

Hiking Trail Maps

The Mainland Trails of **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**



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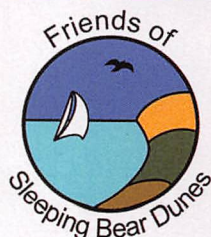


The Mainland Trails of Sleeping Bear Dunes

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P.O. Box 545, Empire, MI 49630

This book was compiled by Kerry Kelly, **Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes**, and Jim DuFresne of **Michigan-TailMaps.com**.

Maps were produced by MichiganTrailMaps.com.



The Mainland Trails of Sleeping Bear Dunes

Established in 1970, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is a long and narrow park, only 6 miles at its widest point. The 72,000-acre park stretches between Frankfort and Leland, with most of it lying in Leelanau County, and includes 31 miles of shoreline on the mainland, 26 lakes, two remote islands in Lake Michigan, and the largest dunes in Michigan.

Sleeping Bear Dunes was created primarily to preserve the fragile dunes along the shoreline, but it is still wide enough to contain beech/maple forests as well as meadows, historic farm fields, wetlands, cedar swamps, streams, and bogs.

The most prominent features of the park, however, are its dunes, high bluffs, and dune plateaus. Towering perched dunes are found on headlands bordering Lake Michigan, such as Empire Bluffs, Sleeping Bear Bluffs, Pyramid Point, and South Manitou Island. The Sleeping Bear Plateau is a four square-mile tract of perched dunes, crowned by Sleeping Bear Dune that rises more than 440 feet above Lake Michigan.

Thanks to the dunes' high vistas and the open terrain they create, the national Lakeshore offers some of the best day hiking in the Midwest with scenery that rivals anything you see in more famous national parks. The park maintains 85 miles of official hiking trails on the mainland, in addition to 12 miles of trails on South Manitou Island and more than 20 miles on North Manitou Island.

The park's trails allow you to explore the various habitats within the National Lakeshore. Some paths lead you to breathtaking views from high vistas overlooking lakes, hills, or dunes. Others take you through fields of wildflowers with views of lakes or forests in the background. Some are challenging with climbs up sandy slopes, others can be enjoyed by the entire family, even hikers as young as three years old.



Hikers finishing the Dunes Trail.

There are 18 maps in this book that use the following icons and symbols:



How To Use This Trail Guide

This book describes the park's 15 official trails on the mainland. Each trail has a trailhead and parking area displayed on the locator map on page 2.

The trail descriptions begin on page 6 with Old Indian Trail and feature a quick-glance subhead that includes icons for appropriate trail users, **Distance** and **Difficulty** information. The paved Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is open to cycling, but due to the fragile nature of the dunes, mountain and fat-tire bikes are prohibited from the rest of the park's trail system.

Each of the mainland trails begins with an introduction followed by a brief **Trail Guide** describing the route and **Location** with driving instructions to the trailhead. The trail is marked on the adjacent maps by a red dashed line. If the trail has multiple loops, like Platte Plains or Bay View Trail, then the red dash line and corresponding mileage flags represent a popular or common route within the system. The rest of the trail is displayed by a black dotted line with segment distances.

The NPS mobile app provides a wealth of information on all National Park Service sites, including Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. We highly recommend that you scan the QR code below to install the app on your smart phone. You can easily find trail information and georeferenced trail maps on the NPS app. Alternatively, you can scan the QR code on any of the maps in this book and it will take you to *MichiganTrailMaps.com* to download a detailed map, even a georeference map, and trail information.

The Official NPS App is HERE

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Search "National Park Service" in the app stores or use the QR code.

Trail Rules

- Get a Park Pass. Either an annual or weekly pass to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore or National Parks Pass is required for using the trails. Passes are available at the Visitor Center, Dune Climb, Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, Glen Haven General Store, and campground offices. There are also self-serve locations at some beaches.

- Plan ahead. Prepare for extreme weather and emergencies. Bring food and water. Tell someone your hiking plans and when you will return.

- Stay on established trails.

- Dispose of waste properly. Pack it in – Pack it out!

- Leave what you find. Preserve the past and leave rocks, plants, and other items as you find them for others to discover.

- If camping in the backcountry, build fires only in established fire rings. Put out fires completely.

- Respect wildlife. Observe wildlife from a distance. Never feed animals. Store food properly.

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Let nature's sounds prevail.

Pet Rules

- Pets are allowed on all trails except at the Dune Climb and ski trails (No. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15) from Dec. 1 to March 31.

- Pets must be on a 6-foot leash.

- Do not leave pets unattended or tied to an object.

- Do not allow your pet to make unreasonable noise.

- Clean-up after your pet and dispose of waste in a trash receptacle.

- Keep your pet from interacting with wildlife.

This book is a collaboration between the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes and MichiganTrailMaps.com to provide park visitors with the best trail information available for all official trails at Sleeping Bear Dunes.



Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes is an all-volunteer non-profit whose mission is to protect resources and heighten visitor experience in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Learn more about Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes projects on its website:

www.friendsofsleepingbear.org

You can support the Friends by becoming a member or volunteering for a project that can put your skills to work.

At MichiganTrailMaps.com 350 non-motorized trail maps, including all the maps in this book, can be searched by county, region, length, by park or by activity and then downloaded onto a mobile device or smart phone.



1

Old Indian Trail



Distance: 3.2 miles **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate

Anchoring the southern end of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is Old Indian Trail. Named from when Native Americans used the route to access their fish camps, the trail draws less attention than most other mainland trails in the park. But Old Indian should not be overlooked. The footpath provides access to a beautiful beach and is often a rare escape from summer crowds.

Old Indian Trail is a pair of loops that merge at 0.25 miles from the shoreline. Following the perimeter of the loops, out to the beach is a 3-mile, one to two-hour trek. Old Indian is an easy walk along a wide path. Black Arrow Loop is by far the more interesting as it dips and climbs a series of old beach dunes now forested.

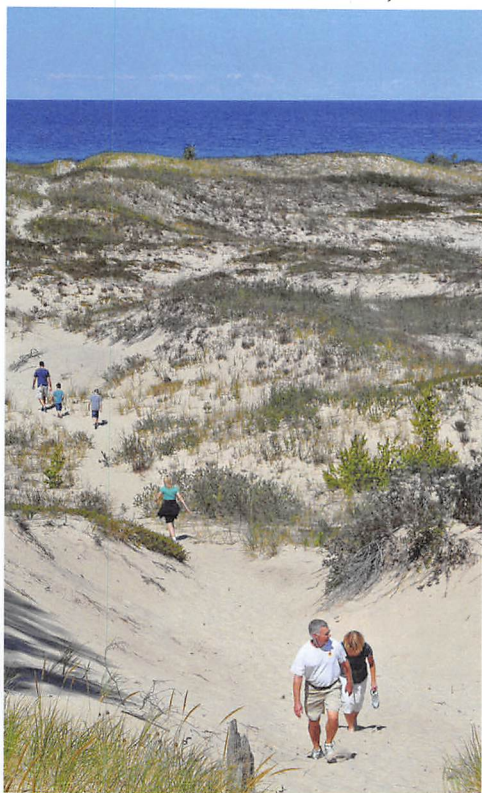
The trail is also popular with Nordic skiers. The Green Arrow Loop is rated as an easy ski and with only a few gentle slopes. Black Arrow is rated intermediate and has one steep downhill section in the northeast corner of the loop.

Trail Guide: From the trailhead, you enter a mix of hemlocks, maples and oaks and, for most of the hike, remains in the forest. You quickly pass the posted junction with the return of Green Arrow Loop from the west (left). Continue north and the third junction is Black Arrow Loop. This route is by far the most interesting, a hike over a series of low forested dunes.

At **Mile 1.2**, you pass a spot where dunes are migrating into the forest, sand pouring down between the trees. From here, it's 0.3 miles to where you head north for the beach. From the junction, you immediately climb a dune to enjoy a sweeping view of Lake Michigan. Blue tipped posts lead you a quarter mile through open dunes past a ghost forest.

This is a scenic spot. To the east, you view nothing but the wide expanse of low beach dunes along Platte Bay, while off in the distance is the famous Sleeping Bear Dune. In Lake Michigan, North and South Manitou Islands are clearly visible. The beach is usually 20 to 30 feet wide, depending on the lake level, and you can walk it the length of Platte Bay.

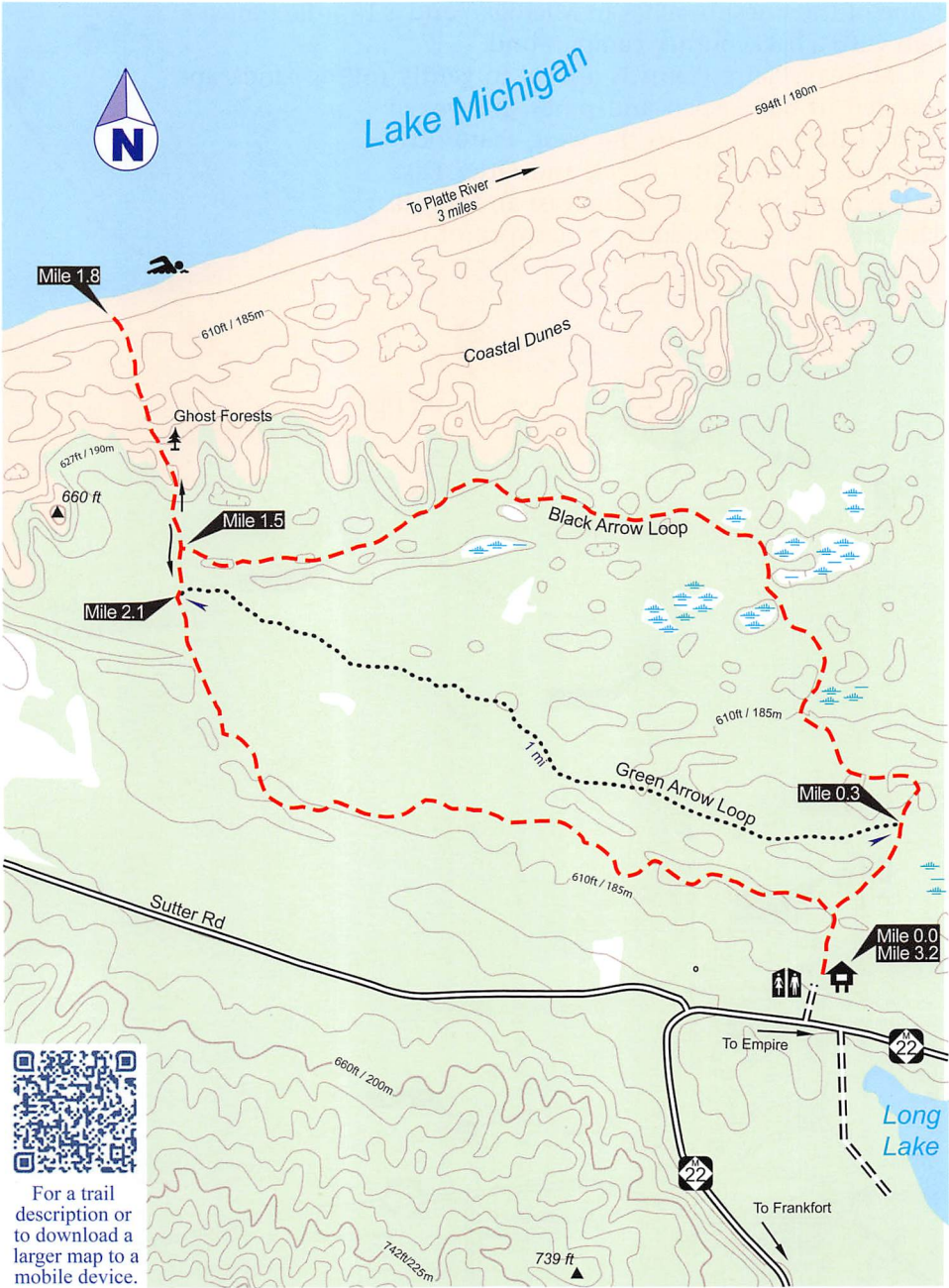
To return, backtrack a quarter mile to the beach junction and head southeast along the Green Arrow Loop. A junction at **Mile 2.1** marks



