

These are the notes for our trip to Michigan and Mackinac Island including activities we did, where we stayed, and where we ate. This is a [Google map link](#) that shows our driving route.

The impetus for this trip was a PBS television show we saw a couple of years ago called Wine First. The property we stayed at and two of the wineries we visited are highlighted in that show. PBS members can watch that video [here](#).

Day 1 (August 29)

We took the [car ferry](#) from Manitowoc to Ludington, MI. The ferry left Manitowoc at 2:00pm and arrived at Ludington at 7:00pm (ET) – a four hour cruise. We booked a state room to be able to relax in and have a private bathroom, but the ship was not very crowded and we really would not have needed the room. We did leave our jackets and water bottles in the room and used the restroom there, but with the 2 beds/cots in the room plus the sink and toilet, there was not really any room to play cards or stretch out except on the beds. Plus, the room was hotter than the air conditioned space in one of the dining areas that we spent most of the time playing cards and having lunch.

It had been raining a bit until the time we departed and was cloudy most of the way over. So, the seating areas outside on the deck were wet and were not dried off by staff due during the trip.

The cruise was smooth and arrived into Ludington a bit early.

We spent the night in Ludington at the [Comfort Inn and Suites](#) and had dinner at KFC.

Day 2 (August 30)

We drove from Ludington to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and followed the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive (7.4 mile loop) and stopped at the following pull-outs:

- #2 Glen Lake Overlook
- #9 Lake Michigan Overlook
- #10 Sleeping Bear Dune Overlook
- #11 North Bar Lake Overlook

The views from #10 and #11 were great. The dunes are very high and steep making the climb back up very strenuous. No, we did not try that.

This was a gorgeous National Park with nicely wooded areas and a number of good hiking paths.

Until I was researching for this trip, I was not aware of the gorgeous, colored water in this area of Lake Michigan. At spots especially near shore, it was a beautiful Caribbean turquoise.

Had the sun been fully out, it would have been spectacular.

We then drove across the Glen Lake Narrows just to see the colored water there in the shallows. Since it was still mostly cloudy, the water was nothing special and this was not worth the short detour.

We drove to [Chateau Chantal](#) for a wine tasting and lunch. This was a beautiful winery on the Old Mission peninsula with great views of the vineyards and the lake (east and west Grand Traverse Bay) on both sides of the peninsula. We sat on the East Terrace and stopped for pictures on the West Terrace.

We shared a Charcuterie board and each selected a flight of 3 wines to taste. We tasted our own wines and then switched glasses and tasted the other's 3 wines.

We focused on sweeter Rieslings, Pinot Noirs and dessert wines since these are the styles of wines we came to try.

We liked the following the best, but none enough that we would order them to be shipped to our home.

- Late Harvest Riesling
- Proprietor's Reserve Trio

This was a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Blaufrankisch.

We had never tasted Blaufrankisch before and we liked this blending grape.

- Proprietor's Reserve Pinot Noir
- Cerise

This was a pinot noir and cherry brandy dessert wine.

After the tasting, we drove to the tip of the peninsula to the Mission Point Lighthouse.

We then headed back down the peninsula to check in at our rental for the next two days. It was a stand alone guest-house on the [Brys Winery Estate](#).

The guesthouse was quiet and clean with a comfortable bed (just a bit hard) and a good shower.

On arrival, we were able to choose a bottle of wine (we chose a reserve Pinot Noir) to go along with some bottled water and snacks that were in the unit. The internet was quite good at 480mbps.

We unpacked and relaxed a bit before heading out to dinner at the [Jolly Pumpkin](#).

There are not too many restaurants close to our rental. Jolly Pumpkin was only a 4 minute drive. It was tucked in among the trees alongside the road and we almost drove by it. The dining room had a log cabin motif. Since we knew we had a more fancy dinner planned for tomorrow, we each had our own brick oven made pizza. Jan liked her pepperoni (\$17.50) and I liked my bacon, sausage and pepperoni (\$20.50) with goat cheese instead of mozzarella. The goat cheese was very tasty on the pizza – glad I tried it.

We each had a local brew to go along with the pizza. Service was very good.

[Day 3 \(August 31\)](#)

We slept in late and made ourselves breakfast in the rental before heading over for our scheduled 1:00pm wine tasting on the Upper Deck.

