



## **WISCONSIN OFFERS WIDE VARIETY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION**

No matter the season – winter, spring, summer or fall – there is always something to do outside in Wisconsin. Though some recreational activities are strictly seasonal, there are plenty that can be enjoyed year-round. Visitors and natives of the state can experience the outdoors of Wisconsin at any skill or experience level, with activities ranging from hiking and biking to snowshoeing and skiing. Here is a sampling of some of the best outdoor recreation in the state:

### **Fishing**

If you thought you had to fly to Canada for big-time musky action, or head to the Pacific Northwest to catch coho and Chinook, think again. Both angling experiences can be had in Wisconsin. With more than 10,000 miles of trout streams, and plentiful musky waters in the Northwoods region, Wisconsin is a fisherman's paradise. In Lake Michigan, steelhead and brown trout also have seasonal spawning patterns and offer similar opportunities similar to coho and Chinook. Wisconsin winters are never complete without ice fishing. Die-hard fishers often spend cold winter days in ice shanties ranging from "luxurious" retreats with carpeting, heat and televisions to more humble homemade shelters. No matter what the accommodations, hardy anglers drill holes in the ice and tap into winter's cold weather catch.

### **Golf**

Once viewed as a Memorial Day to Labor Day activity, mild weather has extended Wisconsin's golf season through October and even into November. It's never too hard to find a tee time here, as Wisconsin has one of the highest ratios of courses to golfers in the nation. Among the state's top courses are Erin Hills near Hartford (site of the 2011 U.S. Amateur Championship and 2017 U.S Open); Whistling Straits in Sheboygan (site of the 2010 PGA Championship and 2007 U.S. Senior Open); Blackwolf Run in Kohler (site of the 1998 and future 2012 U.S. Women's Open); Brown Deer in Milwaukee; Northern Bay in Arkdale; The Bull at Pinehurst Farms in Sheboygan Falls, Troy Burne in Hudson; Coldwater Canyon in Wisconsin Dells;

University Ridge in Verona; Grand Geneva and Geneva National in Lake Geneva and Wild Rock Golf Club at Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

### **Hiking**

Hiking is another activity that can be done year-round in Wisconsin. One of the state's most popular destinations is Door County's Peninsula State Park, which features 20 miles of trails through hardwood forests and along towering limestone bluffs. Door County is also home to four other state parks, also great for hiking: Newport, Potawatomi, Rock Island and Whitefish Dunes. Blue Mound State Park in Blue Mounds is a favorite hiking spot in southwestern Wisconsin. Set atop the westernmost of two mounds, walkers can experience wooded trails, including the Military Ridge State Trail, and a spectacular view of the countryside from the park's perch, the highest point in southern Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Ice Age Trail, a thousand-mile-long trail located entirely within Wisconsin, offers some of the best scenery in the state and a chance for an enriching and educational trek. Information centers, such as the Ice Age Interpretive Center, and guided walks are available along the trail, which is one of the country's eleven National Scenic Trails. Hikers can travel through spruce bogs, tamaracks and marshes of remnant prairies, stand atop the beds of glacial lakes and streams, walk across freshly tended beaver dams and visit the sites of former lumber camps.

### **Biking**

With its extensive system of on-road, mountain bike and bike touring trails, Wisconsin is viewed by many insiders as one of the nation's most bicycle-friendly states. It's true, the League of American Bicyclists recently voted Wisconsin the second-best biking state in the nation for its dedication to bicycle infrastructure, education, terrain and culture.

The Badger State Trail connects Madison to the Illinois border with 40 miles of crushed limestone to accommodate bicycling, walking, hiking and snowmobiling. Trail users will find they are connected to the Capital City, Military Ridge and Sugar River state trails; Madison bikeway system; two state parks; 13 communities in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois; and numerous local parks. Wisconsin is also universally recognized as the nation's leader in "rails-to-trails" conversions. These former rail beds feature minimal grades and no motorized traffic, making them extremely popular with families, novices and experts alike. Among the best known are the Elroy-Sparta Trail in west central Wisconsin (the nation's first rails-to-trails conversion), which connects to 400 more miles of area trails; the Gandy-Dancer Trail in

northwestern Wisconsin; the Bearskin-Hiawatha Trail in northern Wisconsin; the Ahnapee Trail in Kewaunee and Door counties; and the Oak Leaf Trail in Milwaukee. Mountain biking enthusiasts will find 300 miles of premiere off-road bike trails in the CAMBA Mountain Bike Trail System, which covers located in and around the beautiful Chequamegon National Forest.

