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Best West Michigan Hiking Trails

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A person with long hair and a cap is seen from behind, looking out over a field at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon. The field in the foreground is dark green with some yellow flowers. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

Best West Michigan Hiking Trails

SARAH BRANDT

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INTRODUCTION

Best West Michigan Hiking Trails

If you love hiking or want to start hiking and live in the West Michigan area, you're in the right place. I believe that everyone should get outside and explore, starting in their own backyard.

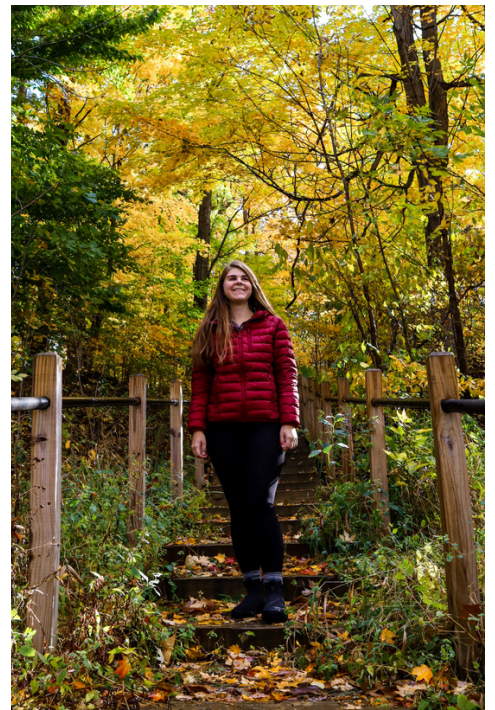
As a local, I've been hiking in the area for almost 4 years now. Prior to completing this guide, I had hiked 19 parks in the area, primarily in Ottawa County. I chose to focus on the 4 main counties in West Michigan: Allegan, Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa County. I determined the best parks to start exploring based on website recommendations, Alltrails reviews, and Google Maps reference images.

This guide is based on my experience hiking a total of 45 of the best parks in 4 counties. Five of the best parks in each county are featured here, along with a few honorable mentions and options for ADA accessible adventures. The parks were narrowed down based on personal experienced-based opinions, ease of navigation, park amenities, natural atmosphere, trail variability, and year-round access.

In the first few pages, I introduce information on why outdoor exercise is so important, how to recreate responsibly, and more about how I determined the best hiking trails in West Michigan. The pages for each park include everything you need to know before your visit: the basics, park history, and personal advice from my experience there. I highlighted the history of each of these places with the hope that reading about it will encourage visitors to appreciate the park on a different level. Understanding the conservation value and work that went into making these parks available to the public has increased my passion for protecting these natural spaces and I hope that you feel the same.

This guide is a passion project for me and one that I hope will inspire others to get excited about hiking and exploring West Michigan. If you want to read more about my experience completing this project, check out the reflection towards the end of the guide.

Happy trails!
Sarah Brandt



WHY SHOULD YOU GO HIKING?

The Importance of Outdoor Exercise

I'm sure you've heard that exercise is good for your health, but did you know there are advantages to exercising outdoors? This means that hiking is actually healthy for you. Outdoor exercise can actually improve your mental health, physical health, and motivation to exercise more than indoor exercise.

Mental Health Benefits

- **Exercising Outside Increases:**

- Memory
- Mood
- Focus
- Creativity
- Feelings of calm
- Enjoyment
- Self-Esteem

- **Exercising Outside Decreases:**

- Anxiety
- Depressive symptoms
- Stress

Motivational Benefits

- **Exercising Outside Increases:**

- Exercise adherence
- Enjoyment of exercise
- Confidence

- **Exercising Outside Decreases:**

- Sedentary behavior

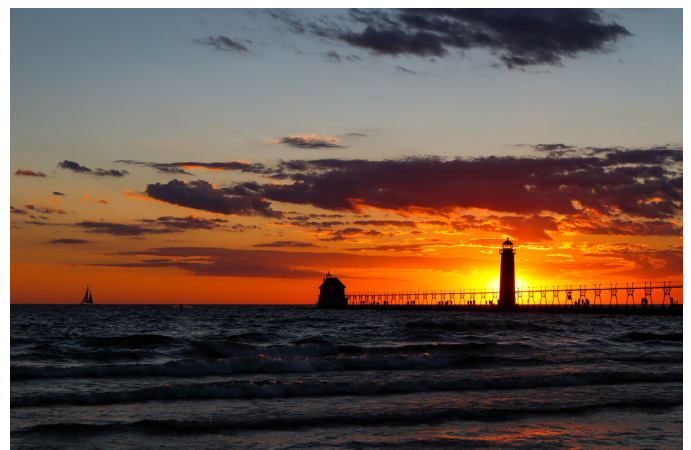
Physical Health Benefits

- **Exercising Outside Increases:**

- Energy
- Gait Development and Endurance
- Duration and Intensity of Exercise
- Respiratory Health
- Sleep Quality
- Immune Function
- Vitamin D Production

- **Exercising Outside Decreases:**

- Heart Rate
- Blood Pressure



EXPLORING RESPONSIBLY

Being Prepared and Leaving No Trace

Before you go outside and start hiking, it's important that you're prepared and educated about the proper etiquette when exploring natural spaces.

Preparing to Go Hiking

10 Hiking Essentials

1. Navigation
2. Headlamp
3. Sun protection
4. First aid
5. Knife
6. Fire
7. Shelter
8. Extra food
9. Extra water
10. Extra clothes

Hiking in Any Weather

- **Cold Weather Tips**
 - Dress in layers
 - Delay if you get too warm
 - Don't stay out too long in sub-zero temperatures
 - Be aware of hypothermia signs
- **Warm Weather Tips**
 - Wear breathable clothing
 - Use sunscreen and bug spray

Leave No Trace Principles

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

It's important to be respectful of the wild places you're exploring and to preserve them for future generations to enjoy. A great rule of thumb displayed in many Michigan State Parks reads "Take only pictures, leave only footprints." To learn more about the Leave No Trace Principles, scan the QR code to read more on their website or click [here](#).



LIST OF ALL PARKS HIKED

All Parks Hiked as Part of This Project

Allegan County

1. Allegan State Game Area:
South Swan Creek Trail
2. Armintrout-Milbocker
Nature Preserve
3. Ely Lake Park
4. Littlejohn Lake Park
5. Sanctuary Woods Preserve
6. Saugatuck Dunes State Park
7. Saugatuck Harbor Natural
Area + Mt. Baldhead
8. Tallmadge Woods and
Crows Nest

Kent County

1. Cascade Peace Park
2. Crahen Valley Park
3. Fallasburg Park
4. Lepard Nature Preserve
5. Luton Park
6. Wahlfield Park
7. Warren Townsend Park
8. Pickerel Lake Park
9. Provin Trails Park
10. Seidman Park

Muskegon County

1. Anderson Woods
Nature Preserve
2. Clear Springs
Nature Preserve
3. Duck Creek Natural Area
4. Duck Lake State Park
5. Dune Harbor Park
6. Flower Creek Dunes
Nature Preserve
7. Lake Harbor Park
8. Mosquito Creek Trails Park
9. Muskegon State Park
10. P.J. Hoffmaster State Park

Ottawa County

1. Aman Park
2. Bend Area Open Space
3. Crockery Creek Natural Area
4. Eastmanville Farm County Park
5. Eastmanville Bayou
6. Grand Ravines County Park
7. Grand River Park
8. Hemlock Crossing County Park
9. Hofma Park + Preserve
10. Holland State Park: Mt. Pisgah
11. North Ottawa Dunes
12. Ottawa Sands County Park
13. Pigeon Creek County Park
14. Riley Trails Park
15. Rosy Mound Natural Area
16. Sheridan Park
17. Van Buren Street Dunes

RATING SYSTEM

Each Category Was Scored Out of 5 Points

Ease of Navigation

- Is there a trail map?
- Are there trail markings to guide hikers along the trail?
- Are social trails along the route misleading?

Park Amenities

- Is there a bathroom at the park?
- Does the park have any picnic tables, trash facilities, or educational signage?
- Is there enough parking available?

Natural Atmosphere

- Does this park offer great views?
- Is there a lot of road noise at this park?
- Does the park feel too urban or devoid of wildlife?

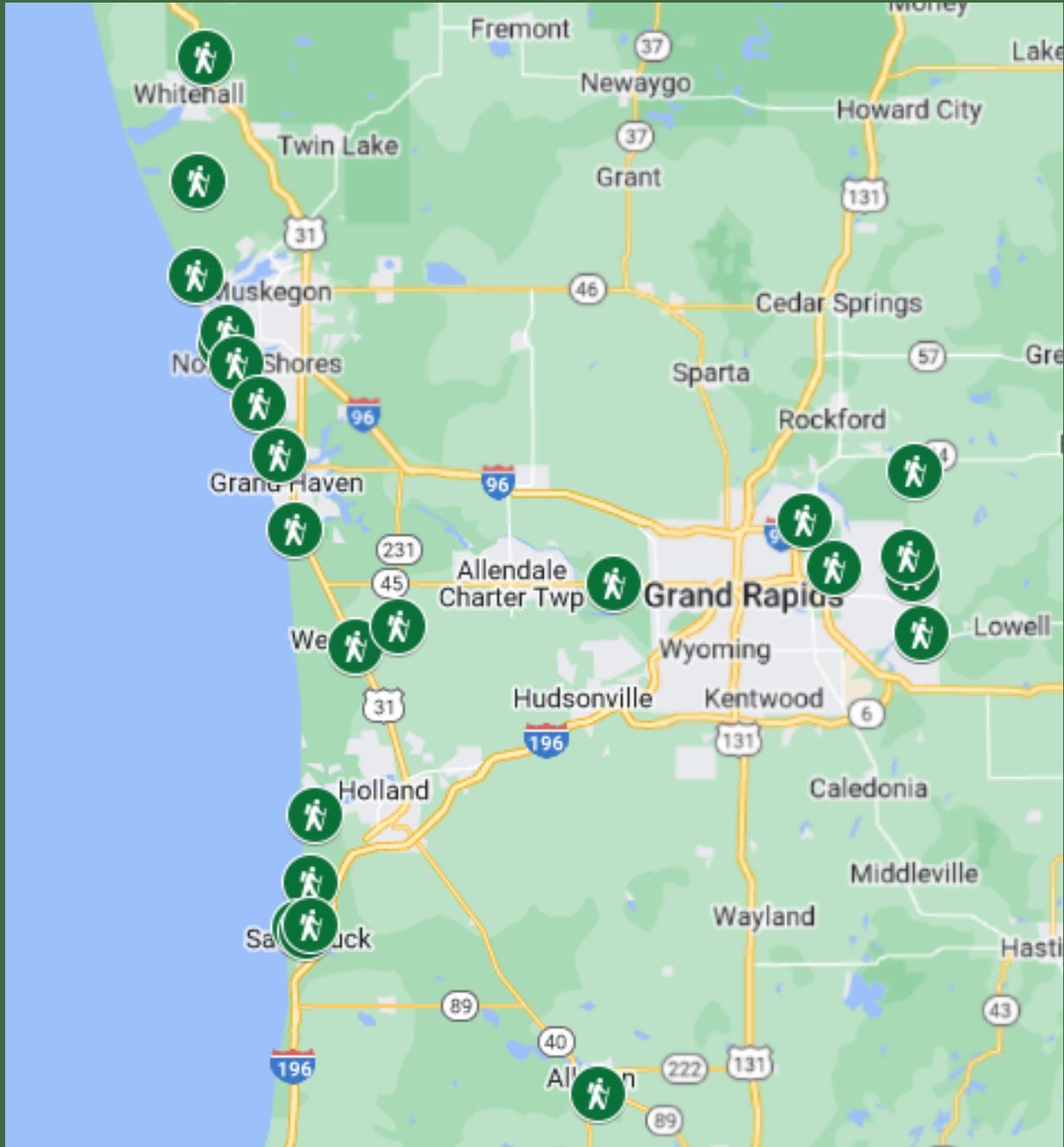
Trail Variability

- Does this park have a significant amount of trail mileage?
- Are there trails or trail sections with varying difficulty available?
- Does the park offer a variety of views (forest, lake, river, dunes, etc.)?

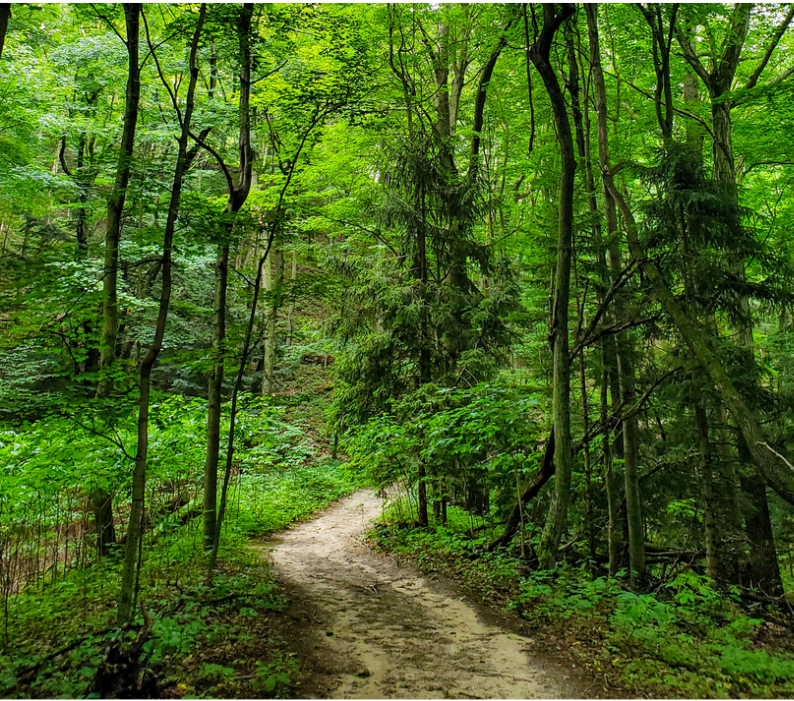
Year-Round Access

- Is there parking available year-round?
- Are the trails suitable for hiking in all seasons?
- Does the park have any seasonal restrictions?

