

Chapter 17: Ludington, Michigan

A Lake Michigan Beach Community

Here is an idea for a special beach weekend at a beautiful Lake Michigan beach community: Ludington, Michigan. Best of all, between Memorial Day weekend and the 2nd weekend in October, you don't need a car to get here. Instead, enjoy a four-hour boat ride across Lake Michigan. (Enjoy a week-long vacation by combining this trip with our Manitowoc vacation.)

Getting to Ludington Without a Car

From Milwaukee, take a 1 ½ hour bus ride to Manitowoc, Wisconsin on either Indian Trails or Jefferson Lines.

From Manitowoc, the SS Badger—also called the Lake Michigan Car Ferry—makes a four-hour trip across Lake Michigan to Ludington: once a day in spring and fall, and twice daily in summer (from June 5-August 31). For schedules and fares, visit www.ssbadger.com, or call toll-free (800) 841-4243. (Pedestrians without cars are welcome. Bicycles can also be taken on the ferry.) Our suggestions are based on the

summer schedule. (We suggest going Thursday or Friday, and returning Sunday or Monday.)



Photo credit www.toddandbradreed.com.

If you want to enjoy the views of Lake Michigan, take the afternoon trip that leaves Manitowoc at 1:15 Central Time and arrives in Ludington at 6:15 Eastern Time. The ferry serves food, shows movies, and has many games and other entertainment for the whole family.

When you return to Manitowoc, the ferry leaving Ludington at 8 a.m. Eastern Time arrives in Manitowoc at 11:00 a.m. Central Time.

After You Arrive

From the ferry terminal, it's just a short walk to downtown Ludington. Or call the Ludington Mass Transit Administration (LMTA) and request that one of their on-call buses pick you up. LMTA (231) 845-6218 is an on-demand service. You call and tell them where you are and where you wish to go. Then, one of their buses picks you up (generally in just a few minutes). LMTA



Photo credit www.toddandbradreed.com.

operates: Monday-Friday: 6 a.m. – 7 p.m., Saturday: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., and Sunday: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Adults: ages 12-60 pay \$2 each trip, senior citizens 60 and older, persons with disabilities and children under 12 pay \$1.

Downtown Ludington has a variety of overnight accommodations, shopping, restaurants, and summer activities. Some lodging facilities offer car ferry shuttle service. Ask about this when making your reservation.

The Ludington Historic Bed and Breakfast Association (www.bbonline.com/mi/lbba/) includes 8 historic Bed and Breakfast Inns, in historic mansions. A stay at one of these inns is a special experience.

If you don't stay at one of these inns, walk along East Ludington Ave. between James and Washington Streets to view these historic buildings.

Stearns Beach Park is a short walk from downtown. Located at the west end of Ludington Avenue, this family friendly beach has 2,500 feet of sandy shoreline, a grassy area with picnic tables and grills, a playground,

miniature golf, volleyball and shuffleboard, changing facilities, rest rooms, and concessions that sell food. A long walkable pier juts out to the North Breakwater Light.

After enjoying the beach, it's natural to crave ice cream. From the beach, it's a short walk to the *House of Flavors Restaurant* (402 West Ludington Avenue, phone: 231/ 845-7360): known for its homemade ice cream.

If you have children, let their imaginations run wild at the *Sandcastles Children's Museum* (227 West Ludington Ave., (231) 690-6735, www.sandcastleschildrensmuseum.com). Here, they can create, discover, and explore an art center, water table, post office, and hands on ice-cream Shoppe.



Photo credit www.toddandbradreed.com.

If you don't have children, or have older children you can drop off at the Children's Museum, check out two nearby galleries:

Red Door Gallery (310 West Ludington Ave., (231) 392-4709, www.ludingtonreddoor.com/): Known for its unique pottery and one of a kind design.

Todd and Brad Reed Photography (114 West Ludington Ave., (231) 843-0777, www.toddandbradreed.com/): A father and son team that truly captures the beauty of the Ludington Area. Three of their photographs are included in this report, with their permission.

Friday Night Live is a series of free concerts downtown, for the whole family, during several July and August Friday evenings.

Ludington State Park (<http://www.ludingtoncvb.com/ludington-state-park-139/>) has hiking trails, sand dunes, swimming, and even rental canoes for short trips. (A taxi costs about \$20 each way from downtown.)

Visit *Historic White Pine Village* (www.historicwhitepinevillage.org, Phone: 231/843-4808). Over 29 buildings recreate Ludington's past. Take time to visit the flower and vegetable gardens. (LMTA can take you here.)

Vintage Baseball Association members host old time baseball club games, at White Pine Village, in accordance with 1860s rules and period uniforms.

For more information

Go to www.DestinationLudington.org, or call the Ludington Convention and Visitors Bureau toll free at (877) 420-6618.

This is Chapter 17 of the book, *Car Free at the Beach*, by Steve Atlas, 2009. Reprinted with permission of the author. For more information about the complete book, visit <http://carfreeamerica.com>.