



ANNUAL REPORT - 2024

VISIT KEWEENAW



KEWEENAW

ADVENTURE NORTH

VISIT KEWEENAW | 56638 CALUMET AVENUE, CALUMET, MI 49913 | VISITKEWEENAW.COM

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of Visit Keweenaw and our dedicated Board of Directors, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the community leaders, local businesses, and countless organizations that make the Keweenaw a truly special place. Every day, we are reminded of how fortunate we are to call this region home and to share its incredible stories with the world.

The Winter of 2024 brought challenges that tested the resilience of our local businesses, as unseasonably mild conditions impacted tourism-related revenue. However, our strong summer and fall seasons helped offset many of these losses, as visitors flocked to experience the Keweenaw's breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and unique cultural offerings. This is a testament to the enduring appeal of our region and the unwavering dedication of our business community.

Tourism is more than just an industry, it is a lifeline that fuels our local economy, sustains our small businesses, and enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike. Thanks to the hard work and commitment of our Board of Directors and the entire Visit Keweenaw team, we have continued to promote and enhance the visitor experience, ensuring that the Keweenaw remains a sought-after destination for generations to come.

As we look ahead to 2025, we remain committed to innovation, sustainability, and growth. We will continue to work tirelessly to support our local businesses, foster economic vitality, and showcase the unparalleled beauty of the Keweenaw Peninsula.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Your passion and support make all the difference, and we are honored to serve this extraordinary community.

With gratitude,



Brad Barnett

Brad Barnett, Executive Director

Visit Keweenaw



Submission by Chris Guibert to the Keweenaw Spring Photo Contest (2024)

Thank you to the countless businesses, volunteer organizations, local and state governments agencies, media partners, artisans, event organizers, and community members who work every day to support the Keweenaw's vibrant visitor economy. At Visit Keweenaw, we have the privilege of sharing stories of what makes our home so special thanks to your dedication, passion and investments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Visit Keweenaw is proud to present its 2024 Annual Report, highlighting the organization's impact on tourism, economic development, and community engagement in Houghton and Keweenaw Counties. Over the past year, we've made significant strides in positioning the Keweenaw Peninsula as a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts, history lovers, and adventure seekers.

Economic Impact & Tourism Growth

- In 2023, visitors spent an estimated \$134 million, supporting 1,557 local jobs and contributing \$25.7 million in income to local Keweenaw residents and families.
- Tourism accounted for 7.2% of employment in Houghton County and 32.2% in Keweenaw County.
- Visitors generated \$13.1 million in state and local tax revenues, helping fund essential public services.

Marketing & Digital Performance

- 849,000 website visits (+28% YoY), generating 1.5 million page views.
- 195,000 social media followers, reaching 15.6 million users.
- 15.7 million video views, including 4.1 million on "[The Crossing Place](#)" documentary series.
- Earned media exposure in Forbes, National Geographic, CNN, USA Today, and Conde Nast Traveler, with 4,000 media mentions (+48% YoY).

Destination Development & Stewardship

- \$127,000 awarded to support trails, signage, historical preservation, visitor experience enhancements, and volunteer organizations.
- Launched "**Love The Keweenaw**" campaign to promote responsible tourism and environmental stewardship.
- Hosted 8 Keweenaw Sustainable Tourism Series sessions, in partnership with Michigan Technological University and local businesses.

Community Engagement & Events

- Sponsored over 18 major events, including Michigan Tech Winter Carnival, Pasty Fest, and the Jibba Jabba Rail Jam.
- Launched new events: Brew Street and November Gale Hockey Tournament.
- Supported volunteer and sustainability initiatives, such as Leave No Trace workshops and the Upper Peninsula Accessibility Summit.

Looking Ahead

In 2025, Visit Keweenaw will invest in tactical marketing programs, support programs which enhance visitor infrastructure, and pursue opportunities presented through sustainability travel. Through continued partnerships and community engagement, we will ensure that the Keweenaw Peninsula remains a vibrant and thriving destination for visitors and residents alike.

Thank you to our local businesses, community leaders, and stakeholders for your continued support in making the Keweenaw an extraordinary place to visit and live. We look forward to another year of success and growth!

For more details, visit [VisitKeweenaw.com](https://www.visitkeweenaw.com) or follow us on social media.





WHO WE ARE

Visit Keweenaw promotes Michigan's Houghton and Keweenaw Counties as a destination for tourism. Tourism, and the broader visitor economy, generates social, cultural, and financial benefits for our community members and is a pillar of the region's economy.