MAP OF BEST WEST MICHIGAN HIKING TRAILS



View and find directions to all hiking trails on Google My Maps [here](#).



ALLEGAN COUNTY



ALLEGAN COUNTY PARKS

Ratings of Final Allegan County Parks

1. Armintrout-Milbocker Nature Preserve: 20/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Great trail map, no social trails, well-placed trail markers
- **Park Amenities: 3/5** - No bathroom facilities, trash, or seating
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - No road noise, great views, lots of wildlife
- **Trail Variability: 3/5** - Not many miles of trail, variety of views, some elevation change
- **Year-Round Access: 4/5** - Parking area is only partially plowed in the winter

2. Sanctuary Woods Preserve: 20/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - No trail map, but easy to navigate without one
- **Park Amenities: 4/5** - Parking is a bit limited and no bathrooms
- **Natural Atmosphere: 4/5** - Urban location, but quiet with wildlife and views
- **Trail Variability: 3/5** - Only a short trail, but stairs and dune-top trail add variety
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Hiking is available all year

3. Saugatuck Dunes State Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - Great directional signage, but social trails can be misleading
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - This park has everything you could want besides camping
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Relatively undeveloped with Lake Michigan access
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - 13+ miles of trails, varying difficulty levels, forest to dune views
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - This park is great in any season

4. Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area + Mt. Baldhead Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - Trail maps and resources could be better organized
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Note Mt. Baldhead Park access road is very narrow
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - This area is boxed in by houses, but still feels very natural, with wildlife and views away from urban development
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - A range of difficulty levels, terrain, and mileage are available
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Access is available year-round, bathrooms are seasonal

5. Tallmadge Woods Nature Preserve: 23/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Trail is easy to follow due to markers and no social trails
- **Park Amenities: 3/5** - Road to parking lot is narrow and amenities are not onsite
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - This park is very peaceful with great views
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Variety of views and difficulty levels
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - If road or parking are not plowed, park is still accessible

ARMINTROUT-MILBOCKER NATURE PRESERVE

137 Thomas St, Allegan, MI 49010



Access: Free, open dawn to dusk



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities:
Benches along trail



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails: View trail map [here](#)

- White Loop Trail, 0.8 miles
- Yellow Loop Trail, 1.4 miles

Park Information

The Armintrout-Milbocker Nature Preserve is located in downtown Allegan, Michigan, along the Kalamazoo River. The nature preserve protects 3 miles of the Kalamazoo River shoreline.

The preserve protects 40 acres of wetlands, 100 acres of pine and oak forests, and offers over 2 miles of hiking trails.

Along with views of the Kalamazoo River and the 60 foot bluffs along the waterway, the preserve is also home to over 560 plant species, including 10 that are endangered or threatened in Michigan.



Park History

The Armintrout-Milbocker Nature Preserve was officially established in 2022 after over 25 years in the making. Discussions between the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) and Dave Armintrout started in the 1990s.

In late 2021, the SWMLC officially secured the acreage needed for the preserve. This project is part of an effort to restore the Kalamazoo River for future recreation and protection of wildlife.

After revamping the trail system and adding signage, the park officially opened to the public on October 15, 2022.



What to Expect

For a park located in downtown Allegan, there's minimal road noise and great views of the Kalamazoo River and wetlands. Taking the full loop around the outside of the preserve is a great way to catch epic views of the river.

It's a short hike, but a worthwhile one. With minimal incline, this trail is also a nice easy hike. There's even a few scenic overlook spots.

I'm excited to come back in the spring or summer to get a glimpse at the diverse plant life that's native to this preserve.



SANCTUARY WOODS PRESERVE

4750 66th St, Holland, MI 49423



Access: Free, open dawn to dusk



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities:

Portable bathrooms, picnic tables, benches



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

- Sanctuary Woods Loop, 0.9 miles, Moderate

Park Information

Sanctuary Woods Preserve is located in Holland, Michigan.

The park is 40-acres of dune forest. With only a little over a mile of trails, there are 170 steps and scenic overlooks of Lake Michigan and Lake Macatawa.

Sanctuary Woods Preserve also has two bridges that cross Kelly Creek and remnants of the historic Interurban Bridge, as well as an old water tower.

Amenities on-site include limited parking, a portable restroom, and picnic tables.

Special thanks to Laketown Township for providing information about Sanctuary Woods Preserve to help me complete this project!



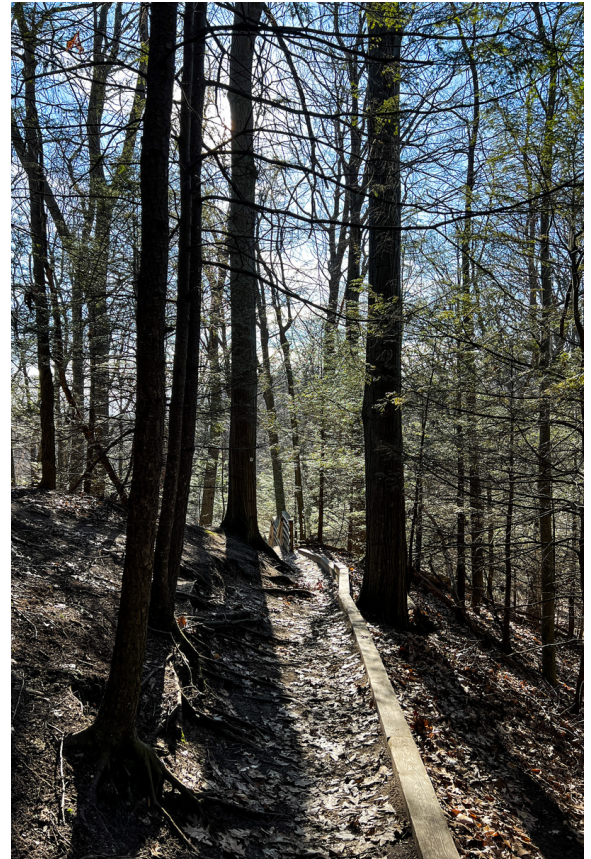
Park History

Sanctuary Woods Preserve was established in 1997. The land was originally owned by the DenUyl family who donated funds to Laketown Township to help them purchase the land. A grant from the Natural Resources Trust Fund also played a large part in securing the property.

The development of the preserve was done in three phases. Phase I took place between 1998 and 1999 and included the addition of groomed trails, a bridge, parking area, picnic tables, and benches. Phase II was between 2002 and 2003 and brought more trail development, boardwalks, additional bridge work, picnic tables, benches, and work on erosion control. Phase III is a long-term goal with plans to restore the Interurban Bridge, add trail signage, and build restrooms.

There are a couple historic landmarks to see at this park. The first is the bridge over the creek that used to be part of the Interurban electric rail system that ran between Holland and Saugatuck. Metal beams sticking out of the bridge were originally train rails. An old water tower is also located on top of the high dune in the park.

It was removed by a local Eagle Scout project, but remnants of the tower are still present. A side trail leads to the brightly painted structure after the main overlook.



What to Expect

This park surprised me. There isn't a lot of mileage here and the location seems underwhelming when you pull into the small parking lot. But once you climb the stairs up onto the bluff, you'll understand why you're there. The trail takes you through a beautiful forest area and takes you to views of Lake Michigan and Lake Macatawa. This trail is great for a quick hike with views or for leaf-peeping in the fall.



SAUGATUCK DUNES STATE PARK

6575 138th Ave, Holland, MI 49423



Access: Michigan Recreation Passport required, open 8 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: Vault toilets, picnic area



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails: View trail map [here](#)

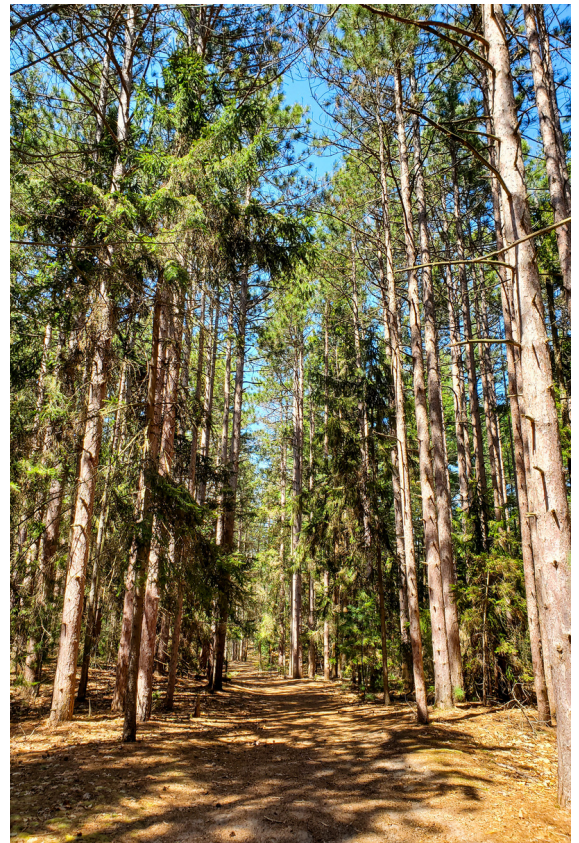
- North Trail, 2.5 miles
- Beach Trail, 1.5 miles
- Livingston, 2.5 miles
- South Trail, 5.5 miles

Park Information

Saugatuck Dunes State Park is located in Saugatuck, Michigan along Lake Michigan. This state park spans over 1,000 acres of land, 2.5 miles of shoreline, more than 13 miles of hiking trails, and features freshwater coastal dunes that are over 200 feet tall.

The park is divided into a north and south trail system. The 300-acre south section is also known as the Patricia Birkholz Natural Area.

Between the two sections of the park lies the Felt Estate and Shores Acres Township Park. This park features mountain bike trails and a disc golf course. This is also where your GPS may take you for Saugatuck Dunes State Park, but the trails are easily accessible from here or the main state park entrance.



Park History

The state park was established in 1977, but its story starts before that. A Chicago businessman named Dorr Felt originally owned the land and developed it into the Shore Acres Farm. He also built a 12,000 square-foot mansion for his wife known as the Felt Estate. The Felt family owned the land until 1949, when the Saint Augustine Seminary took over. In 1970, the estate was used for a prison and state police headquarters.

In 1977, The DNR announced the construction of a 1,500 car parking lot where the north section of Saugatuck Dunes State Park sits today, as well as a dune buggy scramble area where the south part of the park is. Former Michigan State Senator Patricia Birkholz lobbied for the protection of the land and was successful in establishing Saugatuck Dunes State Park as well as a 300-acre natural area, named after her as the Patricia Birkholz Natural Area.

In 1990, Laketown Township purchased the Felt Estate and a few surrounding acres which eventually became Shores Acres Township Park. The Felt Estate is a popular wedding venue today, overlooking the natural dune landscape preserved in part because of the activism of Patricia Birkholz in the first public-private partnership project of the Land Conservancy of West Michigan.

What to Expect

On my first visit to Saugatuck Dunes State Park, the GPS took me to what is actually Shores Acres Township Park. Although the parking lot isn't paved, this alternate parking area is actually great for when the state park is full and still offers easy trail access.

I've hiked both the north and south trails at the park. The north trail offered more diversity, with pine tree groves, beach views, and trails winding through the dunes. However, the south trail offered even more spectacular dunes to climb, with an added challenge. Don't underestimate the workout that climbing dunes will give you. With lots of different trail lengths and options and access to Lake Michigan, you can't do much better than Saugatuck Dunes State Park.



SAUGATUCK HARBOR NATURAL AREA + MT. BALDHEAD PARK

735 Park St, Saugatuck, MI 49453



Access: \$10 if parking at Oval Beach from Memorial Day to Labor Day, free at Mt. Baldhead Park, open 9 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: Benches along trail



Dog-Friendly: Not on hiking trails. Only on Oval Beach, leashed.



Trails:

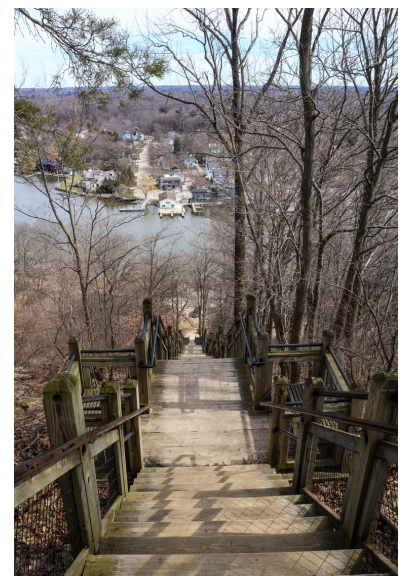
- Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area Trail, 3 miles
- Find other trails [here](#)

Park Information

Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area spans 173 acres along the Lake Michigan shoreline, through the dunes, by Oxbow Lagoon, and near the Kalamazoo River. There are almost 3 miles of trails here and it is best accessed from Oval Beach Park. There is a parking fee charged here in the summer, but parking at the Mt. Baldhead Park trailhead has free parking year-round and provides trail access to Oval Beach Park. There is also a historic site in the park known as “Fishtown.”

