Lights of Northern Lake Huron

1. Charity Island Lighthouse & Bed & Breakfast

3660 E. Huron Road
Big Charity Island
Au Gres, MI 48703
Reservations: (989)876-8929
Phone: (517)579-3182
Email: robertwiltse@charityisland.com
http://www.charityisland.net/
http://www.charityisland.net/swf/index.html

The island was named by the lake mariners for its location, placed "through the charity of God" midway between the city of Au Gres and the Thumb, at the entrance to Saginaw Bay. The light was constructed in 1857, and then replaced by the Gravelly Shoal Light and abandoned in 1939. Enjoy Dinner at the Charity Island Lightkeepers house -The experience begins when you arrive at Northport Travel Center just east of Au Gres MI where you will board the 49 passenger vessel "Northstar" for the one hour trip to Charity Island where you will be greeted by your hosts Bob and Karen Wiltse. Upon arriving, Guests receive a lively 30 minute presentation of the history of the Island and the lighthouse before taking the 7 minute walk thru the woods to the lightkeepers house located on the northern tip of the island. Dinner is served up on the porch of the lightkeepers house that provides Diners with a breathtaking view of Saginaw Bay. Tours of the house are given after dinner. Dessert is served on the return trip to the mainland which is timed to catch the sunset on the way back. Total time on the island is approximately 3-1/2 hours. The departure time changes each week to compensate for the changing sunset time so read our schedule carefully. Now open as a bed and breakfast with four bedrooms available sleep two people and have trundle beds that may be used as a Queen size or as two twin size.

2. Tawas Point Lighthouse

686 Tawas Beach Road
East Tawas, MI 48730
Phone: (865)362-5041
http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17447_18595_18614-67781--,00.html

Tawas point Lighthouse, in operation since 1876, and now part of Tawas Point State Park, is a fascinating attraction for maritime buffs. Tawas Point is also a mecca for birdwatchers, especially in the migration seasons of spring and fall. Tawas Point also offers spectacular views of sunrises over Lake Huron and sunsets over Tawas Bay. Guided tours are available. Also, a gift shop. Tawas Point State Park is offering the opportunity to be a lighthouse keeper at the Tawas Point Lighthouse and stay in the newly renovated lighthouse keeper’s quarters. The lighthouse keeper program is available for one- or two-week stays, during which the lighthouse keeper(s) will be responsible for a variety of duties, including greeting guests, providing information about the history of the lighthouse, helping in the gift shop and taking care of the various artifacts located in the lighthouse museum. Training is provided on-site upon arrival.

3. Sturgeon Point Lighthouse

4. Alpena Light
4. Alpena Historical Society
P.O. Box 174
Harrisville, MI 48740
Phone: (989)724-5056

Sturgeon Point Lighthouse is located five miles north of Harrisville on Lake Huron and was completed in November 1875. The tower is 70 feet, 9 inches tall and is 16 feet in diameter at its base. The light is a 3.5 order Fresnel lens made in Paris, France. The light is still maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard. The keeper's house is now a maritime museum which is open to the public seven days a week from Memorial Day to mid-September. The lighthouse tower is not open to the public. The grounds are open all year.

5. Thunder Bay Scuba
413 S. Ripley Blvd.
Alpena, MI 49707
Phone: (989)356-6228
Email: info@TBScuba.com
http://tbscuba.com/

Thunder Bay Scuba is centrally located along Lake Huron's "Shipwreck Alley" just inside the City of Alpena. We train and supply divers needs from Tawas City in the south to Presque Isle to the north. The Dive Shop sells diving and snorkeling gear from Oceanic, Bare, Scuba Max and AmeriSea. Open seven days a week from Memorial Day to Labor day and five days a week the rest of the year. We offer Air and continuous blend Nitrox fills. Working with charter operators we can book your dives and arrange accommodations for your group. We do our best to show your group a good time so when the weather blows your charter off the Lake ask us and we will arrange for alternate dives. If your coming to Alpena, stop by Thunder Bay Scuba for the best advise on diving or snorkeling our wrecks. If you are looking for a Dive Charter, Lodging, Air Fills or Equipment rentals Thunder Bay Scuba is here to help. We would like to help you arrange your entire stay. Our instructors offer PADI Open Water certification as well as the standard Specialties. New this year is Thunder Bay Underwater Preserve and the DSAT Rec-Tec courses including Deep Tech and Gas Blenders certifications.

6. Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary
500 W. Fletcher Street
Alpena, MI 49707
Phone: (989)356-8805
Fax: (989)354-0144
http://thunderbay.noaa.gov/

The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary preserves a national treasure, nearly 200 historic shipwrecks in and around the bay. You can explore history and archaeology of these wrecks at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center, the sanctuary's 20,000 square riverfront headquarters. With exhibits on Great Lakes maritime history and shipwrecks, NOAA's Science on a Sphere exhibit, a sanctuary store, state of the art education spaces, high-definition theater and archaeological conservation lab, the admission-free center is a great destination and the best place to begin exploring Thunder Bay.

491 Johnson Street
Alpena, MI 49707
Phone: (989)356-2202
Fax: (989)356-3133
http://www.bessermuseum.org/

Come visit Northeast Michigan's center for art, history and science with our displays of arts and crafts, native Americans, geology, industry, and a recreated 1890's street of shops. Our 19th century historic buildings including the Green School, Spratt Church, Mattz exchange Bank, and Morley Log Cabin. Planetarium shows are offered on Saturdays at 2pm. Shows change quarterly so call ahead for the current show information.
9. New Presque Isle Lighthouse Park and Museum

4500 East Grand Lake Road
Presque Isle, MI 49777
Phone: (989)734-5419

http://www.keepershouse.org/newpilh.htm

Presque Isle Light Station is a complex of three historic buildings including a lighthouse tower and two keeper's residences. Located on the Lake Huron shoreline near Presque Isle Harbor, the "New Presque Isle Light" is the tallest lighthouse tower accessible by the public on the Great Lakes. Built in 1870, it replaced the 1840 harbor light. The light station complex is part of a 59-acre township park that includes a playground, picnic area, pavilion and nature trails. A gift shop is located in the original keeper's quarters connected to the tower. Visitors, for a nominal fee, may climb the 150 steps to the top of the tower for a spectacular view. An unattached 1905 keeper's dwelling has been painstakingly restored. It is now a museum that provides visitors with an opportunity to learn about local history, as well as how keepers and their families lived. The buildings and grounds are open to the public daily from 9am - 6pm, mid-May through mid-October. The 1905 House is open Memorial Day through Labor Day, 11am-5pm Tuesday through Saturday, 1pm-5pm Sunday, closed on Monday.

10. Old Presque Isle Lighthouse

5295 E. Grand Lake Rd.
Presque Isle, MI 49777
Phone: (989)595-8079

http://www.keepershouse.org/oldpilh.htm

The Old Presque Isle Lighthouse is one of the oldest surviving lighthouses on the Great Lakes. Built in 1840 by Jeremiah Moors of Detroit, the harbor light operated until 1871 when the keeper transferred to a new, taller, coastal lighthouse a mile to the north. The Old Presque Isle Lighthouse park is a complex composed of two main structures, a keepers dwelling and a light tower. The stone and brick tower measures thirty feet tall and eighteen feet in diameter. Visitors can climb the hand-hewn stone steps for a panoramic view of the Lake Huron shoreline and Presque Isle Harbor. Nearby is the one-story side-gabled brick keeper's dwelling which serves as a hands-on museum. Here, visitors can blow foghorns and examine other interesting artifacts. They can also ring the bell from the Lansing City Hall clock tower. Tipping the scales at an impressive 3,425 pounds, this bronze behemoth is much bigger than the Liberty Bell, which weighed 2,080 pounds when cast. Visitors may also pose for the perfect photo opportunity with head and hands in an old set of punishment stocks. The buildings and park grounds are open to the public daily, from 9am until 6pm, mid-May through mid-October. A nominal fee is charged for tower climbs.