Formed in 1986 as the Keweenaw Tourism Council, and later as the Keweenaw Convention & Visitors Bureau, Visit Keweenaw has served as the two-county region's lead destination marketing organization (DMO) for more than 35 years.

VISIT KEWEENAW'S GOALS

- Enhance the visitor experience
- Collaboratively lead sustainability and stewardship efforts to ensure the Keweenaw Peninsula continues to be a place visitors crave
- Leverage the Keweenaw's collection of outdoor, historical and cultural amenities to support the region's visitor economy
- Advocate for destination enhancing development
- Serve as a resource for regional tourism data to assist with community and economic development opportunities

KNOW YOUR VISITOR

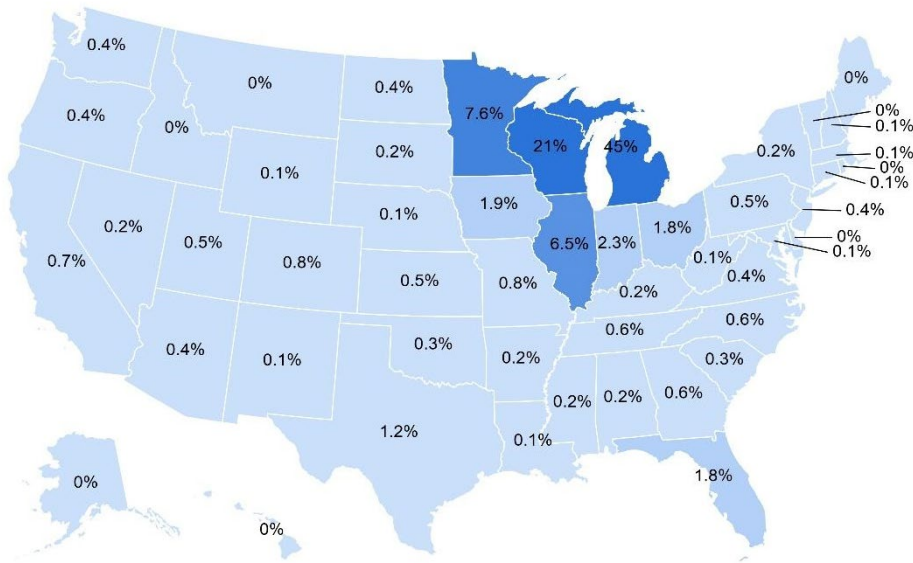
- Our visitors are:
 - Leisure travelers
 - Friends and family
 - Returning alumni
 - Sports teams
 - Business travelers
- The typical leisure traveler to the Keweenaw seeks to experience the region's outdoor amenities (e.g. Lake Superior, trails, fall colors, waterfalls, dark skies, snowfall) and local communities. The region's copper mining history, while not the primary visitation driver, diversifies the experience and helps visitors create a stronger connection to the area.
- Group travel plays a vital role in the Keweenaw's visitor economy. High school and collegiate team sports, like hockey, bring a significant number of visitors to the region each year.



Top Overnight Visitor Origins (2024)

The majority of Keweenaw visitors hail from the Midwest, with nearly 45% of overnight visitors in 2024 originating from Michigan. Wisconsin (21%), Minnesota (7.6%), Illinois (6.5%) and Indiana (2.3%) round out the top five home states of Keweenaw overnight visitors. These five states accounted for 82% of all overnight visits.

Compared to the prior year, the Keweenaw experienced an increase in visitors from outside the Great Lakes Region. According to Datafy, the region saw an increase in visitors from states such as Iowa, Florida, California, Tennessee and Texas. We speculate this change is a result of a variety of factors, not limited to: 1) an increase in Travel Michigan's (Pure Michigan) national advertising; 2) an increase in Visit Keweenaw's earned media efforts, and 3) visitors seeking to escape high summer temperatures.



