

An Outdoor Paradise Awaits Discovery

By Bob Holzhei

Ten lakes comprise the Manitowish Chain of Lakes in Manitowish, Wisconsin which total 4,266 acres with 58.5 miles of shoreline. Great fishing includes musky, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, walleye, northern pike, crappie, perch and bluegill. With over 1,300 lakes in Vilas County, lake front property is plentiful.



The official Musky Capital of the world is located East of the Manitowish Chain of Lakes at Bolder Junction. The Junction is noted for excellent Musky fishing among more than 50 Class A Musky lakes.

As ice arrives cribs are placed on the ice which sink to the bottom as spring arrives and provide shelter for crappie as well as walleye as large Musky search for an easy meal. One crib location produced large crappie as well as walleye.

Every place has a name and history which draw people back to it to relive a moment. Little Bohemia Lodge is where John Dillinger had his famous shootout. It is no surprise that over two million people visit the area each year to become one with the natural world. Pristine forests offer sportsmen an abundance of wildlife in this four-season paradise.

The remoteness of this Northern Wisconsin paradise has all the conveniences one might expect in selecting a location to experience. Cabins, elegant lodges, inns, bed-n-breakfasts, motels, shopping and dining offer a variety of choices to fit family budgets.

My wife Shirley and I arrived at The Lodge in Manitowish Waters and were speechless at the beautiful accommodations. Immaculate amenities were impressive and The Lodge is located just across the street from shops and a grocery store.

Area restaurants were some of the very best we experienced traveling throughout the United States, including The Blue Bayou, Smokey's Supper Club, Wolf's Den, Aberdeen, Pea Patch Grill, Eunice's Beaver Lodge, Aurora Borealis, The Cranberry Inn, and the Gateway Lodge.

This recreational paradise offers outdoor enthusiasts opportunities for fishing, hunting, golfing, mountain biking, cross country skiing and relaxation.

Each season is magical as the colors of autumn emerge and are painted on the landscape. Fall is also a time of harvest and the cranberry harvest, held during the first Saturday in October, is an unforgettable experience which draws over 2,000 folks to the area.

Cran-A-Rama is held the first Saturday in October and features the "19th Annual Cranberry Cooking Contest, Arts & Crafts booths, free cranberry samples." Free shuttle bus tours to the cranberry marshes, free pontoon cruises on the Manitowish Chain of Lakes and fresh cranberry sales are featured.

David Bartling of Manitowish Cranberry Company took us on a tour of the Cranberry Bogs and explained how the harvest occurs. The bogs are flooded with water and a tractor equipped with a rake loosens the cranberry's and they then float to the surface where they are gathered in an area of the bog and then loaded onto semi-trucks for delivery to Ocean Spray.

A nature walk narrated by Bruce Bacon, a retired wildlife biologist with the Wisconsin DNR produced a surprise when a pair of snipes were seen. We also had an opportunity to visit with Kelly Martinko, a forest ranger at the Mercer Ranger Station. Her primary job includes, fire protection, assisting private land owners with managing their land, and assisting people with timber harvests.

A leisurely walk through the 60-acre North Lakeland Discovery Center with Anne McDonnell was a relaxing way to conclude our afternoon. Over 5,000 folks visit the center on a yearly basis and a 24-page booklet lists programs that are available from May through October. There are over 12 miles of trails to walk or cross-country ski through.

Northwoods Wildlife and Wetland Club offered Wednesday trap shooting for members as well as promoting gun safety through hunter education classes and assisting the Mercer Trap Team. The club also hosts a gun show in August in Manitowish Waters and a turkey trap shoot in August.

Memories of the pristine remoteness of this Northern Wisconsin setting will linger after we return home. There is so much more to discover and on a return trip, new discoveries await.

For more information: www.manitowishwaters.org and mercercc.com

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