

RV TRIPGEN

The Complete Guide to
RV Travel in
Michigan

Sleeping Bear Dunes, Isle Royale, the Mackinac Bridge (\$8 RV toll), Upper Peninsula NFs, Pictured Rocks, and one of the great RV states in America.

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RV travel in Michigan

Michigan is, frankly, one of the best RV states in the country. The Lower Peninsula gives you Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore on Lake Michigan, the Traverse City wine country, Mackinaw City at the top, and the entire western shoreline with state-park dune campgrounds back to back. The Upper Peninsula -- separated from the Lower by the Straits of Mackinac and connected only by the Mackinac Bridge -- is RV paradise: Pictured Rocks NL on Lake Superior, Tahquamenon Falls SP, the Porcupine Mountains, Isle Royale NP (boat-only -- not for RVs but the loop drive around the UP visiting Isle Royale's gateway towns is one of the best in the country), and three National Forests (Hiawatha, Ottawa, Manistee on the LP side). Three things to plan around: (1) the Mackinac Bridge toll for RVs is \$8 per axle and big rigs can be \$40+ in total -- not bad but plan for it; (2) Upper Peninsula state-park campgrounds are mostly seasonal, closing roughly mid-October and reopening mid-May, with black flies brutal in late May / early June; (3) Lake-effect snow off all three Great Lakes makes winter RV travel hard. May-October is the window.

Michigan by the numbers

Boondocking + dispersed sites	502
Established campgrounds	276
Dump stations	48
Propane refills	38
Potable water fill-ups	83
Laundromats	29
RV showers	33
Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)	38

Source: iOverlander community database (72% of Michigan spots verified in the last 24 months).

Driving rules

Interstate (cars)	70 mph (most rural)
Interstate (trucks)	65 mph (rural), 60 mph in some segments
Interstate (towing)	65 mph
US/State highway	55-65 mph (posted)
Built-up areas	25-35 mph (posted)
Drive on	Right

Seatbelts	Required for front-seat occupants and all under-16 in any seat
Cell phone use while driving	Hands-free only (banned hand-held statewide as of 2023)

Highways

RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-75	Ohio line through Detroit, Flint, Bay City, Grayling, then across the Mackinac Bridge into the UP, ending at Sault Ste Marie. THE main north-south Michigan RV route. Easy big-rig the whole way.
I-94	Indiana line through Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Ann Arbor, Detroit, to Port Huron and the Canadian border. Easy big-rig route across southern Michigan.
I-69	Indiana line through Lansing to Port Huron. Easy.
I-96	Detroit to Muskegon. Easy big-rig route.
I-196	Holland to Grand Rapids. Easy.
US-23	Toledo OH to Mackinaw City via Ann Arbor and the eastern Lower Peninsula shore. Quieter than I-75; scenic Lake Huron shoreline.
US-127	Ohio line through Lansing to Grayling (joins I-75). Easy big-rig route through mid-Michigan.
US-31	Indiana line up the Lake Michigan shore through Muskegon, Manistee, Traverse City, Petoskey, to Mackinaw City. THE Lower Peninsula west-shore scenic route; easy for big rigs, slower than I-75 but spectacular.
US-2 (Upper Peninsula)	Mackinaw Bridge through St Ignace, Manistique, Escanaba, Iron Mountain, Iron River, to the Wisconsin line. Easy big-rig route across the southern UP.
US-41	Marquette to Houghton/Hancock on the Keweenaw Peninsula. Easy big-rig.
MI-28	Sault Ste Marie across the UP to Wakefield (near Ironwood). The northern UP transit route; easy.

RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
Mackinac Bridge (I-75 between Mackinaw City and St Ignace)	5-mile suspension bridge; not 'restricted' but RV toll is \$8 per axle (most class A and trailers pay \$32-48 round trip). High-wind closures and escort service for high-profile vehicles when wind exceeds 35 mph. The Mackinac Bridge Authority can drive your rig across for you at no extra cost if you're nervous -- a long-running and free service.

Mackinac Island	NO motor vehicles allowed on the island at all. RVs and tow vehicles stay on the mainland (St Ignace or Mackinaw City) and you ferry across as pedestrians. The island uses horse-drawn carriages and bicycles only.
Pictured Rocks NL beach-access roads (some)	Many access roads off H-58 are gravel and narrow; check current postings. Rigs over 30 ft should stick to the main paved access at Munising and Grand Marais.
Tahquamenon Falls Lower Falls road interior	Tight; rigs over 35 ft check current park postings.
Many UP forest roads + Porcupine Mountains interior	Gravel, narrow, washboarded. Park at the main visitor center and use a tow vehicle for interior exploration.
Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive (Sleeping Bear Dunes NL)	Length-restricted to 21 ft (no tow vehicles, no trailers, no rigs over 21 ft). Use the main NL roads or park at the visitor center and shuttle in.

