay, the top priority on my list is visiting Third Man Records, located down Cass Corridor in midtown Detroit. The second of three Third Man storefronts opened in 2015, and is particularly impressive as it houses the Third Man Pressing manufacturing facility. Guests can even purchase tickets to tour the pressing plant (tours are on Fridays), and I can say from experience how eye opening and magical it is to witness one of the few operating pressing plants in the U.S. manufacturing those sacred vinyl records we so take for granted. Always expanding his empire, Jack White is easily a huge part of not just the revival of the vinyl record industry, but also the restoration and rising success of his hometown, Detroit, MI. Unfortunately, I have yet to run into the towering rock-star, but I can't deny that I always hope and wish to encounter him on one of my trips!

Located directly next to Third Man Records, is the delicious brewery, The Jolly Pumpkin. By tradition, I always make a stop at the Jolly Pumpkin after visiting Third Man Records and I never fail to spark conversation with locals. Something special about being far from home is the novelty of disclosing my Arizona residence, especially during November when the MI weather is nothing like November in Arizona! In fact, this year was the first year it actually snowed during my stay. Flying into Detroit, I always marvel at the array of color on the leaves as the plane ascends lower (we don't have the luxury of four seasons in AZ). This year, it was as if I flew in

during the Fall and flew out as Winter began, hopefully bringing the cooler weather back home with me to Arizona!

Another stop I make is The Rust Belt Market in Ferndale. Housing over 30 shops, an event space and even a bar, The Rust Belt Market is ideal for locals and travelers alike, especially if you are searching for unique gifts/ souvenirs made by Michigan artists. This year, I even took the time to sit at the bar and sip on an exceptional craft cocktail. Last year, I learned that one of the vendors opened their own storefront, Tooth & Nail Oddities, located just a couple of miles away from the Rust Belt, so I also made a stop there. I was delighted to have found a necklace at Tooth & Nail that I had been on the hunt for for years-- A necklace made from a vintage car tag that used to hang with one's car key when purchasing the vehicle. Again, Michigan is packed with unique one of a kind artists and finds!

Due to weather, I was not able to visit all that I had planned for this year's trip and pretty much crammed all of my outings into one day. In addition, traveling solo can sometimes be more difficult, and some of the charm was lost with my partner having to stay home for work. All in all, I am always grateful for the opportunity to visit MI each year and can always count on staying with family. The highlight of my trip was spending the day in Detroit the exact same day that The White Stripes were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame-- this really made me reflect on the singularity of grass-roots garage rock and appreciating the origins of where seeds of a dream grow and can sprout into something so huge.