Hikers returning from Platte Bay.

the Green Arrow's northern half. Continue south. The final mile is level as it traverses ancient beach dunes that mark the former location of the Lake Michigan shoreline when the water level was considerably higher in the early post-glacial era.

Location: On M-22 12 miles south of Empire or just beyond Sutter Road from Frankfort.



For a trail description or to download a larger map to a mobile device.

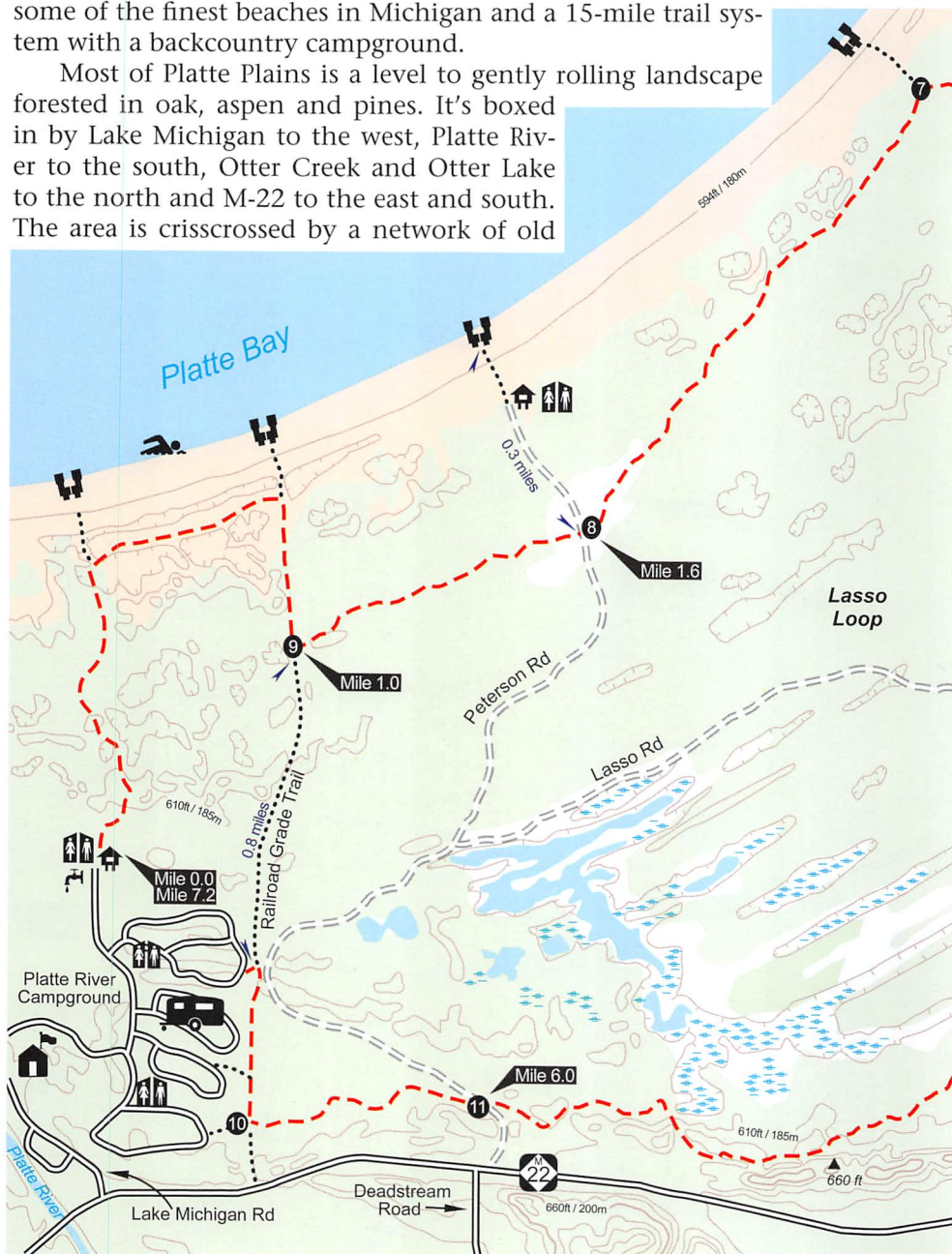
2 Platte Plains Trail

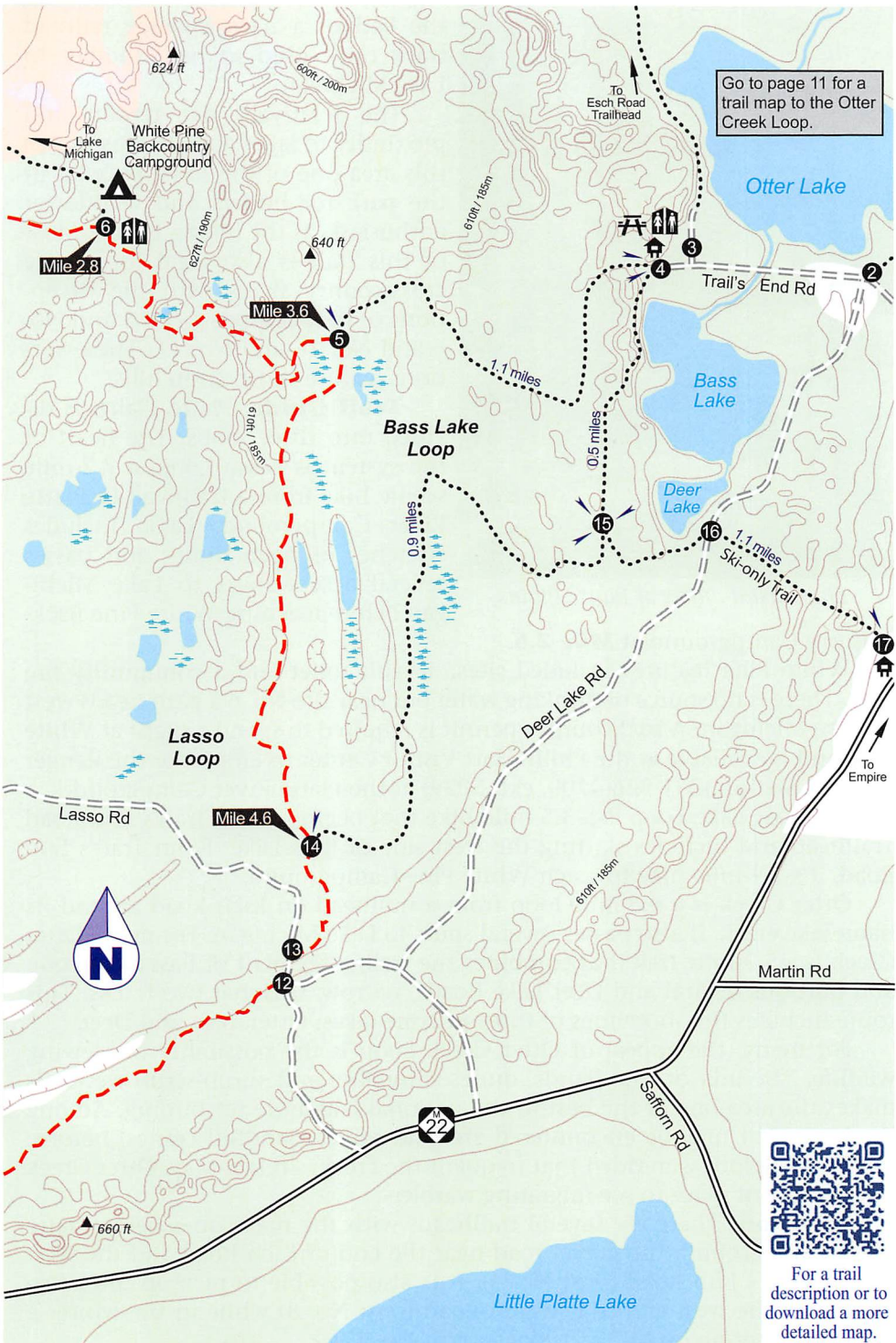


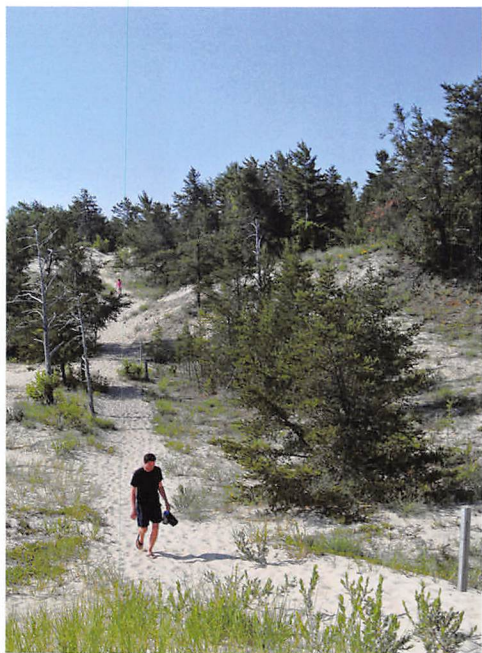
Distance: 3.5 to 7.2-mile loops **Difficulty:** Easy to Advanced

Stretched out along serene Platte Bay is Platte Plains. This slice of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore offers outstanding coastal scenery, some of the finest beaches in Michigan and a 15-mile trail system with a backcountry campground.

