
NORTHERN MICHIGAN

3-DAY ROAD TRIP



NORTHERN MICHIGAN ITINERARY

All restaurants, hikes, activities, and more have been linked throughout the document for your convenience. Simply double-click on the titles within the document to access the external links.



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NIGHT 1 & 2: TRAVERSE CITY

RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

COFFEE

- **Hexenbelle** (\$): Cozy café with outdoor seating and vegan-friendly options.
- **Mundos Roasting & Co.** (\$): Locally loved for its roasted coffee and relaxed vibe, with sustainably sourced beans and outdoor seating.
- **The Mill** (\$\$) *: Historic 1800s landmark turned into a charming café. Features outdoor seating in Glen Arbor. (*Caravan Favorite*)

THE MILL



BRUNCH

- **Frenchies Famous** (\$): Funky, casual dining spot with a patio. Perfect for a laid back brunch. No reservations.
- **NoBo** (\$): Creative breakfast dishes with fresh, innovative flavors perched above Boardman River.
- **9 Bean Rows** (\$)*: Artisan bakery and café known for its freshly baked goods and standout sandwiches, served in a cozy setting next to their farm. (*Caravan Favorite*)
- **The Omelette Shoppe** (\$\$): Classic breakfast spot featuring customizable skillets and outdoor seating. Join the waitlist online. (*Caravan Favorite*)

LUNCH

- **Village Cheese Shanty** (\$) *: Iconic spot offering amazing sandwiches in the heart of Fish Town in Leland. Outdoor seating available.
- **Slabtown Burgers** (\$): Classic burger joint offering hand-cut fries and fresh toppings. Outdoor seating available.
- **Mama Lu's – A Modern Day Taco Shop** (\$\$): Taco shop with creative flavors and margaritas. Outdoor seating available.

DINNER

- **The Little Fleet** (\$): Vibrant collection of food trucks with a lively bar. Outdoor seating available. No reservations.
- **The Filling Station Microbrewery** (\$): Unique train depot setting offering house-brewed beers and wood-fired pizzas. Outdoor seating available. No reservations.
- **Barrio** (\$): Fun, lively taco spot serving creative tacos. No reservations.
- **Art's Tavern** (\$\$) *: Classic American bar serving hearty food with an outdoor patio.
- **Farm Club** (\$\$\$): Farm-to-table dining experience. Outdoor seating available.
(Caravan Favorite)

FARM CLUB

On a nice night, head to Farm Club with a card game in hand and enjoy a drink in the back garden while waiting for your table. The food is fresh and delicious, but the best part is the amazing views and laid-back atmosphere.



WINERIES

- **Bluestone Vineyards** (\$\$)*: A winery offering stunning views, exceptional wines, and a relaxing outdoor seating area perfect for tastings.
- **Brys Estate Vineyard & Winery** (\$\$): A picturesque vineyard featuring handcrafted wines, a charming tasting room, and a stunning outdoor patio with panoramic views
- **Bowers Harbor Vineyards** (\$\$) *: Quaint, family-owned winery specializing in sparkling wines on the Old Mission Peninsula. Outdoor seating available.
- **WaterFire Vineyards** (\$\$)*: Scenic vineyard offering exceptional wines and stunning views, perfect for a relaxing stop.

BLUESTONE VINEYARDS



BRY'S ESTATE



WATERFIRE VINEYARDS



SWEET TREATS

- **Dairy Lodge** (\$): Classic roadside ice cream stand serving generous portions of soft serve, sundaes, and other sweet treats, perfect for a quick stop.
- **Milk & Honey** (\$\$): A sweet spot known for ice cream made with seasonal ingredients, offering unique, refreshing flavors. (*Caravan Favorite*)
- **Cherry Republic** (\$\$): Famous for its cherry-flavored treats, including ice cream, pies, and chocolates. A must-visit for cherry lovers.

HIKING

EASY TRAILS

- **Empire Bluff Trail:** A 1.5-mile out-and-back trail offering breathtaking views of Lake Michigan and the Sleeping Bear Dunes. This easy hike is ideal for families and beginners, with the option to extend the trail for a challenge. The unmatched views make it a must-visit.
 - Distance: 1.5 miles round-trip
 - Estimated Time: 36 minutes



MODERATE TRAILS

- **Pyramid Point Trail:** A 2.7-mile loop with forest and meadow views leading to a high bluff overlooking Lake Michigan and the Manitou Islands. A moderate, scenic trail with great viewpoints.
 - Distance: 2.7 miles loop
 - Estimated Time: 1-1.5 hours
- **Sleeping Bear Point Trail:** A 2.8-mile loop through dunes and forests with scenic views of Lake Michigan. Moderate for all skill levels, with a chance to enjoy the coastline.
 - Distance: 2.8 miles loop
 - Estimated Time: 1.5-2 hours