Mt. Baldhead Park is 100 acres that sits atop a critical dune area. It's located on the west bank of the Kalamazoo River and the trail leads to Oval Beach on Lake Michigan. The most notable part of this park is the 303 wooden stairs that climb 250 feet to the top of the Mt. Baldhead dune.

There are over 3 miles of trails that are part of Mt. Baldhead Park or connected to the trail system. The trails also connect to the Crow's Nest Trail in Tallmadge Woods Nature preserve and Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area. The Saugatuck Douglas Historical Museum is located near the park entrance, and there are restrooms, a pavilion, parking, and picnic tables. Parking is also available at Oval Beach for a different access point to this trail system.



Park History

Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area was opened to the public in 2011. This area is the site of the original mouth of the Kalamazoo River. A fishing settlement called “Fishtown” was located on the north side of the channel and remnants are still visible today. In 1906, the current Kalamazoo River channel was constructed and blowing sand caused the original river mouth to close. This created the Oxbow Lagoon that is seen today. After being privately owned for most of a century, the Land Conservancy and the City of Saugatuck worked together to transfer the area to Saugatuck as a city park. This was done thanks to grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, and more than 600 private donors.

Mt. Baldhead Park was formally established in 2010. That year, the stairs and observation deck atop the Mt. Baldhead dune were reconstructed. The Mt. Baldhead radar tower also sits on top of the dune. This historical radar tower dates back to 1949, when the US Air Force teamed up with IBM and MIT to create the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) system to watch over our northern border. Part of the property on Mt. Baldhead was leased from the Village of Saugatuck to the Air Force for this purpose. The deal was that they needed to rebuild the wooden steps to the top and plant vegetation to help preserve the dune. The radar station was built in 1956 and became operational in 1958. It was deactivated in 1968 and sold back to the Village of Saugatuck.



What to Expect

This trail system may not be for you if you don't like stairs. The stairs that take you to the top of Mt. Baldhead seem endless, but once you've reached the top, there's so many trails to explore. You can find everything from trails winding down the other side of the dune to classic sand dune trails along Lake Michigan in Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area. I recommend parking at Mt. Baldhead Park and braving the stairs to avoid paying for parking at Oval Beach. Trust me, it's worth the climb.



TALLMADGE WOODS NATURE PRESERVE

1045 Park St, Saugatuck, MI 49453



Access: Free, open dawn to dusk



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: None



Dog-Friendly: No



Trails:

- Crows Nest Loop, 2.6 miles

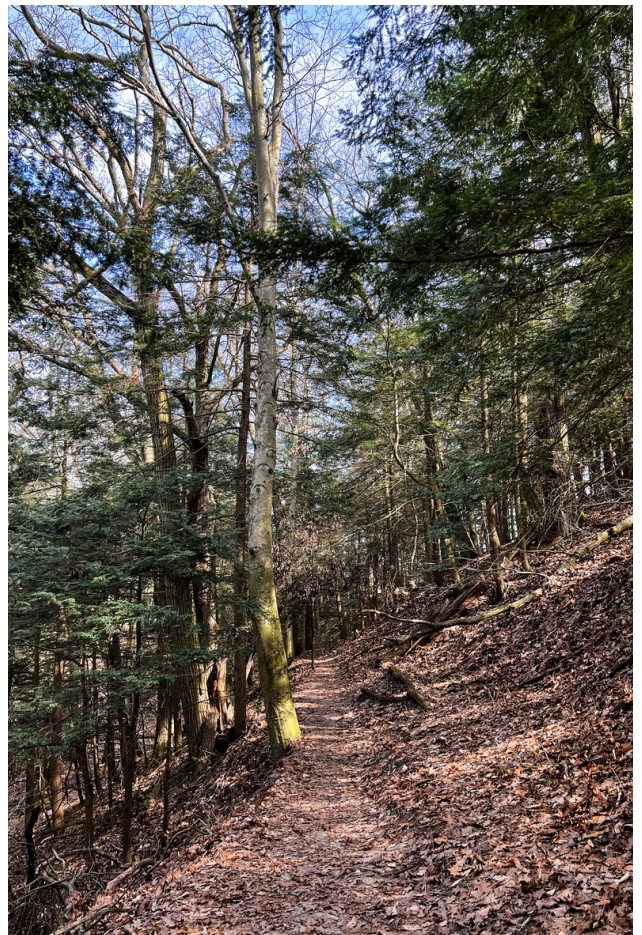
Park Information

Tallmadge Woods Nature Preserve is located in Saugatuck, Michigan.

The preserve is 80 acres and is also the site of the Ox-Bow Summer School of Art and Artists' Residency.

The main trail is also referred to as Crow's Nest and parking is available at the Ox-Bow School parking lot or down the road at Mt. Baldhead Park.

Tallmadge Woods Nature Preserve overlooks the Kalamazoo River, Oxbow Lagoon, and the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area.



Park History

Tallmadge Woods Nature Preserve was established in 2008.

The land was deeded to the City of Saugatuck by Thomas Tallmadge in 1941. Ox-Bow Summer School of Art and Artists' Residency was allowed usage rights as long as the art school was maintained. There was talk of preserving the land for years before it was actually put in action.

The Saugatuck City Council approved a conservation on the land in conjunction with the Land Conservancy of West Michigan. This protected an undeveloped dune and forest region along the Kalamazoo River and the Oxbow Lagoon.



What to Expect

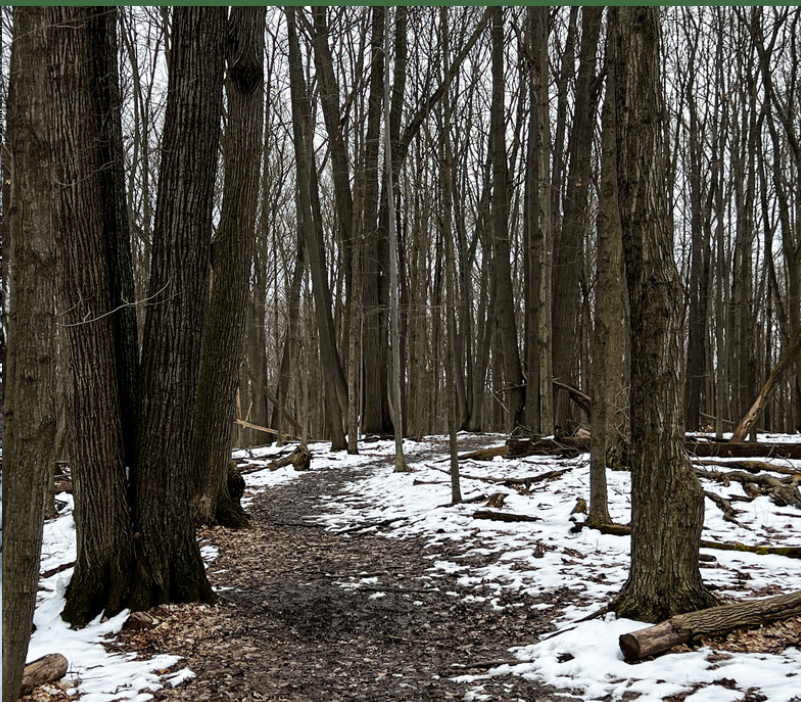
This trail has been on my bucket list for awhile now. There is a parking lot designated for this trailhead, but I would advise against using it during the summer. We went in the spring and didn't have any problems, but the road up to the parking area is steep and one way with no room for oncoming traffic to get off to the side. I'd recommend parking at Mt. Baldhead Park and adding on an extra mile to walk the road to the trailhead.

The trail itself is beautiful before you even get to the viewpoint. Follow the one-way signs through the forest until you see a sign pointing you towards Crow's Nest. You'll also notice that they were kind enough to paint any roots sticking up in the trail orange. This definitely saved me from tripping a few times. After a final climb, you'll reach Crow's Nest, which overlooks the Oxbow Lagoon, Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, and Lake Michigan. There are some social trails down from the overlook, but please don't use them. The loop is easy to follow back to the trailhead once you've soaked in the views.





KENT COUNTY



KENT COUNTY PARKS

Ratings of Final Kent County Parks

1. Cascade Peace Park: 23/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Some trail color-coding inconsistencies, still very easy to navigate
- **Park Amenities: 4/5** - Bolt Drive trailhead has limited amenities
- **Natural Atmosphere: 4/5** - Some noise from nearby airport
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Miles of trails, variety of views and difficulty level
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Open and accessible year-round

2. Crahen Valley Park: 22/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 3/5** - No trail map, not overly difficult to navigate
- **Park Amenities: 4/5** - Paved parking and lookout, no restrooms
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Very undeveloped and no road noise
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - A few miles of trails, challenging hills
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Open year-round

3. Seidman Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - North Country Trail blazes and Blue Trail blazes were confusing, not hard to navigate overall
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Multiple trailheads, restrooms
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - No road noise, great views
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Wooded, wetland, and field areas, varying difficulty
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Restrooms are seasonal, very accessible year-round

4. Pickerel Lake Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Well-marked, direct paths
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Gravel parking lot, restrooms
- **Natural Atmosphere: 4/5** - Road noise before reaching opposite side of lake
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - A few miles of trails, varying terrain and difficulty level
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Main restrooms are seasonal

5. Provin Trails Park: 22/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - Limited trail markings beyond trail map
- **Park Amenities: 4/5** - Gravel parking, benches along trail
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Lots of natural beauty tucked into residential area
- **Trail Variability: 4/5** - Large hills, forest and dune views, but short trail system
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Great hiking year-round

CASCADE PEACE PARK

8900 Grand River Dr SE, Ada, MI 49301

8610 Bolt Dr SE, Ada, MI 49301



Access: Free, open 7 am - 9 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities:

Benches along trail, restroom



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

- Main Trail, 1.6 miles
- Other shorter marked trails

Park Information

Cascade Peace Park is located in Ada, Michigan. The park is 198-acres and has almost 4 miles of well-marked hiking trails. Cascade Peace Park also features an extensive mature hardwood forest, rare for its location in the Grand Rapids Metro Area. The property also has an open meadow, small stream, wetlands, and lowland forest. The upland closed-canopy forest is home to birds like warblers, hawks, and owls. There are even rare species in the park, like the yellow-billed cuckoo, Kentucky warbler, and eastern box turtle.

There are two entrances to the park. The first is off Bolt Drive on an unpaved section of road. It has a small parking area and is set up better for handicap access. The other entrance is located on Grand River Drive and is a better access point for bikers, given its location along a bike lane. There is also parking and a portable restroom at this entrance.



Park History

Cascade Peace Park was established in 2008. The Cascade Township open space study identified the area as having features desirable for preservation. The open space committee as well as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment and the Nature Conservancy of West Michigan worked together to purchase the property. \$3.2 million from a dedicated millage along with a \$1.2 million grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund helped to purchase the property.

After additional work from the aforementioned groups, the township, Disability Advocates of West Michigan, and local landscapers, the park was officially dedicated and opened to the public in 2010.



What to Expect

I was pleasantly surprised by this park. We entered from the Bolt Drive entrance, and the parking lot was underwhelming. Trail maps were available at the trailhead to take with you on your hike and return before leaving. I opted to take a picture. Although some of the trail markers are inconsistent with color-coding for the trails, this trail system is extremely well-marked.

We headed towards the Lookout Trail, thinking this would have the most promising views of the park. It did not disappoint. It overlooks the stream far below, with multiple benches to enjoy the view. You can also continue from the second bench down to the stream for a different perspective. The trails are not only well-marked, but are well-maintained and easy to hike even in the snow.

Although there is no road noise, you might hear planes overhead from the nearby airport. I felt that the miles of trails available, views, and variety of terrain made a little airplane noise worth it, especially when exploring so close to Grand Rapids.



CRAHEN VALLEY PARK

4355 Leonard St NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525



Access: Free, open dawn to dusk



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: Yes, along paved bike trail



Available Amenities:
Overlook seating area



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

- Crahen Valley Park Loop, 3.1 miles

Park Information

Crahen Valley Park is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The park spans 205-acres and the hiking trails descend down into the valley, where it crosses creek off-shoots of the Grand River and winds through forests.

The established hiking trails span a little over 3 miles, although the trail system is unmarked. The park also features pine groves and ponds.

There aren't any facilities available at this park yet, but there is a paved parking lot and a paved section of bike trail on top of the bluff.



Park History

Crahen Valley Park was first established in 2000. Grand Rapids Charter Township purchased over 100 acres of farmland from Kenneth and Gloria Doezema. Another two acres and a house came from Jay and Ruth Doezema, who continued to live on the property until mid-2015. Once the couple left the property, the house was subject to some trespassing and minor vandalism. This led the township to contract with Dean's Excavating to demolish the home in 2017. The rest of the park was purchased from Dykema Excavating, for the final total of 205 acres.

The proposed plan for the park is ambitious, including a winter sports area, fat tire bicycle trails, playground, picnic pavilions, and public restrooms. So far a parking area, paved trails, and an established overlook has been built. There is also some signage and bridges that have been installed.