Above Figure: Share of estimated 2024 overnight trips by visitor origin state

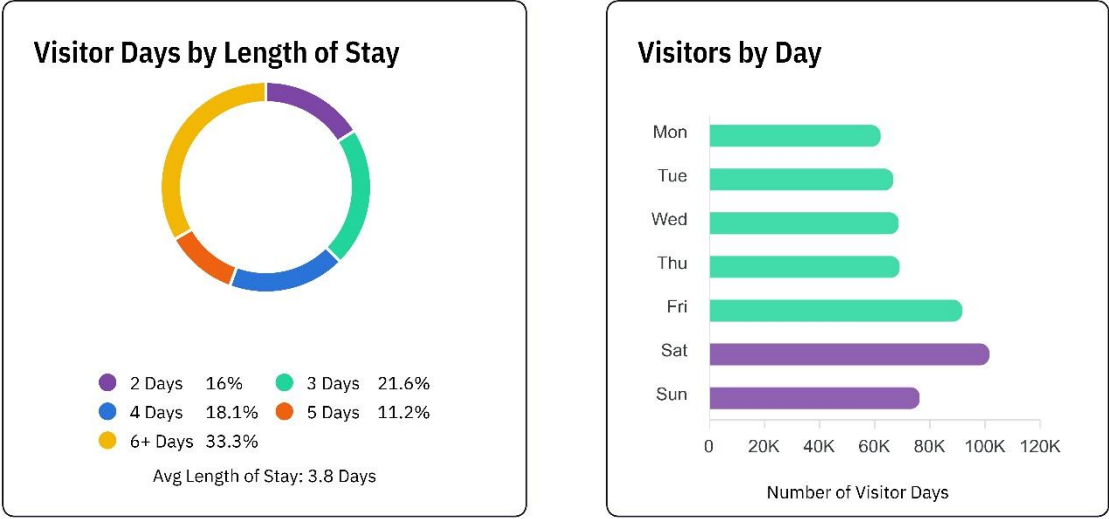
The Keweenaw's Top 10 Designated Marketing Areas (DMAs) account for approximately 71% of all overnight visitors in 2024. Table 1 breaks down estimated visitor DMA origins for the year.

Table 1: 2024 estimated Keweenaw visitor days by DMA

DMA	% of Visitor Days
Detroit	16%
Grand Rapids - Kalamazoo	9%
Green Bay - Appleton	7%
Minneapolis - St. Paul	7%
Upper Peninsula	6%
Flint - Saginaw	6%
Chicago	6%
Milwaukee	5%
Traverse City - Cadillac	5%
Wausau - Rhinelander	3%

*Visitor origin markets provided by Datafy.

