

## Yooper Silver Trail Caravan

Just imagine leaving Texas in mid-September, hitching up your shiny Airstream, and heading north toward Michigan. It's as if Mother Nature laid out a red carpet just for us. The drive is about 1300 miles, but once you arrive, it's the best time: fewer crowds after Labor Day, cooler temperatures in the 60s and 70s, and golden sunlight filtering through the first hints of fall colors. No more sweltering Texas heat – just crisp air that refreshes without overwhelming, perfect for an outdoor adventure.

Lower Michigan: Yoopers call residents of the Lower Peninsula "Trolls" as a playful jab because they live "under" (or south of) the mighty Mackinac Bridge.

**The Mitten in Northern Lower Michigan**, including destinations like Traverse City, Petoskey, Mackinaw City, the Leelanau Peninsula, Sleeping Bear Dunes, and the Tunnel of Trees, offers a scenic and welcoming experience in September. This time of year offers a perfect transition from summer to fall, with mild weather, fewer crowds than in peak summer months, and the first hints of bright autumn leaves against stunning lake views.

The caravan begins in the charming village of **Suttons Bay**, a perfect spot on the eastern shore of the Leelanau Peninsula to gather the group, stretch your legs after the long drive, and soak in the area's welcoming vibe of turquoise bays, rolling hills, and laid-back charm for four days.

Venture out from Suttons Bay for rewarding day trips along the Leelanau Peninsula—scenic drives on M-22 offer stunning Lake Michigan views, vineyards, and charming stops.

- Leland: The town is very walkable with easy parking. Visit historic Fishtown, enjoy treats at local spots, walk along the harbor, or explore galleries and shops.
- Northport: Visit the Grand Traverse Lighthouse Museum and explore Leelanau State Park, great places for a picnic.
- Traverse City: Take a guided walking tour, visit The Village at Grand Traverse Commons, enjoy boat tours on Grand Traverse Bay, and rent bikes for a relaxed ride around town.
- Old Mission Peninsula: Scenic Drive along M-37, Wine Tasting, Mission Point Lighthouse, and visits to local orchards for apples.
- Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore offers breathtaking panoramic views of Lake Michigan and features the Sleeping Bear Heritage Biking Trail, ideal for exploring the area.
- Visit Glen Haven Historic Village in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, where you can explore a working blacksmith shop with live demonstrations, discover the historic Cannery and Boat Museum, and see the Coast Guard Station.

Head up north to **Indian River**, where you'll find beautiful, clear waterways surrounded by lush woods, sandy beaches, and marshes—home to a variety of wildlife like eagles, ospreys, and otters. This charming small town, nestled between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, offers a perfect setting for a laid-back three days of boating, fishing, and discovering nature. Day trips from Indian River showcase northern Michigan's waterways, history, beaches, and small-town charm—quick scenic drives (20-90 minutes) along US-31, I-75, or M-68 make them simple and enjoyable.

- Cheboygan: Discover the scenic Inland Waterways and visit the historic Cheboygan Crib Lighthouse.
- Mackinaw City features Colonial Michilimackinac, a historic fur-trading village; the Mackinaw Bridge, a stunning suspension bridge; and the Icebreaker Mackinaw Maritime Museum, showcasing maritime history and a retired icebreaker vessel.

- Discover the charm of Mackinac Island with its delectable fudge, the iconic Grand Hotel, leisurely carriage rides, and scenic biking adventures.
- Petoskey offers a charming experience with a leisurely stroll through the historic Gaslight District, a fun search for unique Petoskey stones, and a delightful ride along the scenic Little Traverse Wheelway.
- Charlevoix offers a charming downtown area perfect for a leisurely stroll, with highlights including the historic Castle Farms, the iconic Mushroom Houses renowned for their whimsical architecture, stunning views of Lake Charlevoix, and the picturesque Drawbridge.

Crossing the Mackinac Bridge from Mackinaw City to the Upper Peninsula offers a breathtaking drive across one of the world's longest suspension bridges—five miles of vibrant green spans that beautifully connect Lakes Michigan and Huron.



**The Upper Peninsula:** The Yoopers. A humorous take on “U.P.-ers” that highlights their rugged, independent spirit amid forests, lakes, and heavy snow.

Arrive in **Sault Ste. Marie**, Michigan’s oldest city, founded in 1668, is renowned for its stunning waterfront at the rapids of the St. Marys River. This historic site serves as a crucial link between Lakes Huron and Superior, offering a scenic setting for exploration over three days.