Most of Platte Plains is a level to gently rolling landscape forested in oak, aspen and pines. It's boxed in by Lake Michigan to the west, Platte River to the south, Otter Creek and Otter Lake to the north and M-22 to the east and south. The area is crisscrossed by a network of old







The coastal dunes of Platte Plains.

logging roads with one trail following the bed of a narrow-gauge railroad track once used to haul lumber to Lake Michigan.

The relatively flat terrain and proximity to lakes and streams makes this area one of the most popular in the park for birders and wildflower enthusiasts as the hiking is easy. Most of this trail is also ideal for novice cross-country skiers with the exceptions of between posts No. 5 and No. 6 and No. 16 and No. 17. These sections feature short, steep hills.

Trail Guide: Platte Plains is divided into three loops. The heart of the system is Lasso Loop, a 7.2-mile scenic hike from a trailhead in Platte River Campground. Lasso includes stretches of open dunes and passes several access spurs to Lake Michigan before reaching White Pine Back-

country Campground at **Mile 2.8**.

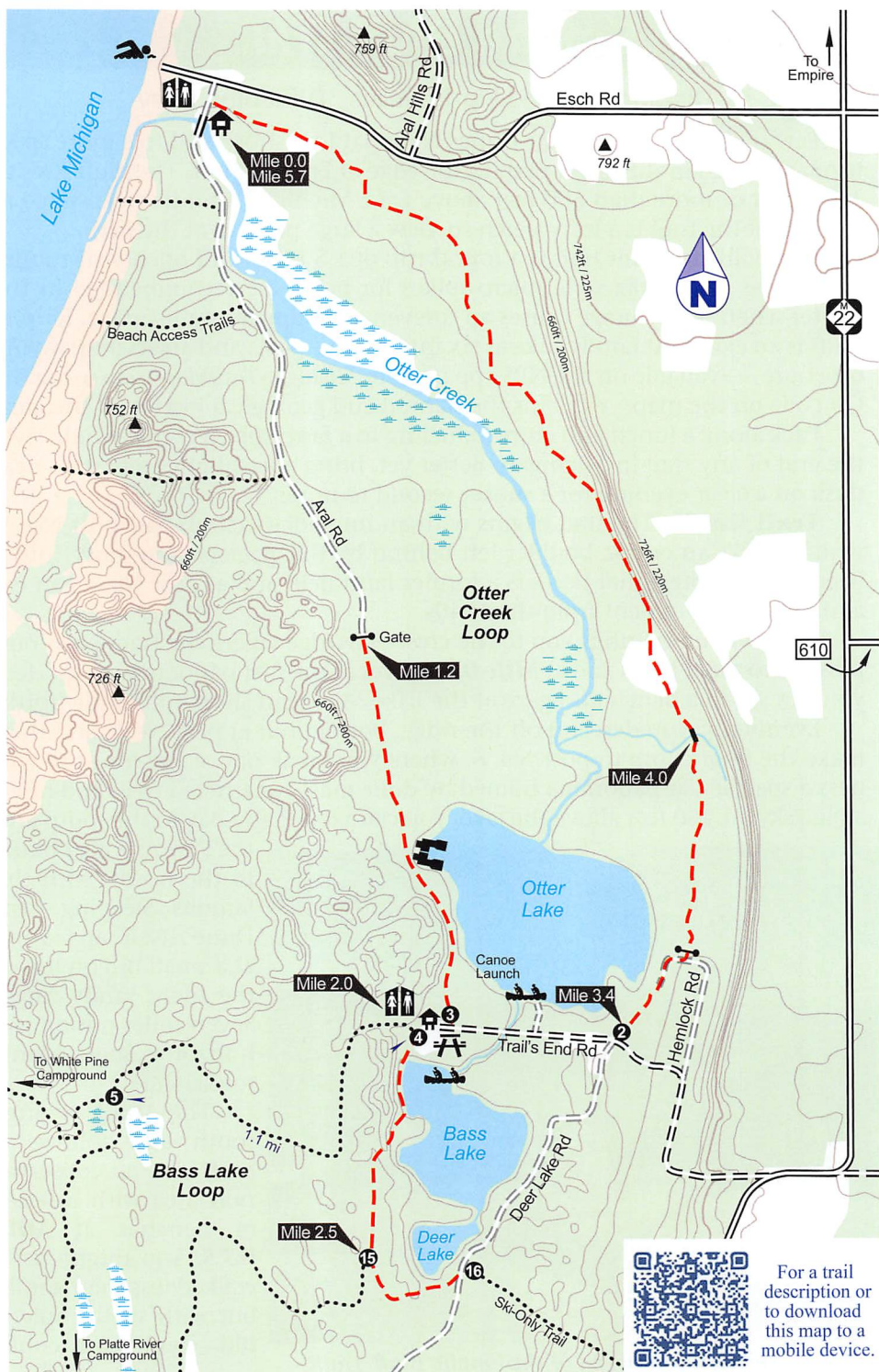
White Pine features secluded sites, a vault toilet and a community fire ring. There is no source of drinking water but near site No. 6 a path heads west to Lake Michigan. A backcountry permit is required to spend a night at White Pine and is available at the Philip Hart Visitor Center in Empire or the Ranger Contact Station (231-326-4700, ext. 5029) at the Platte River Campground.

The Bass Lake Loop is a 3.5-mile hike that begins at the Trail's End Road Trailhead and includes skirting the west side of Bass Lake. From Trail's End Road, it's 1.9-mile hike to reach White Pine Campground.

Otter Creek is a 4.6-mile loop from a trailhead on Esch Road around its namesake creek. It also passes several spurs to Lake Michigan. For many Otter Creek is a 5.7-mile trek that combines the trail, a segment of Bass Lake Loop and portions of Aral and Deer Lake Roads, narrow, seasonal two-tracks. This route includes the shorelines of three pristine lakes: Otter, Bass and Deer.

For many, the appeal of Otter Creek Loop is the possibility of viewing wildlife. The mix of woodlands, dunes, shoreline and shrub-scrub wetlands makes the area one of the best in the national lakeshore for birding. Among the birds that may be encountered are bald eagles, Sandhill cranes, herons, rails, and various waterfowl that frequent the creek. In late May, Otter Creek is an excellent place to see migrating warblers.

Location: There are several trailheads with the main ones being Platte River Campground, the gravel road near the end of Esch Road and the west end of Trail's End Road (post No. 4). It is also possible to pick up the Lasso Loop near the west end of Peterson Road (post No. 8) while in the winter a trailhead is set-up on M-22 for skiers (post No. 17).



3

Empire Bluff Trail



Distance: Round trip 1.5 miles **Difficulty:** Easy

Few trails in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore lead to a more spectacular view than this short path to the edge of Empire Bluff. The bluff rises to 1,106 feet or more than 500 feet above Lake Michigan, and its steep slope at the end of the trail is a lofty perch to view a large portion of the park.

The point-to-point trail is a round trip of 1.5 miles and open year-round. Snowshoes or Yaktrax-style micro-spikes for boots are recommended in the winter when heavy usage causes an uneven and slippery trail surface. Empire Bluff is an excellent family hike as six interpretive posts and an accompanying brochure – available on the NPS app or from *MichiganTrailMaps.com* using the QR code on the map – explains the natural and geological history of the area.

Pack along a lunch and enjoy refueling to a fantastic view that would rival the end of any trail in Michigan. Better yet, bring a flashlight and arrive near dusk on a clear evening for a sunset second to none.

Trail Guide: The trail begins with an immediate climb past post No. 1, which marks an erratic boulder left behind by the glaciers. You move into a beech-maple forest that borders a former farm field and at post No. 2 can examine farm equipment from the 1940s.

Another climb brings you to the crest of a ridge where the trail levels out, passes two more posts and at **Mile 0.5** arrives at the first panoramic view. Here you can sit on a bench and gaze at the Lake Michigan shoreline to the north.

Eventually, you descend off the ridge, bottom out at post No. 5 and then make the final climb to post No. 6, where you break out of the forest to witness a spectacular panorama framed by dune grass, weathered trees and often a blue sky. At 450 feet above the lake, you can view Platte Bay to the south and



the Sleeping Bear Bluffs to the north, with the famous Sleeping Bear Dune itself appearing as a small hill on top of the high, sandy ridge. Seven miles out on the horizon is South Manitou Island.

The trail swings south and follows a bluff to an observation area with a series of benches at **Mile 0.75**. You might have walked less than a mile but with such a splendid view, you could

The view at the end of the Empire Bluff Trail.

rest here for hours. Do not try to hike down to the beach from the overlook. The bluff here is unstable and climbing will cause landslides that may result in injury or require an expensive rescue.

Location: From the Philip Hart Visitor Center on the corner of M-22 and M-72 in Empire, head south on M-22 for 1.7 miles and then west (right) on Wilco Road. Within a mile, the trailhead and parking are on the left.



4 Windy Moraine Trail



Distance: 1.5 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate to Advanced

Windy Moraine Trail is a 1.5-mile loop opposite Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive that climbs its namesake moraine, a nearly 300-foot-high ridge, before descending back to the trailhead. Along the way are nine numbered posts corresponding to an interpretive brochure that explains the importance of diversity in nature. The interpretive brochure is available on the NPS app or from *MichiganTrailMaps.com* using the QR code on the map.