11. Presque Isle Range Light Park

At Presque Isle Harbor
Presque Isle, MI 49777
Phone: (989)595-6526

By the time the new Presque Isle Light Tower was erected in 1870, Presque Isle Harbor was a routine stop for many vessels conducting trade along the Lake Huron shoreline. A natural harbor of refuge, Presque Isle also provided safe and welcome shelter from sudden and powerful storms. The New Presque Isle Light Tower alerted the mariners to impending dangers while the two smaller Range Lights guided them safely into harbor. When the lights were aligned, the mariners knew the safest and easiest path into or out of the harbor. The range light included living quarters for a keeper and family and is now a private residence. Modern, automated lights have replaced historic ones, but most of the original structures remain. The old front range light was relocated to the entrance of the Old Presque Isle Lighthouse grounds, where it stood for many years. It was moved back near its original location in 2004 and there faithfully restored. The grave of Adeline Sims, wife of range light Keeper William Sims, is located to the side of the keeper's path in a fenced-in area. Legend has it that while her husband and fellow Masons held meetings in the rear range light, she overheard and memorized secret passages. To seal her lips, she was made a member. Adeline Sims died an invalid in 1881, and was buried with a Masonic emblem on her gravestone. Sims is the only woman so honored by the Masons.

12. Great Lakes Lore Maritime Museum

367 N. 3rd St.
Rogers City, MI 49779
Phone: (989)734-0706

Email: lor@i2k.net
http://www.glmhm.com/

The Great Lakes Lore Maritime Museum in Rogers City offers an opportunity to learn about Great Lakes maritime commerce and the stories of men and women whose vocation is connected to this industry. Uniforms and personal possessions of ship captains and sailors, maritime tools, cabin furniture, foul weather gear, lockers, lifeboats and other items offer a glimpse into the daily lives of Great Lakes mariners. Visitors can see a number of ship miniatures, photographs and drawings of Great Lakes vessels, lighthouses, docks and shipping offices. The museum is also a "Great Lakes Maritime Hall of Fame" with annual inductees joining the individuals whose lives and accomplishments on the Great Lakes are permanently stored and chronicled. The museum is open mid-May until mid-October. Hours are 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday and Sunday from noon until 4 p.m. Tours for groups are offered with advance reservations.

13. Presque Isle County Historical Museum

176 West Michigan
PO Box 175
Rogers City, MI 49779
Phone: (989)734-4121

Housed in the Bradley House which is an early 20th century, seven bedroom, two story, single family bungalow built in 1914, a national historic site. This house was the home of the president of Michigan Limestone & Chemical Company; the largest industry in this community. Features furnishings of the early 1920's, Indian artifacts, a 1980's general story, a Victorian music room, and displays on the industries of farming, lumbering, and shipping.

14. Harbor View

Calcite Road, off Woodward
Rogers City, MI 49779
Toll Free: (800)622-4148
Phone: (989)734-2535

Email: rchamber@i2k.net
http://www.michigan.org/Places-to-Go/Tours-and-Trails/Detail.aspx?ContentId=951aac5...
15. Forty Mile Point Lighthouse

Lighthouse Park
7323 US 23 N
Rogers City, MI 49779
Phone: (989)734-4587
Email: barbara71@hughes.net
http://www.40milepointlighthouse.org

Forty Mile Point Lighthouse is located on the northern shoreline of Lake Huron in Presque Isle County’s Lighthouse Park, Rogers City, Michigan. At a cost of $25,000, the station was completed by the end of 1896. Its 4th Order Fresnel lens has been a welcoming beacon to sailors since May 1897 and is still operating today. In 1996, the 40 Mile Point Lighthouse Society began restoring the lighthouse, outbuildings and grounds. Several years ago, the pilot house from the Steamer Calcite, built in 1912, and the old Cement Block Garage were reassembled to form the Gift Shop and the Great Lakes Maritime Museum. The former was renovated to become a maritime, general store and schoolroom exhibits. The latter’s fourth order fresnel lens has been restored to its 1920 appearance over the next four years. As such, this represents a unique opportunity for lighthouse lovers to view the restoration in progress. For an entry fee of $5.00 for adults, $3.00 for children, visitors will be able to tour the lighthouse and learn of its rich history from volunteer GLLKA keepers. The lighthouse also features a gift shop stocked with a large assortment of Great Lakes lighthouse-related books, apparel and gifts, with all proceeds to be applied directly to the restoration of the lighthouse. Arrangements can also be made to visit and enter the Cheboygan Crib Light with volunteers working at the lighthouse.

