

Midwest Living

# BEST OF THE MIDWEST

BEST OF THE MIDWEST AWARDS

50

WINNERS REVEALED!

SATURDAY

COOL ROAD TRIP IDEAS

IN ALL 12 STATES

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

LAKES

*and*

BEACHES

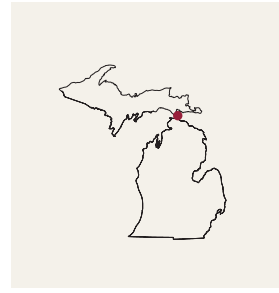




ARCH ROCK



GRAND HOTEL



# mackinac island

MICHIGAN

A trip to this car-free island in Northern Michigan hearkens to a different time, when carriages were a common mode of transport and hotel evenings came with a dress code.

WRITER JULIA SAYERS GOKHALE

## I'm bumping along on the ferry to

Mackinac Island when I see her, the Grand Hotel, coming into view. Poised to overlook Mackinac Bridge and Lake Huron, the historic hotel and its long front porch command the attention of anyone approaching, a dramatic—or grand, should I say—welcome to this idyllic northern Michigan isle.

Stepping off the ferry is like stepping back in time. Since no cars or motorized vehicles are allowed on the island, the transport of choice is horse-drawn carriage or bike. I'm whisked into a maroon-color carriage helmed by a gentleman in a top hat and cape who will be my courier to the Grand Hotel. As we clip-clop down the street, the scent of fudge wafts through the air and a breeze rustles the horses' manes. After checking in—and marveling at the hotel's heavily patterned decor—I'm ready to explore.

An 8-mile road circles Mackinac Island; on any nice day you'll be in the flow of two-wheel traffic. Zip through the bustling streets of downtown, rounding the corner past Mission Point

Resort, and you'll discover the undeveloped part of Mackinac. With no resorts on the east side of the island, the natural beauty in Mackinac Island State Park holds court. Less than 10 minutes out of town, I park my bike and huff and puff my way up 207 steps to Arch Rock, a view well worth it. With legs now like jelly, I continue my ride. The road ribbons along the island's edges, pine forests and bogs on my left, the blue-green lake on my right. But all I can think about is what's waiting for me at the end: A rich, creamy slab of the island's famous fudge.

Back at the Grand, I head to the heated pool to soak my tired legs. As I watch the sun sink below the Mackinac Bridge, I'm struck by the peace of it all. Without the hum of traffic and so removed from city life, people seem to be happier here, more content and gracious. Instead of heads buried in electronics, families play bocce ball and croquet on the lawn. Strangers gather on the world's longest covered front porch to toast the sunset together. And after dinner, a jazz band plays tunes in a ballroom, where people of all ages dance the night away. It's a scene straight from another era, relived like a memory in a time machine called Mackinac.

PHOTOGRAPHS: STARBOARD AND PORT





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THE MACKINAC HOUSE

MORE TO EXPLORE

**eat** Snag a seat at the fuchsia bar in the **Pink Pony** for smoked whitefish dip, then taste test the island's best-known treat: **Murdick's Fudge** is the original, and **Joann's Fudge** is a local favorite among the seven companies on the island. Many seasonal workers come here from Jamaica; **Kingston Kitchen at the Village Inn** shares a taste of home.

**stay** **Grand Hotel** is a bucket-list stay for many who want to experience its traditions, including afternoon tea and formal-dress dinners. Boutique B&Bs offer luxe accommodations in historic houses, like **The Mackinac House**, **Hotel Iroquois** and **Metivier Inn**. Book a balcony room at **Bicycle Street Inn and Suites** to overlook downtown.

**play** Rent a bike from **Mackinac Wheels** to see the island. For a different mode of transport, the two-hour **Mackinac Island Carriage Tour** shuttles guests to highlights like **Fort Mackinac** and **Wings of Mackinac Butterfly Conservatory**. Works depict island scenery at **The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum**.



**TRIP IT**  
Scan the code for a full guide to visiting Mackinac Island.