



Fall Color Tour Guide

ANTRIM | BENZIE | GRAND TRAVERSE | LEELANAU

TRAVERSE
city

TOUR 1:

OUT ON A MISSION



OLD MISSION PENINSULA

Length: 45 miles approx. | 2 hr. drive

The Old Mission Peninsula juts bravely into Grand Traverse Bay, nearly 20 miles long and in some places as little as a mile wide. A beautiful patchwork of orchards, vineyards, forests, and villages, it's the perfect place for a morning or afternoon drive that combines fall color with beautiful views of the bay, visits to wineries and roadside fruit stands, and unforgettable meals at several charming restaurants.

Follow M-37 (Center Road) north from Traverse City. The road begins with a steep climb through pleasant residential and orchard country, descends to the shore of East Bay, and gradually climbs again to a spectacular viewpoint near the Chateau Grand Traverse winery that overlooks both East and West Grand Traverse Bays. About a mile past the charming community of Mapleton, turn right onto Smokey Hollow Road and follow it down through vineyards and orchards to the quiet village of Old Mission, the oldest permanent settlement in the region. Take a left turn onto Swaney Road and follow it back to M-37, where a right turn will have you heading north to the picturesque Mission Point Lighthouse.

On the return journey, head back south on M-37 to Mapleton. Here you'll turn right onto Bowers Harbor Road and follow it down to the shore of West Bay. Keeping to the left, you'll return to Traverse City by way of Peninsula Drive, a pleasant residential road that skirts the shore of the bay with wonderful views of isolated Power Island, Neahtawanta Point, and the distant hills of the Leelanau Peninsula.



TOUR 2: SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

LONG LAKE, INTERLOCHEN, AND THE BOARDMAN VALLEY

Length: 55 miles approx. | 2+ hr. drive

The forested hills south of Traverse City are dotted with dozens of small lakes, rolling meadows and sturdy farm towns. This drive takes you through a broad variety of landscapes, from the coves and islands of Long Lake and the artistic beauty of Interlochen to the villages of Kingsley and Mayfield and the majestic Boardman Valley.

Head west on Front Street, Traverse City's main east-west street, as it climbs the hills west of town to become North Long Lake Road, skirts the northern edge of the lake, and finally is known as West Long Lake Road. Make a right onto South Long Lake Road as it heads south to Interlochen. Here the road (also known as M-137) slips between two beautiful lakes at the pine-shaded campus of the Interlochen Center for the Arts. Just past Interlochen, turn left onto Youker Road and follow it east to M-37, where a quick jog to the south will bring you to M-113, where you'll turn left again and head to Kingsley.

At Kingsley, turn left again onto Garfield Road, which will take you north through the tiny village of Mayfield and across the Boardman River. Just past the river, turn right onto Hobbs Highway and follow it for another mile to the next right, which is Ranch Rudolf Road. (There's a fine view here across the valley and the Boardman River.) Follow the road for several miles to Rennie Lake Road, turn left and pass several small lakes, take another left onto Supply Road and follow it to Hobbs Highway again.

Turn left onto Hobbs and follow it past more forest-shaded lakes to rejoin Garfield. Stay on the road for about half a mile until you reach River Road; turn right and follow it down the Boardman Valley, which begins to open up dramatically just beyond this point. Bear to the left at Beitner Road and follow it as it climbs steeply from the valley floor, then continue past the intersection at U.S. 31 to East Silver Lake Road, which will take you north and back to Traverse City for one last impressive view.



TOUR 3: THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

BENZIE COUNTY

Length: 90 miles approx. | 2+ hr. drive

The road opens up before you when you enter Benzie County. Home to more than half a dozen quaint villages and towns, as well as miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, Benzie offers long stretches of peaceful scenery to admire. The county is heavily forested and relatively hilly, making it the perfect place to get stunning fall color views and quite literally enjoy a breath of fresh air.

Head out of town on West Front Street and North Long Lake Road, which will turn into Maple Street as you approach the village of Lake Ann. Along the way, you'll pass Long Lake and—you guessed it—Lake Ann, before taking a jaunt (via a right on Ole White Dr. and a left on Almira Road) up to Fowler Road, also known as County Road 610. A left turn onto M-22 will send you along the southern tip of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and Platte Lake.