16. Cheboygan River Front Range Lighthouse

606 Water Street
Cheboygan, MI 49721
Phone: (231)436-5580
Email: info@glka.com
http://www.glka.com/

The Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association is proud to announce that they will be opening the Cheboygan River Front Range lighthouse to the public from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. GLLKA took ownership of the 1880 lighthouse through the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act in June 2004, and will undertake the restoration of the station to its 1920 appearance over the next four years. As such, this represents a unique opportunity for lighthouse lovers to view the restoration in progress. For an entry fee of $5.00 for adults, $3.00 for children, visitors will be able to tour the lighthouse and learn of its rich history from volunteer GLLKA keepers. The lighthouse also features a gift shop stocked with a large assortment of Great Lakes lighthouse-related books, apparel and gifts, with all proceeds to be applied directly to the restoration of the lighthouse. Arrangements can also be made to visit and enter the Cheboygan Crib Light with volunteers working at the lighthouse.

17. Cheboygan County Historical Museum Complex

Huron and Court Streets
P.O. Box 5005
Cheboygan, MI 49721
Phone: (231)627-9597
Email: cheboyganmuseum@gmail.com
http://www.cheboyganmuseum.com

Come and explore the rich history of the Cheboygan area at the Cheboygan County Historical Museum Complex. Located at Huron and Court Streets in Cheboygan, the County Seat, the complex consists of five buildings four of which house artifacts and historic exhibits of the past, along with beautiful flowering gardens and the Memorial Rose Garden. The buildings in the complex include: Settlers Log Cabin originally located on Burt Lake in a local Indian Village, the Cheboygan County Sheriff’s residence constructed in 1882, the old Jail, attached to the Sheriff’s quarters and built in about 1912, the decorative Cement Block Garage built in the 1940s, and Spies Heritage Hall, an exhibit hall where the lumbering, maritime, general store and schoolroom exhibits were expanded and moved to.

18. Shepler’s Lighthouse Cruises

P.O. Box 265
Mackinaw City, MI 49701
Reservations: (800)928-6157
Toll Free: (888)828-6157
Phone: (231)436-5023
Fax: (231)436-7521
Email: bill@sheplersferry.com
http://sheplersferry.com/lighthouses/lighthouses.html

On a Shepler’s Lighthouse Cruise, you’ll see these guardians of the Great Lakes like you’ve never seen them before! Nine historic lighthouses lie within easy cruising distance of Mackinaw City. Shepler’s large, spacious vessels provide safe, comfortable passage on these fascinating 3-hour tours. Choose from a westward (Lake Michigan side) or eastbound (Lake Huron side) cruise. Or perhaps an all-day or 2-day excursion. All tours visit at least four lighthouses, pass directly under the mighty Mackinac Bridge and are professionally narrated by members of the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association.

19. Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse

P.O. Box 873
Mackinaw City, MI 49701
Phone: (231)436-4100
Fax: (231)436-4210
Email: mackinacparks@michigan.gov
http://mackinacparks.com/old-mackinac-point-lighthouse/

Look around. This is a setting that has inspired generations. With its impressive buff-colored brick walls, large square tower topped with battlements, and elegant fourth order Fresnel lens, this lighthouse-built in 1892-is a source for inspiration. Surrounding it is a beautifully landscaped lawn dotted with vibrant pine trees and the refurbished fog signal station and barn. And then there’s the backdrop: Sparkling beach sand, the majestic Straits of Mackinac and the magnificent Mackinac Bridge, acting as a vista connecting the past, present, and future. Climb the tower and breathe in the spectacular view as generations of lighthouse keepers did before you. Step inside the lighthouse, and hear the Victrola play pre-World War I tunes in a period-styled sitting room. Explore nighttime navigation and Great Lakes’ shipwrecks. Interact with hands-on exhibits. Ask questions. Immerse yourself. Inside this stately structure, it’s always 1910, so welcome and discover.
In the days before ship-to-shore radios and global positioning systems, lighthouses were the only signposts guiding travelers on the Great Lakes. If you couldn't see them, or the stars and the sun, you were driving blind. This tour visits the Lights of Northern Lake Huron that disappeared from view during the great storm of 1913.