The trail is open year-round. In the winter, the east half of the loop, from posts No. 7 to No. 9, is a wild downhill run on Nordic skis, the reason Windy Moraine is rated moderate for hiking but advanced for skiing.

Trail Guide: The trail begins in a field as a mowed lane before climbing the moraine left from when the last glaciers melted 10,000 years ago. At **Mile 0.5**, you arrive at post No. 5, pointing out the ancient maple tree, a 200-year-old giant and an astounding sight until a strong wind caught up with it.

In less than a mile from the trailhead is post No. 7, the Windy Moraine



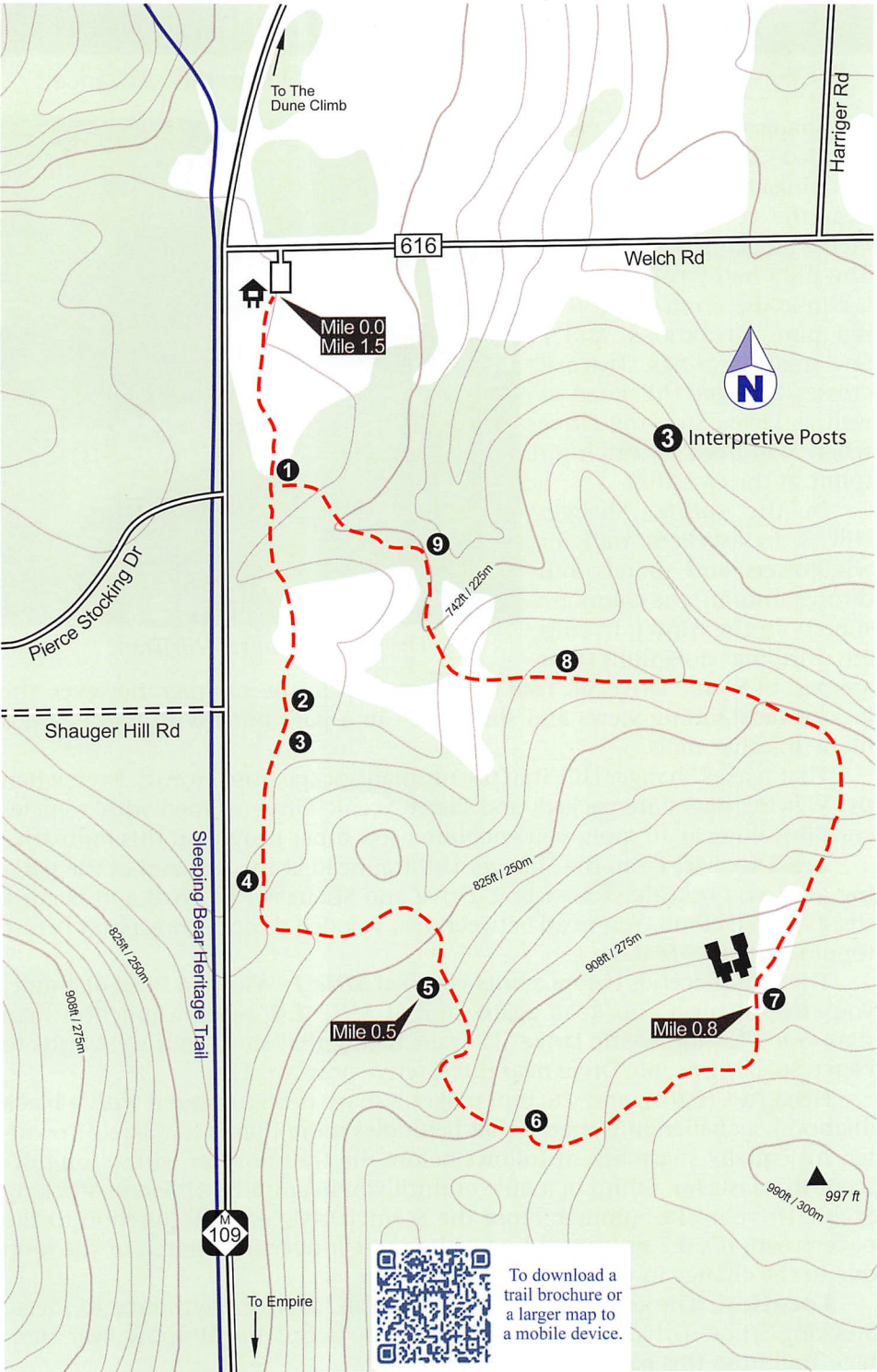
overlook. The view can be disappointing in the summer as foliage obscures much of it. But beginning in October and throughout the winter, it's at its best, a scenic panorama that includes Little Glen Lake, Sleeping Bear Dune and even North and South Manitou Islands on a clear day.

The rest of the hike is a quick descent through an open hillside, whose sandy soil and afternoon sun in July and August provide for outstanding berry picking. This stretch can make for a steep downhill walk and a challenging run if you're on skis.

Eventually, you re-enter the old farm field and return to the trailhead at **Mile 1.5**.

Location: The trailhead is on Welch Rd. just east of M-109, near the entrance to Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive.

Fall colors along the Windy Moraine Trail.



To download a trail brochure or a larger map to a mobile device.

5

Shauger Hill Trail



Distance: 2.2 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate to Advanced

Shauger Hill Trail is a wooded 2.2-mile loop with a trailhead and parking area near the contact station for Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. The hilly trail passes through a climax beech-maple forest, red pine plantations, and a few small clearings. Twice it crosses Shauger Hill Road as well as Pierce Stocking Drive where you need to watch for traffic at the crossings.

In the spring, Shauger Hill is an excellent trail for wildflowers and morels and during autumn, the colors are superb. In the winter, its hills are thrilling downhills that are part of Scenic Drive Ski Trail (see page 18). In the summer, however, the lack of outstanding views and shoreline - in a park filled with them - leads many to other trails.

That makes Shauger Hill Trail the ultimate escape from crowds. Even when the viewing decks are packed, and Pierce Scenic Drive is lined with vehicles crawling along at 10 mph, you encounter few other people on this footpath.

Trail Guide: From the Shauger Hill trailhead at the east end of the parking area, you quickly cross Scenic Drive and Shauger Hill Road and begin a steady uphill climb. You tread between two wooded dunes at one point before topping off at **Mile 0.5**.

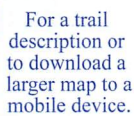
The trail descends before a brief climb at **Mile 1**. Within a third of a mile, you cross Shauger Hill Road again, and at **Mile 1.4**, reach a junction map signposted for the Scenic Drive Ski Trail. Taking that short spur west leads to Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive near interpretive post No. 12.

Head east (right), and the trail makes a sharp descent posted with a black diamond, a challenging stretch that befuddles more than a few skiers in winter. An equally sharp ascent follows before the trail finishes with a long descent that lasts for a third of a mile or until you hear traffic on Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive in the summer. From the Scenic Drive Ski Trail junction to the paved road, it's 0.7 miles and by far the most interesting stretch of the loop due to the change in the topography.

Location: The trailhead is in the parking lot at the entrance to Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive on M-109. You can also access the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail from this parking lot.



The start of Shauger Hill Trail.



6

Scenic Drive Ski Trail



Distance: 3.5 to 6.3-mile loops **Difficulty:** Easy to Advanced

Scenic Drive was built by Pierce Stocking in the early 1960s, predating the National Lakeshore. Stocking operated the loop, charging \$2 a car, until his death in 1976 when the National Park Service renamed it in his honor and upgraded it with picnic areas, observation platforms, and a bike lane.

For most of the year, Scenic Drive is true to its name, featuring a procession of slow-moving vehicles. But after the first snowfall, the road becomes the heart of an 8.75-mile trail system that includes three crossover spurs and Shauger Hill Trail (see page 16), a challenging loop in its own right. At that point, Scenic Drive is one of the most popular destinations in the park for both Nordic skiers and snowshoers.

The National Park System closes the road to vehicles just before fire-arm deer season. In a normal year, skiers can expect snow from Christmas to early March and often powdery conditions due to the road's close proximity to Lake Michigan. They re-open the gates to cars in the spring. Actual date is weather dependent.

Trail Guide: Scenic Drive Ski Trail is a 6.3-mile loop with long downhill and some brutal uphill climbs. It begins in the parking area near the contact station with a short segment on the Shauger Hill Trail. Scenic Drive is not tracked or groomed in the winter but nearby Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is and the two are connected by a spur to the trailhead parking lot.

Crossover spurs allow Scenic Drive to be split into a pair of loops. Dunes Overlook at post No. 3 is the destination for what is referred to as the Easy Loop, a 3.9-mile ski. At Picnic Mountain, **Mile 2.1**, you leave the roadway and head south on a much more narrow trail. This segment bypasses a mile-long stretch of road that winds through open dunes, includes two steep slopes and doesn't hold snow well.

Many skiers, however, want to reach the Lake Michigan Overlook, posts No. 9 and No. 10, and simply follow Scenic Drive out and back to the observation deck in a direction opposite of normal traffic. A crossover spur turns this half of Scenic Drive into a 3.5-mile loop rated intermediate. Another allows skiers to add the southern half of Shauger Hill for an outing of 4.1 miles.

Location: From M-22 veer north onto M-109. Within 1.5 miles, turn west on Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. The trailhead is located in the parking lot before the contact station and is plowed in the winter.



Lake Michigan Overlook in the winter.



7

Cottonwood Trail



Distance: 1.7-mile loop **Difficulty:** Moderate

On the road with the most enticing name in the park, Pierce Stocking *Scenic Drive*, is Cottonwood Trail. The 1.7-mile loop winds through the perched dunes above the Dune Climb and provides a close look at the beauty of these shifting hills of open sand and the native plants – bearberry, buffaloberry, beachgrass, and cottonwoods – that are slowly stabilizing them.



Views from the Cottonwood Trail at post No. 7.

Cottonwood is an interpretive trail with nine posts corresponding to a brochure that is available on the NPS app or from *MichiganTrailMaps.com* using the QR code on the map. The rolling dunes surrounding the trail are part of Sleeping Bear Plateau, a 4-square-mile highland that rises more than 400 feet above Lake Michigan and is covered with a veneer of perched dunes. The panoramic views from Cottonwood Trail are stunning.