Continue following M-22 to pass the Point Betsie Lighthouse as you traverse the narrow strip of land between Lake Michigan and Crystal Lake. When you reach Frankfort, Benzie's jewel of a beach town, swing a right on M-115 E toward the villages of Beulah and Benzonia. A little jog south on US-31 will lead you back to 115, where you can follow the forested highway all the way to Thompsonville. Turn left onto Lindy Road, then left onto Karlin Road (which becomes Nessen and then Karlin again) to begin your journey back toward Traverse City. After you pass Interlochen, take a right on US-31 to return to town.

Color Tour Map

in 3
Scales
Cady
Miles
Four C
Count
Poles
Scale
Inches
Footage
Center
Shading
Ball Park

Longhouse
Winery
Golf Course
Information Center
Airport

TOUR 4

OPTIONAL LOOP

TOUR 1

TOUR 5

TOUR 3

TOUR 2

GRAND
TRAVERSE
COUNTY

KALKASKA



TOUR 4: MICHIGAN'S LITTLE FINGER

THE LEELANAU PENINSULA

Length: 75 miles approx. | 3+ hr. drive

(30 miles including optional loop—another hour drive)

It's hard to find another place in all Michigan where so much beautiful scenery, so many lovely villages, and so much fascinating history are packed into such a small area. This tour will take you to the very tip of this scenic peninsula through the villages of Suttons Bay, Northport, and Leland. And if that's not enough, we've added an optional visit to Glen Arbor and the magnificent Sleeping Bear Dunes.

Take M-22 north from Traverse City along the shore of West Bay to Cherry Bend Road, where a left turn will take you to the foot of the TimberLee Hills. Turn right here and head north on County Road 633, a lovely rural road that leads through beautiful upland country to the village of Suttons Bay. Here you'll rejoin M-22 and continue north along the shore through the villages of Peshawbestown (home to the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians), Omena, and Northport. From Northport, continue north to the tip of the peninsula and visit Leelanau State Park and the Grand Traverse Lighthouse.

Returning to Northport, take M-22 west to the charming fishing port of Leland.* Beyond Leland, you'll skirt the western shore of Lake Leelanau for a mile or so and turn left onto County Road 204 which leads to the inland village of Lake Leelanau. Turn right here, just before the bridge, onto County Road 643 which follows a very scenic route along the lake and eventually takes you to the picturesque town of Cedar. Continue south from Cedar on County Road 651 to M-72, turn left, and follow the highway back for a spectacular return to Traverse City.

*(Optional loop) After leaving Leland, continue south on M-22 along the Lake Michigan shoreline and through the eastern section of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to the village of Glen Arbor. Continue through the village on what is now called M-109, past the ghost port of Glen Haven and the famous Dune Climb, and take the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive (permit required), which offers splendid views of the surrounding lake and dune country. Turn right when leaving the scenic drive and go for about a mile to County Road 616, where you make a left turn and head along the southern shore of the two Glen Lakes. Just past the lakes the road climbs steeply—at its top is an excellent viewpoint called Inspiration Point. Continue eastward through the villages of Maple City and Cedar. In Cedar, take a right turn onto County Road 651 and follow it south to M-72, where a left turn will bring you back to Traverse City.



TOUR 5: A SECRET SPLENDOR

ELK LAKE, TORCH LAKE, AND THE RAPID RIVER

Length: 45 miles approx. | 2+ hr. drive

Just east of Traverse City are two watery jewels of the Michigan landscape: Elk Lake and Torch Lake, beloved by generations of cottage owners but relatively unknown to the outside world. Even less famous is the steep valley of the little Rapid River, whose forested slopes look as though they were transported from somewhere in the Appalachian Mountains. This tour gives you a pleasant introduction to all three.

Head north from Traverse City's eastern edge on U.S. 31, following the highway as it carves its way past orchards and farms along the shore of East Bay. At the lively little port of Elk Rapids, turn right at the light and follow Ames Street (which becomes the Cairn Highway) along the northern shore of Elk Lake, through the village of Kewadin, and southward again on County Road 593. This road will take you along the eastern shore of Torch Lake. Cross the Torch River as it empties into the lake, then turn south onto Aarwood Rd NW and into the village of Rapid City.

Continue east on 593 (now known also as Valley Road) as it winds its way up through the narrow valley of Rapid River. A good stop here is at The Seven Bridges, where the river separates briefly into several braided streams. Continue up the valley past Rugg Pond, another very scenic area where Ernest Hemingway once camped during a teenage fishing trip, until the road ends at M-72. Turn right and follow the highway west to Traverse City, where you'll pass a dramatic vista of Elk Lake and nearby Lake Skegemog.

Respect
THE LAND & WATER

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WITH FRIENDS

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EVERYTHING ELSE

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