

BLOSSOM TOUR GUIDE

BENZIE | GRAND TRAVERSE | LEE LANAU

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In Japan there are at least 70 words that describe cherry blossoms. Here in northern Michigan we are a little more succinct. We have one word – Stunning!

There is a bit of a dance around the Traverse City cherry blossoms. The blossoms only last a few days. Since their flowering is dependent on the warmth of the ground and the amount of sun in the sky – the blossoms pop in different parts of the region on different days. We dance around the area to see where the next explosion of color takes place.



Cherry blossoms are best experienced by most of your senses. Yes, your eyes will take in the feast of color through miles and miles of rolling hills. But if you are able to stand in the orchard – stand still – be silent – and your other senses will come to life. You can hear the sound of bees active with their own ritual of pollination. You can feel a gentle breeze that blows small white petals that lightly touch your skin. Take in a deep breath and smell the sweet aroma of spring. Standing here in northern Michigan during cherry blossom season and you will realize these blossoms have taken you to a pretty great place.

It takes a little timing to explore the cherry blossoms. It's not an exact science. Farmers watch for the signs, but northern Michigan spring weather can shift and impact when the blossoms open. So the best thing to do is to stay vigilant and watch for the signs.



When Will the Blossoms Bloom?

Traditionally blossoms appear midway through May. Blossoms could begin in early May. Normally, blooms are first spotted in the Acme and Williamsburg areas because those trees are further away from the water. It results in slightly warmer temperatures and earlier blossoms. Next, we historically see the blossoms start in Benzie County, followed by the southern and middle areas of Leelanau County. Blossoms will work their way north to the fruit growing fields of Leelanau County and Old Mission Peninsula. The last regions for the blossoms to pop are typically around Northport and near Mission Point Lighthouse.

For more information on cherry blossoms



TOUR 1

OLD MISSION PENINSULA

We suggest taking M-37 north from Traverse City. This takes you through the entire length of Old Mission Peninsula. Here's you'll see amazing panoramic views of both West and East Grand Traverse Bay. Cherry orchards are intermingled with vineyards throughout the drive. Don't hesitate to divert from the route. At the northern tip stop in at Mission Point Lighthouse and enjoy some great hiking trails. Or take a little side drive to historic Bowers Harbor where the sunset views are spectacular.

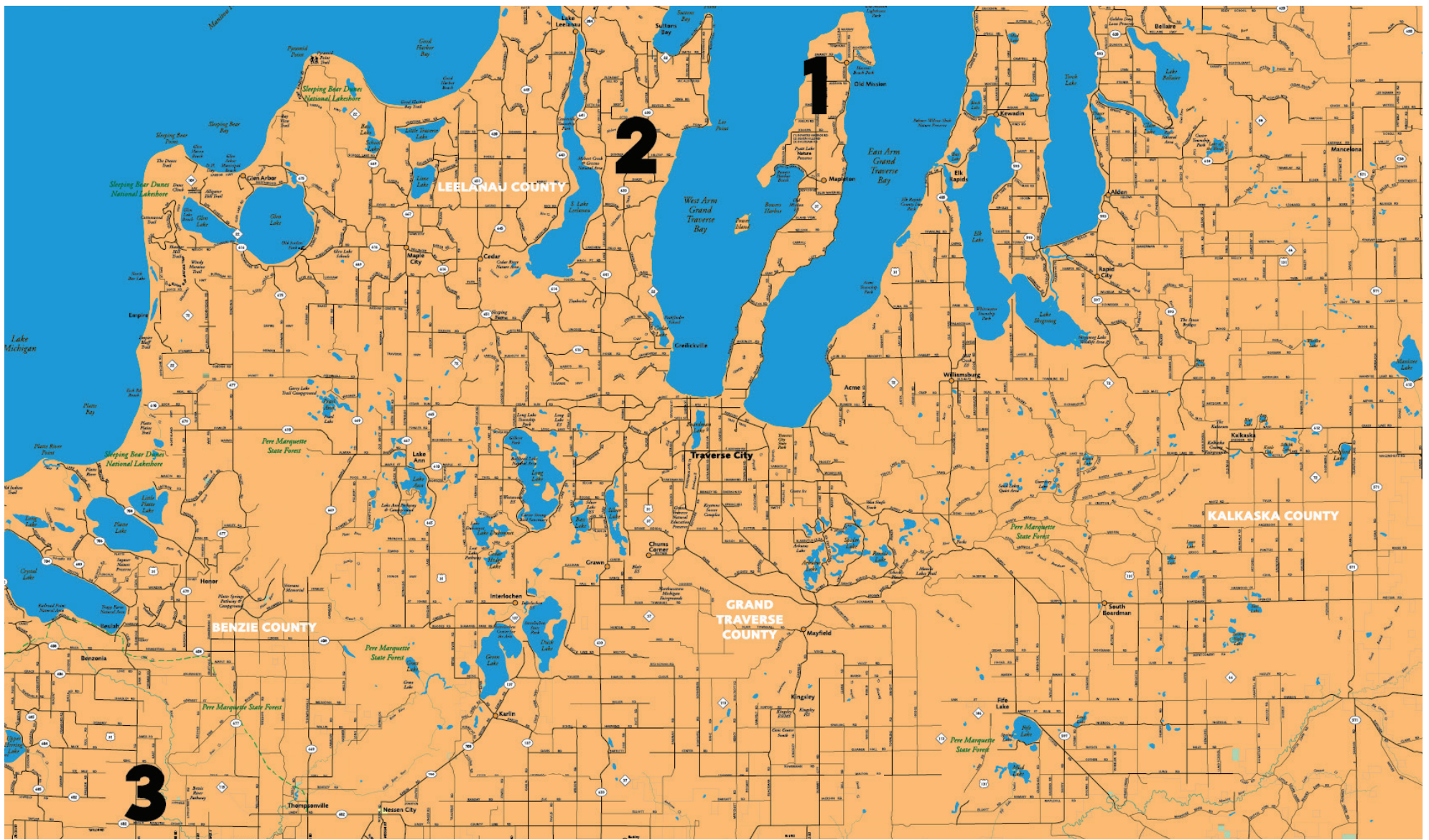


TOUR 2

LEELANAU PENINSULA

One of the best routes for cherry blossom viewing is along County Road 633 south of Suttons Bay. It takes you to the heart of the county. The route joins up with the famous M-22 for a brief period, but splits off north of Suttons Bay for more orchards and blossom viewing. Remember you are in the middle of Traverse Wine Coast with this drive. A few stops along the way at for wine tasting can make this trip even more memorable.





Be Respectful

Don't forget most of these blossoms are on private land and you need to be respectful of their property rights. Only walk through the orchards if you have approval from the property owner.

Real Time - Real Blossoms

The MSU Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station in Leelanau County has a live cherry tree camera to watch the progress of the blossoms. But keep in mind this is just one tree in one part of Leelanau County. It is a tart cherry tree, and the sweet trees will blossom before the tart cherry trees. Check out their camera here:

canr.msu.edu/nwmihort/nwmihort_cherry_orchard_webcam

TOUR 3

BENZIE COUNTY

Locals recommend Joyfield Road, south of Elberta between M-22 and US-31. In Blaine Township in the southeast corner of the county. There are plenty of orchards, farms and northern Michigan scenery. Try not to be in too much of a hurry on this trip. A little side trip to Frankfort to walk downtown or to check out the Lake Michigan beach is well worth the time. The area also has some great hiking trails along Lower and Upper Herring Lake and around beautiful Crystal Lake.



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