- Watch the massive freighters glide along St. Mary’s River from our beautiful campground. Enjoy waterfront activities like kayaking and paddling, relax at nearby parks, and take in stunning sunsets over the flowing river.
- Soo Locks is a busy, historic lock system with a free visitor center, viewing platforms, and exhibits on maritime history.
- Soo Locks Boat Tours are popular narrated cruises in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, that take passengers right through the famous Soo Locks on the St. Marys River.
- The Museum Ship Valley Camp is a historic 550-foot Great Lakes freighter located right next to the Soo Locks. Retired after nearly 50 years of service. It features exhibits on Great Lakes shipping history, navigation, shipwrecks, and artifacts — including a moving Edmund Fitzgerald memorial with the actual recovered lifeboats from the sinking.
- The Tower of History is a 210-foot (64 m) tall observation tower, the tallest in the area, offering 360-degree panoramic views from its decks. It offers an express elevator to the top for views of the Soo Locks, St. Marys River, the shipping channel, historic sites, the twin cities (U.S. and Canadian sides), and wilderness.
- The Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre (often called the Bushplane Museum) is a world-class, interactive aviation museum in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. It’s the only museum of its kind in Canada dedicated to preserving and celebrating Canada’s bushplane history—rugged floatplanes and aircraft used for remote wilderness flying, forest firefighting, and northern exploration.
- Sault Ste. Marie Canal National Historic Site (ON side): Walk the trails, view heritage buildings, and birdwatch along the canal.

- Take the Big Ben Double Decker Hop-on Hop-off Bus Tour[MI side]—a fun, narrated loop through downtown, highlighting sights, history, and easy stops for a full-day overview.
- A day trip from Sault Ste. Marie, MI, to Tahquamenon Falls State Park and Whitefish Point combines thundering waterfalls, dramatic Lake Superior shores, and haunting maritime history. Total round-trip: About 150-180 miles, 4-5 hours of driving (plus stops), doable in a single long day.

***Munising, MI***, offers some of the Upper Peninsula’s most breathtaking scenic drives along Lake Superior’s rugged shoreline, colorful cliffs, forests, and waterfalls for 3 days.

- Pictured Rocks Boat Tours are one of the best ways to experience the stunning cliffs, colorful sandstone formations, waterfalls, and caves of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore along Lake Superior
- MI Dogs: Led by veteran musher Laura Neese (Iditarod & Yukon Quest finisher), the 1.5-hour summer tour lets you meet her energetic Alaskan husky race team, get kisses and hugs, hear heartfelt trail stories, and learn about mushing/off-season life—all hands-on and full of joy.
- Day trip to Kitch-iti-kipi. This renowned natural attraction is Michigan’s largest freshwater spring, with more than 10,000 gallons of water per minute gushing through fissures in the underlying limestone at a constant 45 degrees Fahrenheit. By means of a self-guided (accessible) observation raft, visitors can view this crystal-clear pool with an emerald green bottom.

***Marquette, Michigan***, in September shines as a crisp, vibrant Upper Peninsula gem—Lake Superior’s southern shore town blends lively downtown energy with rugged outdoor adventures, emerging fall colors, and perfect shoulder-season calm for three days.

- Hike Presque Isle Park or Sugarloaf Mountain for reds/oranges against Lake Superior.
- Presque Isle Park: dramatic cliffs, rocky coves, easy trails with panoramic views.
- Sugarloaf Mountain: short, steep hike to 360° summit vistas of the lake and changing forests.
- Downtown: stroll historic streets, shops, galleries, breweries (Blackrocks), harborfront.
- Lake Superior fishing—September marks the start of fall runs, with salmon and trout becoming more active nearshore.
- Lakenenland Sculpture Park: free quirky metal sculptures in woods.
- Marquette Lighthouse and Maritime Museum, historic downtown, and the Ore Docks

The final stop is ***Ontonagon, Michigan***, which isn’t touristy—it’s more of an authentic small-town Michigan, with local eateries, lodging, and a focus on nature. Perfect for refreshing your spirit away from crowds, whether you enjoy outdoor activities, history, or just relaxing by the lake.

- It serves as the perfect base for exploring the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park. “The Porkies” in September—Michigan’s largest state park (over 60,000 acres) with old-growth forests, waterfalls, and vibrant fall colors that make it one of the Midwest’s top foliage destinations.
- Our campground is situated directly across from Lake Superior and the entrance to the State park. Walk along the lakeshore in search of the glowing fluorescent Yooper rocks. Our caravan finale will be at The Squeeze On Main, a charming spot in the Upper Peninsula ideal for small celebrations. It is known as a local favorite for its delicious food, friendly service, and emphasis on celebrating local culture with fresh, UP-sourced ingredients.