The deck and main tasting room is about 200 yards from our rental just through one of the vineyards. We would have walked over through the vines, but since it had rained overnight, we took the car the short distance. The sun had come out and it was a beautiful afternoon, but the ground had not yet dried.

The view from the deck offered sweeping views of the vineyards with Lake Michigan in the background.

We shared a Charcuterie and cheese board and each selected a flight of 5 wines to taste. We tasted our own wines and then switched glasses and tasted the other's 5 wines.

We again focused on sweeter Rieslings, Pinot Noirs and dessert wines since these are the styles of wines we came to try.

We both really liked the following the best and would order these to be shipped to us:

- Riesling/Gris
- Pinot Noir/Riesling

After the tasting, we relaxed and enjoyed the view with a glass of each of the above.

We then took a short drive over to the estate's "Secret Garden" that consists of 12 acres of lavender fields, flower beds, herb gardens, and a farmhouse-style gift shop.

We then drove down the road for one final wine tasting at the Chateau Grand Traverse Winery.

They had a nice tasting room plus tables on an outdoor covered deck.

We each had 3 different wines again and tried each others as we did earlier. We also had a flatbread pizza to go with the wines.

We really did not care for any of the wines here. The tasting experience and views were not as nice as the previous two wineries we had visited.

That evening, we ate dinner at the [Boathouse Restaurant](#). We were able to get a table on the deck overlooking the small marina with a great sunset view.

The view from the deck was great except for a few pesky bugs. The meal was good, but nothing spectacular. That being said, there are not many good options up this far on the peninsula. So, we were happy to get a reservation here on a beautiful night.

We shared the Morel Chanterelle bisque (\$18) which was smooth and tasty with lots of mushrooms. Jan had the halibut (\$58) for her entrée but did not really care for it. She said it was blah and not very flavorful. I had the English rack of lamb (\$54). It had four, small ribs with a tasty sauce. Not the best lamb I have had, but a decent entrée. Jan had an after dinner drink (\$14) called Skrewloose and I had an espresso (\$6). Service was average to good. They have a decent wine selection that was reasonably priced.

Day 4 (September 1)

After making ourselves a light breakfast in the rental, we packed up and headed up to Mackinac Island. We parked our car at the ferry docks in Mackinaw City and took the 16–18 minute ferry ride across the Straits of Mackinac. It was a beautiful day with small waves of 1-2 feet.

Our bags were tagged at the dock for our inn on the island and they were delivered there to await us as we would spend some time in town before heading to the inn.

The ferry ride was smooth and relaxing. After docking, we headed over to the [Pink Pony](#) for lunch. We only had to wait five minutes before our table on the outdoor, upper level patio was ready.

We had a gorgeous view right on the harbor. We each started the meal with a tropical drink – a Painkiller (\$17 each). Jan had an apple and goat cheese salad (\$20) that was large and excellent tasting. I had the fish tacos (\$22) which were three, large flour tortillas with local whitefish – very yummy. I also had a glass of a local beer (\$8). Service was excellent.

After lunch, we walked the town a bit and purchased some fudge from Murdick's. What we have tasted so far was smooth and creamy and not too sweet. We brought most of the fudge home.

We then boarded a horse drawn carriage belonging to the inn where we would be staying. It took us on a 40-45 minute ride to the inn. It was a relaxing ride to hear the clip clop of the horse's hooves on the pavement as we enjoyed the scenery and the "smells" along the way.

We then checked in to our room at [The Inn At Stonecliffe](#).

The second floor, king room was huge. In addition to the bed, it had a chaise lounge/fainting couch and two, upholstered chairs with views overlooking the huge lawn area with the Mackinac bridge in the background. The room had a good sized closet, a larger dresser plus two night stand tables with storage. The room was clean and quiet. The internet speed was an adequate 10mbps.

Mackinac island is actually located in Lake Huron. The Mackinac bridge divides Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. So, the views we had from the island were actually part of both lakes.

We had dinner at the Inn at The Backyard restaurant. The setting was open air dining on a patio overlooking the lawn and the Mackinac bridge. There was a guitar player singing in the background during most of dinner. The volume was not too loud and the songs were a nice mix of softer music.