The price hikers pay for this unusual scenery is that much of the trail, particularly the first half, is loose sand through hilly terrain. Sandy slopes can be tiring, the reason this loop is rated moderate in difficulty. There is no water at the trailhead and no shade along the trail. Wear sunblock and bring water.

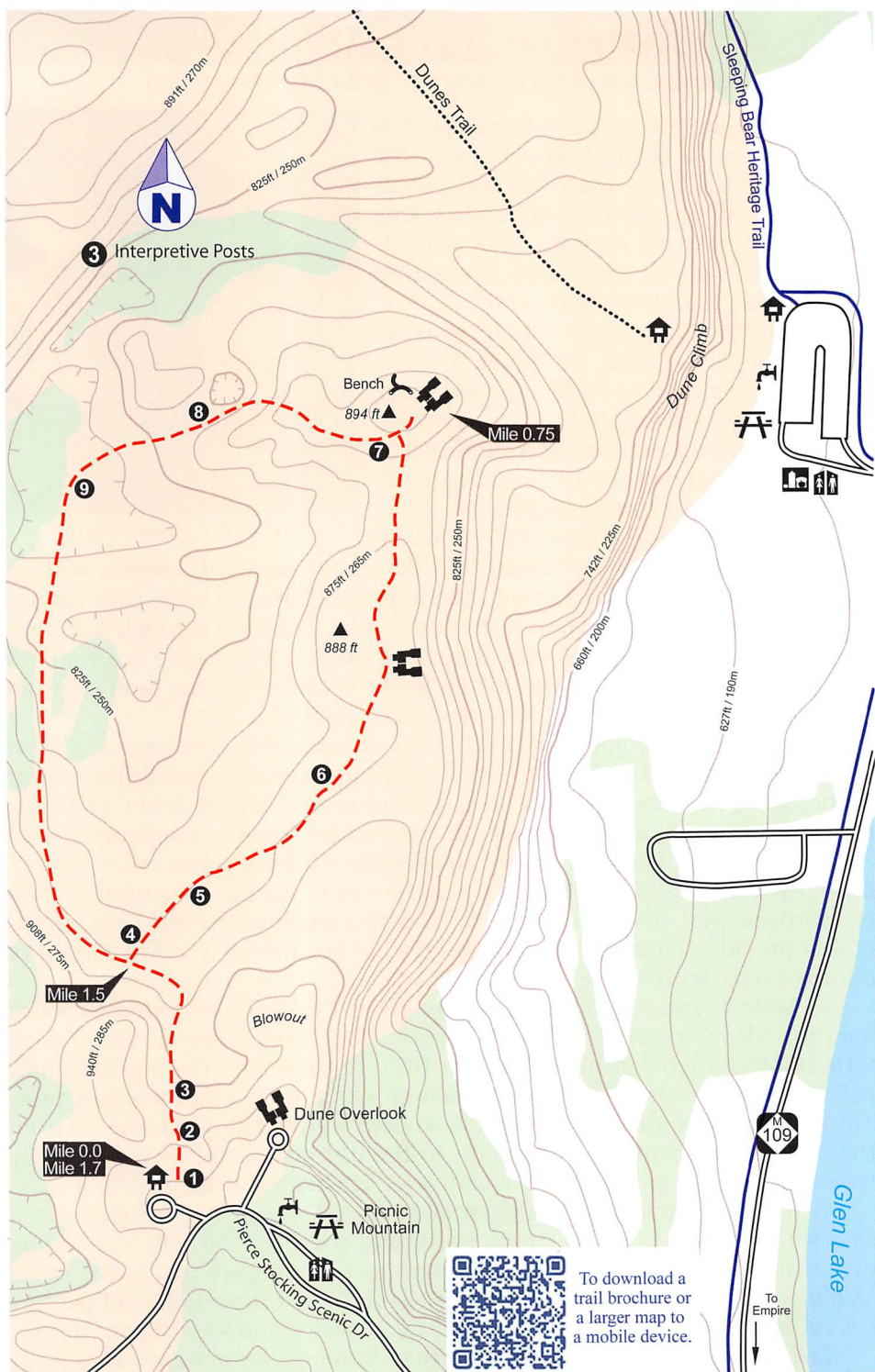
Trail Guide: Cottonwood Trail descends as a boardwalk from the information kiosk, quickly passing three posts. In less than a quarter mile, you reach the junction of the return trail and head right.

Beyond post No. 5, you begin a steady climb and at **Mile 0.5** top off at 888 feet elevation on a small sand-and-grassy knoll. The view is magnificent and includes Lake Michigan off in the distance along with Pyramid Point and the Manitou Islands. Almost 300 feet below to the east is Glen Lake.

For the next quarter mile, you follow a sandy ridge of the dune and enjoy the beautiful views along it before climbing to a patch of cottonwoods at **Mile 0.75**, where post No. 7 and two benches are located. As good as the vistas have been, this one is the best. The panorama from under the cottonwoods includes open dunes, Lake Michigan, inland lakes and DH Day Farm. Almost directly below is the park's famous Dune Climb.

Cottonwood Trail then heads west, descending off this high point to post No. 8 before swinging south to return to the trailhead.

Location: From M-109, follow one-way Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive 2.3 miles to the Dune Overlook. The Cottonwood Trail has a small parking area next to the often-busy Dune Overlook parking lot. Also nearby is Picnic Mountain, with drinking water, modern toilets, and picnic tables.



8

The Dunes Trail



Distance: 3.8 miles round trip **Difficulty:** Advanced

The Lakeshore's imposing Dune Climb is one of the most beloved attractions in the park, attracting more than 300,000 people annually, with the vast majority undertaking the climb during the summer. They struggle up the steep slope of open sand only to turn around and gleefully romp down it.

But the top of the slope also serves as the start of the Dunes Trail, a 1.9-mile route to Lake Michigan marked by blue-tipped posts. Once at the shoreline, hikers are often delighted to encounter pieces of a shipwreck.

Foul weather on Lake Michigan frequently washes up shipwreck fragments, but a powerful storm in November of 2014 pushed

ashore near the end of the Dunes Trail significant pieces of a wreck, making one of the most scenic and unique hikes in Michigan even more captivating.

The Dunes Trail is rated as a strenuous hike. Trudging through soft sand up steep dunes in the hot sun for almost 4 miles is not the same as a stroll on a beach. A good time to do this hike is in the winter when the sand is frozen or after a rain when the sand is wet and more stable.

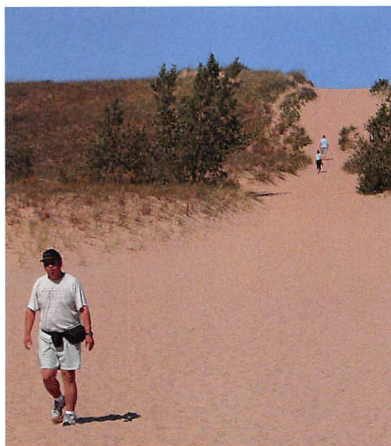
It's important to remember that there is no water along the route and most hikers need 30 to 40 minutes to cover a mile across the dunes. Bring a water bottle along with sunglasses, a hat, and sunscreen. Hiking boots or tennis shoes are necessary, as attempting this trail in bare feet is not recommended.

Trail Guide: Begin with the Dune Climb. At the top you enter a sandy bowl, where a *DUNES TRAIL* sign points the way to the first blue-tipped marker. Continue west, and soon you're faced with a second dune and then another that provides a much better picture of what lies ahead: a rolling terrain of dunes covered with sparse beach grass.

At **Mile 1**, you scale a dune and are greeted with the best view of South Manitou Island on Lake Michigan's horizon. You can even see the island's historic 100-foot-high lighthouse, built in 1871. At this point, the trail descends, makes one more short climb, and then crosses a level area for a half mile. Throughout much of June, this area is colored with wildflowers ranging from the bright yellows of hoary puccoon to the distinct orange of the butterfly weed or the subtle purple of the endangered Pitcher's Thistle.

When you reach Lake Michigan at **Mile 1.9**, you could see pieces of a wooden shipwreck a quarter mile north and south of the trail, depending on Great Lake water levels. Park historians believe they are part of the *James McBride*, which sank in 1857. To return to the Dune Climb Trailhead parking lot, backtrack to the last blue-tipped post you passed and retrace your steps.

Location: From M-22, 6 miles north of Empire, veer left onto M-109.



Start of the Dunes Trail.

9 Sleeping Bear Point Trail



Distance: 2.8 miles loop **Difficulty:** Moderate

Often overshadowed by the Dune Climb, Sleeping Bear Point is one of the most intriguing corners of the National Lakeshore, a place with ghost forests, windswept dunes, and panoramic views of Lake Michigan and the Manitou Islands. Providing access to the area is Sleeping Bear Point Trail, a 2.8-mile loop that skirts the bluffs above the point.

The point features more open sand and a dramatic landscape of blow-outs, bowls, and slopes so gracefully curved you don't want to mar them with footprints. Two highlights are ghost forests – trees killed but left standing by migrating sand – and Devil's Hole. Within a mile of the trailhead, Sleeping Bear Point Trail passes through the middle of a ghost forest of more than two dozen trees. Devil's Hole, which is halfway along the trail, is a natural hole of stunted trees encircled by migrating dunes.

Don't underestimate this short hike, rated moderately difficult. Walking in sand can be strenuous, and in the the summer, sunglasses, a hat, suntan lotion, and a quart of water are needed to survive the heat that radiates off the dunes. But this trek is not nearly as long or strenuous as the Dunes Trail.

Trail Guide: Like the Dunes Trail, this route is easy to follow – despite the shifting sand – thanks to a series of tall, blue-tipped posts that keep you on course. The Point trail begins in the woods but quickly climbs out of the trees near a posted junction. The spur to the right leads a quarter mile through a blowout carved by the wind to a stunning beach along Lake Michigan. The loop heads left. Just beyond **Mile 0.5**, you top off at the first panorama of the hike; there are views in every direction. To the west are the Manitou Islands, to the northeast the towering bluffs of Pyramid Point, to the south rolling dunes.



A ghost forest.

The trail skirts the dune above the point, and the panoramic views get even better. Eventually, you swing south and descend to a plain of wind-swept sand. At the end of **Mile 1**, you pass a ghost forest. Another ghost forest is seen further along and then the trail takes you on an uphill march that tops off to views of Devil's Hole to the south.

