

# MICHIGAN'S BEST

## [ Michigan's Best ]

Stories for foodies, adventurers, business men and women, innovation that uplifts our communities, and the many things that make Michigan a remarkable place to live and thrive.

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# LUDINGTON *Summer* ROAD TRIP

Beaches | Hiking & Biking | Restaurants & Breweries  
Lighthouses | Adventure | And More

Brought to you by:

PURE  
#LUDINGTON

## SUMMER IN LUDINGTON IS A DAY AT THE BEACH

As home of the longest freshwater coastline in the world, we're blessed with lots of water here in Michigan. We are the Great Lakes State, after all!

But with record-high lake levels, we now have so much water it can be hard to enjoy all that coastline. Many beaches are cramped and have even disappeared in some places.

Not in Ludington. There's plenty of shore where you can spread out a blanket and soak in the wonderful beauty of our Michigan.

With so many of you staying closer to home this summer and trading long-distance vacations for drivable destinations right here in our state, we'd like to invite you to experience Pure Ludington.

Not only can you relax and recharge at the beaches in Ludington, but there's opportunity for outdoor recreation all over Mason County. Here are just a few ways you can get out in the fresh air of Ludington and immerse yourself in the unique splendor of your own state's backyard:

### **SAFETY FIRST!**

Learn about COVID-19 precautions in the Ludington area at [staysafemasoncounty.com](https://staysafemasoncounty.com).



### **Beaches**

There's still a ton of beachfront in the Ludington area along Lake Michigan, from the half-mile of sandy shore at Stearns Park Beach downtown to

the seven miles of pristine shoreline leading to the iconic Big Sable Point lighthouse in Ludington State Park. The state park also has an inland lake beach along the warm, shallow waters of Hamlin Lake, one of the largest inland lakes in the Lower Peninsula.

### **Lakes**

For water recreation, there's no shortage of options in Ludington. There's Lake Michigan, of course, which is great for everything on water from skipping stones to wind surfing. There's also all-sports Hamlin and Bass lakes for boating as well as Pere Marquette and Lincoln lakes for fishing.

### **Rivers**

Paddle the Lincoln River, enjoy a family-friendly float by tube down the Big Sable River in Ludington State Park or explore the wilderness of the Manistee National Forest by way of the many canoe liveries along the Pere Marquette River.

### **Trails**

For an overland adventure, you can hike, bike or ride off road vehicles through the massive Manistee National Forest. Hiking and biking trails weave through Ludington State Park, too, and there's an Urban Single Track system that's perfect for novice mountain bikers with 10 miles of trails in town.

### **Events**

Precautions surrounding COVID-19 have resulted in many summer events being cancelled around Michigan, but there's still a lot going on in Ludington. From a summerlong farmers market and monthly bonfires on the beach to weekly live music events downtown, there's something happening whenever you visit this summer.

***We haven't even mentioned golf, ice cream at House of Flavors, shoreline tours on the SS Badger...the list goes on! To plan your visit, go to [pureludington.com](https://pureludington.com)!***



## Beaches, trails and waterfront eats make Ludington the 'front door to Up North'

TANDA GMITER | [tgmiter@mlive.com](mailto:tgmiter@mlive.com)

Longtime Ludington fans know to expect it, but it still catches first-time visitors by surprise: that sparkling expanse of Lake Michigan, lapping right at the edge of downtown.

Ludington is one of those true Michigan beach towns where everything is designed to take advantage of the water. The town's main thoroughfare leads right to it. Gorgeous beaches flank it, not only in the city but just up the road where a gem of a state park is neatly sandwiched between the Great Lake and a popular inland lake - and its connecting river.

Add into that a downtown with lots of local shops and a handful of great restaurants and breweries, and it's not a surprise some vacationers don't consider themselves having reached Northern Michigan until they've landed in Ludington.

"That's kind of how we describe ourselves - We're the front door to Up North," said Brandy Miller, executive director of the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

While summer and fall are the top tourist times, this spot has really become a four-season getaway. If you're hitting the road for Ludington, check out the next few pages to round out your trip



## Beaches

**Stearns Park Beach:** This one is right in town. It's got a half-mile of sandy beach, playground and concessions. It's a great gathering place to stay and play during the day or stroll at the water's edge at sunset.

**Buttersville Park Beach:** Typically a quieter spot, this beach is located on the south side of the Pere Marquette River channel and has a nearby campground.

**Ludington State Park:** This is the ultimate beach experience. The popular state park boasts several miles of shoreline and sandy beaches on both Lake Michigan and the inland Hamlin Lake. There are beachside playgrounds, picnic tables and concessions. You can follow the shoreline all the way to a lighthouse, or float down the Big Sable River until you reach Lake Michigan.



## Hiking and Biking

Pack your comfortable walking shoes or day hikers and don't forget to load up your bike – or plan to rent one from the bike shops in town. The Ludington area has miles of trails built for exploring. If you're headed to Ludington State Park, it's got a bike trail connecting all three of its campgrounds, as well as a non-paved road out to the Big Sable Point Lighthouse that draws bikers.