2024 Visitor Profile



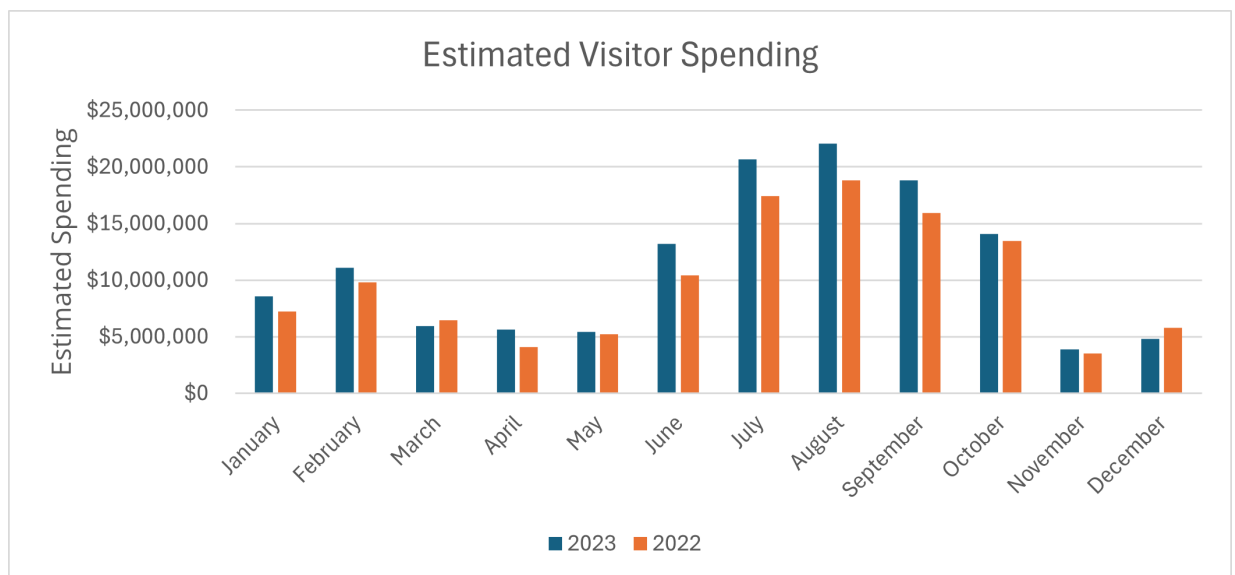
Demographics



ECONOMIC IMPACT

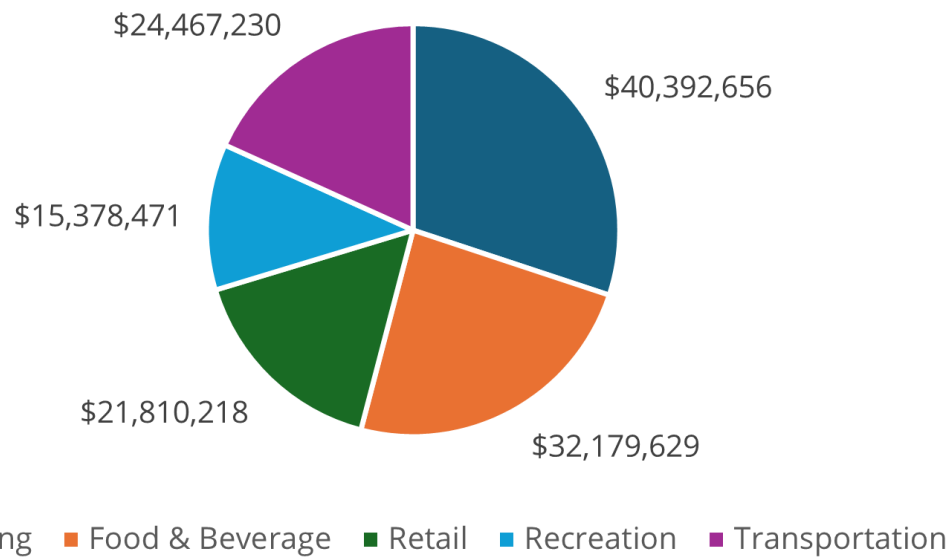
The visitor economy generates significant benefits to our local economy and entire business community. According to Visit Keweenaw estimates, in **2023***:

- Houghton & Keweenaw **visitors spent an estimated \$134 million** on activities like lodging, shopping, recreation, entertainment, food & beverage, and transportation.
- Visitor spending supported **\$25.7 million in direct labor income** according to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).
- **1,557 jobs** in Houghton and Keweenaw Counties were directly supported by tourism.
- Visitor spending accounted for approximately 7.2% of Houghton County employment and 32.2% of Keweenaw County employment.
- Visitors paid an estimated **\$13.1 million in state and local tax revenues** which provide valuable services and programs to area residents.



**2024 visitor spending data was not yet available at the time of this publication. Visit <https://www.visitkeweenaw.com/tourism-statistics/reports/> for the most recent spending and statistical information available.*

TOTAL VISITOR SPENDING BY CATEGORY



HOW WE ARE FUNDED

Visit Keweenaw is a membership-based 501c6 nonprofit organization. Our work is funded through a 5% assessment on gross lodging sales from member lodging businesses (e.g. hotels, resorts, motels, etc.). The assessment was established under Michigan Public Act 395 of 1980. Properties with more than 10 rooms used for the purpose of commercial short-term lodging (less than 30 days) are required to collect the assessment; however, businesses with less than 10 rooms may voluntarily join.



LODGING MARKET

The Keweenaw's overnight lodging market consists of a collection of experiences including traditional hotels and motels, resorts, cabins, short-term rentals, friends and family, seasonal vacation homes, and campgrounds (private, municipal, county, and state). Over the past year, the supply of traditional overnight accommodations, like hotels, motels, and resorts have remained stable. However, the region has experienced a nearly 10% increase in short-term rental supply between 2024 and 2023.