Just before **Mile 2**, the trail begins to loop back and heads in a northerly direction along the crest of another high dune, from where Glen Lake can be seen to the east. In less than a half mile, you drop into a spruce-birch forest, and at **Mile 2.8**, the trail emerges at the parking area.

Location: Where M-109 turns east toward Glen Arbor, continue north on Glen Haven Road, follow it into Glen Haven and then west on Sleeping Bear Dunes Rd. The trailhead is just beyond the park's maritime museum.

Lake Michigan

Sleeping Bear Point



For a trail description or to download a larger map to a mobile device.





Distances: 3 to 4.6 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate to Advanced

Alligator Hill is best known as a destination for cross-country skiers. The trail's total mileage is 8.3 miles, with three loops ranging from 3 to 4.6 miles. The skiing is rated easy to advanced and features plenty of long downhill runs and equally long climbs. During the rest of the year, Alligator Hill is also a good choice for anybody looking for a walk that includes the kind of sweeping Lake Michigan panorama this park is famous for.

The moraine picks up its name from a long ridge and bluff at its southeast corner that resembles the silhouette of an alligator's snout, best seen from the top of the Dune Climb to the west. Alligator Hill was the result of glacial activity when two lobes of ice that gouged out Big Glen Lake and Little Glen Lake dumped loads of sand and rock between them.

Other than to increase mileage, the Advanced Loop and Intermediate Loop hold little interest to most hikers. The most popular hike is the Easy Loop, along with the spur to Big Glen Lookout, a 4.3-mile outing. Although the trek is rated moderate, it's a steady uphill climb in the first half. Along with Nordic skiers and day hikers, the wide, well-marked paths are also the only trails in the park where equestrians are allowed. Mountain bikes are prohibited.

Trail Guide: The clearing that surrounds the main trailhead was the Day Forest Golf Club's fifth hole while the nearby row of charcoal kilns was constructed in the 1950s by lumberman Pierce Stocking before he built his famous road on the west side of the park.

Within a third of a mile from post No. 1, you swing east to begin a steady climb along a wide trail that was a former roadbed. It's a gentle half-mile ascent through the beech-maple forest that was heavily affected by the 2015 wind storm, the reason for the down trees. The trail swings away from the edge of the ridge, and at **Mile 1.4**, you arrive at post No. 2, marking the spur for Islands Overlook.

A bench is located at the edge of the bluff where you can plop down to take in the spectacular view. Below you a forest stretches north to the sandy Lake Michigan shoreline while floating on a watery horizon are North and South Manitou islands.

Nearby is the spur to Big Glen Lookout. The spur trail narrows and at **Mile 2.2** arrives at the overlook and another bench. While scenic, this view is not as spectacular as Islands Lookout as only a small portion of Big Glen Lake is visible.

After backtracking to post No. 2, head west, gently descending to post No. 3, reached at **Mile 3.2**. The descent becomes more mellow to post No. 5 and, within 0.3 miles, levels out. The last segment resumes its gentle descent through the beech-maple forest almost all the way back to the parking lot.

Location: From M-109, just east of the entrance to D.H. Day Campground, head south on Stocking Road. The trailhead is reached in 0.75 mile. There is also a second trailhead at the south end of Forest Haven Road on the outskirts of Glen Arbor..

Lake Michigan

D.H. Day
Campground

Glen
Arbor

Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail



South Forest Haven Dr

Stocking Rd

Kilns
Mile 0.0
Mile 4.3

Islands
Lookout
Mile 1.4

Mile 3.2

Easy Loop

Mile 3.9

Big Glen
Lookout
Mile 2.2

Intermediate Loop

Advanced Loop

Day Forest Rd

Little Glen Lake

Big Glen Lake



For a trail
description or
to download a
larger map to a
mobile device.

11 Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail



Distance: 22 miles **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate

The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is a hard-surface, multi-use trail, which currently extends 22 miles from Empire through Glen Arbor to Bohemian Road (CR-669). Most of the year the trail is popular with walkers, runners, parents pushing baby strollers and especially cyclists. In winter, the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes grooms segments of the trail for classic Nordic skiers and skaters.

Most of the non-motorized trail is an asphalt-paved, 10-foot-wide path accessed by 10 trailheads and lined with amenities such as restrooms, picnic areas, and benches. The exceptions are boardwalks over wetlands and a 3.1-mile segment through the Port Oneida Rural Historic District, where the trail surface is compacted crushed limestone. Most of the trail is accessible and suitable for wheelchair use.

The Heritage Trail officially opened in 2012 when the 4.3-mile segment, anchored at one end by Glen Arbor and the other by the Dune Climb, was completed. Since then, the trail has been developed in segments and eventually will extend 27 miles from CR-651 northeast of Glen Arbor to Manning Road south of Empire.

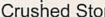
Glen Arbor and the Dune Climb serve as hubs of the system. Mileposts along the Heritage Trail begin with Mile 0.0 at the Dune Climb with mile markers to the south starting with "S" (S01.0) and those heading north towards Glen Arbor starting with "N" (N01.0). Mileposts for N05, N06 and N07 do not exist as they are located in Glen Arbor.

Location: You can access the trail at the following trailheads:

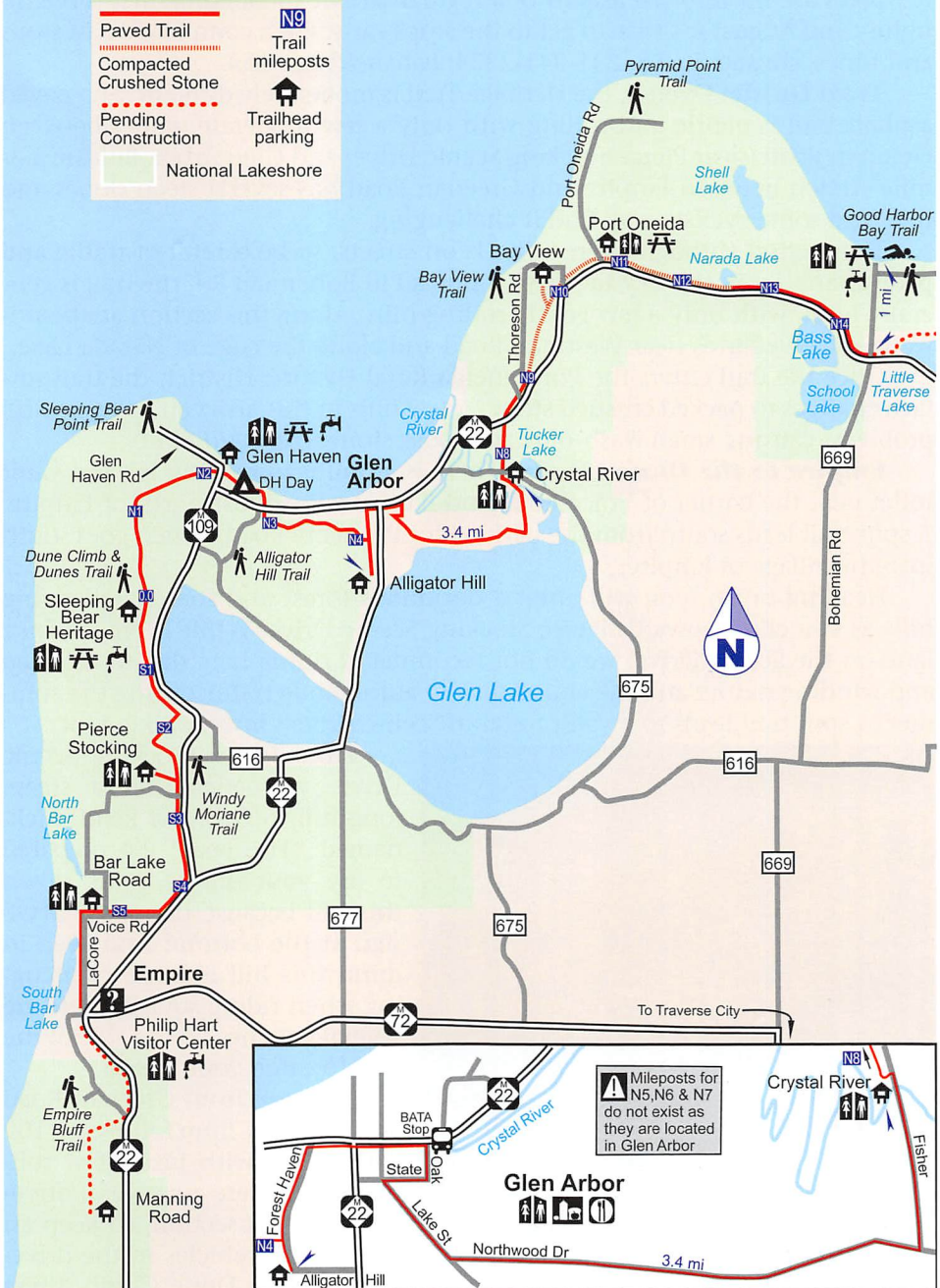
- Bar Lake Road Trailhead at the corner of Voice and Bar Lake Roads – just north of the Village of Empire
- Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive – Lower Parking Lot.
- Dune Climb parking lot – The main Sleeping Bear Heritage Trailhead is located on the north side of the parking lot.
- Glen Haven Village on Glen Haven Road.
- DH Day Campground.
- Alligator Hill Trailhead on Forest Haven Road in Glen Arbor.
- Crystal View Trailhead in Glen Arbor at the Crystal River kayak put-in near the intersection of County Road 675 and Fisher Road.
- Bay View Trailhead on Thoreson Road, just north of M-22.
- Port Oneida Road at the Kelderhouse Farm Parking Area.
- Bohemian Road with parking along CR-669 or at the Good Harbor Bay Beach, a mile north of the Heritage Trail and M-22.

