

lake michigan and beyond

Lofty sand dunes... Beaches made for swimming and sunning... A longtime zoo... Lively restaurants and breweries... Farmers markets... U-pick farms. This easygoing region in Porter and LaPorte Counties is home to one of the nation’s best-loved natural treasures—The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Away from the water, you’ll find a bounty of fresh goods and artsy discoveries.

Day 1: Lake Michigan Shore (Chesterton and Michigan City)

THINGS TO DO:

- **Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and State Park** (*Photo 1*): You can easily spend a day along Lake Michigan. Here are some enticing options:
 - **Swim, sun and stroll the beach:** Soft sand and clear waters draw visitors to this 15-mile stretch of coastline.
 - **Hike the dunes and trails:** Climb lofty dunes (get your heart pumping on the state park’s “3 Dune Challenge”) or head inland on trails through woodlands and wetlands.
 - **Go birdwatching:** More than 350 bird species live in or migrate through this area. Learn more about the birds (and the ecology system of the dunes) at the State Park Nature Center, which also offers interpretive programs.
- **Reel in the big ones!** Several companies offer guided charter boats for a day of fishing on Lake Michigan. Catch Coho salmon, Lake trout and more with the help of an experienced, licensed captain.
- **Do the zoo:** The Washington Park Zoo in Michigan City, along the Lake Michigan shore, is home to everything from lions and bears to pythons and alligators—some 90 species, all in natural settings.
- **Watch the sunset** (*Photo 2*): Catch nature’s nightly show at Washington Park beach. Grab a frosty treat from the very popular Bubbles Ice Cream just a few blocks away before you settle in for the glorious finale.

LODGING:

- **At Home in the Woods Bed & Breakfast, Chesterton:** This National-Park-themed bed and breakfast combines the convenience of a hotel with the comfortable casualness of staying with family.
- **Serenity Springs, Michigan City:** Individual cabins with an intimate touch of class in a country setting where you’ll enjoy a getaway of pampering and unsurpassed service.

DINING:

- **Shoreline Brewery and Restaurant, Michigan City:** Classy entrees team up with beers brewed on the premises.
- **Octave Grill, Chesterton:** Creative burgers and homemade desserts.



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Day 2: Markets and More (Chesterton, Michigan City, Valparaiso)

THINGS TO DO:

- **Shop the Farmers’ Markets (Saturdays, early May to mid-October):**
 - **Chesterton European Market** (*Photo 4*): Produce is elevated to an art form in the hands of vendors here. Stroll some 100 outdoor booths brimming with heirloom tomatoes, boutique creamery cheeses and so much more. There’s music, too!
 - **Michigan City Farmers Market:** It’s amazing what you’ll find at this little market, including Amish-raised produce and home-baked pies and cookies, organic herbs, and even dog treats, plus an art bazaar a block away.
- **Tour the Old Lighthouse Museum:** Climb to the top of Indiana’s oldest lighthouse, built in 1858.
- **View iconic American art:** Head south to the community of Valparaiso and visit the Brauer Museum of Art at Valparaiso University. The museum’s nationally recognized collection of American art includes works by Frederic Edwin Church and Georgia O’Keeffe.

LODGING:

- **Songbird Prairie Bed and Breakfast, Valparaiso:** A romantic retreat with luxurious rooms and a three-course breakfast.

DINING:

- Ten Valparaiso restaurateurs (*Photo 5*) have developed a website (**ValpoDining.com**) detailing their amazing array of offerings, whether you’re in the mood for a juicy steak or burger in a casual setting, spicy Mexican fare, or elegant seafood in a classy restaurant.



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Day 3: LaPorte

THINGS TO DO:

- **Shop for artsy finds:** Before you leave Valparaiso, don’t miss **Air One Custom Photography** for aerial shots of lighthouses, landscapes, and more. Head to the community of LaPorte, just 20 miles northeast, and stop in at **Hook Pottery Paper** (*Photo 6*), where two local artists create unique ceramics and unusual papers and stationery with materials indigenous to the area.
- **Pick a peck:** Harvest the freshest of fruit at two longtime LaPorte operations (or they’ll do the work for you). Pick strawberries and raspberries at **Garwood Orchards and Farm Markets** or blueberries at **Blueberries of Indiana**.

DINING:

- **Mucho Mas!:** Casual California-style Mexican eatery where fish tacos are a favorite.



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Extend your Northern Indiana stay by traveling to other stops on the Art and Earth Trail, detailed throughout this publication.