

GRAB A GETAWAY



BEACHES AND PEACHES

Fall Fun in Saugatuck-Douglas, the Art Coast of Michigan

By Bill Malcolm

You cannot beat a weekend in Saugatuck-Douglas, Michigan, the Midwest's only gay resort area. The art coast of Michigan is full of fun things to do in an area of rolling sand dunes and fruit farms along Lake Michigan.

The local peaches and apples are ripe (and a few blueberries may be found) and the weather is still good (and Lake Michigan is still warm). The beaches of the area cannot be beat. My favorite is the Wau-Ke-Na Preserve near Fennville where you hike through a forest to the beach. The Glenn Beach and Pier Cove as well as County Park are excellent as is the world famous Oval Beach. Look for the gang at the north end. Or just hang out at the pool at the Dunes Resort in Douglas and enjoy a cocktail from the bar. The

people watching is nice and they have cabanas to rent for shade lovers.

Saugatuck-Douglas has been a LGBTQ-friendly destination since the late 1800s. It transformed from a lumber and fruit shipping port into an arts colony and tourist destination after that where steam ships delivered tourists from Chicago. The Ox-Bow School of Art is still in existence today.

Unlike the cookie cutter, often bland look alike Midwest cities, you will find few chain stores or chain motels in the charming unique area. Both Saugatuck and Douglas are very walkable.

WHAT TO DO

Rent a bike at In The Elements Rentals and enjoy the lakeshore on the new Beach to Bayou Trail. Across from the post office in downtown Saugatuck,

they also rent beach gear, kayaks, and paddleboards.

Bring your swim suit for a hike and swim at Saugatuck Dunes State Park. A ½ mile hike through old growth maple and hemlock forests takes you to a beautiful beach area which is great for swimming.

Enjoy the 100 years of LGBTQ history exhibit (A Century of Progress: 100 Years of LGBTQ History) at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center in Douglas across the street from the Pride Celebration Garden, honoring Larry Gammons and Carl Jennings, the founders of the Dunes Resort. The Center also features another great exhibit, "History Book: LGBTQ Portraits" upstairs. Details at www.mySDHistory.org. Don't miss the shipwreck museum and gardens



Sunset at Oval Beach

behind the Center as well.

Rent a kayak at Third Coast Paddling in Douglas and enjoy the Kalamazoo River and Wade's Bayou.

Take a walk or go for lunch in the very walkable downtown Douglas.

Hike to the top of the Mt. Baldy.

Watch the sunset at Oval Beach.

Hike the trails of the nearby Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area after that.

Work out at the Community Gym. Arrive by 12 noon to get in although they are open 24/7.

Go wine-tasting at Fenn Valley Vineyards or the Modales Wines which is also close to a new cider distillery, Virtue Cider (details of the latter at virtuecider.com)

The Saugatuck Center for the Arts has plays as well as beautiful gardens and a farmers' market.

WHERE TO STAY

The Dunes Resort in Douglas is my favorite. It has great midweek specials, regular rooms and cabins. You can enjoy the indoor and outdoor bars,

dance the night away, or stop by for karaoke. Don't miss the Sunday T-Dances and barbeques.

Upcoming events include:

End of Summer Blues Weekend:

August 30: Cookout and Drag Queen Bingo of the summer 5:30-8p.m.

Labor Day Weekend:

September 1: Karaoke
September 2: DJ Keller, Perfect 10 Men, Cabaret Dunes Divas

September 3: Pool DJ, PM DJ
Alaine Jackinsky, Cabaret Sutton Lee Seymour

September 4: Pool DJ, Early Tea
DJ Keller Shaw, Main Tea DJ Ralphie Rosario, Cabaret Sutton Lee Seymour
September 5: Tea Dance DJ Keller Shaw

Lambda Car Club

Weekend: September 15-18

Mr. Michigan Leather Weekend:
September 23-25

Hoedown at the Dunes: September 30-October 2

For more information visit www.duneresort.com. Phone **269-857-1401**. You will find it at 333 Blue Star Highway in Douglas.

The Campit Outdoor Resort! south of Fennville at 118th Street, is my other favorite and perfect for value travelers. Tent sites from just \$10 as well as a bunkhouse and cabins are among the options. A nice pool and food truck plus a dance floor are a lot of fun. Special events every weekend include:

September 15-18 is the Fire and Arts Weekend.

September 30-October 2 is the LeatherBear weekend. More event information

at www.campitresort.com.

The AmericInn by Wyndham just down the road from the Dunes is another option.

WHERE TO EAT

The What Not Inn in Fennville has a great Friday fish fry. The perch basket is also very good. Lots of family there.

The Pennyroyal Café and



BUTLER PANTRY- DOWNTOWN SAUGATUCK

in the area. Food is prepared the old fashioned way with local ingredients that highlight the bounty of West Michigan farms and they take reservations.

The Farmhouse Deli has great salmon, sandwiches, and fresh juices. Try the Zinger with fresh carrot.

Isabel's Market and Eatery across from the Dunes has great coffee and Italian treats.

Grab a slice of tasty homemade pizza or a sandwich at the Lakeshore Party Store just north of the Dunes.

The Guardian Brewing Company has 22 beer taps and 14 wine taps at the Old Red Barn. Very LGBTQ-friendly. Have coffee at Uncommon Coffee Roasters Grounds in downtown Saugatuck. The LGBTQ-friendly spot roasts its own coffee and also has pressed juices.

For desert, try a homemade chocolate chip cookie (five varieties) at Cookies on Call inside the Butler Pantry in Saugatuck.

GETTING THERE/GETTING AROUND

Amtrak serves nearby Holland as well as Kalamazoo. The Gerald Ford Grand Rapids Airport is 50 miles north while Chicago is just 140 miles away. Most folks drive to Saugatuck. It's an easy drive from Chicago, Detroit and Indianapolis.

While in the area, take the Inter Urban Transit Authority for just a \$1.

OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

The LakeVista Supervalu has everything you need. You will find them in Douglas.

Saugatuck.com has all the information you need to plan your trip as well as a listing or each week's happenings. Stop by the Saugatuck Douglas Welcome Center in Douglas to help plan your day.

Michiganders have a distinct nasal twang. They also speak their own slang. A convenience store in Michigan is a "party store." Cans are worth 10 cents deposit. Lots of local microbrews, wines and cider to enjoy in the area. Enjoy a Vernors, a ginger-ale type of beverage popular with Michiganders. And ask someone where they live in Michigan and they will point to it on their hand (aka the Mitt). And don't plan on turning left as Michigan has its own unique way of handling a left turn. It's a friendly Midwestern state that is fun to visit.

The Commercial Record is the weekly Saugatuck area paper. *Between the Lines*, *OutPost* and *Metra Magazine* are the three LGBTQ publications.

You won't run out of things to do in the art coast of Michigan. Plan a trip today.

Bill Malcolm is North America's only syndicated LGBTQ+ value travel columnist. He is a former resident of Royal Oak, Michigan and has been coming to Saugatuck-Douglas-Fennville for 20 years. His column now appears in publications in Toronto, Seattle, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and other cities as well as on the travel blog section of **IGLTA.org**.

