



KEWEENAW

THINGS TO DO: GUIDED TOURS OF THE KEWEENAW

Author: Kayleigh White on July 20, 2023

The Keweenaw Peninsula is a place full of rich history, vast wilderness, and endless shoreline to explore. While some incredible places are easy to find on your own, many are tucked away and hidden in lush forests or deep underground. With the help of a local guide, you can discover the magic of Lake Superior, the beauty of the Keweenaw's rugged terrain, and the history of things you didn't even know were there. On land, on water, or underground... read on to learn more about things to do and the various tours offered throughout the Keweenaw Peninsula region.

UNDERGROUND MINE TOURS

If you've been to the Keweenaw before, you've probably heard locals call it "The Copper Country." Copper mining brought tens of thousands of immigrants to the area in search of work, and the industry played a major role in the development of our communities. Collectively, our Keweenaw copper mines generated over 5 million metric tons of copper. However, rising production costs, the Copper Country Strike of 1913, and the decline of population during the Depression era led to the gradual closure of our Keweenaw copper mines.

Towering smokestacks, old shaft houses, and artifacts of the past still exist nearly everywhere you look. Some of the mines offer tours so you can learn more about the process of mining copper and what life was like for workers and their families.

Quincy Mine & Smelter

Sitting at the top of Quincy Hill in Hancock, Michigan is one of the most prominent landmarks in the Keweenaw... Quincy Mine. Often referred to as "Old Reliable," Quincy Mine operated between 1846 and 1945 and was known for its steady output of dividends between 1868 and 1920. Quincy Mine has multiple tour options available, but we highly recommend doing the underground portion to learn about working conditions deep underground. During your tour, you will take a cog-wheel tram down Quincy Hill to the opening of the shaft. The tour continues through the deep shaft, and your guide will be happy to answer any questions you may have. The mine stays at a temperature of 43°; so make sure to dress accordingly! Quincy is a fully accessible site, but be sure to call ahead if you have mobility issues.

Part of the Quincy Mine Complex is the Quincy Smelter, which is located on Hancock's waterfront. It is the oldest and most intact smelter from this period in the world. The smelter was used to help move copper from ore into finished copper ingots. During the smelting process, smelter furnaces heated copper concentrate to a liquid and slag/ rock debris was skimmed off the surface. Air stirred into the molten copper oxidized the remaining impurities. Much of the original machinery remains intact, and visitors can take a guided tour of the smelter to learn more about the smelting process.

Painesdale Mine & Shaft

Just south of Houghton, in Painesdale, Michigan, is the Champion #4 Shaft House. This distinctive shaft house was built in 1902 as part of the Copper Range Mining Company mines that ran from Atlantic Mine to Painesdale, MI. The Champion #4 mine operated for nearly 65 years before its official closure in 1967.

Painesdale Mine & Shaft Incorporated has been dedicated to restoration efforts and historical preservation of the mine site for many years. It is also the newest Keweenaw National Historical Park Heritage Site and offers surface level tours and tours of the upper levels of the shaft-rock house.

Delaware Mine

On US-41 on your way to Copper Harbor, you will see signs for the Delaware Mine. The Delaware Mine operated for forty years, but never turned a profit for its investors. The mine continues to serve as a prime example of what mines were like in this area during the 1800's. The tours at Delaware Mine are self-guided, and visitors walk down 100 feet of stairs through the #1 shaft to the first level of the mine. Delaware Mine also includes two original mine buildings, antique trains, equipment displays, and even pet skunks. Don't worry, as the skunks are very friendly and do not spray guests. Overall, Delaware Mine is a great destination for families who want to learn about the history of the area but prefer to go at their own pace.

Adventure Mine

The Adventure Mine in Greenland, Michigan, offers a unique visitor experience. Different tour packages are available, and activities include rappelling down a mine shaft, underground drilling and blasting workshops, and easy guided walking tours of the mine. The history of this mine dates to 1850. From 1850 to the mine's closure in 1920, miners removed more than 11 million pounds of native copper from the ground.

KEWEENAW NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK RANGER PROGRAMS

During the summer months, the Keweenaw National Historical Park (KNHP) offers ranger led programs that dive into the history and landscape of the Keweenaw Peninsula region.

Most tours begin at the KNHP Visitors Center in Calumet, unless otherwise specified. Ranger talks include discussions of the success of Calumet & Hecla Mining Company, conversations about how geology affects daily life, history of local recreation, the evolution of a mining landscape, and more. See our events calendar for more information about upcoming ranger tours.

LAURIUM MANOR INN

The Laurium Manor Inn is an incredible mansion that was built in the early 1900's during the peak of the copper mining boom. The mansion belonged to Captain Thomas Hoatson Junior, owner of the Calumet & Arizona Mining Company. At a time when miners were making just 25 cents per hour, this house was built at a cost of \$50,000 with an additional \$35,000 of furnishings added.

