

SUMMER FUN

Explore the Hidden Gems Right in your Backyard

by Katie Grevious

Nothing beats summertime in Michigan. Sandy beaches, lush forests and electric cities all have something to offer. Whether you want to take the family away for the weekend, or get your employees out of the office for the day, there are hidden gems right in your Michigan backyard.

A Walk to Remember

Ghosts, beer, art, history. These are just some of the magical tours offered by BBB Accredited Business Tours Around Michigan. Owner and Operator Candice Smith finds stories about the greater Grand Rapids area and shares the experiences that people often don't know about.

"Our main goal is to really inspire people to keep exploring and go out and find things that are fun," says Smith. "We

do show visitors around town, but we get a lot of locals because they get to see the state in a totally different way."

Smith is passionate about sharing unique stories and inspiring people to keep exploring and keep researching. That's why she offers both preset tour experiences and customizable ones. And it's not just families who enjoy exploring. Tours for business groups are also available to help employees make connections outside of the office. Smith says corporate groups find success from the brewery, winery and distillery tours.

"Corporate groups are a way for people to get out together to help the team bond," says Smith. "It gives them something to talk about that is a little different and creates memories together."

Tours Around Michigan also takes pride in making every tour accessible for anyone with mobility, hearing, sight or sensory limitations. The company is even adding an electric bike tour through Ada to expand exploration on tougher terrain. You can check out opportunities for your family and your colleagues on their website, toursaroundmichigan.com.



The Lazy River

Skip the crowded beaches and hot sand this summer, and enjoy a leisurely float down the Muskegon River. BBB accredited business Wisner Rents Canoes can help you every step of the way, from tube, kayak, raft and boat rentals, to pick up and drop off from along the river. The family-run business has been around for more than 50 years. Owner and President Rachel Wisner says with an awesome crew and amazing customers, it's easy to have a great experience.

"The river is absolutely gorgeous and we have a ton of people who really care about it. You can see the bottom, even when it's 12 feet deep," says Wisner. "It's not a party river—it is more family centered—and there is no white water, so you can relax and enjoy and not worry about what's around the bend."

Wisner Rents Canoes has catered to a variety of groups over the years, including corporate gatherings and even a wedding. Wisner says the experience is beginner oriented, and guests are encouraged to sit back and relax.

"When we rent out, we rent for the entire day. We don't put a time limit on you," says Wisner. "You're more than welcome to take your time on your trip and have a blast."

You can plan your next canoeing, kayaking, floating or fishing trip by visiting their website, wisnercanoes.com.

Become One with Nature

A gentle breeze rustling trees, the soft chirp of birds and the soothing motion of waves upon sand are just some of the peaceful experiences found in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy nonprofit works diligently to preserve natural spaces in five northern counties.

"We've identified properties in this area that are absolutely critical to protect because of their natural features or their ability to be working agricultural land or their importance to a community," says Jay. "Our mission is to protect that land, and to advance stewardship now and for future generations."

Whether you like hiking, bird watching, or just want to enjoy peaceful scenery, all of this hard work has created natural environments that anyone can enjoy.

"These stunning natural areas can be life-changing. You'll see birds and wildlife and wild flowers that perhaps you didn't even know existed," says Jay. "There's access to water frontage and beaches, there's something for everyone."

There are accessible trails for those with mobility limitations, and even guided hikes for those looking to try something new. A full list of areas to experience, events and volunteer activities can be found online at gtrlc.org.

You can find these and many other amazing BBB Accredited Businesses at BBB.org.