HARD TRAILS

- **Dunes Trail (Sleeping Bear Dunes):** A challenging 3.5-mile round-trip trail with steep climbs over sand dunes leading to beautiful views of Lake Michigan. It's a physically demanding hike with great rewards.
 - Distance: 3.5 miles round-trip
 - Estimated Time: 2-4 hours



ACTIVITIES

WATER ACTIVITIES

- **Kayak or Paddleboard on Boardman Lake:** Rent equipment from [The River Outfitters](#) or [Paddle TC](#) and enjoy a peaceful paddle on the lake.
- **Fishing Charters:** Schedule a guided fishing trip with [Mega-Bite](#) to catch salmon, trout, and bass in Grand Traverse Bay
- **Catamaran Cruise with Nauti Cat Cruises:** Relax on a scenic catamaran tour of Grand Traverse Bay with [Nauti-Cat](#), offering fun daytime and sunset excursions.



NAUTI CAT CRUISE

For a fun and lively afternoon on the water, the Nauti Cat Windjammer ride is a must-try. With reasonable prices and a fully stocked bar on board, it's the perfect way to unwind and soak in the scenery.



MORE FUN

- **Farmers Market:** Visit the Sara Hardy Farmers Market for local produce, baked goods, and artisan crafts.
- **Cherry Festival (July):** Celebrate cherries with parades, food, and activities at the annual [National Cherry Festival](#).
- **Cherry Bowl Drive-In Theater:** Watch a movie under the stars at the retro [Cherry Bowl Drive-In](#).

SARA HARDY FARMERS MARKET

Held downtown on Saturdays and Wednesdays from May through October, the market offers plenty of options to choose from. Its prime location makes it a convenient stop while walking around downtown Traverse City.



NEARBY TOWNS



Leland Fishtown

Explore the historic Fishtown district, where old fishing shanties now house boutique shops and fresh seafood spots. It is a must-visit!

Manitou Islands

Accessible by ferry from Leland, the North and South Manitou Islands offer pristine beaches, scenic hiking trails, and historic sites. Perfect for a day trip.

Distance from Traverse City: 35 minutes

Petoskey

Gaslight District

A charming lakeside town known for its historic Gaslight District, boutique shopping, and stunning sunsets.

Petoskey State Park

Enjoy hunting for Petoskey stones along the shore and hiking in Petoskey State Park.

Distance from Traverse City: 1 hour 30 minutes



Glen Arbor

Sleeping Bear Dunes

A popular spot for climbing the towering sand dunes overlooking Lake Michigan

Downtown Glen

Quaint downtown offers charming shops, local art galleries, and delicious dining options, including the famous cherry-based treats at Cherry Republic.

Distance from Traverse City: 37 minutes

NOTE TO TRAVELER

Glen Arbor and Leland make excellent day trips from Traverse City, while Petoskey is perfect stops if you're traveling toward Mackinaw City or Mackinac Island.

NIGHT 3: MACKINAC

Mackinac Island is a **car-free destination** known for its architecture, history, and natural beauty. **Accessible only by ferry**, the island offers a unique experience with horse-drawn carriages, bicycles, and plenty of outdoor activities. While all **Caravan Trip Plan stays are off the island**, a day trip to the island is highly recommended to fully experience its highlights. **Below are on and off the island recommendations:**



Book round-trip tickets in advance through [Shepler's](#) or [Star Line](#) ferries.

RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

ON MACKINAC ISLAND

BRUNCH

- **Watercolor Café** (\$): A light and airy cafe that also serves excellent coffee alongside sandwiches and fresh bites.
- **The Chuckwagon** (\$): Cozy diner known for its hearty breakfast options like pancakes, omelets, and biscuits.
- **Lucky Bean Coffeehouse** (\$): Cafe serving handcrafted espresso drinks, fresh pastries, and light breakfast options.

SWEET TREATS

- **Murdick's Candy Kitchen** (\$\$): Known as the first fudge shop on the island, Murdick's has been crafting its iconic fudge since 1887 with a classic recipe and tradition.
- **Ryba's Fudge Shop** (\$\$): A local favorite offering a wide variety, Ryba's is famous for its creamy, melt-in-your-mouth fudge made fresh daily.

LUNCH

- **Mighty Mac Hamburgers** (\$): A no-frills burger joint offering classic burgers, hot dogs, and fries. Great for a quick meal.
- **Doud's Market & Deli** (\$): Historic market with a deli serving made-to-order sandwiches, perfect for a picnic or a quick bite on the go.

DINNER

- **Millie's on Main** (\$\$): Charming eatery offering classic American dishes, including burgers, sandwiches, and soups, in a cozy setting.

MACKINAC ISLAND FUDGE

Mackinac Island fudge has been an island tradition since the late 1800s.

Now a must-try treat, its rich, creamy texture is made using time-honored methods at the island's many fudge shops.