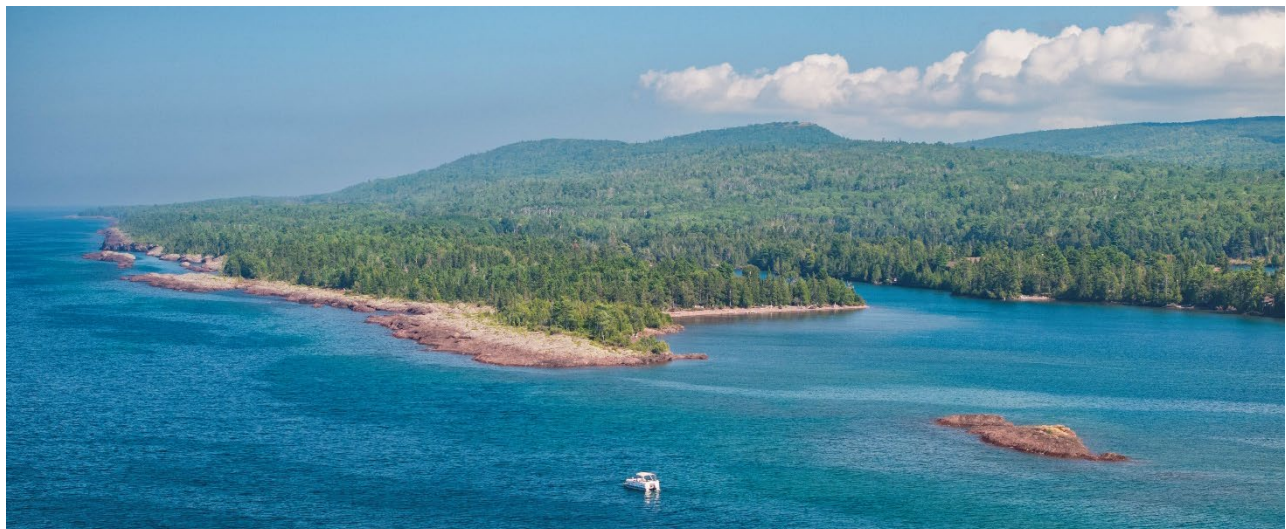
Lodging Market Fast Facts

- The average daily rate for an overnight rental in the Keweenaw in 2024 was \$180.99 compared to \$174.91 in 2023.
- As total supply grew, the occupancy rate for the Keweenaw lodging market slightly declined from 52% to 51% year over year.
- The number of short-term rental units listed in Houghton and Keweenaw Counties increased from 455 in 2023 to 502 in 2024.

*Lodging data for this report section was provided by STR Inc. and AirDNA.

DID YOU KNOW?

When a visitor stays with a Visit Keweenaw's member, a portion of the customer's lodging expense is invested in our **Destination Development Fund** to support local community infrastructure and the **Love The Keweenaw** responsible recreation education campaign.



MARKETING AND PROMOTION HIGHLIGHTS

The Visit Keweenaw team executes a marketing plan to position the Keweenaw as a compelling destination for individuals and groups who appreciate slow travel experiences and seek to connect with nature and history. We do this through a variety of tactics including cultivating earned media coverage, digital and social media marketing and advertising, traditional print, content partnerships and more.

EARNED MEDIA

The Visit Keweenaw team works with industry partners and media professionals to generate positive coverage of the region. We regularly host media for Keweenaw tours, pitch stories, and partner with content creators to generate “earned media” exposure about local events, attractions, and community stories. Visit Keweenaw staff help coordinate visits, schedule activities and guide media members through trails and attractions to give them an authentic experience. “Earned media” is the best kind of press because it’s an organic article about the destination – not an advertisement.

2024 Keweenaw Earned Media Features

- Ann Arbor News
- Chicago Magazine
- ClickOnDetroit.com
- Conde Nast Traveler
- CNN.com
- Detroit Free Press
- Detroit Metro Times
- Drift Travel Magazine
- Eater Detroit
- Forbes.com
- Grand Rapids Press
- Golf.com
- HGTV
- Hour Detroit Magazine
- Lake Superior Magazine
- Michigan Snowmobile and ORV Magazine
- MLive
- MyNorth.com
- MSN.com
- National Geographic
- Outside Magazine
- POWDER Magazine
- Pure Michigan Travel Guide
- Silent Sports Magazine
- Snowshoe Magazine
- Star Tribune
- The Detroit News
- The Weather Channel
- Travel Awaits
- Travel Zoo
- Traverse Magazine
- Trips to Discover
- UpNorth.com
- USA Today
- Wall Street Journal
- Yahoo! Lifestyle

MEDIA MENTIONS TRACKING

In 2024 “Keweenaw Peninsula” appeared in nearly 4,000 US media print and digital outlets compared to 2,700 times in 2023. Just as significantly – “Visit Keweenaw” appeared in 659 pieces in ‘24 compared to 570 last year. This is a more direct result of press releases and media outreaches being released by Visit Keweenaw, who is cited as a source of information when it is mentioned. It builds brand confidence and records us as a source of information.



Visit Keweenaw staff regularly hosts travel media and industry professionals to learn about the area to support earned media content about the Copper Country. Featured above is a recent photography session with Pure Michigan/Travel Michigan team members.

WEBSITE PERFORMANCE

VisitKeweenaw.com is the area's leading source of information for community events, attractions, places to stay and things to do. In 2024, the site shattered previous traffic records and shined a spotlight on ways to experience the Keweenaw's collection of incredible communities.

