

What We Did on Our Summer Vacation... Part 1 ~ Our Trip to The U.P. AZ Rider

If you've ever considered a visit to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the only reason you truly need is the sunsets ☺

If you are also a motorcyclist, then you have even more to look forward to... beautiful roads through scenic countryside, small towns full of history, and long days for riding... Summer sunsets clock in between 9:30-10pm, with last light about a half-hour after that. So ~ after a day's riding, enjoy a bonfire on the beach to watch a spectacular sunset. It doesn't get much closer to perfect than that.

At the time of this writing, Michigan is a 'freedom of choice' state regarding helmets; that is, as long as you have their state-mandated insurance minimum. As always before departing on a road trip, be sure and check what the current regulations are in the various states you'll be rolling through.

Whichever route gets you there, you'll notice quickly that the pace slows *waaayyyy* down when you're traveling above the Mighty Mac... The Mackinac Bridge takes you from Lower Michigan to the Upper Peninsula, across the Straits of Mackinac. OR if you're traveling in from the west, Wisconsin will be your gateway to the U.P.

Once your internal clock resets from the pace many people call 'normal' and remember that it is okay to enjoy being 'busy' doing what may feel like 'nothing' for a while ~ you'll do just GREAT. It's very refreshing, truly relaxing, restorative, and does wonders for recharging your batteries.

We saw a LOT of bikes in our travels. Riding season up there is May - October... if you don't mind getting chilly. July & August seem to be the most consistent for good riding weather. But even at that, be sure to have your rain suit and some warm gear in your pack. The

weather can be changeable. Some days while we were there in July the high got to 80 degrees, and we found ourselves in some significant rain a couple of times.

If you prefer to participate in a planned ride, rather than just adventuring on your own, there is an active motorcycling calendar here. June through August is when the bulk of organized runs take place; with one-time events and weekly bike night gatherings bringing riders together for fundraising, camaraderie, and general 'memory making'.

Whether you are traveling by 2-, 3-, or four wheels, you'll find museums, state and national park lands, lighthouses, interesting small towns, and friendly people. Lake Superior is an extraordinary place, with a great deal of history all its own. One stands on its shore looking to the horizon and there's no land in sight... as with an ocean. Its sand is powder soft and fine. BUT ☺ even in the summer the water can be quite cold ... so desert rats are unlikely to relish a swim ~ lol.

Our explorations included the Ontonagon Light House and Lake of the Clouds. The Light House tour included a climb up into the lantern room, offering a unique perspective from which to view Lake Superior and our surroundings. Our tour guide Mr. Johanson is extremely well-versed in local history; making his presentation very engaging. A trip

through the Historical Museum, the departure point for the Tour, provided a glimpse into the area reckoning back into the 1800's & earlier. History here encompasses mining, logging, the fur trade, Native Americans, shipping, and more. A forest hike up to the cliff-top vista of Lake of the Clouds rewards you with a beautiful overview of lush green old-growth forest surrounding the Lake. We've heard that this is also a magnificent sight during fall's change of colors. Its home, the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, is Michigan's largest state park ~ a popular destination for hiking, fishing, bird watching, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, & more.

The U.P. is truly a four-season vacation destination. If you enjoy viewing the fall colors, the U.P.'s "Color Season" can provide you with an amazing display. Camping, waterfalls, hunting, boating, & more are all part of what the Upper Peninsula has to offer. If you are into skiing, snowmobiling, and other winter sports... the U.P. has your name written all over it as well. Did you know that Michigan has the most ski areas in the USA aside from New York? Neither did we ☺

We found a useful reference while we were there called the Upper Peninsula Motorcycle Travel Guide. In it you'll find information about biker-friendly lodgings, places to eat, maps, suggested roads, & more. If you decide to make a run to the U.P., you'd be well served to visit U.P. Cruising online at <https://upcruising.com>. You can order the book & pay to have it shipped to you OR pick it up for free at any of the Michigan Welcome Centers in the Upper Peninsula, as well as at participating businesses.

We thoroughly enjoyed our trip to the Upper Peninsula and feel it has a great deal to offer most anyone looking for a new & interesting place for a tour. Enjoy your trip!

Betsy & Bruce