OFF THE ISLAND**COFFEE**

- **Mackinaw Bakery and Café** (\$): Quaint cafe offering freshly brewed coffee, specialty drinks, and an array of homemade pastries and breakfast items.

BRUNCH

- **Pancake Chef** (\$): Family-owned diner, serving fluffy pancakes, waffles, and classic breakfast fare.
- **Bentley's B-N-L Cafe** (\$): A retro-style diner serving classic breakfast favorites like pancakes, omelets, and coffee.
- **Wild Blueberry Breakfast & Bakery** (\$): A breakfast spot offering homemade baked goods, hearty breakfast plates, and freshly brewed coffee in a welcoming atmosphere.

**JAVA JOE'S CAFE**

Java Joe's Cafe (\$): A quirky and colorful diner known for its delicious breakfast and lively atmosphere. With menus printed on newspaper and a freshly repainted floor each year, you might even get a chance to meet the famous Java Joe himself! (*Caravan Favorite*)

**DINNER**

- **Clyde's Drive-In** (\$): Iconic roadside diner with made-to-order burgers, fries, and shakes served in a nostalgic drive-in setting.
- **Gateway City Garage** (\$): A popular food truck serving gourmet street food, including tacos, burgers, and creative daily specials, in a casual outdoor setting.
- **Dusty Dogs** (\$): A local favorite offering hot dogs, sausages, and casual comfort food in a relaxed outdoor atmosphere. Perfect for a quick, satisfying dinner.

OFF THE ISLAND DINING

Mackinaw City and St. Ignace, both located near Mackinac Island, offer a variety of quick bites and family-owned diners. These towns provide a more casual dining experience compared to other stops on the trip, with a relaxed, welcoming vibe perfect for a laid-back meal.

SWEET TREATS

- **Mickey's Ice Cream** (\$): A popular stop for classic ice cream cones, sundaes, and milkshakes.
- **Mackinac Double Decker Ice Cream** (\$): A classic ice cream stand offering a variety of scoops served from a double-decker bus.

HIKING

EASY TRAILS

- **Arch Rock Trail:** A short out-and-back trail leading to the iconic Arch Rock, offering stunning views of the island and Lake Huron. One of the most iconic spots on Mackinac.

- Distance: 2.1-mile
- Estimated Time: 50 minutes

- **Mission Point to Anne's Tablet:** Paved and well-maintained trail leading to a scenic overlook and a historical monument.

- Distance: 1 mile
- Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

MODERATE TRAILS

- **M-185 Loop:** A scenic, mostly flat route that runs around Mackinac Island, providing spectacular views of Lake Huron, the surrounding islands, and the iconic landmarks of the island. While it's primarily known as a biking route, it is also popular for walking as well.

- Distance: 8 miles (full loop, but you can choose shorter sections)
- Estimated Time: ~3 hours for the full loop

- **Fort Holmes Loop:** The Fort Holmes Loop is a moderate, scenic hike offering historical landmarks, a fantastic workout, and breathtaking panoramic views from the island's highest point. This loop starts and ends at Fort Mackinac, with key stops at Skull Cave, Point Lookout, and Fort Holmes.

- Distance: 3.4 miles
- Estimated Time: 1.5 hours

- **Mackinaw City Headlands Loop:** A scenic trail located within the Headlands International Dark Sky Park, just outside Mackinaw City (not on the island). This loop offers a peaceful hike through dense forests and along the Lake Michigan shoreline, with opportunities to enjoy views of the bridge (***off the island***)

- Distance: 3.6 miles
- Estimated Time: 1 hour

ACTIVITIES

ON THE ISLAND

- **Biking Around the Island:** Explore the 8.2-mile M-185 loop, offering scenic views of Lake Huron, Arch Rock, and historic landmarks. Bring your bike on the ferry or rent one at [Mackinac Wheels](#).



- **Horse-Drawn Carriage Tours:** Discover the island's history with a carriage tour, featuring stops at Arch Rock and Fort Mackinac. Keep in mind that there are no set departure times—you will board the next available carriage after purchasing your ticket at the [ticket office](#). The approximate tour duration is 1 hour and 45 minutes.
- **Fort Mackinac:** Tour this historic military outpost with interactive exhibits, live reenactments, and panoramic harbor views.
- **Butterfly Conservatories:** Walk through lush gardens filled with exotic butterflies at [The Original Mackinac Island Butterfly House](#).



- **Sampling Mackinac Fudge:** Visit iconic fudge shops like Joann's Fudge and Murdick's Fudge for fresh, hand-made treats.
- **Kayak and Paddleboard around the Island:** Explore the waters around Mackinac Island with kayak or paddleboard rentals. Guided tours are available through [Great Turtle Kayak Tours](#).