What to Expect

This park came highly recommended. Crahen Valley Park is a popular spot for fall colors. It's also close to East Beltline without being overrun or having a lot of road noise. There's a nice paved parking lot and a viewpoint over the valley that I'll definitely be coming back in the fall to see again. After walking left from the lookout, you'll come to a sign and a natural surface trail that descends steeply from the paved trail. The sign warns that the climb back up from the valley isn't an easy one.

This park is relatively undeveloped and doesn't have a trail map yet. I came here with someone who had explored the trails before, so I'll share how we found the highlights of this trail. After going down the hill, you'll cross a field and a bridge. Take the trail straight from the bridge, not to the right. Eventually you'll have to find a trail to climb another hill, which leads to an open field. In the middle of the field is a large mound that you can climb for a great view of the lake and surrounding field. There are even more miles of trail to explore beyond this, just make sure you keep a phone or at least your sense of direction with you to find your way back to the trailhead. Expect mud in the spring, and great views year-round.



SEIDMAN PARK

8155 Conservation St NE, Ada, MI 49301

1710 Honey Creek, Ada, MI 49301



Access: Free, open 7 am - sunset



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: Only on nearby bike trail



Available Amenities:
Seasonal restrooms



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

- Blue Trail, 2+ miles
- Red Trail, 1.0-1.1 miles
- Yellow Trail, 1.2-1.5 miles

Park Information

Seidman Park is located in Ada, Michigan. It connects to Ada Townships paved multi-use trail and is part of the North Country Trail that runs through the entirety of Michigan.

With more than 400 acres to explore, the trail system winds through woods, fields, and wetlands. There are over 5 miles of trails to explore here including bridges, natural surfaces, and boardwalks.

Seidman Park has two trailheads to choose from located on Honey Creek Street and Conservation Street with seasonable restrooms.



Park History

Seidman Park was established in 1973 with land deeded to Kent County by William and Sarah Seidman. The goal of this land donation was to establish a natural recreation area near Grand Rapids. The Seidman family originally purchased part of the land in 1955 and the rest in 1967. The Ada Schoolhouse No. 4 stood on the property and was removed during the Seidman family's ownership.

In 1979, the park was officially named Seidman Park to recognize the land donors.



What to Expect

I had a great first experience visiting Seidman Park. Starting from the Conservation Street Trailhead, I stuck to the Blue and Red Loop trails. There was fresh snow falling during my visit which really added to the beauty of this park.

I found the trail navigation system to be fairly easy to understand, but there were a few unmarked sections or places where I felt I needed to consult a GPS. It's also a little misleading that there is a blue loop, but the trail blazes for the North Country Trail are also blue.

Overall this trail was great. I got in 5 miles of hiking, crossed boardwalks and bridges, and saw a variety of forest and marsh areas. The trails may get muddy depending on weather, so come prepared to trek straight through in order to stay on the trails. This park is a great one for getting outside near Ada!



PICKEREL LAKE PARK

6001 Ramsdell Dr NE, Rockford, MI 49341



Access: Free, open dawn to dusk



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: First section of trail, including boardwalk



Available Amenities: Portable restroom



Dog-Friendly: No



Trails:

- Lake Trail, 1.9 miles
- Woodland Trail, 0.9 miles
- Sandy Knoll Trail, 0.8 miles
- Other shorter marked trails

Park Information

Pickerel Lake Park is located in Rockford, Michigan. It's also known as the Fred Meijer Nature Preserve. Pickerel Lake is nearly 80 acres. The entire nature preserve features over 300 acres and nearly 4 miles of trails to explore.

The most prominent feature of the park is the 900-foot floating boardwalk that goes across part of Pickerel Lake. The rest of the trail winds through wetlands and wooded rolling hills.

While the main restrooms in the park are closed in the off-season, the trailhead features a portable restroom. The lake is completely undeveloped, and the north side of the park is bordered by Camp Rogers.



Park History

Pickerel Lake Park was established in 1992 with a donation from Fred Meijer.

The land itself was originally owned by Joseph “Indian Joe” Cizauskas, who lived on the lake for over 40 years. His nickname of “Indian Joe” was attributed to the children of Camp Roger, who would visit him. He was a loner that devoted his life to the land, refusing to sell to developers. In the summer, he used to offer a day of fishing on Pickerel Lake for 50 cents. And before Christmas, he would sell \$5 Christmas trees to lines of customers from thousands of Colorado blue spruce he had planted on the property.

Cizauskas didn’t have a deed for the land, so it went to his heirs in 1988 when he died. They sold it to Kent County to be operated as a public park and nature preserve. The funds for this came from Fred Meijer’s substantial donation as well as other contributions. Today at Pickerel Lake Park, there’s a stone at the trailhead honoring Indian Joe and telling his story.



What to Expect

I visited this park for the floating boardwalk, but the great trails and views are why it makes the list. After crossing the floating boardwalk, there's a seasonal restroom and a few different trail options to explore. The handicap accessible section of the trail ends shortly after this point. We stuck to the loop around the lake on our visit. The trail goes up and down a series of hills around the lake with different lookout points along the way. Then you'll cross a couple more boardwalk sections before you come to a gate. The gate was a little off-putting, but it means you're close to the trailhead.

This park is a great one if you like wildlife. When I hiked the trails here, the lake was completely frozen over, but there were multiple swans hanging out on the lake. A couple flew overhead as we crossed the first boardwalk. But after we reached the other side of the lake, we got a great view of two more sitting out on the ice. I can only imagine how active the wildlife is here in the warmer months.

You can expect some road noise towards the trailhead, but that will fade away on the other side of Pickerel Lake. And although it's unfortunate that there are no dogs allowed on the trails here, Pickerel Lake Park is definitely worth checking out.



PROVIN TRAILS PARK

2900 4 Mile Rd NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525



Access: Free, open dawn to dusk



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities:

Benches along trail



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

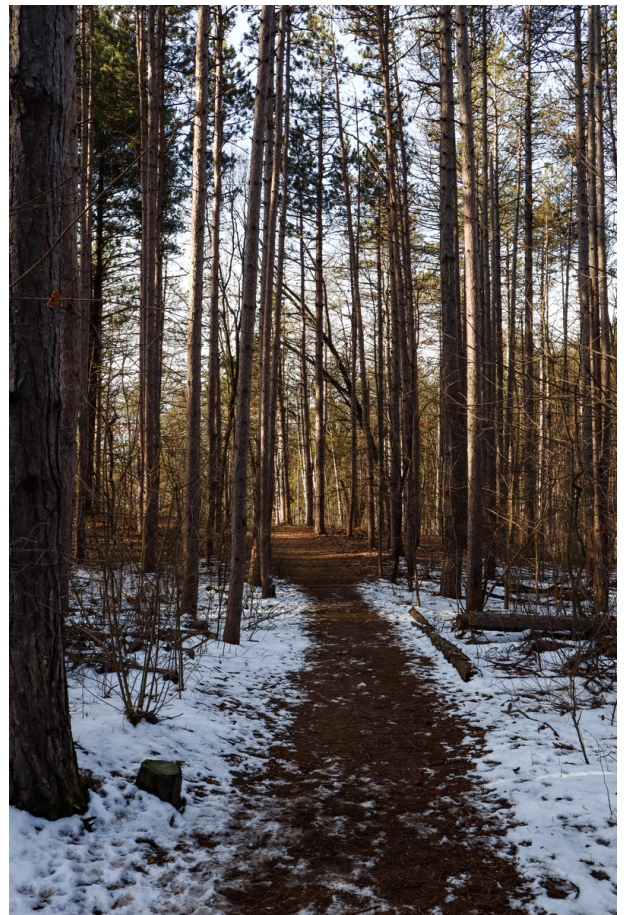
- Provin Park Trail, 0.8 miles

Park Information

Provin Trails Park is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

This park is 45-acres, tucked into the suburbs of the city. The perimeter trail only claims to be 0.9 miles long. However, there are two additional marked trails in the center of the park, as well as many trails not on the map. There is likely 2 miles or more to hike at Provin Trails Park.

The park features an open sand dune, dense pine groves, and natural surface trails that wind up and down hills and valleys. The parking lot is dirt with limited spots and a portable restroom available.

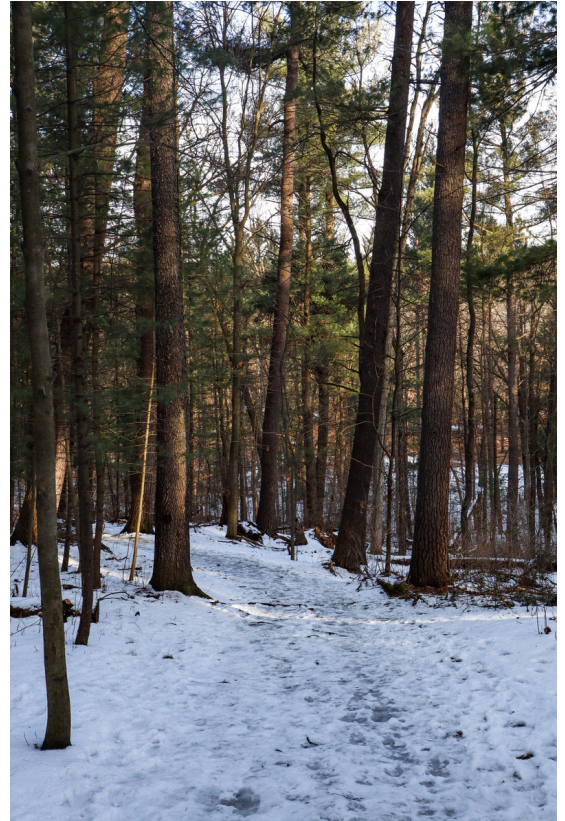


Park History

Provin Trails Park was originally established in 1936.

Estelle Provin left the property to the City of Grand Rapids when she passed in 1936. Kent County and the City of Grand Rapids approved a 40-year lease in 1981.

Since then it has been jointly operated by the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County, because the park actually falls outside of the Grand Rapids city limit.



What to Expect

This park might not have a large trail system, but it's still a must-visit. There are several large hills along the trail that make it more challenging than your average level trail through the woods. The best and biggest hill is the one towards the entrance, that overlooks the valley below. You can head here first by taking the trail straight from the trailhead.

We started down the trail to the right from the trailhead and ended with a great view from the top of the hill. There are actually a lot of trails either not marked on the official map or not included in the trail mileage, so there is more to explore here than the advertised 0.8 miles.

The trail here can get extremely icy in the winter and into the spring until it turns to mud. Unless you like slip and slides, microspikes are a must for the winter. This trail gets a lot of traffic, so fresh snow gets packed down quickly.

Provin Trails is also popular with photographers, so you might run into a few photoshoots along the trail, especially at golden hour.

This definitely isn't a park to go for a full day hike, but it's well worth visiting.





MUSKEGON COUNTY



MUSKEGON COUNTY PARKS

Ratings of Final Muskegon County Parks

1. Clear Springs Nature Preserve: 22/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Well-marked, no social trails
- **Park Amenities: 3/5** - Limited parking, no bathrooms
- **Natural Atmosphere: 4/5** - Some road noise at far end of park
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - A few miles of trails, views along creek and through woods
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Parking area is cleared during winter

2. Dune Harbor Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - No trail map, but trail is just a straightforward loop around the lake
- **Park Amenities: 4/5** - Paved parking, portable restroom at one of the trailheads, no signage
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Lots of forest, lake, and dune views, no road noise
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - A couple miles of trail available with more to come, trail varies in difficulty around lake
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Very accessible all year

3. Lake Harbor Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - Social trails through dunes can be misleading
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Portable restrooms, picnic area, paved parking
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Great forest, dune, and Lake Michigan views
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Range of difficulty levels and terrain, a few miles of trails
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Great for hiking year-round

4. Muskegon State Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - Some social trails interfere with navigation
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Restrooms, multiple trailheads, camping, picnic area
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Mostly undeveloped trails through dunes and forest
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Range of views and trail difficulty, miles of trails
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Trails are accessible year-round


5. P.J. Hoffmaster State Park: 25/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Well-marked and easy to navigate
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Restrooms, visitor center, campground
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Quiet with great views of lakeshore and lots of wildlife
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Variety of views, trail difficulty, and terrain
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Great park for hiking all year

CLEAR SPRINGS NATURE PRESERVE

3585 W Fruitvale Rd, Montague, MI 49437



 **Access:** Free, open dawn to dusk

 **Seasonal Restrictions:** None

 **ADA Accessible:** No

 **Available Amenities:** Benches along trail

 **Dog-Friendly:** Yes, on a leash

 **Trails:**

- Long Loop (Spring, West, Rim, and East Trails), 1.5 miles
- Short Loop (Spring, Pond, and Rim Trails), 0.9 miles

Park Information

Clear Springs Nature Preserve is located in Montague, Michigan. The park spans 118 acres and features almost 3 miles of hiking trails.

The most notable feature of this park is Landford Creek and the man-made ponds created from it. The ponds can be used for canoeing, kayaking, and catch-and-release fishing.

There is also a diverse range of trees in the nature preserve, including white pine, eastern hemlock, beech, and so many more. Many trees in the park are huge trees that are 100's years old.

There are 6 different labeled trails and two loop trail systems that are available to explore in this unique park.

