



Michigan

THE GREAT LAKES STATE

by SANDRA LEE MCKAY AND SALLY LA LUZERNE-OI

Although Michigan is often called the “Wolverine State,” its more common nickname is the “Great Lakes State.” This name comes from the fact that Michigan is the only state in the United States that borders four of the five Great Lakes. Also referred to as the “Water Wonderland,” Michigan has 11,000 additional lakes, 36,000 miles of streams, and 199 waterfalls. It is said that someone could stand anywhere in Michigan and be within six miles of a lake or stream and within 85 miles of the Great Lakes. The name Michigan itself comes from the Chippewa word, *michi-gama*, meaning “large lake.”

Geography of Michigan

Many thousands of years ago, glaciers swept down from what is now northern Canada eroding some of the land and depositing rock in other parts. These glaciers created Michigan and its surrounding area as we know it today: Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula, Lake Erie, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, and the islands in these lakes. This two-part state is the only one of its kind.

Michigan, made up of two peninsulas, is located in the Upper Midwest of the United States. Michigan's Upper Peninsula (called "the U.P." by locals) is the northern part. Wisconsin is the only state that borders the Upper Peninsula, which is also bordered by Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, and Lake Huron. The mitten-shaped Lower Peninsula to the south is bordered by Indiana and Ohio, as well as by Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, and Lake Erie. Michigan's two peninsulas are connected by the Mackinac Bridge, one of the longest suspension bridges in the world.

The total land area of Michigan's two peninsulas is 56,804 square miles, making Michigan the 22nd largest state in size. Because it borders four of the five Great Lakes, Michigan has the longest shoreline (3,288 miles) of all the states except Alaska.



Above: Michigan is made up of two peninsulas and borders four of the five Great Lakes — Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, and Lake Erie.

Left: The Mackinac Bridge spans the Straits of Mackinac, connecting Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula. It is one of the largest suspension bridges in the world.



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Each of Michigan's two peninsulas has a distinct landscape. The western half of the Upper Peninsula is called the Superior Upland. This area has rugged hills including the Porcupine and Huron Ranges, and Mount Arvon (1,979 feet), Michigan's highest point, is found here. The Superior Upland was once covered with pine forests, but many of those have been replaced with birch, maple, and beech trees. The eastern half of the Upper Peninsula and the Lower Peninsula are referred to as the Great Lakes Plains. This area is made up of farmland, rolling hills, and sand dunes.

Although Michigan is one of the few states in which the population has decreased during the past few years, it remains the eighth largest state by population with approximately 10,003,422 inhabitants; most of them live in the Lower Peninsula. Michigan residents come from a variety of backgrounds. The Upper Peninsula has one of the largest Finnish populations in the United States and is the home of Finlandia University in Hancock. Dutch immigrants founded Holland, Michigan, while German settlers established the town of Frankenmuth. Dearborn, near Detroit, has one of the largest Arab populations outside of the Middle East. However, the state's

Left: A tugboat on the Detroit River tows a barge past the riverfront of Detroit, Michigan's largest city.

Right: The Michigan State Capitol in Lansing houses the state legislature and the ceremonial offices of the governor. The building, finished in 1879, was modeled after the national Capitol in Washington, DC.

largest nonwhite minority are African Americans, who make up roughly 14 percent of the population. Many African Americans live in industrial centers such as Detroit.

Detroit, with a population of approximately 822,000, is Michigan's largest city and a busy port. It is in the southeastern part of the state, adjacent to Canada. (Detroit's Ambassador Bridge makes for a short drive to Windsor, Ontario, in Canada.) Detroit was the capital when Michigan became a state in 1835, but in 1847 the capital was moved to Lansing, a more central location. Lansing (population approximately 114,000) is located about 80 miles northwest of Detroit. Other major cities in Michigan include Ann Arbor, home of the University of Michigan, Grand Rapids, and Flint. These cities are all found in the Lower Peninsula.



A Brief History of Michigan

Around 11,000 BC, the last of several glaciers formed Michigan. As the glaciers receded, Michigan's first inhabitants probably arrived. It is likely that these earliest people were nomads who hunted large animals living there, such as caribou. These people were followed by nomadic hunters and gatherers who in turn were followed by Copper Culture people who learned to make tools from copper mined near Lake Superior.