Mountain passes

Pass	Elevation	Note
Brockway Mountain Drive summit (Keweenaw)	1337 ft	Highest paved road in Michigan, between Eagle Harbor and Copper Harbor. Steep 6-7% grades; rigs to 30 ft OK. Closed in winter.
Porcupine Mountains crest (M-107)	1500 ft	Scenic overlook drive to Lake of the Clouds. Easy at posted speed.
Mt Arvon area (UP, Baraga County)	1979 ft	Highest natural point in Michigan, mostly gravel access. Use a tow vehicle.

National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	\$25/vehicle (7 days), \$80 America the Beautiful annual	Two NPS campgrounds: D.H. Day (rigs to 35 ft, reservable Apr-Oct via recreation.gov, the main one) and Platte River (rigs to 40 ft with hookups in some loops, reservable). Adjacent state parks (Interlochen, Traverse City SP, Leelanau SP) provide additional RV camping. The 7-mile Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive has the famous dune-climb overlook but is 21-ft length-limited.
Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore	Free entry (as of recent NPS policy; verify current fee)	Two NPS campgrounds: Twelvemile Beach (rigs to 36 ft, reservable Jun-Sep via recreation.gov), Hurricane River (rigs to 30 ft, reservable). The Munising Falls / Miners Castle approach is fully paved and big-rig accessible; the eastern (Grand Marais) section has more gravel access. The headline boat tour from Munising is highly recommended -- run by Pictured Rocks Cruises (private), reservable Jun-Sep.

Isle Royale NP	\$7/person/day	Boat or seaplane access from Houghton MI or Copper Harbor MI (Lower Peninsula access via Grand Portage MN ferry also). NO vehicles on the island. Note for completeness -- you cannot RV-camp Isle Royale itself; you visit by ferry as a backpacker.
Keweenaw NHP	Free entry (multi-site)	Quincy Mine, Calumet Heritage Site, multiple cooperating sites across the Keweenaw Peninsula. Day-use only. Stay at McLain SP, Fort Wilkins SP (Copper Harbor), Twin Lakes SP.
River Raisin National Battlefield Park (Monroe)	Free entry	Day-use only. War of 1812 battlefield. Stay at Sterling SP (15 min north) or commercial parks in Monroe.
North Country National Scenic Trail (Michigan segments)	Free entry	Long-distance hiking trail crosses both peninsulas. Trail-only; no vehicle camping in the NPS unit itself. Use adjacent state parks and NF campgrounds.

State parks

Michigan State Parks operates 100+ parks and recreation areas, the majority RV-accessible -- one of the largest state-park systems in the US. Lower Peninsula standouts: Holland SP (Lake Michigan beach), P.J. Hoffmaster SP (dunes near Muskegon), Ludington SP (excellent, full hookups), Hartwick Pines SP (one of the last old-growth white pine stands), Tawas Point SP (Lake Huron), Petoskey SP (Lake Michigan north shore), Wilderness SP (top of the LP near Mackinaw City). Upper Peninsula standouts: Tahquamenon Falls SP (the headline UP park, the Upper and Lower Falls with full-hookup RV loops), Porcupine Mountains SP (the largest state park in MI, full-hookup at the Union Bay loop), Fort Wilkins SP (Copper Harbor, one of the most remote state parks in the system), Brimley SP (eastern UP), Wells SP (south of Escanaba). Reservations open 6 months ahead at midnrreservations.com. Day-use \$9 in-state recreation passport (annual) / \$11/day out-of-state. Camping \$25-40. Michigan also operates State Forest Campgrounds (140+ rustic sites scattered across the state forests, \$15-25, mostly first-come, an underrated free-feeling tier).

Boondocking + dispersed camping

BLM: Michigan has no significant BLM land. Federal-land dispersed camping is via the three National Forests -- see NF summary, which provides exceptional dispersed-camping density. Workarounds for non-NF nights: Walmart and Cracker Barrel overnight (Michigan is generally permissive outside the Detroit metro), Harvest Hosts at MI wineries and farms (Old Mission and Leelanau Peninsulas have dozens of hosts), Boondockers Welcome statewide, Michigan DNR Commercial Forest tracts (40 million private acres in 'Commercial Forest' status -- open to the public for hiking and fishing but not camping; check signage), state forest camping (see state parks section).

National Forest: Three National Forests in Michigan: Hiawatha NF (Upper Peninsula, 894,000 acres, the largest, with the iconic shoreline along Lake Michigan and Lake Superior), Ottawa NF (UP western section, 990,000 acres, the Porcupine Mountains and waterfalls country), and Huron-Manistee NF (Lower Peninsula, 977,000 acres). All three permit free dispersed camping along forest roads with a 14-day stay

limit; most dispersed sites accept rigs to 30-40 ft (forest roads are wider than the eastern NFs). Combined developed-campground count is over 50: Hiawatha (Pete's Lake, Bay Furnace, Camp 7 Lake, Soldier Lake, Indian River, Foley Creek, Brevoort Lake, Lake Michigan Camp), Ottawa (Black River Harbor, Bobcat Lake, Norway Lake, Bond Falls), Huron-Manistee (Sand Lake, Pere Marquette, Manistee River, Tippy Dam, Round Lake). The UP NFs (Hiawatha + Ottawa) are some of the best free dispersed-camping country east of the Mississippi.