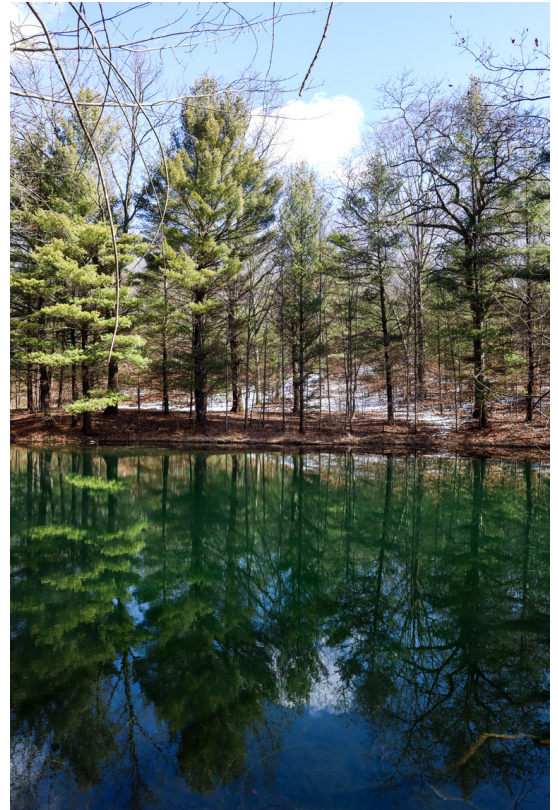


Park History

Clear Springs Nature Preserve was established in late 2000. But the history of this piece of land starts long before that. The first township records of the property are from 1848, showing it to be one of the area's first trading posts. The first official ownership recorded of the land was by Thomas White Ferry, a US Senator between the years of 1875 and 1877. The Ferry family owned the land beginning in 1854.

In the early 1950s, North Star Fish Hatchery owned the land, raising fish on the site for over 10 years. They were responsible for the damming of the spring-fed Landford Creek and creation of two man-made ponds. Remnants of their construction is still present today. In 1960, John Harvey purchased the land with the intent to preserve the natural area. He owned the land until Montague Township purchased it in late 2000.

In the 1990s, developers became interested in the property and it was slated for a 90-home development project. Several Montague Township Board members created a campaign to save it in 1999. Towards the end of November 2000, a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant was given to the township, which covered 74% of the purchase price for the property. A loan was taken out to cover the rest. The property has been maintained by the township and community since, including a signage project by the 2014 Montague NBC 8th grade students, North Muskegon High School students, and other area businesses.



What to Expect

The color of the water at this park reminds me of Kitch-iti-kipi in the Upper Peninsula. The water is so clear and the reflection of the green pine trees is beautiful.

I recommend doing at least the short loop if you visit. This takes you around the spring and man-made ponds. You'll see the remnants of the fish hatchery and there are several benches to stop at and take in the view. Just be sure to not walk out on any of the old docks. This park is worth visiting based on just for the unique views, but it also has some great trails.



DUNE HARBOR PARK

2161 Seminole Rd, Norton Shores, MI 49441

3071 Lincoln St, Norton Shores, MI 49441



Access: Free, open 8 am - 10 pm, dawn to dusk in



winter



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: Portable restroom



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

- Dune Harbor Loop Trail, 2.2 miles

Park Information

Dune Harbor Park is located in Norton Shores, Michigan. The park will include over 376 acres of wooded dunes, inland lake views, and Lake Michigan shoreline when completed.

Dune Harbor Park's current trail system includes a 2.2-mile loop around an inland lake. New 2023 expansions to the park will provide additional trails and access to Lake Michigan.

There are currently two trailheads to access the trail system, located on Seminole Road and Lincoln Street. Only the Lincoln Street trailhead has a portable restroom available.

Dune Harbor Park is home to a unique dune system with a variety of trees, beach grass, and wildlife. A variety of birds including bald eagles are often spotted in the park. Monarch butterflies are also commonly seen in the park because of milkweed plants growing on the grounds.



Park History

Dune Harbor Park was established in May of 2021. This is the newest park to open in Muskegon County, and it's not finished yet.

In December 2020, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) recommended a grant that helped with Phase I of the park development. The first phase of the project includes a wooded 214 acres including the man-made "South Lake" and 202 feet of Lake Michigan frontage. Donations from The Land Conservancy of West Michigan also contributed to this project.

The property was previously owned by the sand mining company called Nugent Sand. The owner Robert Chandonnet and his two daughters matched the MNRTF grant to allow for the park's development. He requested that the name be "Dune Harbor Park" as a tribute to his late wife, Lynne. The first phase of the park formally opened to the public on March 21, 2022.

Phase II or "North Lake" is 162 acres, including another man-made lake and 1,460 feet of Lake Michigan lakeshore. The acquisition of Phase II was completed on December 13, 2022. The second phase was scheduled to open in March 2023.



What to Expect

I'm excited to come back to this park once it's finished. There is already so much potential here. Right now the trail just goes through the sand dunes around the South Lake, but there is so much coming. Trails around another lake and out to Lake Michigan are in the future plans for this park.

We started at the Seminole Road trailhead, which does have more parking than the Lincoln Street trailhead. From there we headed to the right, which took us down from the top of the dune to the lake. For sand trails, they aren't hard to walk, but there isn't a lot of tree cover if it's a sunny day. This is definitely a great option to explore year-round.

Please note that while there is no entry fee right now, a parking fee is expected to be introduced once improvements to the park have been made.



LAKE HARBOR PARK

4635 Lake Harbor Rd, Norton Shores, MI 49441



Access: Free, open 5 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: Paved section near channel



Available Amenities: Portable restrooms, picnic tables, grills



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash, but not allowed on the beach



Trails:

- Yellow Trail, 1.25 miles
- Blue Trail, 1 mile
- Purple Trail, 0.8 miles
- Find more trails [here](#)

Park Information

Lake Harbor Park is located in Norton Shores, Michigan. The park has a total of 189 acres, including 4,000 feet of shoreline on Lake Michigan, 2,000 feet along the Mona Lake Channel, and 1,500 feet of frontage along Mona Lake.

There are well over 4 miles of marked trails in Lake Harbor Park. These trails feature stunning backdune formations, shoreline, and wooded dunes. A wooden walkway with observation decks overlooks the Mona Lake Channel and Lake Michigan, and an additional wooden walkway takes hikers off the beach towards the Whitey's Woods portion of the park.

There is also a picnic area and shelter available on a first-come, first-served basis. Two wheelchair accessible portable restrooms are available along the paved and gravel surfaced trail that winds along the Mona Lake Channel.



Park History

Lake Harbor Park was established in 1980. It first began with the City of Muskegon purchasing a piece of property referred to as the “Swett Property” in 1980.

The park expanded in the following years, beginning in 1982 with the addition of the Lake Harbor bridge, roadway, and paved parking lot. In 1994, the CWC Textron sand mining property and the Mona Shores school property were added to the park.

An additional 10 acres called Whitey’s Woods was added to the north end of the park in 2000 for a total of 189 acres. This property was originally owned by Ralph “Whitey” Edlund, who welcomed others to learn about and enjoy his property.

The scenic deck that overlooks the Mona Channel was also added to Lake Harbor Park in 2000.



What to Expect

Dune Harbor Park rivals some of the classic lakeshore parks like P.J. Hoffmaster State Park and Muskegon State Park. It's a great park to check out if you love exploring along Lake Michigan but want to try somewhere new or don't have a Michigan Recreation Passport.

There are several miles of trails to explore and this would be an amazing place for a sunset hike.

The trails are marked, but the social trails through the dunes can make them hard to navigate. Look for the markers and remember that the next intersection is probably further than you think it is. I even got off-trail on a social trail during my visit.



The trails through the dunes can be challenging, come prepared for long hikes, especially during the summer. This park also offers a lot of different views, from forest to lakeshore, so be sure to explore them all on your visit.

MUSKEGON STATE PARK

3560 Memorial Dr, North Muskegon, MI 49445



Access: Michigan Recreation Passport required, open 8 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: Off-road electric chairs available free of charge (find details [here](#))



Available Amenities: 2 campgrounds, fishing piers, bathhouse, picnic areas, and Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:
• Find hiking trail details [here](#)

Park Information

Muskegon State Park is located in North Muskegon, Michigan.

The park encompasses over 1,233 acres which includes over 2 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline and over a mile along Muskegon Lake. Over 12 miles of hiking trails climb through forested and exposed dunes.

The most notable feature in the park is the Blockhouse. The park also features a Winter Sports Complex with a luge and ice skating in the winter.

In addition, Muskegon State Park offers picnic areas, boating access, play areas, beach houses, and two campgrounds with 247 campsites and two mini-cabins.



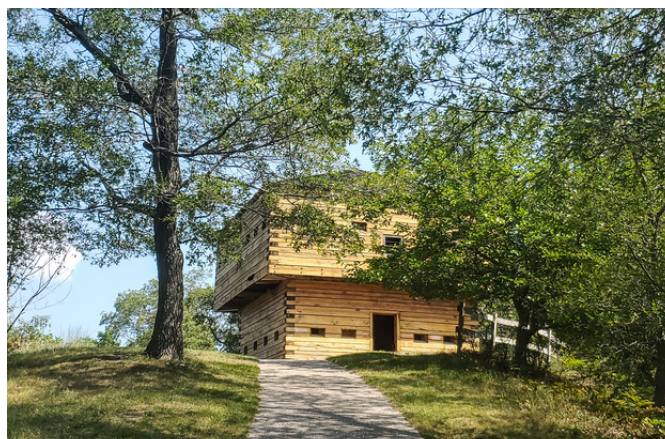
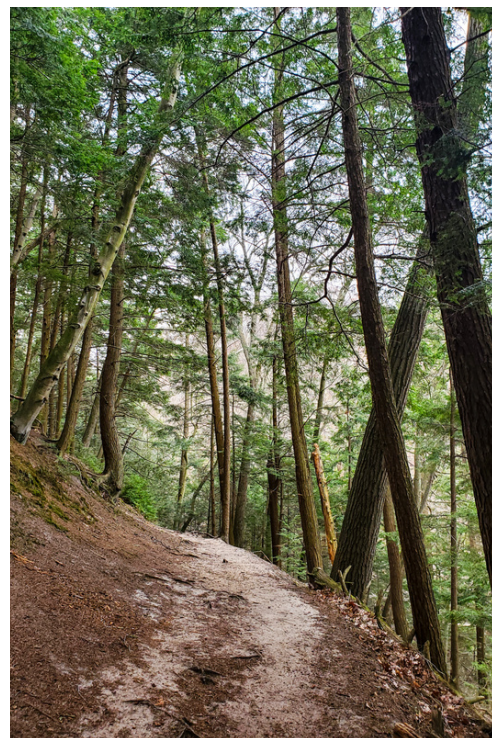
Park History

Muskegon State Park was established in 1923. Several lumberman owned the land on the north side of the Muskegon channel as well as around Snug Harbor along with Ryerson Hills & Co. Ryerson built the pavilion, bathhouse, and bandstand where Muskegon State Park is today. The land was sold and almost developed twice before a local named Lou Lunsford organized to save the area from development.

The City of Muskegon and the community worked together to give the original 840 acres of land to the Department of Conservation, making the area an official state park.

The Civilian Conservation Corps worked in the park in 1933 and 1934, building the original roads and campsites. They also planted trees in the area and built a square blockhouse in 1935. The blockhouse was positioned at the highest point in Muskegon County and is modeled after Fort Dearborn. Arsonists burnt down the structure in 1962. The current building is a replica finished in 1964, which has experienced additional arson attempts and vandalism.

The Winter Sports Complex in the park was built in 1984 with the initial luge and the sports lodge was added in 1990. Ice skating and ziplining have since been added to the park.



What to Expect

In my opinion, Muskegon State Park is one of the best parks in the West Michigan area. Its only downfall is the endless construction that's been going on over the last several years. On my last visit the main trailhead wasn't even open, but you can still access the trails from the Winter Sports Complex.

While the trails are well-marked, there are a lot of social trails in the park. I've gotten lost several times, not realizing that I wasn't on the trail until later. Luckily the road through the center of the trails makes it easy to get back on track.

If you only hike one section of Muskegon State Park, it should be Lost Lake. It's easily the most unique trail in the park. This park is a great option for a full day hike or something shorter.

P.J. HOFFMASTER STATE PARK

6585 Lake Harbor Rd, Norton Shores, MI 49441



Access: Michigan Recreation Passport required, open 9 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: Trail to beach, 2 off-road electric chairs available for free at park office



Available Amenities:

Campground, picnic area, benches, bathhouse



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

- [North Hiking Trails](#)
- [South Hiking Trails](#)

Park Information

P.J. Hoffmaster State Park is located in Norton Shores, Michigan. One of over 103 state parks and recreation areas in the state, this park spans over 1,100 acres and includes over 3 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline.

There are over 10 miles of trails within the state park and the trail system also connects to additional trails in North Ottawa Dunes County Park to the south. The trails offer the opportunity to wander through natural dune landscapes shaded by trees or along the shores of Lake Michigan.

P.J. Hoffmaster State Park also features an expansive campground with over 293 campsites, the Gillette Visitor Center, and the Dune Climb Stairway with a panoramic view from the top of a high sand dune. There are several parking areas for beach and hiking access as well as bathroom facilities onsite.



Park History

P.J. Hoffmaster State Park was established in 1963. It's named in honor of Percy James "P.J." Hoffmaster, who was a prominent part of Michigan preservation history. He was named the first superintendent of Michigan state parks in 1922. He served in that position until 1934 when he was promoted to Director of the Department of Conservation. Hoffmaster abruptly died while in this position in 1951.