I had a whitefish sandwich (\$30) with a side of chips that was excellent. It was a large piece of fish that was lightly breaded and very moist and tender. One of the better fish sandwiches I can recall.

Jan had the pepperoni, oven baked pizza (\$26).

Our waiter asked us if we cared for any dessert. We replied that no, we were going to have smores by the campfire (the inn provides free smore making materials including the stick, marshmallows, graham crackers and Hershey bar). When he returned with our bill, he brought us the smore kit.

We walked over to the lawn and asked a staff person to light a fire in one of the many firepits scattered about the lawn. We ended up with a private campfire to make smores and to watch the sunset. It was a lovely setting on a beautiful night to have a campfire with the inn on one side of us and the lit up bridge on the other.

Day 5 (September 2)

The day started out with rain in the morning, but it ended about noon. At that time, the skies turned blue and it ended up being a great day for biking.

We ate a late breakfast at the Inn. Jan had the French Toast which she liked and I had the meat omelet. The omelet was a bit too done and the sausage in it had little flavor. I would not choose that again.

After the rain stopped, we walked over to the general store to rent bikes for a period of 4 hours. Neither of us had been on a bike for decades. While it is true that you never forget how to ride a bike, we took a few minutes riding around on the grounds to get comfortable again on how to do it.

We rode our bikes down the hill towards town and stopped at the Grand Hotel for pictures and a quick walk through the lobby. We then turned onto Mahoney Ave. and pedaled down Lake shore boulevard on the west side of the island with many great views of the bridge. We took a break when we reached British Landing. At that point, we followed British Landing road past the Wawashkamo golf course and the small airport and then back to the inn. We ended up biking about half of the 8.2 mile loop around the island.

After returning to the inn, we relaxed with an ice cold beer on the inn's porch.

We had a fancier dinner at the inn in "The Straits" restaurant. We asked to be seated in the smaller of the two dining areas and loved the quietness and view from that room. As it turns out, we were the only ones in that room for the entire meal.

Jan started with a delicious Caesar salad (\$18) and I had the crab cakes (\$36) which were very good, but just a tad too crispy on the outside. We both had a filet (\$70) as our main entrée. The filet had a black garlic demi-glace, black truffles, local asparagus, parsnip puree, and a carrot puree. The overall entrée was good, but the meat was not as flavorful or tender as I would have expected. A slight disappointment. For dessert, Jan had tiramisu in a cup (\$18) and I had a flourless chocolate cake (\$18). Both desserts were very good. We shared a wonderful LBV port (\$16) and I had a triple espresso. With the meal, we had a bottle of a Stolpman red blend wine that we enjoyed. Service was excellent.

A very good meal overall, but on the expensive side.

After dinner, we took a 5-8 minute walk over to Sunset Rock to view the sunset. It was a very nice view from just above the water. Only a few other people were there to watch with us. However, after the sunset everyone else quickly left and we were alone for a few minutes until two women rode up to the rock on horseback. The horses were beautiful. We left them along to enjoy the view.

The inn was much smaller than the Grand Hotel, but offered a more tranquil experience with similar views and a likely better dining experience. The private campfire and dining one night was wonderful. The inn was expensive to stay at, but all aspects of the property were top notch and worth the once in a lifetime, magical experience.

Day 6 (September 3)

We had one last breakfast at the inn before starting the trip to head back home.

Jan had the Eggs Benedict that she liked a lot (just one egg was a bit too done) and I had scrambled eggs with a side of sausage. My meal was better today. The eggs were fluffy and the sausage was a bit spicy and tasty.

We took the horse and carriage from the hotel to the docks, got on the next available ferry and headed back to the mainland.

It was a beautiful day with very little wind which meant little to no waves and a super smooth ride on the ferry.

Once we docked in Mackinaw City, we quickly received our luggage and started the six or so hour drive home. We crossed the Mackinac bridge that we were looking at in the distance for the past few days. The drive across the UP and down through the Green Bay peninsula was pleasant with very little traffic going in our direction. There were plenty of cars coming up to Escanaba, MI for the Labor Day weekend, but hardly anyone else was going south like we were.

General

The high temperature for most days was between 69 and 75 degrees. A couple of the days were muggy, but most of the time was dry and very pleasant.

We had a great time and now have more vivid memories of a place “somewhere in time” called Mackinac Island.