Bike-N-Ride: In 2014, the Bay Area Transportation Authority (BATA) set up a Bike-N-Ride bus service for the Heritage Trail similar to what was already being provided for the Leelanau Trail. From late May to late October, BATA offers Bike-N-Ride service on Route 11 that extends from Traverse City to Empire with stops in Glen Arbor. The specially equipped buses can carry 11 bikes, including child trailers, and depart daily from the Hall Street Transfer Station

Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail

Lake Michigan



in Traverse City from late June through Labor Day and on weekends the rest of the season. Bike-And-Ride stops along the Heritage Trail include Glen Arbor, the Dune Climb, Pierce Stocking Drive, and Empire, so it's possible to ride a good portion of it without backtracking. In Glen Arbor, the stop is at the corner of M-22 and Oak Street.

Bikes are transported as part of a regular fare. It's first-come-first-serve, so in July and August it's wise to get to the stops early. For a complete list of stops and times, contact BATA (231-941-2324; bata.net/bikenride).

Trail Guide: Overall, the Heritage Trail is moderately difficult. The paved asphalt trail is gentle and rolling with only a few moderate grades between Greenan Road (near Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive) and Glen Arbor. But the 3.3-mile stretch between Empire and Greenan Road has several steep slopes and hills and some cyclists may find it challenging.

The section through Glen Arbor is on streets, so be careful of traffic and pedestrians. From the Crystal View Trailhead to Bohemian Rd, the trail is generally level, with only a few gently rolling hills. Along this section are boardwalks over wetlands near Westman Road and along the edge of Narada Lake.

Once the trail enters the Port Oneida Rural Historic District, the trail surface changes to packed crushed stone. A few hills in this area can have erosion problems causing small wash-outs and loose stones. *BE CAREFUL!*

Empire to the Dune Climb: There is a trailhead parking lot and vault toilet near the corner of Voice Road and Bar Lake Road just north of Empire. A spur trail leads south from the parking lot to Lacore Road, which goes south into the village of Empire.

Heading north, you will enter a deciduous forest and some challenging hills as you climb towards Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. While there is a bike lane on the Scenic Drive, we do not recommend riding here due to its steep and winding nature and the abundance of automobile traffic during the summer. A spur trail leads to a vault toilet in Scenic Drive's lower parking lot.



Arriving at the Dune Climb on the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail.

From Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, you encounter a steep, long hill to Greenan Road, nicknamed "The Bear." Be prepared to use your brakes going down this hill because there is a STOP sign at the bottom! And keep in mind this hill is more challenging when riding south! There are several benches on the side of the trail to catch your breath.

The trail from Greenan Road to the Dune Climb follows M-109 and is easy with just a few rolling hills. There are several drive-ways on this section, so keep an eye out for vehicles in the drive-ways. At the Dune Climb, there



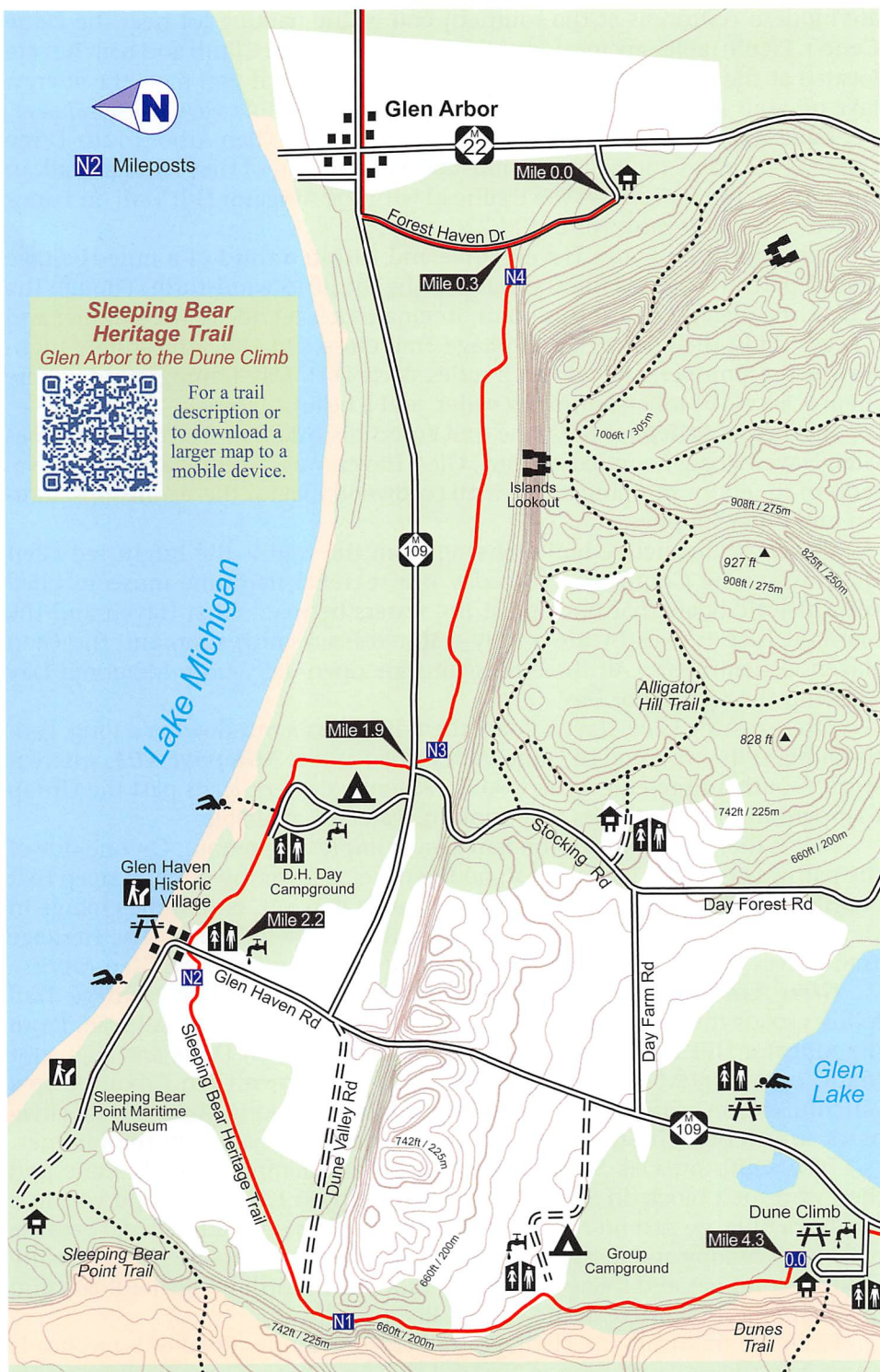
N2 Mileposts

Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail

Glen Arbor to the Dune Climb



For a trail description or to download a larger map to a mobile device.



are modern restrooms at the southern end of the parking lot near the Dune Center. Picnic tables are located at the foot of the Dune Climb and benches are located at the main Sleeping Bear Heritage Trailhead. If you have the energy, take off your shoes and climb the dunes for an incredible view of Glen Lake!

Glen Arbor to the Dune Climb: The ride from Glen Arbor to the Dune Climb is 4.3 miles and by far the most popular section of the Heritage Trail. In Glen Arbor, the trail shares the trailhead with the Alligator Hill Trail on Forest Haven Drive, 300 yards west of M-22.

Head north on Forest Haven Drive and within a third of a mile Heritage Trail departs west into a forest devastated by the 2015 windstorm. Though the trail skirts Alligator Hill at this point, it remains a level ride in the summer and an easy ski in the winter. The Heritage Trail crosses M-109, a busy state highway in the summer, and within 2 miles skirts D.H. Day Campground, where there is access to toilets, drinking water, and a beautiful beach.

Just before ***Milepost N02***, the trail enters historic Glen Haven and crosses Glen Haven Road. Founded in 1865, Glen Haven was developed as a deep-water port to service shipping traffic with cordwood fuel for the steamships, lumber and other supplies.

The most distinctive building seen from the trail is the bright red Glen Haven Canning Company that today is a seasonal maritime museum filled with historic boats that once plied the waters between Glen Haven and the Manitou Islands. Nearby are a fully restored blacksmith shop and the Glen Haven General Store. All three museums are open daily from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

After crossing Glen Haven Road, the trail enters a meadow for a long, gentle climb to the west end of Dune Valley Road and at ***Milepost N01***, where it swings south and re-enters the woods. A gentle descent leads past the Group Campground, where toilets and drinking water are available.

Riders then pass some of the trail's most impressive terrain. On one side of the pathway is a lush green forest; on the other, a towering dune so steep that occasionally small avalanches of snow rumble down it. For all the change in elevation surrounding the path, this is a surprisingly level trail. The Heritage Trail arrives at the Dune Climb at ***Milepost 0.0***, 4.3 miles from Glen Arbor.

Glen Arbor to Good Harbor Bay: East of Glen Arbor, Heritage Trail follows roads through town for 3.4 miles to the Crystal River Trailhead. From the Alligator Hill Trailhead, head north on Forest Haven Drive and then east (right) on M-109/M-22 through the heart of downtown Glen Arbor. Keep a watchful eye on traffic! There is a dedicated bike lane along M-22, but this five-block stretch often bustles with cars, pedestrians, and cyclists in the summer.

Turn south on Oak Street to escape the maddening summer scene and then west for a block on State Street. Turn south on Lake Street and within a third of a mile, go east on Northwoods Drive, a pleasant road to pedal because of its leafy canopy and light traffic. Glen Lake is just to the south but is usually hidden by homes and foliage. Within 3 miles turn north on Fisher Road, and in a half mile, you arrive at the Crystal River Trailhead.

From the trailhead, the Heritage Trail crosses County Road 675 and heads north into the wetlands west of Tucker Lake. An 800-foot boardwalk provides



The 22-mile Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail includes riding past historic Glen Haven on the way to the Dune Climb.

passage and makes for an ideal place to pause and look for wildlife. Just beyond **Milepost N08**, or 4.3 miles from Alligator Hill, the Heritage Trail crosses M-22 near the Homestead Resort, whose reception center is a BATA bus stop.

Another hilly stretch is encountered after crossing M-22. You immediately climb a hill, descend to Thoreson Road, and climb again. Finally, you enjoy a long downhill run. At **Milepost N09** the surface changes to compacted crushed limestone as you enter the Port Oneida Rural Historic District.

Near **Milepost N10** the Heritage Trail crosses Thoreson Road, which leads west to the Bay View Trailhead, and in another half mile arrives at the Charles Olsen Farm with its impressive red barn and steel and wooden silo that were built in 1918. This is the home of Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. In the summer, you can stop and visit the house to see an exhibit of the history of the Port Oneida area.

