

## Going coastal along Michigan's peninsula

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A few hour's flight from Central Florida's sun-drenched flatlands, cool Douglas fir forests embrace the world's longest freshwater coastline. A land shaped by glaciers, Michigan's Upper Peninsula or "U.P.," is 90 percent forested with 1,700 miles of coastline and 150 waterfalls. When Floridians crave a respite from densely populated cities and seasonal sameness, the U.P.'s accessible wilderness and invigorating climate promise a ruggedly beautiful change of scene.

### A NEW LOOK AT SOO

Many flights land in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., making the city an ideal launching point for U.P. adventures. Situated this side of Canada between lakes Superior and Huron on the St. Mary's River, "The Soo," is where Michigan was born. America's third oldest city was established in 1668 by Father Jacques Marquette. Its Native American, French, British and Italian influences are evident in townspeople's faces, surnames and accents.

For dinner and a history lesson, cruise alongside freighters aboard the Soo Locks Boat Tour as it travels one of the country's busiest shipping channels. Bring extra batteries for your camera and wear layers -- photo opportunities abound above deck. Kids enjoy watching lockmasters "fill the bathtub" as the boat is raised 21 feet straight up from Lake Huron to Lake Superior. The locks allow freighters to manage water levels and navigate around a 21-foot waterfall.

### A BREW, A BURGER AND THOU

From Sault Ste. Marie, lightly traveled highways ribbon past farmlands to the land of Longfellow's inspiration. It's easy to imagine the legendary Hiawatha in 45,000-acre Tahquamenon Falls State Park, part of Hiawatha National Forest. Tourists gravitate to the upper falls, second in size to Niagara; but trails through old growth forests promise plenty of solitude. Halfway up the trail, hikers can stop for a handcrafted beer and locally-raised buffalo burgers at Tahquamenon Falls Brewery and Pub.

### COASTAL MYSTERY AND HISTORY

Anyone who listened to '70s radio remembers Gordon Lightfoot's iconic ballad, "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald." The legend lives on in the U.P., where this and other shipwrecks are chronicled at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum near Whitefish Point. The museum submerses visitors into an otherworldly atmosphere as it tells the story of vessels that succumbed to Superior's storm-tossed waves. "Big Fitz's" ship's bell, retrieved from a depth of 535 feet, holds a place of honor. Lucky visitors may hear staffer Bill Maki describe seeing Fitz's light disappear as he watched from the Arthur M. Anderson, a freighter following the Fitzgerald's path before it went down in November 1975, taking 29 crew members with it. The campus also boasts Lake Superior's oldest active lighthouse. Overlooking a remote spit of land, Whitefish Point Light Station was built in 1861 at President Lincoln's request. Those wanting more of the seafaring life can stay overnight in the restored Coast Guard Crews Quarters.

Driving back from Whitefish Point to Sault via Curley Lewis Highway could max out a camera's memory card with images of lakeside cabins, rocky beaches and birch trees. When the North Country air sharpens the appetite, duck into a local diner for generous helpings of hospitality and regional delicacies such as whitefish.

As a travel destination, the U.P. will inspire Floridians to borrow a "Yooper" expression: "Wha!" Rough translation: "Wow!"

*Nancy Moreland is a professional writer based in DeLand.*



Explore the world's longest freshwater coastline in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where scenes, such as the Grand Sable Dunes in Grand Marais, await you. National Park Service



Second only in size to Niagara is the upper Tahquamenon Falls in the state park of the same name, which is part of Hiawatha National Forest in the Upper Michigan Peninsula. Theresa Neal/Michigan Department of Natural Resources



The Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., at right, is among the busiest shipping channels in the United States. For dinner and a history lesson, check out the Soo Locks Boat Tours. Soo Locks Boat Tours



The steamer Michipicoten passes Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum Campus near Whitefish Point, Mich. Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society

#### Tour the Peninsula

Michigan's Upper Peninsula tourist season runs from May through October.

For more information:

- Sault Ste. Marie Convention and Visitors Bureau, [saultstemarie.com](http://saultstemarie.com)
- Soo Locks Boat Tours, [soolocks.com](http://soolocks.com)
- Tahquamenon Falls State Park, [michigan.gov/dnr](http://michigan.gov/dnr)
- Tahquamenon Falls Brewery and Pub, [tahquamenonfallsbrewery.com](http://tahquamenonfallsbrewery.com)
- Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, [shipwreckmuseum.com](http://shipwreckmuseum.com)