Website Highlights

- Received over 849,000 website visits (an increase of 28% over 2023) from 662,000 unique users.
- Generated more than 1.5 million page views in 2024 (17% increase over 2023)
- More than 87,000 views of lodging listings
- More than 79,000 views of community events and festivals listings
- Generated over 64,000 referrals to lodging member websites (flat compared to 2023) with an estimated bookings value of \$1.02 million.
- Received 3,300 visitors guide mailing requests (2x more demand than last year).

SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE

Visit Keweenaw maintains an active presence on social media to celebrate the area, share timely updates, and engage with those passionate about the Keweenaw. While nothing beats experiencing the Keweenaw in-person, social media allows our team to connect with fans from near and far. Social media platforms help Visit Keweenaw inspire visitors while also sharing (nearly) real-time information on local conditions and experiences all while helping to drive traffic to VisitKeweenaw.com.

FOLLOWING

The combined following of Visit Keweenaw's social media channels surpassed 180,000 in 2024. Visit Keweenaw is active on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) posting and sharing content daily. This year:

- Visit Keweenaw's following grew to over **195,000** followers across all platforms, a **6.5%** increase over 2023.
- Content from Visit Keweenaw's social media channels reached **15.6 million accounts** in 2024.

VIDEO CONTENT

The Visit Keweenaw team produces video content to inspire visitation, establish the destination's brand, and help travelers plan their experiences in the Keweenaw. Video content is distributed across streaming platforms and social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. In 2024:

- Videos were viewed an estimated **15.7 million times** on Visit Keweenaw's social media channels.
- More than **2.3 million minutes** (about 38,854 hours) of video view time were consumed on Visit Keweenaw social channels. That's the equivalent of a person watching Keweenaw content non-stop 24 hours a day for over **four and a half years straight!** *Watch time reported for Facebook and YouTube and only.*

[The Crossing Place](#), a documentary video series launched in 2024, brought a new life to Visit Keweenaw storytelling. Not only did these profiles of local business, organizations, and personalities imbue a new sense of understanding and appreciation for the area, but it laid the groundwork for a returned sense of appreciation towards the organization from community partners.

- Crossing Place videos were viewed an estimated nearly **4.1 million times on Facebook alone.**

NEWSLETTER

Visit Keweenaw's email marketing program shares content with approximately 28,000 subscribers interested in inspiration, trip planning, and local event information. 2024 highlights include:

- 2.76 million individual emails sent in 2024.
- An email open rate of 28.3% (on par with 2023).
- A click-thru rate of 1.7% generated nearly 46,000 website visits.



Visit Keweenaw takes followers along for a tour of the Delaware Mine through its social media channels.



EVENTS & FESTIVALS HIGHLIGHTS

The Keweenaw's year-round collection of festivals and events help visitors and residents connect with our community, culture, and the Great Outdoors. Visit Keweenaw financially supports many of the area's most beloved annual events and often serves as a key event organizer through dedicated staff time and technical assistance. This involvement has led to increased participation and awareness of the events and helps give culturally rich experiences to visitors.

SPONSORED EVENTS

In 2024, Visit Keweenaw was a sponsor of the following community events:

- Michigan Tech Winter Carnival
- Copper Harbor Trails Fest
- Houghton Locavore Festival
- Great Bear Chase Ski Marathon
- Houghton Fall Fest
- Ride the Keweenaw
- Brew Street
- CCJHA November Gale Tournament
- Houghton New Year's Eve Chook Drop
- Jibba Jabba Rail Jam
- Keweenaw Pride Fest
- Pasty Fest
- Plaidurday
- Heikinpäivä
- Sauna Week
- Bridgefest Hot Dog Eating Contest
- Upper Peninsula Accessibility Summit
- Upper Peninsula Dark Sky Festival

NEW EVENTS LAUNCHED

In 2024, Visit Keweenaw worked with community partners to launch three new events in the Keweenaw. **Brew Street and a November Gale Hockey Tournament were received well by the community and visitors.** Brew Street, a beer garden in Houghton, raised over \$1,000 for the Carnegie Museum of the Keweenaw, a place where visitors and the community can connect with the region's heritage.

Visit Keweenaw helped organize room blocks and financially contributed to the November Gale Tournament, bolstering late fall for hoteliers in the Keweenaw with sports teams traveling to play in Houghton. Visit Keweenaw helps promote events, recruit volunteers and even staff events when needed.



