

Things to See and Do Near Crystal Lake

The map shows the Crystal Lake area, including Lake Michigan, Lake Monona, and Lake Kegonsa. Key locations marked include North Manitou Island, South Manitou Island, Sleeping Bear Point, and various towns like Frankfort, Benzonia, and Leelanau. Red arrows point from callout boxes to specific locations on the map.

Callout Boxes (Left Side):

- Coast Guard Maritime Museum
- Sleeping Bear Dune Climb
- Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive
- Empire Bluffs, Empire Beach, NPS visitor ctr.
- Otter Lake, Otter Creek, Esch beach
- Platte River canoe trips
- Point Betsie lighthouse
- Congregational Summer Assembly
- Frankfort: Breakwater, Charter Fishing
- Gwen Frostick's cards and gifts

Callout Boxes (Right Side):

- Road to Leelanau wineries
- Leland: ferry to Manitou, Fishtown
- Port Oneida, Pyramid Pt., Rural Heritage
- Cherry Bowl Drive-In Movie Theater
- Benzonia: County History Museum
- Platte River Fish Hatchery
- Road to Interlochen Music Center
- Betsie River canoe trips
- Road to Crystal Mtn: golfing, water slide

Map Legend:

- Improved road
- Authorized parking
- Boat launch
- Public area
- Compost
- Statewide recognized trails in general use
- Trails

Trail List:

- 1 Old Indian Trail
- 2 Middle Pointe Trail
- 3 Empire Bluff Trail
- 4 Windy Mountain Trail
- 5 Sprague Hill Trail
- 6 Cottonwood Trail
- 7 The Dunes Trail (no winter use)
- 8 Duneside Accessible Trail (no winter use)
- 9 The Leland Trail (Sleeping Bear Point Loop - no winter use)
- 10 Allegan Hill Trail
- 11 Bay View Trail
- 12 Pinesford Trail
- 13 Good Harbor Bay Trail

1. Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore

The cottage is on Crystal Lake, about 5 miles south of the southern boundary of [Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore](#), which protects about 40 miles of spectacular shoreline from development. Its headquarters and interpretive center are in Empire, where you can purchase weekly permits for \$10.00 per vehicle. Here are some of the many things to do in the National Lakeshore, with more detail at their web site.

- **The Dune Climb:** This is great for kids and worth the effort for adults. Once on top, you can hike to more secluded dunes and draws off the trail. With steady winds from the west, it's a great place to fly a kite. Bring lots of water.
- **The Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive:** This 7 mile drive takes you through some beautiful hilly woods to some spectacular views and overlooks of Lake Michigan and Glen Lake. The observation deck sits about 450 feet almost vertically over the beach.
- **Spectacular views:** Empire Bluffs has one of the best views of the National Lakeshore with Sleeping Bear dune in the distance. A few miles to the northeast, Pyramid Point overlooks the Manitou Islands from the tip of the Oneida Peninsula, a [Rural Heritage District](#) in the Lakeshore where they have preserved more than a dozen 19th century farms.
- **Lake Michigan beaches:** Esch Beach is one of the best swimming beaches, but there are several other wilderness beaches accessible by walking a mile or two through the woods where you can picnic and swim entirely away from other people. Boekeloo Road and Old Indian Trail lead to such beaches.
- **Leland and the Manitou Islands:** Leland is a small town that has preserved its old fishing docks in an historic district called [Fishtown](#). The [Manitou Islands](#), a few miles offshore by ferry, are a popular site for backpackers.
- **Maritime Museum:** The coast guard station at Glen Haven has been converted into a [maritime museum](#) about how the Coast Guard rescues shipwrecked sailors. On a clear day with binoculars, you can see the 1960 wreck of the freighter Francisco Morazan off the south tip of S. Manitou Island, part of the [Manitou Passage Underwater Preserve](#).



2. Boating

The area offers many boating opportunities from canoeing down one of several local rivers, to sailing on Crystal Lake, to kayaking and canoeing on Lake Michigan when it is calm.