Continuing in a northeast direction, the Heritage Trail arrives at Port Oneida Road just before **Milepost N11**. On the west side of the road is the Port Oneida Schoolhouse, built in the 1890s, and a classic outhouse. On the east side is a parking lot and vault toilet next to the the Kelderhouse farm.

The Heritage Trail swings around the Kelderhouse Cemetery to M-22 and then begins to skirt the state highway, remaining within view of it most of the time. Near the intersection with Wheeler Road, you arrive at the Lawr Farm that dates to 1890. Beyond the farm, the trail crosses Basch Road and passes through a roadside rest area with two picnic tables.

Within a quarter mile, the trail swings away from M-22 and enters the woods, arriving at the west side of Narada Lake, 2 miles from Port Oneida Road. At this point, the Heritage Trail dips down to cross the lake's marshy south shore via a 1,000-foot boardwalk.

Just beyond Goffar farmhouse on the east side of Narada Lake, Heritage Trail leaves Port Oneida Rural Historic District and continues as an asphalt-paved path. The trail remains close to M-22 for the next mile, passing views of Bass Lake on the south side of M-22. After **Milepost N14** you arrive at County Road 669 (Bohemian Road) and the east end of Heritage Trail. To the north, Bohemian Road leads you a mile to the Good Harbor Bay Beach where there are toilets, drinking water, picnic tables, and a beautiful beach.



Distances: 7.5 miles in 4 loops **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate

Bay View Trail totals 7.5 miles and is one of three trails in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. The trail is one of the most popular with cross-country skiers in the National Lakeshore.

The rest of the year Bay View offers uncrowded trails that pass through a mix of beech-maple forest and old farm fields. At its north end hikers pass historic barns, a one-room schoolhouse, and farmhouses, many of which are being restored by the park.

There are four loops at Bay View with its premiere a 6.4-mile hike. In 2015, the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail was merged into Bay View and the southern portion of Low Trail was paved. Bicycles are only allowed on the Heritage Trail, which switches to a compacted limestone surface in the Historic District.

A popular loop for hikers is the northern half of the system that includes the unpaved portion of Low Trail, Farms Trail and a side trip to Lookout Point. This 3.7-mile walk features several historic buildings and impressive views.

Trail Guide: The hike begins at the north end of Thoreson Road, where three trails converge at the main trailhead. Head north for a long, gentle climb through a hardwood forest to arrive at post No. 1 at **Mile 0.4**, marking the junction to Lookout Point. Just to the east is post No. 2 and Lookout Point, a grassy hilltop. The vista includes Lake Michigan, Pyramid Point, farms and the Manitou Islands on the horizon.

North of post No. 1 the trail descends into the woods and at **Mile 1**, you cross Miller Road and pass Miller Barn, built in the early 1890s. Near the barn are abandoned farm equipment, including what is believed to be an early corn chopper. From Miller Barn, Farms Trail becomes a mowed grassy lane as it swings past the historic Port Oneida School and an outhouse complete with a crescent moon on the door.

At post No. 3 Farms Trail merges with the Heritage Trail and switches to a compacted limestone surface that continues south, arriving at the Olsen Farm at **Mile 1.9**. The house and barn, built in 1918, were the first in the area with indoor plumbing. The trail crosses Thoreson Road continues south on Low Trail and reaches post No. 6 at **Mile 2.8**. Beyond the post Low Trail is paved. The spur to the west climbs 100 feet, topping off on the bluff at post No. 5 and sweeping views of Sleeping Bear Point jutting out into Lake Michigan.

Head north on High Trail and more views follow as the path dips and climbs along the open top of the bluff. Within a quarter mile, Thoreson Farm can be seen to the west, framed by Sleeping Bear Point and the Manitou Islands in the background. Beyond Thoreson Farm, High Trail enters the woods and begins a descent off the bluff's north end. At **Mile 3.5**, the trail swings east, cuts across an open field, and arrives at the Thoreson Road trailhead in less than a quarter mile.

Location: The main trailhead is on Thoreson Road a quarter mile from M-22. The trail system can also be picked up from Olsen Farm, Miller Barn and Homestead Resort.



For a full trail description or to download a larger map to a mobile device.

13 Pyramid Point Trail



Distance: 2.6-mile loop **Difficulty:** Moderate

Pyramid Point Trail is a 2.6-mile loop north of the Port Oneida Rural Historic District known for its towering perched dune above Lake Michigan that rivals those at Empire Bluff and Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive.

The point was formed during the Ice Age when lobes of a glacier pushed into the adjacent Sleeping Bear and Good Harbor Bays. The melting ice deposited layers of sand to form a high headland that at one time jutted more than 2 miles out into Lake Michigan. Eventually, the continuous pounding of waves wore down the point but the lakeshore bluffs remained high and steep.

At the Lookout, hikers stand 373 feet above the lapping waters of Lake Michigan. The headland is a dramatic setting because it is the closest spot on the mainland to the Manitou Islands. Pyramid Point forms the south side of Manitou Passage, a popular shipping lane, so you not only get an eyeful of North and South Manitou Islands but also any freighter in the area.

Most visitors who arrive at the Pyramid Point trailhead merely hike to the Lookout for the view and then return, a round trip of 1.2 miles, with a bit of strenuous climbing near the top. Beyond the Lookout, you'll usually have the rest of the trail to yourself, a 2.6-mile loop that passes through remnants of 19th-century farms and equally-old beech-maple forests, home to some of the largest trees in the park. In early October, the fall colors are stunning.

Trail Guide: While the outside perimeter of the Pyramid Point Trail is a 2.6-mile hike, a crossover spur, between posts No. 2 and No. 3, allows you to shorten the walk to 2 miles.

The trail begins as an old two-track in a grassy meadow, the remnants of a 19th century farm. Within a quarter mile, it enters the woods and starts climbing. Eventually, the ascent steepens, and at **Mile 0.6** you break out of the trees at the Lookout. At 957 feet, this highpoint is a scenic spot on the edge of a perched dune, almost straight above Lake Michigan.

For your safety and to prevent erosion, please do not descend the bluff to Lake Michigan. The clay bluff below is near-vertical in places and areas can break off causing landslides.

From the Lookout, you backtrack to post No. 1, follow the fork to the left and continue the descent through a beech-maple forest. After dropping 120 feet, the trail bottoms out where a



The views from the Lookout at Pyramid Point.



Distances: 3.4 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate to Advanced

The Kettles Trail traverses a 500-acre tract 5 miles southeast of Glen Lake where there are at least a dozen kettles, many of them within sight of the footpath. The Kettles Trail is one of the best places in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to view kettles, pothole lakes, and bogs.

A kettle is a fluvio-glacial landform resulting from blocks of ice splitting off from the front of a receding glacier and then buried by glacial outwash. When the ice melts, a sharp-sided hole appears. An area with numerous kettles results in rugged topography, a chaotic array of ridges, mounds and potholes.

Officially opened in 2019, the Kettles Trail is 3 miles long with the first 1,000 feet that leads to a kettle overlook a fully accessible path with a compacted stone surface. The remainder of the trail often utilizes old two-tracks that climb the slopes and ridges of the kettle topography, some with a more than 20 percent grade.

Due to some backtracking, Kettles Trail is a 3.4 mile trek with the southern portion moderate in difficulty and the northern half more challenging.

Kettles Trail is an excellent destination in the winter. Due to its inland location, the tract receives more snow than the rest of the park while the old two-tracks become easy-to-follow paths for snowshoers and backcountry skiers. In the spring this area has a beautiful display of wildflowers.

Trail Guide: From the trailhead, the Kettles Trail begins as a universally accessible path that leads 300 yards through an open field to an observation area providing a view – best in late fall or winter – into a kettle. You descend into the woods and arrive at the junction with the bog access spur at **Mile 0.5**.

The 0.3-mile spur begins with a steady climb, topping off at a junction with an old two-track heading south. You are surrounded by views of kettles here with the kettle bog to the east and two small wooded kettles to the west before descending to Bog Edge Overlook at **Mile 0.8**.

Backtrack to the main trail and head north (right). At **Mile 1.5**, the loop at the north end is reached. There are climbs, no matter which way you choose. Following the loop in a counter-clockwise direction (right), an old two-track takes you past a kettle with a small pond, and then at a well-posted junction, a true footpath leaves the old road and climbs around a larger kettle. This is interesting terrain, especially in the winter. The climb is long and strenuous on skis - and if you are skiing clockwise, this section requires advanced ski skills due to steep downhill and curves.

At **Mile 2.1**, the footpath arrives at another old two-track, and a signpost points south (left) on it. It's a steady descent along the two-track back to the loop junction at **Mile 2.5**. From there it's less than a mile of backtracking to the trailhead on Baatz Road.

Location: The trailhead is on Baatz Road near Fritz Road. From M-72, head north on County Road 669 and in 2 miles turn west on Baatz Road. In 2.2 miles the trailhead is on the north side of the road.



For a full trail description or to download a larger map to a mobile device.



15

Good Harbor Bay Trail



Distance: 2.8-mile loop **Difficulty:** Easy

Good Harbor Bay Trail is the exception in the National Lakeshore, a 2.8-mile loop that is almost entirely flat. A narrow strip of low coastal dunes surrounds the picnic area but further inland is a mix of forest and wetlands.

People new to Nordic skiing love this trail. Its level contour – the grade never exceeds 10 percent – and the abundance of lake-effect snow off the bay make it easy to master the kick-and-glide technique of traditional cross-country skiing. The forests tend to hold the snow late into the season.

Trail Guide: The trail enters the woods and immediately arrives at a junction. Head east to follow the loop in a clockwise direction. At **Mile 0.6**, the trail swings south to cross a series of ancient shorelines. Footbridges lead you through wooded wetlands, and at **Mile 1.2**, an unnamed stream is crossed. On the other side, you briefly follow what appears to be an old railroad bed before the trail swings west (right) at a well-marked junction.

At **Mile 2**, the trail swings north where a long stretch of planking leads across more wetlands and then across the stream again. The final segment remains in the forest until you swing east to return to the short trailhead spur.

Location: From M-22, 9 miles north of Glen Arbor, turn north on Bohemian Road (County Road 669) and then right on Lake Michigan Road.