Visit Keweenaw partnered with the Copper Country Junior Hockey Association to establish an early season tournament in 2024.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT & STEWARDSHIP

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT FUND

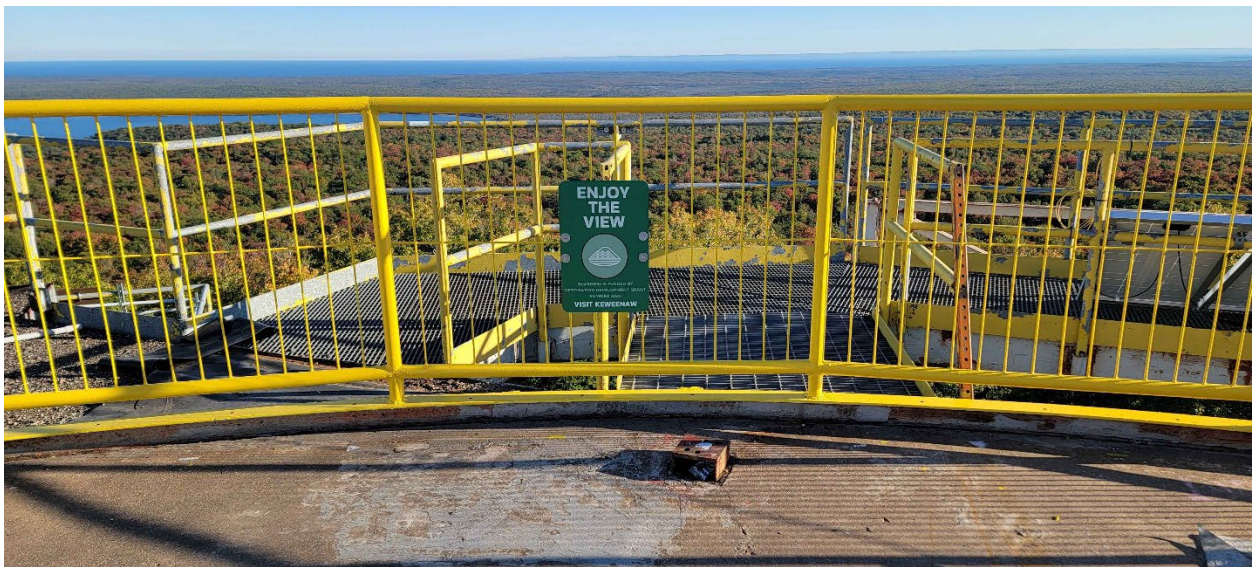
In 2024, eighteen (18) [Destination Development Fund](#) Awards were made totaling \$127,000. Both the number of awards and total dollars awarded were records. The following awards were given:

- Copper Country Trail National Byway - **\$27,000** - Wayfinding signage & confidence markers
- Swedetown Recreation Area - **\$20,000** - Accessible beginner level biking/hiking trail
- Hancock Trails Club - **\$17,000** - Swedetown Creek Bridge connector at Maasto-Hiitho / Churning Rapids Trail System
- Copper Harbor Trails Club - **\$11,500** - Berry Picker climbing trail at Brockway Mountain
- Main Street Calumet - **\$8,000** - Downtown seating and planters
- City of Houghton - **\$7,500** - Installation of Historic Houghton downtown signage
- Calumet Air Force Station Heritage Museum - **\$6,000** - Safety railing atop viewing tower
- Calumet Township - **\$5,000** - New disc golf course
- Painesdale Mine & Shaft, Inc - **\$4,900** - Interpretive signage and visitor kiosk
- Chassell Township - **\$2,750** - Wayfinding Signage
- Keweenaw County Sheriff's Office - **\$1,725** - Directional and safety signage
- Keweenaw ATV Club - **\$695** - Trail directional signage
- Organizational Sponsorships - **\$15,000** - Copper Shores Community Foundation Giving Tuesday Club Sponsorship





View of new bridge supported by Visit Keweenaw's Destination Development Fund near Tomasi Road at Maasto-Hiitho Trail System



View of new overlook at Open Skies supported by Visit Keweenaw's Destination Development Fund

LOVE THE KEWEENAW

In partnership with several Keweenaw community organizations, Visit Keweenaw launched the [Love The Keweenaw](#) campaign to educate our visitors and community members on responsible recreation and local stewardship. The new community brand embraced educational pillars focused on respecting communities, Leave No Trace principles, and outdoor recreation safety practices.

Love The Keweenaw Community Partners

- [Copper Harbor Trails Club](#)
- [Eagle Harbor Township](#)
- [Keweenaw ATV Club](#)
- [Keweenaw County Sheriff's Office](#)
- [Keweenaw Land Trust](#)
- [Keweenaw Snowmobile Club](#)
- [Michigan State University Extension](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy](#)
- [Visit Keweenaw](#)
- [Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region](#)



Love The Keweenaw banners at local welcome centers

KEWEENAW SUSTAINABILITY SERIES

Visit Keweenaw continued its [Keweenaw Sustainable Tourism Series](#) (KSTS) which connects local businesses and community leaders with relevant subject matter experts (SME) to discuss the principles, latest developments, and opportunities of sustainable travel.