It serves as an example of the wealth of mine owners at the time. Today, the mansion operates as a bed & breakfast and offers self-guided tours. Bring a set of headphones with you so that you can listen to the audio tour on your phone as you walk through the beautiful rooms of the mansion. The audio tour is narrated by the owners, Julie and Dave Sprenger.

THE KEWEENAW'S RADAR BASE

A hidden Keweenaw gem – Mount Horace Greely stands at an elevation of 1,512 feet and is home to the former Calumet Air Force Station. This cold war radar base was opened in the 1950's and operated for nearly 40 years. It was later the site of the Keweenaw Academy Reform School, with some facilities being used for cellular and radio communications.

In August of 2021, it was purchased by the Open Skies Project, LLC with the goal of restoring the property, preserving its history, and making it a site that is accessible to the public. Because of its remote location in the rugged Keweenaw wilderness, the site also included housing and a cantonment area.

If you are interested in learning more about the history of this legendary cold war radar station, you can book a tour at OpenSkiesProject.org.

BOAT TOURS

One of the most incredible ways to experience the beauty of the Keweenaw is by getting out on the water. Breathe in fresh air and take in views that simply can't be seen from your car when you take a boat tour. Read on to explore the different boat tour options in the Keweenaw Peninsula region.

Keweenaw Boat Tours

Captain Jason Swain of Keweenaw Boat Tours offers several different experiences throughout the region and operates both a luxury pontoon and the 25-foot Keweenaw Explorer cabin cruiser. Hop aboard for a sunset cruise on Lake Superior, cruise out to the Jacobsville Lighthouse and the sandstone cliffs, or take in views of the most pristine shoreline from Lac La Belle to Keystone Bay when you book the ultimate Keweenaw Adventure tour. Feel free to bring your pup along, as Keweenaw Boat Tours is a pet-friendly service.

Copper Country Boat Tours

Copper Country Boat Tours offers slow-paced tours of the Portage Canal aboard a beautiful emissions-free electric boat. The cabin is cozy and comfortable, and the canvas cover provides protection from wind, rain, and sun. Captain Dominic Snell offers a variety of tour options, including historical and sunset tours. Enjoy the views as you learn about the many hidden gems that dot the Keweenaw waterway.

Isle Royale Queen IV

The Isle Royale Queen IV is one of two vessels that take passengers to Isle Royale from the Keweenaw Peninsula. On select days of the summer, it also offers Lake Superior sunset cruises. These popular sunset cruises have been offered for over 50 years and provide fantastic views of pristine Keweenaw shoreline. Check out the Isle Royale Queen Facebook page to find out when the next sunset tours will be offered.

PADDLING

Enjoy the peace and quiet of mother nature when you take a guided paddling adventure.

Portage Paddle Sports

If you are looking to get out on the Portage Canal, Portage Paddle Sports has you covered! With a location in both Houghton and Hancock, exploring the beauty of the canal has never been easier. Not only do they offer equipment rentals, but they also have instructors who are ready to help. Book a private paddleboard or kayak lesson to make your first paddle in the Keweenaw one to remember.

Mount Bohemia

An epic ski resort in the winter, and an outdoor adventure destination in the summer. Located in Lac La Belle, Mount Bohemia offers hiking trails, a Nordic Spa, and guided sea kayak tours on Lake Superior. With the assistance of knowledgeable guides, kayak to Montreal Falls or explore Lac La Belle and the Bête Grise area. Adventures vary in difficulty, but your guide will be able to make a suggestion based on your skill level. Mount Bohemia also offers guided paddle boarding on Sundays.

Keweenaw Adventure Company

Staying in the Copper Harbor area? Consider a guided sea kayaking trip with Keweenaw Adventure Company. Tours are open to all skill levels and allow you the opportunity to safely explore the beauty of the harbor and Lake Superior. Trips begin with instruction on land to ensure that everyone on the tour is equipped with the basic skills necessary to paddle around. The guides at Keweenaw Adventure Company let you set the pace and happen to be great at spotting eagles.

Keweenaw Adventure Company also organizes overnight kayaking trips on Isle Royale. These all-inclusive trips begin with a pre-trip orientation and a ferry ride aboard the Queen IV to Isle Royale National Park the next morning. Trip itineraries are designed to meet the needs and ambitions of the group and include daily paddling adventures to explore the remote archipelago of Isle Royale. Paddling also allows your group to camp on exterior islands away from other campers. Your guides will be with you the entire time and can help with any part of the excursion.

COPPER HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE TOURS

Located on Hays Point, the Copper Harbor Lighthouse remains a prominent structure in the area. The brick building was built in 1866 from bricks that were used in the original stone light tower erected in 1847. When the stone tower was in use, a lighthouse keeper stayed in a house nearby. Today, the lightkeepers house and lighthouse are set up with historical displays, but the only way to access the lighthouse is by boat.