The Gillette Visitor Center in P.J. Hoffmaster State Park also ties into Michigan state park history. E. Genevieve Gillette was a classmate of Hoffmaster's when they attended the Michigan Agricultural College (now known as MSU). She was the first woman to graduate in the landscape architecture class in 1920 and worked with Hoffmaster to find and fund new parks. Gillette took on her and Hoffmaster's ambitions on her own, after he passed away in 1951. She played a part in founding 30 state parks and creating a national lakeshore at Sleeping Bear Dunes.

Today, the Gillette Visitor Center recognizes the early history of Michigan parks and studies the dune ecosystem at the park.



What to Expect

This is my favorite park to hike in West Michigan. The dune trails through the forest and the lakeshore access are the perfect combination. And there are so many miles of trails here that you can hike for hours. To make this park even better, it has direct trail access to North Ottawa Dunes. This means that you have double the mileage in trails available.

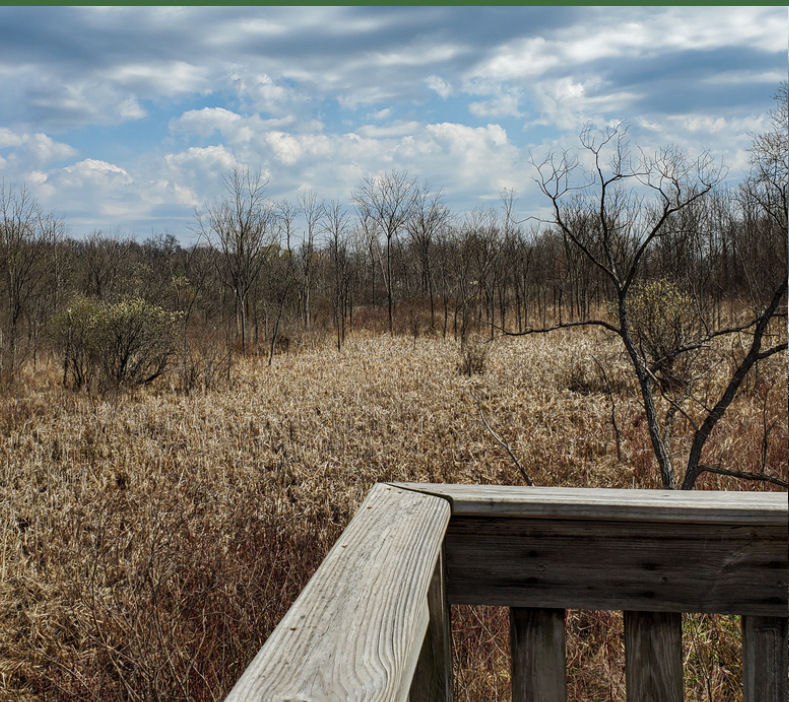


When I visit, I typically park at the ski lot. I find that this provides the best access point to the trails. I always make sure to take the Homestead Trail to the beach. Another highlight to visit at this park is the Dune Climb Stairway, which is located behind the Gillette Visitor Center. I love this park year-round, but it can be icy in the winter or early spring. It is also prone to mud or flooding after heavy rainfall or snowmelt.

Road closures expected for this park in the summer of 2023. Find more details [here](#).



OTTAWA COUNTY



OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS

Ratings of Final Ottawa County Parks

1. Aman Park: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 4/5** - Difficult to navigate without picture of trail map
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Portable restroom, picnic tables, paved parking area
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Peaceful with great forest and creek views
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - A few miles of trails, varying trail difficulty and views
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Great hiking all year

2. Hemlock Crossing County Park: 25/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Trails are easy to follow and trail markers are well-placed
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Restrooms, paved parking, picnic area
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - Quiet with great views along river and in woods
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Miles of trails, different views and difficulty levels
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Very accessible year-round

3. North Ottawa Dunes: 25/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Thorough trail map and enough trail markers
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Multiple access points, restrooms, picnic areas
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - No road noise, great views throughout dune trails in forest and along lakeshore
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Miles of trails, everything from forest to lakeshore, easy to difficult trails
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Seasonal restrooms, great for hiking year-round

4. Pigeon Creek County Park: 22/25

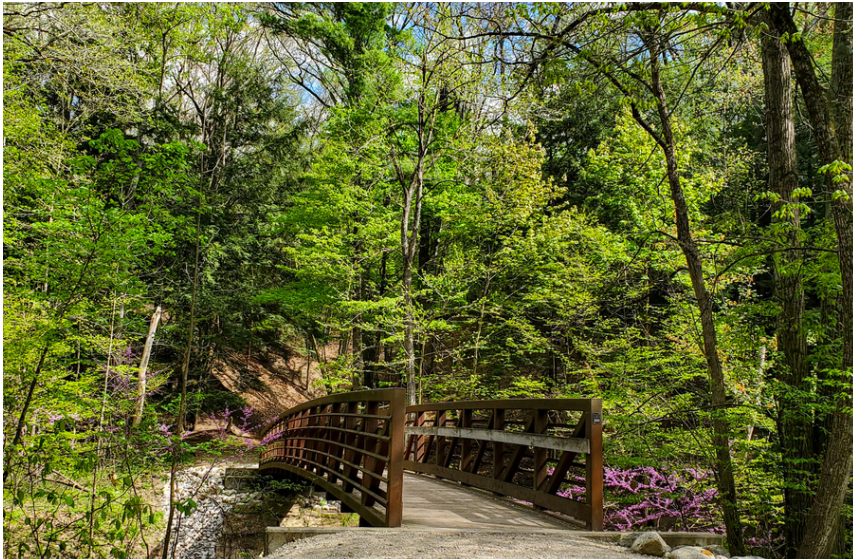
- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Trail signs are easy to follow, personalized maps for winter and summer seasons
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Rustic bathroom, picnic tables, benches, large parking lot
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - No road noise, creek and forest views, wildlife
- **Trail Variability: 5/5** - Miles of boardwalk and natural surface trails, variety of difficulty levels
- **Year-Round Access: 2/5** - Hiking access in the winter is severely limited

5. Rosy Mound Natural Area: 24/25

- **Ease of Navigation: 5/5** - Trail is straightforward and easy to follow
- **Park Amenities: 5/5** - Restrooms, picnic tables, benches, paved parking
- **Natural Atmosphere: 5/5** - No road noise, great dune, forest, and beach views
- **Trail Variability: 4/5** - Shorter trail distance, soon to be expanded, trail sections that range in difficulty and use of stairs, natural surface, and boardwalks
- **Year-Round Access: 5/5** - Paid parking in summer, great hiking year-round

AMAN PARK

1859 Lake Michigan Dr, Grand Rapids, MI 49534



Access: Free, open 6:30 am - 9 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: Picnic tables and rustic toilet



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



Trails:

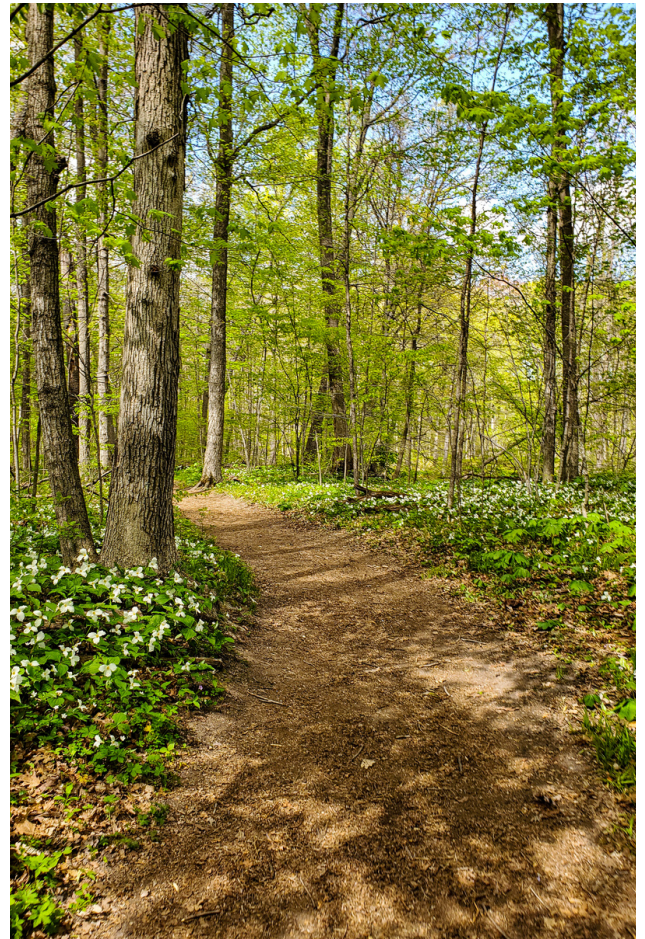
- Check out trail map [here](#)

Park Information

Aman Park is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The park spans 331 acres and the trails wind through the forest and along Sand Creek. Aman Park has over 5 miles of trails, including natural surface trails and two bridges that cross Sand Creek. Besides the bridges, the other major landmarks include Aman's Grave and Sweet's Monument.

Aman Park is ecologically diverse, with many plants and birds populating the park. It's especially known for its wildflowers that grow along the banks of Sand Creek in the spring, including bluebells and trillium. A section of the parking lot is paved, and picnic tables and a rustic toilet is available at the trailhead.

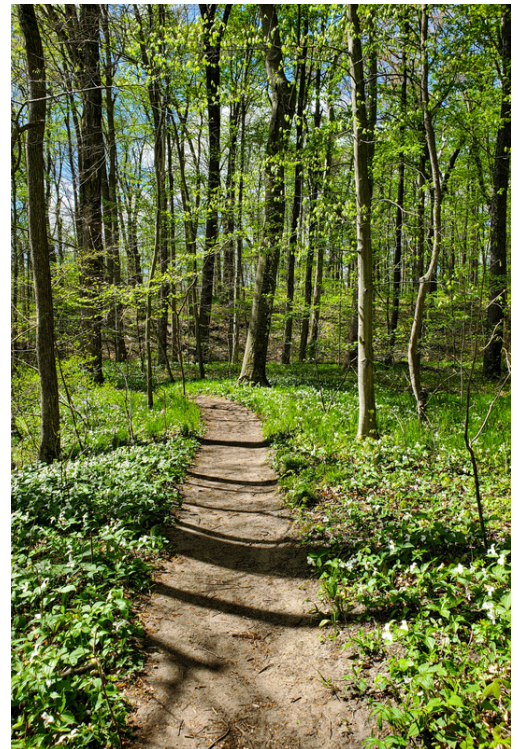


Park History

Aman Park was established in 1926. The park is unique because it is owned by The City of Grand Rapids, even though it is well outside the city limits. This was because of Jacob Aman, who donated the first 254 acres of the park. He believed that Grand Rapids was expanding and would need a park on its western border.

Aman bought the property in 1900 and when he donated it to the City of Grand Rapids in 1926, he retained “life estate” of 10 acres, meaning that he could live on this property for the remainder of his life. Aman was a supervisor of the original park, establishing trails and picnic areas. He died a few years later in 1928 of pneumonia. He had requested before his death that he be buried at a pre-selected site in Aman Park. A rock and plaque mark his gravesite today, done at the request of his family.

Two neighbors of Aman’s also donated property to the park. Dr. Joel C. Parker donated 22 acres and William F. Sweet donated 40 acres. Sweet was also buried in Aman Park and his grave is marked today with a plaque called “Sweet’s Monument.” In 1930, the City had schoolchildren plant oak and walnut seedlings in the park to help with reforestation efforts. In 1953, The City of Grand Rapids granted 15 acres of the park, including Root Beer Lake, to the Indian Trails Camp.

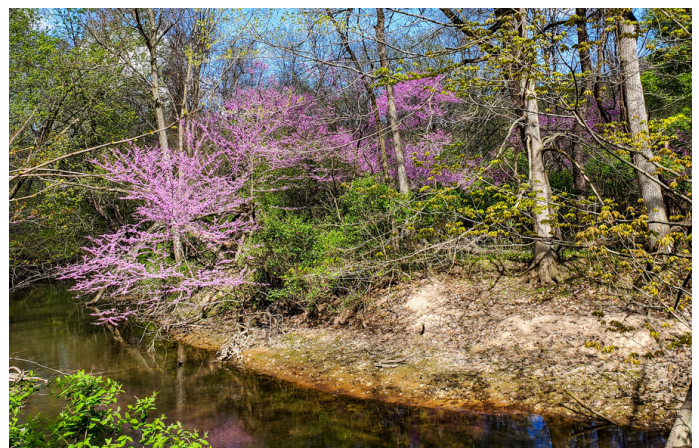


What to Expect

I have two pieces of advice for anyone who wants to visit this park. First, take a picture of the trail map before starting. The map is color coded and once you're on the trail, you'll want the map to help you decipher the colored trail markers. As long as you do this, the trail is pretty easy to navigate.

I also recommend visiting during the spring months. Usually late April or May. This park really comes alive with wildflowers. It's also amazing in the fall or any other time of year, but the spring is my personal favorite.

You can expect some big hills and views along the creek. The blue trail on the far side of the creek is less maintained and gets overgrown in the summer, making it difficult to navigate. Overall, this park is a great one to explore!



HEMLOCK CROSSING COUNTY PARK

8115 W Olive Rd, West Olive, MI 49460



Access: Free, open 7 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: Yes, paved loop and access to bridge lookout



Available Amenities: Seasonal modern bathrooms, rustic toilets, benches, kayak/canoe launch, picnic shelters, grills, snowshoe rentals, public observatory.