In 2024, Visit Keweenaw coordinated and hosted eight public sessions including discussions of economic sustainability, cultural preservation, land use planning for tourism and other pertinent topics. In the Fall, Visit Keweenaw had the privilege of partnering with Dr. Mark Rhodes' Introduction to Sustainable Tourism class at Michigan Technological University to host four KSTS sessions. The presentations drew community members and tourism stakeholders to learn more about tourism best practices from case studies from across the country.

KEWEENAW CARES

In April, the Visit Keweenaw Team partnered with the Keweenaw Land Trust to help re-pot thousands of native seedlings in celebration of Earth Day. The event drew dozens of volunteers.



The Visit Keweenaw Team partnered with the Keweenaw Land Trust during Earth Day '24 to repot and distribute native plant species for local nature areas.

LEAVE NO TRACE PARTNERSHIP

In May, Visit Keweenaw hosted a stewardship training seminar in partnership with [Leave No Trace](#) (LNT). Community partners representing outdoor recreation, conservation and cultural preservation attended to learn about LNT best practices in preparation for the summer tourism season.



Leave No Trace Training Workshop Hosted by Visit Keweenaw in Calumet

COMMUNITY & INDUSTRY SERVICE

In 2024, Visit Keweenaw staff proudly served on the following community boards and committees:

- Accessible Keweenaw Initiative
- Copper Country Trail National Byway Planning Committee
- Houghton Country Recreation Authority
- Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance
- Keweenaw Heartlands Advisory Committee
- Michigan Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus



Visit Keweenaw helped launch the first ever Upper Peninsula Accessibility Summit in partnership with the Accessible Keweenaw Initiative, the Keweenaw Community Foundation, the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region, Michigan Technological University and other community partners.

VISIT KEWEENAW MEMBERS

Visit Keweenaw's work is supported through the participation of the following local businesses in the region's lodging industry room assessment program.

AGASSIZ HOUSE INN
AQUA LOG CABINS
AHMEEK COPPERMINE CAMP
AMERICINN BY WYNDHAM CALUMET
BELLA VISTA MOTEL
BROCKWAY INN
CEDAR POINT CABINS
CENTENNIAL COTTAGES
COPPER COUNTRY INN
COUNTRY INN & SUITES BY RADISSON
DA BEACH CABIN
FRESH COAST CABINS
EAGLE RIVER COTTAGE
EXPEDITION INN
FITZGERALD'S HOTEL & RESTAURANT
CLIFF VIEW BAR & CABINS
HAMPTON INN & SUITES BY HILTON
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS
HOUGHTON SUPER 8 BY WYNDAM
INDEPENDENCE STAY OF HOUGHTON
INN ON LAC LA BELLE
KEWEENAW HODGE PODGE LODGE
KEWEENAW MOUNTAIN LODGE

KEWEENAW WATERS RESORT
KING COPPER MOTEL
LAC LA BELLE LAKESIDE CABIN
LAC LA BELLE LODGE
LAKE BREEZE RESORT
LAKE FANNY HOOE RESORT/THE PINES RESORT
LAURIUM MANOR INN
VICTORIAN HALL
THE YELLOW HOUSE
MAGNUSON COPPER CROWN
MARINER NORTH RESORT
MINNETONKA RESORT
THE SPIRIT OF THE NORTH RETREAT COTTAGE
MOUNT BOHEMIA RESORT
PARKVIEW LODGE
QUALITY INN & SUITES
RAMADA WATERFRONT BY WYNDHAM
ROCK HARBOR LODGE
THE VAULT HOTEL
TRAILSIDE LODGE
VIC'S CABINS
WHITE HOUSE LODGING
WILDERNESS RESORT

BOARD & STAFF DIRECTORY

Visit Keweenaw Board of Directors

Julie Sprenger, President

Jen Julien, Vice President

Nichole McCloskey, Secretary

DeeAnna Gariepy, Treasurer

Marina Alexander

Vern Barber

Mike LaMotte

Jason Miller

Diane Neitzel

Laurium Manor Inn

The Vault Hotel

Country Inn & Suites by Radisson

Holiday Inn Express of Houghton

Rock Harbor Lodge

Mount Bohemia Resort

Fitzgerald Hotel & Restaurant

Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton

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