Noah's Ark Charters offers transportation to Hay's Point and will unlock the buildings so that you can learn more about the history. No time limit is put on visitors as they explore, and the boat will be accessible for departure or arrival every 30 minutes. By request, Noah's Ark Charters also offers sunset/ sunrise tours. Stop by or call the Bella Vista Motel in Copper Harbor to book a tour.

GUIDED FISHING EXCURSIONS

Inland lakes, winding rivers, and easy access to Lake Superior make the Keweenaw a prime destination for fishing. The Keweenaw's freshwater ecosystem provides a great habitat for a huge variety of fish... Whitefish, salmon, lake trout, panfish, walleye, pike, and more! While fish may be abundant, they can be difficult to catch. If you want to reel in the big ones, hiring a local guide may be a good idea. Not only are our local guides licensed captains, but they also have years of experience fishing the vast waters of the Keweenaw Peninsula region. From knowing how to use the gear to knowing where to go and when... your guide will ensure that you have the best experience possible. There are several different guides in the area that offer different experiences depending on their preference and style of fishing.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Keweenaw Adventure Company

Copper harbor's rugged wilderness terrain makes it the perfect destination for mountain biking. While it may seem like this activity is only for the experienced, Keweenaw Adventure Company offers tours for individuals of all skill levels. Starting at Keweenaw Adventure Company's home base in Copper Harbor, tours begin with basic instruction to ensure that you have the knowledge and gear necessary to hit the trails.

Copper Harbor Trails Club has been working on improving trail options for beginners, and now there are several easy-rated trails in the village area. During your tour, you will be matched with riders of a similar skill level to ensure that everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience. Mountain bike tours are not limited to adults! Keweenaw Adventure Company offers full suspension Rocky Mountain bikes that provide the youngsters with a quality ride on par to the larger adult models.

Cross Country Sports

Cross Country Sports is a family-owned and operated cycling and ski shop in Calumet, MI. This sporting goods shop offers high quality gear available for purchase or rent. They also offer bike and ski service and repair. The staff at Cross Country Sports has a passion for outdoor recreation and regularly host group rides and events on our local trails. Stay in the loop about upcoming events with Cross Country Sports by following their Facebook page.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Upper Peninsula Tours

If you are looking for the ultimate adventure tour, you need to meet Yooper Steve of Upper Peninsula Tours. Yooper Steve has explored the forests and waters of the U.P. for his entire life and is eager to show you some of his favorite spots.

Several tour options are available in the Keweenaw area. Choose the Keweenaw Big Views Tour, the Keweenaw Super Sampler, find hidden waterfalls, or even try your luck at finding Yooperlites with someone who knows where to go! Steve can share fascinating facts about the historic places you see, as well as information about local geology and the environment.

UP Adventure Company

The U.P. Adventure Company is a family-owned business that focuses on accessible/ inclusive boating and fishing adventures. Some of their popular sightseeing boat trips include Manitou Island Day Trips, Keweenaw Peninsula Circumnavigation, overnight Manitou Island Trips, and fall color boat tours. The U.P. Adventure Company also has a CUA permit to work within Isle Royale National Park and offers custom trips to this remote archipelago.

During the winter, they also offer guided snowshoe hikes, ski lessons, and dog sled training adventures. Lacy and Justin Cygan, owners of U.P. Adventure Company, are happy to customize tours to best suit your needs.

Keweenaw Land Trust

Keweenaw Land Trust (KLT) is a local community partner committed to protecting land, water, and quality of life through conservation, stewardship, and education. The KLT owns several properties throughout the region that are open for public use. Throughout the year, they host events on their trails and nature areas. These include Tyke Hikes, Story Trails, snowshoe hikes, winter solstice gatherings, and more. Stay in the know by following the KLT on Facebook.

Wise Old Man of Isle Royale

Wise Old Man focuses on Isle Royale expeditions. Packages include round-trip passage aboard the Queen IV to Isle Royale National Park. Available excursions range from 4 to 10 days and can be customized for up to 2 weeks. Explore and hike Greenstone Ridge, Minong Ridge, Chippewa Harbor, or Daisy Farm loop. Your guides are experienced and can provide knowledgeable guidance when exploring these remote backcountry trails.

Author

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Kayleigh is a U.P. native with a passion for the outdoors. Some of her favorite outdoor hobbies are rock collecting on the shores of Lake Superior, springtime foraging, and hiking. She is also passionate about flow arts and can be found recording technical double hula-hooping videos throughout the scenic Keweenaw Peninsula. If you are interested in seeing her latest flow arts videos, you can follow her work here: <https://www.instagram.com/waywardkay/>

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