CAMPING 101

CARAVAN TRIP PLAN

CAMPER GUIDE

PACKING LIST

GEAR

- Tent
- Sleeping Mat
- Sleeping Bag
- Day Hike Bag
- Towel
- Bug Spray
- Sunscreen
- Duct Tape
- First Aid Kit
- Garbage Bags
- Paper Towel
- Zip Lock Bags (Packing Lunches)

CLOTHING

- (4) T-Shirts
- (1-2) Long Sleeve
- (3) Shorts
- (2) Pants
- (2) Sweatshirts
- (1) Sweatpants
- (1) Nicer Outfit (Depending on Dinner Plans)
- (1) Rain Jacket
- (1) Light Jacket
- (1) Bathing Suit
- (7) Underwear / Socks

SHOES

- Hiking Boots
- Gym Shoes
- Water Shoes

COOKING NECESSITIES

- Camping Stove / Gas
- Lighter
- Pot
- Pan
- Camping Bowl
- Utensils
- Sharp Knife
- Cutting Board
- Spatula
- Spork (Spoon, Fork, Knife)
- Cooking Spray or Olive Oil
- Salt and Pepper

ACCESSORIES

- Baseball Hat
- Sunglasses
- Hat and Light Gloves
(Depending on Weather)
- Portable Charger
- Camera

GEAR RECS

- **Wawona 6 Tent** - North

Face makes some amazing tents. The tent pictured is the 6-person model, and it's super spacious with a large vestibule in the front. Due to its size, it's definitely best suited for front-country camping.



- **Camping Bowl** - Collapsible camping bowls are incredibly versatile, reusable throughout the trip, and can double as a bowl or plate when needed.

- **Camping Stove**: A Eureka or Coleman camping stove is an excellent choice. All you need is butane and a lighter. These stoves are highly compact and easy to use while camping

- **Spork** - The best utensil for camping. Can be used as a spoon, fork, or knife!

RECIPES

Camping trips are all about **simplicity and enjoying the outdoors—and that includes your meals!** These easy and tasty recipes have been a staple on every trip. They are designed with **minimal perishable ingredients**, so they'll stay fresh while traveling. Enjoy!

TRIPPER STEW

Ingredients:

- 2 cans of tomato soup
- 2 cans of mixed vegetables (with liquid)
- 1 can of corn (drained)
- Instant mashed potatoes (whole potatoes without seasoning)
- Veggie burgers



Instructions:

1. Pour the tomato soup into a large pot and bring to a simmer over the campfire or stovetop.
2. Add the canned mixed vegetables (with liquid) and the drained can of corn to the pot.
3. Once the mixture begins to boil, stir in the instant mashed potatoes until the stew reaches your desired consistency.
4. Season generously with your favorite spices (salt, pepper, garlic powder, paprika, etc.).
5. Grill the veggie burgers on a separate pan or grill.
6. Serve the stew in bowls and top with pieces of grilled veggie burgers for added flavor and texture.

Tripper Stew might sound unconventional, but it's a beloved camping staple for its simplicity and tastiness!

PEANUT BUTTER NOODLES

Ingredients:

- Rice noodles
- Vegetables (e.g., broccoli, water chestnuts, onions)
- Peanut butter
- Soy sauce



Instructions:

1. Heat a pan over medium heat and sauté the vegetables until tender.
2. While the vegetables cook, boil water and prepare the rice noodles according to the package instructions.
3. In a small bowl, mix together peanut butter, soy sauce, and a splash of water to create a creamy sauce. Adjust the proportions to suit your taste.
4. Once the vegetables and noodles are cooked, combine them in the pan.
5. Pour the peanut butter sauce over the mixture and toss until evenly coated.

MEXICAN QUESADILLAS



Ingredients:

- Tortillas
- 2 bell peppers (any color)
- 1 onion
- 1 can of black beans (drained)
- 1 can of corn (drained)
- Salsa
- Shredded Cheese

Instructions:

1. Sauté the bell peppers and onion in a pan until softened and slightly charred.
2. Lay out the tortillas and sprinkle a layer of shredded cheese on one half of each tortilla.
3. Add the cooked vegetables, black beans, and corn on top of the cheese.
4. Fold the tortilla in half and cook in a pan over medium heat until the cheese melts and the tortilla is golden brown.
5. Serve with salsa on the side, and let everyone customize their quesadillas with additional toppings.



GO TO TRAIL LUNCH

- Tuna on Tortillas - Pack small cans or pouches of tuna and some tortillas. Add any veggies you might have!
- Salami on Tortillas - Add cheese or mustard... or even Peanut Butter (Don't knock it till you try it)
- Apples and Peanut Butter - The PB pouches are a great way to go
- Hummus and Veggie Wraps
- Cheese and Crackers
- Granola
- GORP - Good Old Raisins and Peanuts (in other words Trail Mix)
- Jerky