The Copper Culture people are often referred to as the Hopewell, a group that lived not only in Michigan but also in other areas throughout what is now the United States. The Michigan Hopewell traded copper with other Hopewell as far away as the Gulf of Mexico. The Hopewell also built very large mounds that are thought to be burial grounds in which people were buried along with common objects such as tools and pottery. One of the best-known mounds is the Norton Mounds, located near Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today remains of such mounds can be found on display at the Van Andel Museum in Grand Rapids.

Finally, the Woodland culture appeared about 2500 BC. The Woodland people lived near rivers and lakes in semi-permanent villages. The men were hunters, gatherers, and fishermen. The women cultivated a number of crops, above all the “Three Sisters”—maize, beans, and squash. When French explorers arrived in the early 1600s, approximately 100,000 Native Americans, ancestors of the Woodland culture, were living in the area.

The French found three major groups of Native Americans: the Ojibwa (also referred to as Chippewa), Odawa (also referred to as Ottawa), and Potawatomi. Because these groups had related languages and cultures, they joined together to form the Council of Three Fires. The members of the Council worked together for the common good of



Top, left: Ancient mounds, thought to be burial mounds, were built by the Hopewell, also known as Copper Culture people, who lived in the Michigan area long ago.

Bottom, left: The Gateway to Freedom International Memorial to the Underground Railroad on the riverfront of Detroit commemorates the city's role in freeing slaves during the Civil War.

all. The Ojibwa, excellent hunters and fishermen, lived along the southern shore of Lake Superior. The Odawa, skilled traders, made their home along Lake Michigan, while the Potawatomi, who were farming people, moved into what is now southern Michigan.

Around 1618 a French explorer, Etienne Brûlé, traveled the Great Lakes by canoe. Soon more French explorers came and started building forts, including one along the Straits of Mackinac and another where Detroit stands today. French fur trappers, traders, and Roman Catholic priests began arriving soon after. The French controlled the region for about 150 years but lost control after being defeated by the British in the French and Indian Wars.

After the American Revolutionary War, which ended in 1783, the British wanted northern Michigan, but eventually, they only kept the area that is now Canada. In 1787 Michigan became a part of the Northwest Territory of the United States, a territory that included Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and sections of eastern Minnesota. According to the law that formed the territory, a region could apply for statehood once it had sixty thousand people. However, because of territorial disputes, it was not until 1837 that Michigan was able to become the 26th state.

In 1861, the United States became engaged in the American Civil War in which the Northern states (the Union) fought the Southern states (the Confederacy) over a variety of issues, including slavery. Michigan sided with the Union as an antislavery state, and its citizens played an active role in freeing many slaves. During the Civil War, many abolitionists (individuals who opposed slavery) hid slaves in their homes and provided food, shelter, and money to slaves traveling north in hope of gaining their freedom. The network of homes, churches, and schools that hid slaves was called the Underground Railroad. One of the key players in the Underground Railroad was Sojourner Truth, a former slave who settled in Battle Creek, Michigan, but traveled the country advocating equal rights for women and blacks.

Major Commerce and Industry

Most Americans associate Michigan and Detroit with car manufacturing because Michigan leads the



Top: The driver of a restored Model T Ford—the car that established Detroit as the leader in U.S. car manufacturing—stops to gaze at one of the Great Lakes.

Above: Cucumbers are piled up for a farmers market. Michigan produces more cucumbers than any other state.

Right: Michigan leads the nation in the production of tart cherries.

country in car production. Michigan is home to three of America's largest car manufacturers—General Motors, Ford Motor Company, and Chrysler. The growth of the car industry in Michigan began in 1908 when Henry Ford introduced the Model T, a car that had a 15-horsepower motor and could go up to 45 miles per hour. By developing an assembly line for car manufacturing, Ford was able to produce the cars at a price that was affordable for most Americans.

Because of the focus on the car industry in Michigan, few people realize that Michigan has many other thriving industries. Michigan produces computers, missiles, and communication equipment and has a thriving service industry based on, among



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Top: Upper Tahquamenon Falls in one of Michigan's 100 state parks is one of the largest waterfalls east of the Mississippi River and a popular destination for hikers.

Above: Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, located along the southern shore of Lake Superior on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, features towering cliffs topped by evergreen forests.

other things, publishers, hotels, hospitals, and real estate. Many large companies have settled in Michigan. For example, Dow Chemical, the second largest chemical company in the world, has its headquarters in Michigan.