The state park also offers a 4-mile

canoe trail, 10 miles of cross-country skiing trails in the winter, and more than 25 miles of hiking trails that range from backdune to forest to marshland. Hint: the Lost Lake Trail is a favorite for kids, with its boardwalk, shady pathways and wildlife viewing spots.

Closer to town, try the Cartier Park Pathway, which offers trails for walking, road biking and a contoured, single-track mountain biking route called "The Dragon." Cyclists say it's as fun to ride as its name implies.



*The "dog days of summer" refer to the dates from July 3rd to August 11th. They are named so after Sirius the Dog Star. This star is located in the constellation of Canis Major*

## S.S. Badger

No trip to Ludington would be complete without seeing the S.S. Badger. This 600-passenger ship is a National Historic Landmark, and the last coal-fired car ferry operating on the Great Lakes. It makes one round-trip a day between its Ludington berth and Manitowoc, Wisconsin. It can accommodate 180 vehicles for those who want to drive off and start an adventure on the other side of Lake Michigan. It's also full of interesting things to do and see (Hint: Check out the Badger Bingo game), and its top deck has plenty of room to spread out and enjoy the waterfront view for the four-hour trip. Private staterooms can also be reserved.

**For more information on travel times and amenities, check the Badger's website.**



“Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability.”

SAM KEEN

## Get a little wild

Want a little deeper back-to-nature experience? Check out Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area. These 3,400 acres stretch along Lake Michigan, north of Ludington State Park. This national forest land offers hiking and rustic camping. "The wilderness area is popular for hiking, camping, hunting, nature study and wildlife viewing," according to the U.S. Forest Service.

"There are approximately 10 miles of trail that can be accessed from two developed trailheads at the end of Nurnberg Road and Lake Michigan Recreation Area." It can be a day trip or a mini-vacation, depending on your timeline. For trail maps and details on camping regulations, check the Nordhouse Dunes website.





## Lighthouses

The Ludington area has two spots for lighthouse lovers. The biggest draw is Big Sable Point Lighthouse, a towering black-and-white column that is best accessed via a trail in Ludington State Park. The point itself was named by French explorers, and the lighthouse was built in 1867. In the 1940s, it became the last Great Lakes lighthouse to get electricity. While the tower itself is not open for visitors during the 2020 season, the lighthouse gift shop is open for weekend visitors.

The North Breakwater Light is another popular spot, this one right in town at Stearns Park Beach. It's a great spot to walk out to see the sunset, or wave at the S.S. Badger as it heads across the lake or is pulling into port.

*On average, the summer water temp of Lake Michigan is between 62° to 68°*



## Hidden Gem

If you've got kids in tow, make sure to try the city's Waterfront Park for a little down time. It's not only a great place to see the S.S. Badger, but it sits between two marinas, so there's plenty of boat-watching to be had. There's a big playground for kids and a unique sculpture park that gives visitors a little history lesson about the area. The sculptures also have QR codes, allowing you to scan them for a little audio tour of the artwork and what they represent.

## Restaurants and Breweries

Some are relatively new additions, while others are Ludington staples. Here's a rundown of some spots to check out when you're on the hunt for a meal or a craft beer and a snack. Some of these come with amazing rooftop or waterfront views.



**The Q Smokehouse:** 225 S. James St. Slow-smoked meats are the hallmarks of this eatery. Currently, it offers online ordering and a convenient outside ordering/pickup system. You can do strictly take-out or enjoy your food outside on tables. Find the menu on the website and see the Facebook page for updates.

For more information about planning your next trip to Ludington, go online to [pureludington.com](http://pureludington.com)



**Jamesport Brewing Company:** 410 S. James St. More than a century ago this spot was a saloon whose seats were filled by sailors and lumbermen. Now it's a place for craft beer lovers who want a good meal served up alongside their brew of choice. Check their website for the latest beer list and their Facebook page for updates.



**House of Flavors Restaurant:** 402 W. Ludington Ave. Now in its third generation of Neal family ownership, House of Flavors' flagship location is a downtown magnet for ice cream and sundae lovers and those seeking a bit of 50's diner-style nostalgia. Each year, the manufacturing side of the operation produces more than 30 million gallons of ice cream. Up for a challenge – or planning to bring friends? Order The Pig's Dinner and get a collector pin.



**Old Hamlin:** 122. W. Ludington Ave. A family-owned restaurant right downtown, this place is a staple. It's known for its buffet, big menu and Friday Fish Fry. To see its menu and specials, check its website and Facebook page.

**PM Steamers Restaurant:** 502 W. Loomis St. A waterfront locale and a steak-and-seafood menu make this a spot for locals as well as vacationers. See the website for seating times and more details.



**Blu Moon Bistro:** 125 S. James St. This eatery draws people in with an eclectic menu – fusion, sushi, Americana with a twist, anyone? – and delights them with a rooftop deck, one of two outdoor seating options. Find updates on their Facebook page and a menu on their website.



**Ludington Bay Brewing Co.:** 515 S. James St. With about 20 brews on tap daily, you'll want to check this brewery's website for the latest seasonal lineup. Menu runs from solid pub food to an array of creative pizzas and a conversation-starter Adult Mac & Cheese entrée, which you can load up with chicken, bacon or grilled fresh jalapenos.





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STARTS HERE.**



**PURELUDINGTON.COM**