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash



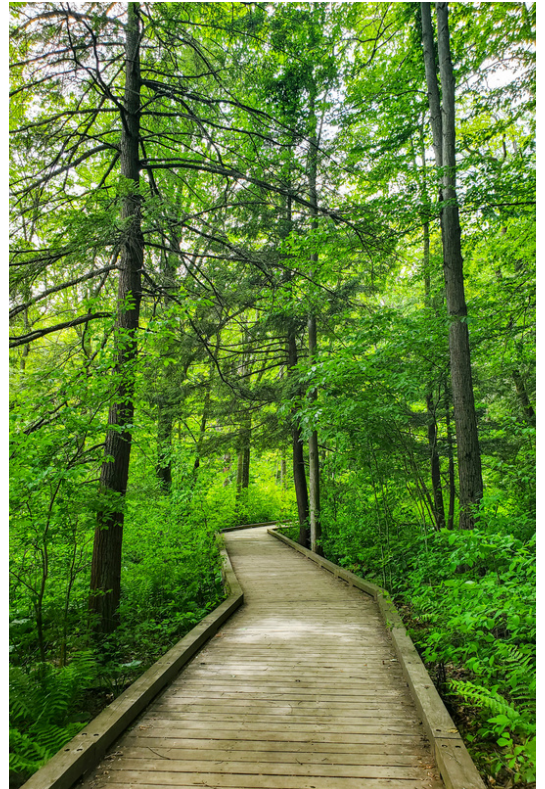
Trails:

- Find trail map [here](#)

Park Information

Hemlock Crossing County Park is located in West Olive, Michigan. The park includes 239 acres of wooded and wetland trails along the Pigeon River. There are over 6 miles of trails in the park, including a shorter paved section. The trails are composed of natural surface, boardwalks, and a large pedestrian bridge that spans the Pigeon River. Hemlock Crossing County Park has a diverse ecology, including old pine plantations, wetlands, and upland forests.

There are also two small picnic shelters, seasonal modern restrooms, rustic toilets open year-round, a kayak/canoe launch, a Nature Center that includes multiple outdoor classrooms, and a new public observatory. The park's trail system also connects it to Pine Bend County Park, where you can see the historic Weaver House. Pine Bend County Park also has parking and a pit toilet available. In the winter the Nature Center offers snowshoe rentals and many hiking events are held by Ottawa County at this park throughout the year.



Park History

Hemlock Crossing County Park and Pine Bend County Park were established in 1997. Between the years of 1997 and 2000, the property was bought from eight different landowners. Two different grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) helped with the purchase of the property. The master plan for the park was completed in 2000 and the first phase of park improvements were completed in 2003 with the help of an additional MNRTF grant. In 2010, the second phase was completed with the construction of the Nature Education Center and parking.

The name for Hemlock Crossing County Park actually comes from the eastern hemlock trees that are common to the Pigeon River greenway and the pedestrian bridge that allows visitors to cross the Pigeon River from the park's trailhead. Pine Bend County Park was named for the pine groves found in the park.

The historic Weaver House on the property was built in 1901 for Fridrich's Point Resort, which was in operation until 1918. A popular dance hall called Styx hall was located there from 1920 to 1959. The house is now renovated and has been used for many meetings, weddings, and other functions.



What to Expect

Hemlock Crossing County Park doesn't get the attention it deserves, in my opinion. Although it's not on the lakeshore, it offers wildlife and great views along the Pigeon River. And I personally love any trail system that has enough miles that I can explore for hours.

This park is very easy to navigate and offers a variety of trail views and surfaces. There are boardwalks, natural surface trails, and even a section of paved trail.


This park is easy to navigate, but is marked with the intent of directing one-way ski traffic. For hiking purposes, the trails are not one-way. However, there may be trails shown on the map that don't have arrows directing you towards them. I recommend exploring across the bridge on your first visit to find the best views.



NORTH OTTAWA DUNES


18201 N Shore Rd, Spring Lake, MI 49456




 **Access:** Free parking at Coast Guard Park, paid parking at North Beach Park (\$8/day), open 7 am - 10 pm

 **Seasonal Restrictions:** None

 **ADA Accessible:** No

 **Available Amenities:** Picnic tables, seasonal modern restrooms

 **Dog-Friendly:** Yes, on a leash

 **Trails:**
• Find trail map [here](#)

Park Information

North Ottawa Dunes is located in Ferrysburg, Michigan.

The park is nearly 600 acres with the latest 2017 acquisition. The park features an elevation of 185 feet composed of parabolic dune formations. There are 8 distinct dunes on the property exceeding 750 feet in height.

Over 10 miles of hiking trails traverse the dune landscape, connecting the park to Coast Guard Park, North Beach Park, P.J. Hoffmaster State Park, and the new subset of the park called Ottawa Sands. It is also one of the largest wooded dune areas still preserved in the West Michigan area.



Park History

North Ottawa Dunes was first established in 2005. The biggest proponent of the project was John Scholtz, the leader of the Ottawa County Parks Commission since 1987. Scholtz recognized the importance of conserving remaining open space around Lake Michigan, the Grand River, and other waterways.

With contributions from the state and leveraging county funds and support, Scholtz spearheaded the purchase of the original 513-acre North Ottawa Dunes property. The land was purchased from a mining firm that had plans to mine the dunes and build houses. Scholtz persuaded the owners to sell the property to Ottawa County for \$2 million less than it was worth. Trails and parking were completed in 2009.

The project created a five-mile greenway along the coast of Lake Michigan as it linked North Beach Park to P.J. Hoffmaster State Park. Between all of these parks, over 1,800 acres of open space were preserved and made accessible for recreation. North Ottawa Dunes was expanded again in 2017 with a purchase of 80-acres of backdune forest, already surrounded by the park on 3 sides. In 2019, an additional purchase of the current Ottawa Sands park was added to make a total of 2,000 acres.



What to Expect

I love this park for a couple of reasons. It has all of the challenging terrain, great dune forest views, and easy-to-navigate trails without the crowds of P.J. Hoffmaster State Park. And it even has trail access to the state park.

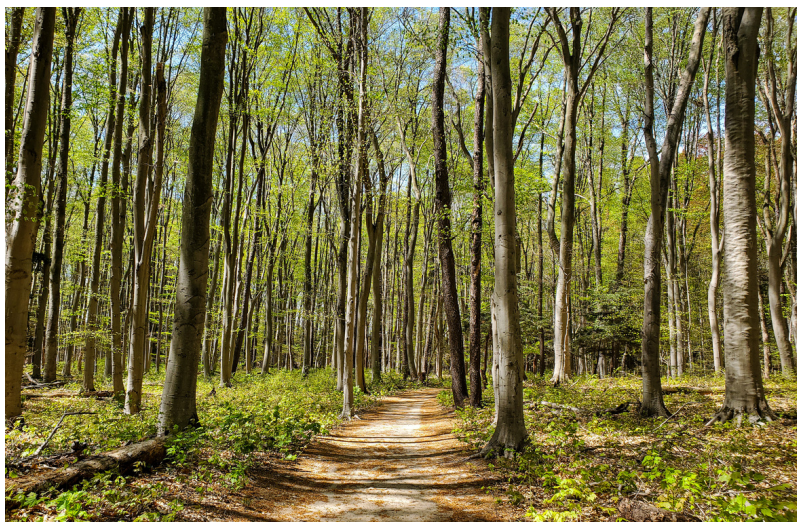
When I'm in need of a long 10+ mile hike, this is where I go. I'll hike all the way up the trail to the North Ottawa Dunes beach access trail and then walk the beach until I find the state park trail of my choosing to loop all the way back. You get the best of everything from forest to beach on a long hike here.

I always park in Coast Guard Park when I visit and hike into North Ottawa Dunes. And as far as after that, you can't go wrong with any trail route you choose here in any season.



PIGEON CREEK COUNTY PARK

12524 Stanton St, West Olive, MI 49460



Access: Free, open 7 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: Limited hiking/snowshoe trail access in the winter, most trails reserved for cross-country skiing



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: Rustic toilet, picnic tables, grills, benches, snowshoe + cross-country ski rentals, sledding hill



Dog-Friendly: Yes, on a leash, but not during winter season



Trails:

- [Summer Trail Map](#)
- [Winter Trail Map](#)

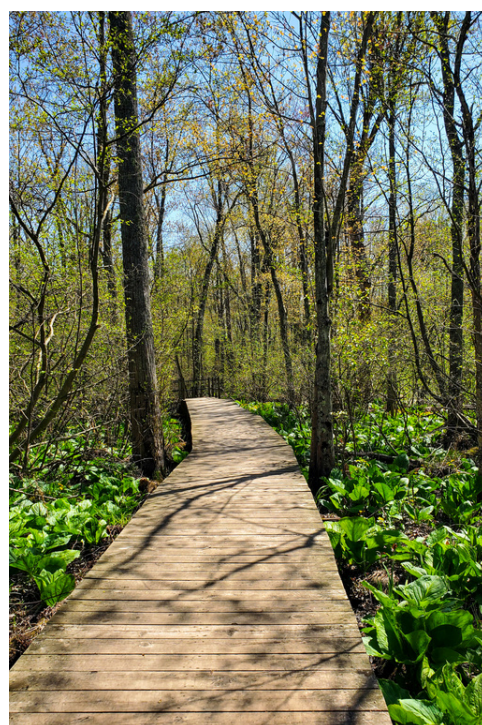
Park Information

Pigeon Creek County Park is located in West Olive, Michigan.

The park includes 282 acres with an additional 130 acres of County Open Space across the street. There are over 10 miles of hiking in the park, winding through old pine forests, deciduous forests, and swamp forests along the Pigeon River.

There is also a lodge in the park open for rentals and cross-country ski operations in the winter. The park offers ski and snowshoe rentals as well as sledding in the winter. In the summer the trails are open to hiking, biking, and horseback riding.

Pigeon Creek County Park also has a group campsite on the grounds available for groups from recognized organizations.



Park History

Pigeon Creek Park was established in 1937.

The original acquisition of land was only 112 acres, which made park officials consider getting rid of the property. At the time, the land's only feature was an overgrown scenic drive. It was named after an extinct passenger pigeon that roosted in large numbers along the creek.

John Scholtz was a major proponent of expanding the park and helped with expansions and development. In 1992, a Zeeland resident named Harold Berghorst donated 80 acres to the park. A grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund was used to buy 90 more acres in 1993.

Another grant was used to construct trails, boardwalks, and the lodge facilities between 1995 and 1996.



What to Expect

Pigeon Creek Park is a year-round recreational park for outdoor enthusiasts. It's a great place for hiking spring through fall, with towering stands of pine trees, creek views, and miles of trails to explore. The trail also features a boardwalk loop and some major hills to make the terrain more interesting.

The major downfall to this park for hikers is the winter season. In normal snow conditions, the trails here are designated for cross country skiing. A short trail section of only about a mile allows for snowshoeing or hiking. And dogs are not allowed during the winter. For this reason, I usually avoid this park in the winter for hiking.

The other three seasons of the year are where this park shines for hiking. In addition, if you time it right, you can hike at night using the lighted trails they turn on for skiing in the winter. Watching conditions in early winter or the beginning for spring. On their website they will indicate if trails are open to hikers still or only for skiing.

This is nice for when it gets dark early and you want to go for a hike later in the day.



ROSY MOUND NATURAL AREA

13925 Lakeshore Ave, Grand Haven, MI 49417



Access: \$8/day parking Memorial Day to Labor Day, free parking in off-season, open 7 am - 10 pm



Seasonal Restrictions: None



ADA Accessible: No



Available Amenities: Modern restrooms near trailhead, rustic toilets near beach, picnic tables, grills, shade canopy, benches



Dog-Friendly: No



Trails:

- Find trail details [here](#)

Park Information

Rosy Mound Natural Area is located in Grand Haven, Michigan. This park is currently 164-acres, with 3,400 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline. The park features a 2.2 mile trail system, something that will be changing with upcoming park expansions. The trail system includes 1,000 feet of stairs up and down the dunes. There are scenic woodland views, the dune blowout in the distance, and classic Lake Michigan shoreline views. Natural surface trails and stairs wind through the woods, while boardwalks pave the way through the dunes near the lakeshore.

A paved parking area with restrooms is available at the main entrance. Down by Lake Michigan, there is also a shade canopy and rustic toilets. There are parking fees from Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day. These are for some local Ottawa County Parks and are not covered by a Michigan Recreation Passport. Permits can be purchased online or at the on-site kiosk. Onsite permits will be \$8 per day or \$25 for an annual permit. If you purchase online, there are discounts for Ottawa County residents and seniors for annual passes. You can find more about purchasing these permits [here](#).



Park History

Rosy Mound Natural Area was originally established in 2004. This project has been an ongoing mission of the Ottawa County Parks commission since its establishment and to this day. The Ottawa County Parks commission was established in 1987, and there are records from 1989 of Rosy Mound being identified as a primary site they wanted to preserve. The dunes in this area were timbered in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In 1924, the sand dunes were being mined by the Kinney Sand Company, later becoming the Standard Sand Company. The first interest in preserving the land started with students at Rosy Mound Elementary School petitioning a local senator in the 1960s. The Standard Sand Company mining the area later cooperated with the state with the purchase of and deeding of the land to Ottawa County. Arsonists actually set fire to the mining buildings in 2019, which prompted the demolishing of the old sand mine. By 2021 the old mine had been removed.