Much of Michigan, especially in the Lower Peninsula, is rich agricultural land where growers produce cucumbers (Michigan produces more cucumbers than any other state), carrots, cauliflower, tomatoes, and onions. Michigan leads the nation in the production of tart cherries and also grows apples, grapes, peaches, plums, and strawberries. Because

Michigan has good land for grazing, the state raises cattle, pigs, sheep, turkeys, and chickens. Dairy products, however, are Michigan's leading agricultural product.

Michigan has a long history of mining because it has deposits of copper, iron, gold, silver, slate, salt, coal, and limestone. Michigan supplies nearly one-third of the iron used in the United States for building cars, bridges, and buildings. Copper was historically another important mineral found in Michigan. However, due to all of the mining in earlier periods, the state's copper resources decreased, and in 1969 Michigan closed its last big copper mining company.

Tourist Attractions and Activities

Many of the tourists who visit Michigan go there to enjoy its outdoor beauty and parks. Michigan has 100 state parks, more than 40 ski resorts, 800 golf courses, and miles of hiking trails. One of Michigan's most popular parks is Mackinac Island National Park; located between the Upper and Lower Peninsula, it was named the "Land of the Great Turtle" by Native Americans who observed that the island was shaped like a turtle's back. Cars are banned on the island, and the only way to get there is by ferry. Many people take bicycles or horse and buggy rides to explore the unusual rock formations that exist in



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the park. Some of the formations have strange names such as Devil's Kitchen and Skull Cave. Many tourists also enjoy fishing in the Great Lakes and the streams of Michigan, so sport fishing is a large tourist industry.

Another famous island in Michigan is Isle Royale, the largest island in Lake Superior. While Isle Royale is part of Michigan, it is most easily accessible from Grand Portage, Minnesota. Part of Isle Royale National Park which is composed of various islands and surrounding waters, Isle Royale is best known for its extensive wilderness with 165 miles of hiking trails and its moose and wolves. Most people come to the island to hike its trails, canoe its inland waterways, or explore its rugged coast.

The Upper Peninsula, shaped like a bird spreading its wings, is particularly noted for its natural beauty. One of the most beautiful parts of the peninsula is Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Composed of 42 miles of white sand beaches on southern Lake Superior, it is framed by towering cliffs and forests. Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park, located in the northwest section of the Upper Peninsula, is a favorite spot for hiking and skiing.

In the farthest eastern section of the Upper Peninsula is Sault Ste. Marie, noted for its Soo Locks, which allow an average of 10,000 ships per year to

Above: The sand dunes of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore on Lake Michigan host a variety of birds, insects, and plant life.

travel between Lake Superior and the lower Great Lakes. By going through the locks, ships bypass the rapids of the St. Mary's River, where the water falls 21 feet from Lake Superior. Managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the locks are a popular place for tourists. Sault Ste. Marie, where the locks are located, is actually the name of two cities—one in the United States and the other in Canada—connected by the International Bridge.

The mitten-shaped Lower Peninsula contains forests, flatlands, and sand dunes. These dunes, one of the best-known natural features of the Lower Peninsula, exist along most of the shores of the Great Lakes. Some of the most popular sand dunes are along the Lake Michigan shore, including those of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The dunes host a great variety of birds, insects, and plant life and are home to the Eastern box turtle, which is on the endangered species list.

No visit to Michigan would be complete without a stop in Detroit. Detroit sits on the Detroit River. The city is laid out with major streets extend-

ing from the river like spokes on a wheel. One of Detroit's most popular areas is Greektown with its Trappers Alley. The five buildings around the alley originally housed a fur trading company, but now they are occupied by shops and restaurants. Belle Isle, in the center of the river, is a thousand-acre public park that houses an aquarium, conservatory, zoo, and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum, which traces the maritime history of Detroit and the Great Lakes.

Central to Detroit's tourism is the car industry. Cobo Hall conference center hosts the annual North American International Auto Show, the largest display of cars in the United States. The famous Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village is a 254-acre attraction in Dearborn, Michigan, located within the Detroit metropolitan area. This museum, which opened in 1929, was designed by Henry Ford to show how inventions had forever changed America. The museum houses office machines, the lab where Thomas Edison produced the light bulb, steam engines, neon restaurant lights, and, of course, a great variety of automobiles, including the car in which John F. Kennedy was shot.

State Symbols

Many of Michigan's state symbols reflect its varied and colorful terrain and industries. One of the important crops of Michigan is apples, so it is fitting that the state flower is the apple blossom. The state fish, the brook trout, reflects the large fishing industry in Michigan, and the state tree, the white pine, is a symbol of lumbering, one of Michigan's central industries. A colorful and common bird, the robin, is the state bird. Because turtles are found through the state, the Painted Turtle was named the state reptile. And finally, the Dwarf Lake Iris, found along the shores of the Great Lakes, is the state's wildflower. Taken together, these symbols illustrate the diverse and natural beauty of the state, as well as its rich agricultural industry.