The Storm

The storm began on Friday, November 7, 1913, over Minnesota. At first, it traveled northwest towards Canada, with 40 mph winds. Then, Saturday night, it suddenly turned south. By Sunday, it was a hurricane with 90 mph winds and snow.

Captain James B. Watts of the Durston was headed north. He saw the "Thunder Bay" light around 1:30 Sunday afternoon and then, nothing. "The sea was coming over us from both sides. It was terrible—higher than the cabins." Finally, around 8:00 Monday morning the Spectacle Reef Light placed the storm, and Watts knew where he was. A man of very humor, he noted, "The one mercy the storm showed us was to seal our hatches and ford cabins and windows with a thick armor-plating of ice."

Most boats on the lake that day were not so fortunate. Some ran aground. Eight on Lake Huron went down with all hands.

Charity Island and Tawas Point

Captain Watts still had decent visibility when he passed the lights that guarded Saginaw and Tawas Bays. Today visitors can have dinner on the porch of the Charity Island Light Keepers House and desert on the boat making the return trip to Au Gres at sunset. The full experience takes about 3½ hours. The 1876 Tawas Point Lighthouse, in Tawas State Park, is open for summertime tours during its restoration.

Harrisville/Sturgeon Point

Just north of Harrisville the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse marks a rocky reef that extends a mile into the lake. Perley Silverhorn donated the land for the light and became its first keeper. Modern visitors can explore both the lighthouse exhibits and the point, where an occasional Petoskey stone is found.

Alpena

The last lighthouse Captain Watts saw was on Thunder Bay Island. Land-based travelers are more likely to see the Alpena Light, which marks the mouth of the Thunder Bay River. Called "Sputnik" and "Little Red" by locals, the steel tower built in 1914 is sometimes dismissed as "Long on duty, short on beauty."

Alpena was at the heart of the 1913 storm. Today the Thunder Bay Suba Snorkel tour gives non-divers a close up look at some of the boats that make Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary the only fresh-water sanctuary in the nation. The sanctuary's new Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center lets landlubbers experience the shipwrecks and their history. There are more maritime exhibits and the Katherine V, a fishing tug, at the Besser Museum.

Charity Island Light Station never saw the Middle Island Light Station that terrifying Sunday afternoon. But visitors can see it and even spend the night in its converted foghorn building on summer weekends. Tours on Saturdays and Sundays last three to four hours and include a short boat ride, a nature walk, and up-close views of the lighthouse and its restoration.

Presque Isle

The new Presque Isle Lighthouse was completed in 1871; the old one, about a mile south, was built in 1840. You can still visit both of them and climb to the top of their towers. Presque Isle also has range lights—two lights that sailors lined up to enter a harbor safely. Anna Garnety maintained the rear light for years, sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch for her all-night watches. For lunch, try the Portage Restaurant or the Portage General Store.

Rogers City

The Durston was a working boat, but it still had some comforts of home. One of its tablecloths is in the Great Lakes Lore Museum in Rogers City. There are other maritime treasures in the Presque Isle County Historical Museum, and Lakeside Park includes a maritime memorial. At the time of the great storm, it took 36 hours for workers with shovels and wheelbarrows to load 2,000 tons of limestone into a small freighter. At Harbor View you can see how 25,000 tons are loaded in 8 hours at the world's largest limestone quarry.

Cheboygan

Cheboygan also has a set of range lights—they mark the entrance to the Cheboygan River. The Great Lakes Lightskeepers Association is restoring the Front Range Light. To sense the courage of those who tried to rescue stranded sailors on the lakes, visit the self-bailing lifeboat at the Historical Society of Cheboygan County.

Mackinaw City

Shepler's Lighthouse Cruises take visitors past some of the lights Captain Watts followed through the Straits of Mackinac to Mackinaw City, where the Mackinaw Point Lighthouse must have been a welcomed sight. The cruises are splendid on a clear, sunny day, but it's the gray, foggy days that fill the imagination as lights and their fog signals suddenly appear out of nowhere.