### **Birding**

The growing popularity of birding is quickly becoming an American pastime and a hobby well suited for Wisconsin. From the spectacle of thousands of migrating geese to the majesty of bald eagles, Wisconsin offers birdwatchers countless birding hot spots and festivals. Visit Bald Eagle Watching Days in Sauk City and Prairie du Sac, Horicon Marsh Bird Festival in Horicon or the annual Birding Festival in Manitowish Waters for tours, informational speakers and increased opportunities for birdwatching. A popular fall activity is the Tundra Swan Watch in Rieck's Lake Park in Alma, where the majestic birds pass through on their annual migration from northern Canada and Alaska to the Chesapeake Bay area. In south-central Wisconsin, Devil's Lake State Park and Baxter's Hollow State Natural Area in the Baraboo Hills region offer wonderful birdwatching opportunities. A perennial favorite is Horicon Marsh in southeastern Wisconsin, the nation's largest cattail marsh, spanning approximately 14 miles long and five miles wide. Birdwatchers should also visit Crex Meadows Wildlife Area in northwestern Wisconsin, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in the central part of the state, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge along the state's western border and the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo.

### **All-Terrain Vehicles**

With all-terrain vehicle (ATV) usage up dramatically over the last 10 years, ATVs are a significant part of Wisconsin's outdoor landscape. The state offers more than 5,500 miles of state-funded trails, in addition to hundreds of miles of trails located on private lands and operated by ATV clubs.

The Department of Natural Resources also offers a comprehensive ATV education program and monitors usage to ensure a safe and exciting experience for everyone. Novice and avid ATV riders alike will want to check out Wisconsin's most popular and scenic ATV trails, scattered in almost every county throughout the state. The *Wisconsin ATV Guide* is available through the Wisconsin Department of Tourism to help ATV enthusiasts in planning their trail riding adventure.

### **Zip Lining**

Zip lining is no longer something you can only do while on an exotic vacation in the rainforest. It's an exhilarating experience you can find right here in Wisconsin. In Door County, Gravity Trails offers one and two-hour zip lining tours. Soar over wooded areas, ponds and sand dunes. For a special treat, take part in the Twilight ZipLine. You'll walk the trail to the Zipline with candlelight and glowsticks before ascending a climbing wall to a 20-foot platform. Then, you'll descend like a shooting star. Two zip lining operations in Lake Geneva are Lake Geneva Canopy Tours and Aerial Adventures. Several Zipline businesses have cropped up including Bigfoot Zipline Tours, Wilderness Canyon Zip Line Canopy Tour and Vertical Illusions.

### **Paddling**

One of the best ways to enjoy the natural beauty Wisconsin has to offer is along its shorelines, riverbanks and lakes. Paddlers can choose from whitewater or flat-water canoeing, kayaking and rafting, and many areas throughout Wisconsin can accommodate lovers of each. Although the Wolf, Flambeau and Peshtigo are considered to be some of the Midwest's top whitewater rivers, they represent just a small portion of the opportunities for canoeists and kayakers. The Apostle Islands sea caves are a kayaker's paradise and draw paddling enthusiasts to Lake Superior's southern shore. The area also offers sandy beaches, historic lighthouse tours and sunken shipwrecks. The Kickapoo River and areas around the lower portion of the state are also very popular. Whichever paddle sport is of interest, watercraft rentals are available in many areas along Wisconsin rivers and lakes, and numerous outfitters offer instruction, guided tours and river information. The Lower Wisconsin River draws paddlers who can camp out and stop on the many sandbars along this Wisconsin State Scenic Byway.

### **Boating**

Wisconsin is a great place for pleasure boaters, thanks to more than 15,000 inland lakes, 43,000 miles of rivers and 650 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. The state also boasts many public launch ramps, lots of beautiful marina and harbor facilities and fish stocking done by the Department of Natural Resources. However, the enjoyment of Wisconsin's lush marine environment isn't limited to those who own a powerboat, sailboat, kayak or canoe. Residents and visitors alike can enjoy the beauty of Wisconsin from one of the state's many tour boats. From paddle-wheelers and pontoons to sailing vessels, catamarans and excursion boats – even

amphibious “ducks” – Wisconsin boat tours are a great way to take in the state’s beautiful scenery. Sail on an urban cruise like the Iroquois Boat Line, or try the Edelweiss River Cruise Line, both in Milwaukee. Companies in La Crosse offer tours of the Mississippi River, while Door County offers various ferry rides to tour the state parks and waterways.

For a unique boating experience, visit Wisconsin Dells, where WWII amphibious vehicles called Ducks take you on land and water to view the scenery of the Upper and Lower Dells. The Lake Geneva Cruise Line offers its famous US Mailboat tour which features a mail carrier that leaps off the bow of the boat onto the pier, delivers the mail into the box, grabs outgoing mail, and jumps back aboard. The only hitch is the boat never stops!

### **Cross-Country Skiing**

With 45+ inches of annual snowfall and more than 700 miles of groomed trails, Wisconsin has plenty to offer Nordic ski enthusiasts. Thanks to improvements in trail grooming technology and snowmaking equipment, Wisconsin has maintained its status as an international Mecca for cross-country skiers because of the state’s hilly, rolling countryside and plentiful forests that are ideal for the sport. Wisconsin has 250 cross-country ski facilities, and the state’s cross-country ski industry – which ranges from resort operators to state and county forestry officials to ski clubs – has kept most marquee trail areas open through the use of trail segregation, Ginzu Groomers and other state-of-the-art trail maintenance equipment, and, in some cases, snow-making apparatuses.