- **Canoeing down the rivers:** The Platte River has a fast, tricky upper section near Honor, and a slower, safer section from the National Park Service Platte River Campground down to Lake Michigan, which is a good place to swim. The [Riverside Canoe Trips](#) company rents canoes, kayaks, and inner tubes for both sections. The Betsie River also has a faster upper section and a slower, safer lower section. About 35 miles southeast of Frankfort is the Manistee River, a fast, clean river with limited road access and longer trips. [Wilderness Canoe Trips](#) in Mesick rents boats. About 40 miles northeast of Frankfort near Traverse City is the [Boardman River](#), which runs into Traverse Bay, with fast, clear water.
- **Kayaking on Lake Michigan:** [Sleeping Bear Surf and Kayak](#) in Empire rents solo and tandem kayaks for the big lake. Canoeing on the big lake can be done only when it is infrequently calm, but when it is, canoeing out in the lake opposite Empire Bluffs at sunset can be magical.
- **Otter Lake and Otter Creek:** South of Esch Beach a couple of miles is Otter Lake, a small inland lake that is great for canoeing in the evening. Otter Creek runs out of Otter Lake to Lake Michigan. Because it gets very little human traffic, a family of Sandhill Cranes has taken up residence there in the past few years. It is a good place to go canoeing at dawn.
- **Lake Michigan charter boats:** Frankfort has many [charter fishing boats](#) for those who want to fish for salmon and brown trout on the big lake.



3. Watching the sunset

On the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, watching the sun set over the horizon is one of the main forms of recreation.

- **The Frankfort Breakwater:** When the waves aren't too high, the Frankfort and Elberta breakwaters are great places to go. There are usually some serious fishermen who catch enormous fish. When the waves are too high to walk on the breakwater, you



can sometimes see people kite-surfing off the Frankfort beach. After the sun set, it's fun to go to one of the two ice cream parlors on Main Street, and then walk around looking at the yachts in the marina.



- **The Assembly Beach:** The Lake Michigan beach at the Congregational Summer Assembly is a good place to watch the sunset. If you go to the south, you have fewer cottages but steeper bluffs behind you than to the north. You can have fires on the beach, if you can find any firewood, but fireworks and alcohol are not allowed.

- **Point Betsie:** About 5 miles north of the cottage is the [Point Betsie Lighthouse](#), which was sold by the federal government to a nonprofit organization, which is restoring it. It's available to rent for weddings and other events, and it's a great place to watch the sun set.



- **The Zetterberg Preserve** Just north of the lighthouse is the Nature Conservancy's [Zetterberg Preserve](#), accessible by going around in front of the lighthouse and up the beach to the north. It has a beautiful sandy draw that leads up to a tall sand dune with a great view of the lighthouse.



- **Wilderness beaches:** Any of the wilderness beaches in the Lakeshore is a good place to watch the sun set, but you should be sure to bring flashlights for the walk back on the trail at night. [Old Indian Trail](#) has a 2.5 mile loop to the beach and back. About 3 miles north, Boekeloo Road on the left takes you to a parking area just a mile from a wilderness beach.

4. Other Attractions

There are several other things to do and see in the area, depending on your interests.

- **Leelanau Peninsula Wineries:** Because of the moderating lake effect, the Leelanau and Old Mission Peninsulas north and west of Traverse City have developed more than 70 wineries in the past 3 decades, 25 of which are on the [Leelanau Peninsula](#). It's a very pleasant way to spend an afternoon sampling some excellent wines.



- **Bicycling:** The paved [Betsie Valley Bicycle Trail](#), in an old railroad bed, runs from Frankfort to Beulah. To the north, the entire [Leelanau Peninsula](#), with sand

dunes that give it a gentle, scenic terrain, has become a favorite destination for distance cycling and the site of several races.

- **Northport Fly-In Pancake Breakfast:** In Northport, near the tip of the Leelanau Peninsula, the little airport with the grass landing strip holds a [Fly-In Pancake Breakfast](#) every summer, with several vintage airplanes.



- **Interlochen Center for the Arts:** About 25 miles east of Frankfort is the [Interlochen Center for the Arts](#). It started out as a national music summer camp but has become a year-round center for the performing and visual arts, with high quality concerts, plays, and art exhibits. They bring national talent like Bonnie Raitt and Lyle Lovett to their main auditorium.



- **Traverse City Film Festival:** In late July the [Traverse City Film Festival](#) screens about 150 films from all over the world.

- **Cherry Bowl Drive-In Theater:** This family-oriented, [back-to-the-fifties drive-in](#) west of Honor on M-31 has become something of a phenomenon, as evidenced by this picture of a couple getting married beneath the “Monsters vs. Aliens” marquee.



- **Gwen Frostic's:** Gwen was a local artist who developed her block prints into a business that prints and sells a wide [range of nature-themed cards](#) and other gifts. The store and house are a unique building, and you can watch the presses in action from the store.

- **State Fish Hatchery:** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources [Platte River Fish Hatchery](#) just east of Veteran's Park on Highway 31 east of Honor is worth a visit.

- **Area golf courses:** There are [four golf courses in the area](#), 3 near Beulah at the east end of Crystal Lake, and one in Thompsonville about 20 miles east of Frankfort.