Stay limit: 14 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

Tribal lands

Michigan has 12 federally-recognized tribes, concentrated mostly in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula. Largest by membership and most-relevant to RV travel: Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians (eastern UP, headquartered in Sault Ste Marie -- operates Kewadin Casinos with RV-accessible parking), Bay Mills Indian Community (eastern UP near Brimley -- operates Bay Mills Resort and Casino with adjacent RV park), Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe (central LP at Mt Pleasant -- operates Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort, full-hookup RV park on-property), Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (Manistee area -- Little River Casino with RV parking), Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (Petoskey/Harbor Springs -- Odawa Casino with RV parking), Pokagon Band of Potawatomi (southwest MI -- Four Winds Casinos), Hannahville Indian Community (UP near Wilson -- Island Resort and Casino with full-hookup RV park, one of the better casino RV bases in the UP), Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (Baraga -- Ojibwa Casino, RV parking), Lac Vieux Desert Band (western UP, Watersmeet -- Lac Vieux Desert Resort Casino with RV park), Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi (Wayland), Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi (Athens area), Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (Suttons Bay -- Turtle Creek Casino). Tribal sovereignty is real; respect posted boundaries. The casino RV parks are an excellent alternative tier of camping in Michigan with rates often lower than state parks and amenities comparable.

Propane, dump stations, fuel

Propane: Plentiful in the Lower Peninsula along all interstates and US highways. Tractor Supply in every county seat, U-Haul in every metro. The Upper Peninsula thins out: refills available in Sault Ste Marie, St Ignace, Manistique, Escanaba, Marquette, Ironwood, Houghton -- but in between, plan 100+ mile gaps. Most KOA and Good Sam parks fill on-site. Top up at St Ignace (just over the Mackinac Bridge) before heading deeper into the UP.

Dump stations: Dense in the Lower Peninsula, adequate in the Upper Peninsula. Most Michigan State Parks with RV camping have free dump stations for registered guests. Flying J / Pilot / Love's / TA truck stops along I-75, I-94, I-69 charge \$10-15 for non-guest dumps. UP truck stops are sparser -- the standard ones are at St Ignace, Escanaba, Marquette, and Ironwood. National Forest developed campgrounds have free dumps for guests at the larger sites.

Fuel: Diesel and gas widely available in the Lower Peninsula. The Upper Peninsula has long gaps: M-28 between Munising and Marquette (50 miles, limited), US-41 north of L'Anse to Houghton (60 miles, very limited), Brockway Mountain Drive area at Copper Harbor (top up at Eagle River or before reaching Copper Harbor), and the Porcupine Mountains area (top up at Bergland or Ironwood before entering). The remote Keweenaw and Porkies should be approached with a full tank. Fuel prices typically lowest along I-75 in the southeastern LP, highest at Mackinaw City / St Ignace (border markup) and in the deep UP

resort areas.

Weather windows

Best months: Late June through mid-September. Daytime highs 65-80 F (cooler in the UP, warmer in the LP); fall colour peaks late September in the UP and mid-October in the LP and is one of the great displays in America. May is technically open season but the black flies in the UP late May / early June are legendary -- bring deep-woods DEET and screened windows.

Avoid: October-April (UP) -- most UP state-park RV loops close mid-October and reopen mid-May; NFs are open but dispersed roads close due to snow. December-March (LP) is cold and snow-heavy, with lake-effect blizzards off Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. April in both peninsulas is mud season. Black-fly peak is late May / early June UP-wide; deer-fly peak is July UP-wide.

Climate caution

Black-fly and deer-fly season in the Upper Peninsula is no joke -- locals genuinely plan around it. Late May to mid-June is peak black-fly, especially in moist woods (Porcupines, Tahquamenon, eastern UP). They bite, draw blood, and ignore most repellents that work on mosquitoes. Use repellents containing picaridin (more effective than DEET on biting flies), wear a head net at dusk and dawn, and choose campsites on Lake Superior's exposed shoreline rather than inland in the bogs. Late July onward the bug pressure drops dramatically. Mackinac Bridge winter wind closures are also worth flagging -- the bridge can close to high-profile vehicles, occasionally to all traffic, in winter storms.

Emergency + road conditions

State patrol	Dial 9-1-1 for emergencies; (517) 332-2521 for Michigan State Police HQ non-emergency
Road conditions	https://mdotjboss.state.mi.us/MiDrive

How RV TripGen helps

Mackinac Bridge high-wind + escort booking

RV Tripgen pulls the Mackinac Bridge Authority wind forecast and flags any planned crossing day when winds may force escorts or high-profile closures, so you have time to delay or use the bridge's free driver-assistance service rather than pulling off at St Ignace at sunset.

Black-fly forecast for UP nights

RV Tripgen surfaces black-fly intensity windows (late May / early June, UP-wide) for any Upper Peninsula overnight in your plan, with picaridin-strength and screened-window reminders so an evening at Pictured Rocks isn't the trip you'd rather forget.