In 2023, the Ottawa County Parks Commission received the first of two \$1.65 million state grants that will be used to expand Rosy Mound Natural Area. These grants will be used to purchase adjacent property owned by Tacoma Industries and used for sand mining in past years. The property totals 127 acres, 72 of which were undisturbed by mining, and 55 acres that have been undergoing revegetation by Tacoma Industries. The first grant will be used to purchase half of the property, and if the second grant is approved, the second half of the property will likely be purchased in late 2024 or early 2025. This expansion will double the available trail system at the park and offer more scenic views of the dunes.



What to Expect

If you don't mind stairs and love any trail with a beach view, this park is for you. The trail system is relatively short, but new expansions will be changing that in the next few years. And despite only being a couple miles long, the trail at Rosy Mound is a great challenge every time.

From the parking area, the trail will take you up a dune by way of stairs. The trail is pretty level from there until you reach a lookout of the rest of the park. From there more stairs take you all the way down to the boardwalk through the sand dunes. Waterfront access is a little limited due to some flooding that wiped out the platforms, but this park is great for any time of day, year-round. In particular, it's great at sunset and popular for engagement shoots.



OTHER WEST MICHIGAN TRAILS



HONORABLE MENTIONS

Parks That Didn't Make the Cut

Crockery Creek Natural Area

Located in Nunica, Michigan, this 331-acre natural area sits along the Grand River and Crockery Creek. There are around 2 miles of hiking trails that include creek views, floodplain forest, and meadows. This park is also home to a variety of wildlife like bald eagles, sandhill cranes, woodpeckers, and river otters.

There is a farm house and barn at the park from a Centennial Farm, now closed to the public. There is limited parking and the park is open from 7 am to 10 pm or sunset. The park also has a portable toilet onsite. Dogs are allowed as long as they're leashed. This is a great park for a quick hike with great views. Although it can get muddy in the spring, Crockery Creek Natural Area offers great views year-round, especially in the fall when the leaves turn color. The trail offers some stairs, hills, and a variety of views to enjoy.

Eastmanville Farm County Park

Located in Coopersville, Michigan, this 229-acre park was originally the site of Ottawa County's "poor farm." The "poor farm" provided housing and work for any indigent residents. Today you can still see the old barn from the 1930's and the historic cemetery. Portions of the park are now leased to the West Michigan Agriculture Education Center.

Over 4 miles of trails wind through open fields, alongside planted corn fields, and through the woods. Deer and other wildlife are abundant here. Part of the property does sit across the road along 1,367 feet of Grand River shoreline, but there is no trail access. The park is open from 7 am to 10 pm or sunset. There is parking for both cars and horse trailers available. The park also has a modern restroom near the trailhead.

Trails are designated for equestrian use and hiking, and dogs are allowed on a leash. The trails at Eastmanville Farm County Park can get muddy in the spring months and sometimes aren't mowed often enough in the summer. This park is unique for its amazing sunrises and sunset golden hours. Many photographers love to take advantage of the great lighting here.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Parks That Didn't Make the Cut

Mosquito Creek Trails

Located in Twin Lake, Michigan, this 550-acre park is a massive project that was just completed in the last few years. Primarily geared towards fat tire or mountain biking, this trail system is also open to hikers and dogs on leashes. The trail is open from dawn to dusk. The now completed trail system offers over 12 miles of trails with hills and curves taking the trail through the forest into the valley near Mosquito Creek.

Hikers have the right-of-way on these trails but pay attention to the designated trail direction for mountain bikers on the given day. It's often easier to go against bike traffic instead of with it. You'll also want to skip any earbuds and pay attention to your surroundings here because of all the bike traffic. Even though this park is intended for mountain biking, it is still a great hike in any season with beautiful views.

Fallasburg Park

Located in Lowell, Michigan, this 250-acre park doesn't actually have its own hiking trail network. The park offers a historic covered bridge, picnic areas, and a disc golf course. The park is open from 7 am to sunset and there is a portable restroom available at the disc golf course. Despite not having an actual hiking trail system, a segment of the North County National Scenic Trail goes through this park. The North Country Trail is actually the longest trail in the National Trails System, totaling 4,800 miles across eight states from North Dakota to Vermont.

Fallasburg Park offers a great access point to hike a segment of the North Country Trail. This 2.2 section of trail starts near the disc golf course, but can also be accessed from the other side of the park by crossing the pedestrian trail on the bridge. The trail follows the east side of the Flat River, going all the way into Fallasburg. From that point, you can detour to the right to see the historic Fallsburg Covered Bridge, built in 1871. Dogs are allowed, as long as they're leashed.

I hiked this trail in the winter, and the views along the river were beautiful I highly recommend checking out this trail if you're looking for a new opportunity to explore in the area or just want to say you've hiked part of the North Country Trail.

ADA ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

Rail Trails in West Michigan

North Bank Trail

The North Bank Trail will be 18 miles upon completion, connecting the Village of Spring Lake Bike Path to the Musketawa Trail. The trail is currently 5.2 miles and primarily follows the route of the former Grand Trunk Railroad. The current non-motorized, paved trail goes from Fruitport Road to 112th Ave in Nunica. There is parking for this trail on Fruitport Road in Central Park, on 144th, and 112th. The North Bank Trail offers scenic views like blueberry fields, woodlands, and marshes to enjoy on your adventure. This is a favorite walking path of mine and a great place to get outside with limited mobility.

Spoonville Trail

The Spoonville Trail is a 3.5-mile non-motorized, paved trail that offers great views, bridges, and wildlife. The trail got its name from a ghost town that used to be located at the mouth of Crockery Creek on the Grand River. As the Spoonville Trail leaves the Nunica Trailhead on 112th, it weaves through the Terra Verde golf course, past the Spoonville Trailhead on 120th, and then over the Grand River on M-231 via the Sgt. Henry E. Plant Memorial Bridge. The trail ends at the M-231 Trailhead on North Cedar Road, where the Idema Explorers Trail intersects with the trail. The section across the Grand River offers the chance of spotting bald eagles, and the views are great on this trail year-round.

For more information on non-motorized, paved trails in Grand Haven, Spring Lake, and Ferrysburg, check out this link [here](#).

Musketawa Trail

The Musketawa Trail is a 25-mile section of trail that begins in Marne and ends in East Muskegon. This trail is available for use year-round, taking you through orchards and fields on the way to the lakeshore. The trail also includes six wildlife observation decks, signage, benches, and more. Trailheads to access the path are available at 8th Avenue, Sehler Street, Blackner Street, and Broadway Street. You can find the trail map [here](#). The Musketawa Trail connects with the western Laketown Trail at the Blackner Street Trailhead and the eastern Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail at the 8th Avenue Trailhead.

ADA ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

Rail Trails in West Michigan

Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail

The Fred Meijer Pioneer Trail is a 9-mile non-motorized, paved trail that connects the Musketawa Trail, the Fred Meijer White Pine State Trail, and other trails in the City of Grand Rapids. The views along the rail trail get progressively more urban as it crosses Alpine Avenue and heads across West River Drive, ending at Lamoreaux Memorial Park. Trailheads can be found on 8th Avenue, Fruitridge Avenue, and at Lamoreaux Memorial Park. You can find the trail map via the link [here](#).

White Pine Trail

The Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park is 92 miles in total, connecting Comstock Park to Cadillac. It follows the rail line of the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad. Most of the trail is paved and open to non-motorized use, except for 22 miles of the trail between Howard City and Big Rapids that is gravel. The main trailhead in West Michigan is at Rogue River Park in Belmont. Other trailheads or access areas can be found [here](#).

Kent Trail

The Kent Trail is a 15-mile, non-motorized trail that connects John Ball Park and Millennium Park to Byron Center. This rail trail offers a great way to get outside in the Grand Rapids area. It offers several bridges, tunnels, and views of urban, suburban, and rural Kent County. To access the trail, there are four main trailheads. The trailheads include North Millennium Trailhead near John Ball Zoo, 84th Street in Byron Center, Johnson Park, and Douglas Walker Park.

For more about the Kent Trail and other trail systems in the Grand Rapids area, check out this link [here](#).

ADA ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

Scenic Park and Trails in West Michigan

Reeds Lake

The Reeds Lake Trail is a great paved trail option for walking, running, or cycling. It's located north of East Beltline in East Grand Rapids. The sidewalks, paved pathways, and boardwalks are ADA accessible. Reeds Lake Trail is 4.2 miles in length, with views of woodlands, wetlands, and residential areas around Reeds Lake. The boardwalk section of the trail actually becomes Waterfront Park, and offers the chance of wildlife like birds, minnows, and frogs. Bikes are not allowed on the boardwalk section of the trail. You can find more details and a trail map [here](#).

Riverside Park

Riverside Park offers 3.7 miles of out-and-back paved trail. It is located east of Alpine Avenue and US-131 in Comstock Park. While the park offers many amenities like an accessible kayak launch, picnic shelters, free wi-fi, modern restrooms, athletic fields, disc golf, and playgrounds, the Grand River views make for a great walk any time of year. Because of its proximity to the Grand River, parts of Riverside Park can be prone to flooding, so use caution when visiting after a lot of rain or snowmelt.

Millennium Park

Millennium Park is one of America's largest urban parks, sprawled across Grand Rapids, Walker, Grandville, and Wyoming. It's located south of John Ball Zoo on the Grand River. The park has 1,400 acres and 6 miles of frontage along the Grand River. The park includes a 6-acre beach, seasonal bathroom facilities, playgrounds, volleyball courts, water recreation access, and more. Millennium Park has over 18 miles of trails, the majority of which are trailed and ADA accessible. The trails offer the opportunity to explore around the lakes in the park or along the Grand River. A map of the facilities and trails at Millennium Park can be found [here](#).

ADA ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

Scenic Park and Trails in West Michigan

Anderson Woods

The Anderson Woods Nature Preserve was established in 2015 and features a wheelchair and stroller accessible trail system. Located in Whitehall, Michigan, the trail totals 2 miles and winds through an oak and white pine forest. The South Loop is fully accessible, but the North Loop offers a more rustic and less accessible way to explore. Two handicap-accessible parking spaces are available in the parking lot but beware that this parking area is small and can fill up quickly.

The Sandy Hansen Birding Trail that winds through the forest offers a chance at seeing birds, deer, turkeys, and other wildlife. You can view the trail map [here](#).

Grand Ravines

Grand Ravines is divided into two different sections. The first is the Grand Ravines North County Park and the other is Grand Ravines Dog Park, or Grand Ravines South. The park totals 202 acres and has a half mile of frontage on the Grand River. There are almost 3 miles of trails in the park.

While a section of the park isn't paved, a large part of the park is. For best ADA-accessibility, start from the dog park or one of the first parking areas in the North section of the park. Take the trail away from the river from either trailhead and travel the outside loop of the trail closest to the road. This way you can still explore the overlooks and check out the suspension bridge but can avoid any major hills or unpaved trails. The lodge deck and lower parking lot offer great views of the Grand River without wandering far from your vehicle.

As its name suggests, the park offers views of deep ravines formed along the Grand River waterfront as well as wildlife and unique plant life. A map of the park can be found [here](#).



REFLECTION + REFERENCES



PROJECT REFLECTION

My Experience and Thoughts About This Project

This project was so much more than I expected it to be, in so many ways. It started as a simple idea that I was really excited about. My goal was to compile a list of the best hiking trails in West Michigan. To me, this was a great opportunity to educate others about getting outside and point them towards some great places to explore.

The more research I began to do, the more I realized that this project was more than I had anticipated. There were 26 parks I still need to visit to be able to properly determine if they were worthy of the top 5 parks for each county. The guide itself quickly expanded to include two pages for each park, honorable mentions, ADA accessible trails, and more about how I chose the final parks. While I was being proactive about managing my time on this independent project, it seemed like my to-do list was growing rather than shrinking. My schedule and winter weather also made this project difficult. I had two free days per week and it seemed like the weather was never nice on those days.

And then I had a partial dislocation of my right kneecap while on a trip in the Upper Peninsula in February. I had over 15 parks left to visit at that point and no idea when I'd be able to hike again. I decided to focus on the guide portion of my project and focus on recovering as fast as possible. I ended up finishing all of the parks in marathon days where I took on all of the parks for a county and hiked over 10 miles each day just hitting the highlights of each park. I went with my supportive knee brace, hiking poles, and someone to drive me. I couldn't fathom changing my project so I was determined to make it work. I ended up finishing all of the hikes by my deadline and devoting the rest of my time to working on the guide. In a weird way, having to take time off from my part-time job due to my injury freed up some time, I needed for this project.

I can't even begin to quantify the amount of time I spent on this guide. Between all of the hiking, travel, research, editing, and design work, I spent a large portion of my semester working on this. I learned so much while completing this project. I had the opportunity to independently set and meet deadlines over a period of 4 months. I was also able to further develop a lot of creative skills like design, photography, editing, and writing. It was fun to take a hobby I love and create a guide for others to find places to hike in the area.

Even though this project turned out to be more of an undertaking that I intended, I'm so grateful for the experience and excited to share what I hope will be a valuable resource with others.

REFERENCES

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BEST WEST MICHIGAN HIKING TRAILS

After visiting 45 parks in the West Michigan area, I've narrowed them down to the best 20 for hiking in Allegan, Kent, Muskegon, and Ottawa County. Find everything you need to know to explore them for yourself, including educational resources, honorable mentions, and ADA accessible trails.