Websites of Interest

About the Great Lakes

www.abouththegreatlakes.com

This website contains information on the history, ports, lighthouses, and stories of the Great Lakes.



Above, left: The robin, a common bird known for its red breast, is the state bird of Michigan.

Above, right: Michigan's state flower is the apple blossom; apple trees are plentiful in Michigan.

Experience Detroit

www.experiencedetroit.com/index.htm

With photos, overviews, and links to Detroit's attractions and self-guided tours, this site provides an armchair tour of the city. The Motown Historical Museum, in the "Museums" section, is just one of the stops.

Pure Michigan

www.michigan.org

Pure Michigan, "Michigan's Official Travel and Tourism Site," spotlights featured destinations around the state and provides travel information for every city in Michigan.

State of Michigan

www.michigan.gov

The official website of the government of Michigan, this site offers information on the state's government, business, environment, education, and recreation. It also includes a Michigan photo gallery.

SANDRA MCKAY is a visiting professor at Hawai'i Pacific University in Honolulu. She has been a professor in the MATESOL program at San Francisco State University for many years. Her areas of expertise and research are sociolinguistics, English as an international language, and second language teacher education.

SALLY LA LUZERNE-OI has taught in Mexico, Venezuela, Portugal, Japan, and Ukraine. Her areas of professional interest include curriculum and materials development, teaching speaking and listening, and professional development for language teachers.

Motown

Diana Ross is one of the many music stars who recorded at Motown, the legendary record label that celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year.



The name Motown is synonymous with a record label, a sound, and Berry Gordy Jr. Gordy was born in Detroit in 1929. He dropped out of high school to become a boxer and later he served in the army. Returning to Detroit after his service, he opened a record store, looked for new musical talent, wrote songs for Rhythm and Blues (R & B) performers, and worked on the assembly line at the Ford-Lincoln-Mercury Plant. On January 12, 1959, with an \$800 loan from his family, he started Tamla Records. Some months later, he introduced another label—Motown. (Motown was a shortened form of Motor Town, a nickname for Detroit.) He also purchased a two-story house that he named Hitsville U.S.A., which became the company headquarters and his home.

In 1960 Motown had its first number one R & B hit with “Shop Around” sung by The Miracles, and in 1961 the Marvelettes’ “Please Mr. Postman” was the company’s first number one pop hit. From 1961 to 1971 Motown had 110 top ten hits and created music legends, including the Four Tops, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross and the Supremes, the Temptations, the Jackson 5, and Stevie Wonder.

In the mid-70s, Motown was the largest independent record company in the world. What adds to the noteworthiness of this success is that Motown was the first record label owned by an African-American

that spotlighted African-American performers, and these artists gained popularity with mainstream white America. This did not happen by chance.

Gordy applied principles he had learned on the assembly line to his operation at Hitsville U.S.A. The premises housed a songwriting staff, production team, and in-house musicians. There were weekly quality control meetings. A teacher from a finishing school and a choreographer in residence instructed new singers in how to carry themselves and add synchronized dance steps to their performances.

Gordy called the Motown Sound, “The Sound of Young America.” It was a distinct style of soul music that used a heavy rhythm section, horns and tambourines, and vocal echo, an exchange between the lead singer and backup vocalists modeled on the call response of gospel music. There was not only a Motown Sound but also a Motown look. Performers wore eye-catching clothes, were neatly coiffed, and had polished mannerisms. Gordy insisted on this attention to image as a means of negating white stereotypes of black musicians.

In 1972 Gordy moved the Motown Record Corporation to Los Angeles, California. The company expanded into other types of music, television, and movies. In 1988 he sold the company, which is now headquartered in New York City as a subsidiary of the Universal Motown/Universal Republic group. Hitsville U.S.A. (2648 W. Grand Boulevard, Detroit) became the Motown Historical Museum in 1985, a popular tourist attraction.

Motown celebrated its 50th anniversary on January 12, 2009. The celebration continues in a variety of ways: Gordy is working on a feature film documentary, “Motown: The Complete No. 1’s” box set has been released, and a Broadway musical is in the works. And there has probably even been some “Dancing in the Streets” like Martha and the Vandellas sang about.