One of southern Wisconsin’s most popular cross-country skiing destinations is the Kettle Moraine State Forest Southern Unit in Waukesha and Walworth counties, which offers nearly 65 miles of trails. This includes the Nordic Cross-Country Ski Trail just south of Palmyra, the Scuppernong Ski Trails just north of Eagle and the McMiller Ski Trails south of Eagle, which permit both skate and classical (stride-style) skiing. Paths are Closer to Madison, Governor Nelson State Park, on the north shore of Lake Mendota, boasts more than 400 acres and provides eight miles of cross-country ski trails. State Parks around the state offer special candlelight cross-country skiing and snowshoe hike events during the months during January and February. Trails are lit by torches and warming stations and warm drinks are provided.

The famous American Birkebeiner takes place every February and is the nation’s largest and

most prestigious cross-country ski marathon. Thousands of cross-country skiers compete approximately 51 kilometers from Cable to the city of Hayward, drawing thousands of skiers and spectators from all over the world.

### **Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding**

Although Wisconsin's Midwestern terrain doesn't boast any snow-capped peaks, the Badger State's naturally undulating landscape, large annual snowfall and sophisticated snowmaking equipment make it a regional hotspot for downhill and snowboard enthusiasts. With more than 30 ski and snowboard facilities, Wisconsin ranks fourth in the country. Ranked the top ski destination in the Midwest by *Ski Magazine*, Granite Peak Ski Area at Rib Mountain State Park has 74 runs and offers one of the largest varieties of skiable terrain anywhere in the Midwest. Skiers and snowboarders can challenge themselves on the steep slopes of the peak's 700-foot vertical drop or hit the terrain park filled with ramps, rails, half pipes and tabletop jumps. For the best family and budget-friendly ski area, Cascade Mountain in Portage offers 36 challenging trails, snow-tubing and kids and 12 under ski free every day when accompanied by a paid adult. Some of the state's top ski and snowboarding locations are found in the rolling hills of southeastern Wisconsin, only a short drive from Milwaukee. North of Milwaukee, skiers come across the slopes of Sunburst Ski Area in Kewaskum. Younger skiers can get into the fun with lessons specifically geared toward kids and take to the gentle grades of Sunburst's bunny slopes, while experienced skiers cruise down 10 runs reaching 2,600 feet or hit the terrain park for some extreme moves.

### **Snowtubing**

Any day can be a snow day on Wisconsin's slopes, where snowtubing unlocks the kid in everyone. Eighteen locations found throughout the state offer special runs and snowtube lifts, helping to make this classic winter activity an all-around favorite. Cascade Mountain thrills riders speeding down four chutes, and treats them with two tow-ropes designed to carry tubers back to the top. Sliders at Sunburst Ski Area in Kewaskum sprint down 900-foot long chutes that drop nearly 10 stories along the way. Other ski areas catering to tubers include Christie Mountain in Bruce and Christmas Mountain Village in Wisconsin Dells.

**Snowmobiling**

With its abundant snowfall, extensive trail system and numerous snowmobile-oriented hotels and resorts, Wisconsin's Northwoods has become a regional and even national draw for snowmobilers and their families. In fact, the readers of *Snow Goer* magazine have perennially rated it among the "Top Family Snowmobiling" and "Top Snowmobile Touring" destinations in America, with many Northern Wisconsin resorts and restaurants receiving individual recognition. Wisconsin's snowmobile trails are impeccably maintained by local snowmobiling clubs and link every corner of the state. A model for states and provinces worldwide, this extensive trail system runs through both public and private land and can total as much 25,000 cumulative miles in good snow conditions. In fact, snowmobilers can ski from New York and Los Angeles and back three times on the miles of snowmobile trails in Wisconsin.

Some of the best-known areas include the Minocqua/Arbor Vitae area, the Cable/Hayward area and Hurley, with Eagle River known as the "Snowmobile Capitol of the World." The city hosts the annual World Championship Snowmobile Derby, which is the most recognized professional snowmobile race and one of the largest gatherings of "sledders" in the world. More than 300 professional snowmobile racers, some from as far away as Japan, compete for the world championship and prizes. In addition to the high-speed races, the expected 30,000 spectators can enjoy trail rides and the beautiful scenery of the Northwoods.

**Dog Sledding**

If you thought dog sledding was a strictly Alaskan activity, think again. Wisconsin features hundreds of miles worth of dog sled trails and several dog sled outfitters. The Northwind Wilderness Base Camp near Park Falls provides training for those looking to both ride and mush. Visitors there can also participate in tours with optional overnight accommodations. In Bayfield, Wolfsong Adventures in Mushing offers trips for all ages and abilities, from short daytrips to overnight and weekend trips along Lake Superior's South Shore. Bayfield also hosts the Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race each February. The event includes two main races – an eight-dog, 80-mile race and a six-dog, 60-mile race – along with a 40-mile Sportsman's Race and a six- to eight-mile Family Race.