



Welcome to South Manitou Island

A Pocket Guide for Visitors

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

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Manitou Island Transit

207 West River Street

Leland, MI 49654

Ph: 231-256-9061

Internet: <https://manitoutransit.com>

Cellular Service

Wireless service on the Island is spotty and unreliable. Phone-charging stations are not available.

911 Emergency Service

Not available. Rangers are equipped for direct communications with the mainland.

Island Ranger Station

Island headquarters are located at the Old Coast Guard Station in the village area by the dock.

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... Your Special Island

There she lay, in the morning mist just offshore to the north and west. Viewed from high atop the giant Sleeping Bear dune, this jewel of emerald and gold floats on a sea of sparkling sapphire, and whispers with all the beckoning power of Bali Ha'i

... "Here am I, your special island. Come to me ...
Come to me."



Lakeshore visitors don't always know that the Manitou Islands are part of the park. But you are indeed welcome to come to South Manitou. Whether you come for just the day or a longer stay, trips to the island are always educational, enjoyable and memorable.

Mishe-Mokwa, the intrepid island ferry, leaves Leland's historic and picturesque Fishtown Dock early every morning. If you've never sailed on the open sea, you'll enjoy 90-minutes of beauty and adventure as you voyage across the Manitou Passage.

The Passage is fickle; sometimes placid, sometimes playful, sometimes bullyish, occasionally mean ... and it's disposed to rapid mood-swings! An important, but risky, shortcut for early sailing ships and steamers, many ended up on the bottom here. You might think to doff your cap as you pass over their long-forgotten remains. But no need to worry about *Mishe-Mokwa* when the wind's up! Just remember to bring dry clothes, then enjoy the excitement as she braves the waves, and experience the fun as she dives into the occasional "Queen" wave.¹

¹ Queen waves are the bluest and strongest – sometimes said to be every seventh wave

Geology Lesson

South Manitou Island is the southern-most of a group of islands that extends from here, north to the Straits of Mackinac which separates Michigan's two peninsulas. The islands consist of a ridge of tilted layers of limestone, buried under a blanket of glacial debris. Glaciers carved out the Lake Michigan basin. When the basin filled with water, the peaks along the ridge remained exposed as islands. During post-glacial times, winds blowing on the high, sandy bluffs on the west side of the island moved sand inland, forming perched dunes.

That's the scientists' version of it. Another story², supposedly from an Indian legend, explains the islands this way ...

Long ago a great famine had spread over the land. Longingly, a mother bear wishing to save her two famished cubs urged them into the water on the Wisconsin shore, to swim across the great lake to Michigan, which in those days was the land of plenty. As they approached the Michigan shores, one of the cubs began to falter, and the mother's heart was rent as she saw the babe sink and drown. With the remaining cub she struggled on, but after only two more miles the second cub also perished.

Reaching the Michigan beach all alone, the mother crept sadly to a resting-place where she lay down facing the restless waters that covered her lost cubs, hoping against hope they might somehow reach the beach after all. As she gazed at the lake, two beautiful islands slowly rose to mark the graves of her little ones ... created by the Great Spirit Manitou to commemorate their bravery. Saddened and exhausted, the mother closed her eyes for the last time, and where she lay a great solitary dune arose to honor her courage and faithfulness.



² Adapted from a version provided online by MSU Department of Geography

History Thumbnail

South Manitou was once the center of civilization and commerce in the Manitou Passage. In fact, settlement in the area began on this little island. Its protected, natural deep-water harbor made it the perfect refuge from bad weather. The island was densely forested, so when steamers began to sail the Great Lakes, its strategic location between the Straits and Chicago made it the best place to take on firewood for their boilers. Back then, when the "wooding" business was going great guns, a little "boom town" developed near the dock on the shores of the bay.

One thing led to another. First it was the "wooders" ... the young woodchoppers and various support people needed to run that kind of operation. The dock was built, and even a little railroad to transport logs from the interior down to the bay. Then came the immigrant farmers ... homesteaders mostly from Bavaria. Life was good here, so brother enticed brother to come, then close friends, and before long there was a little farming community.

As Chicago grew, travel between there and Buffalo resulted in heavy traffic on the lower Great Lakes. Long before automobiles and paved roads, passengers and freight traveled from New York's harbor to Chicago by barge and boat. Early sailors quickly discovered that the Great Lakes, and especially Lake Michigan, were different than the ocean, being capable of kicking up treacherously angry seas without notice. As the disasters increased and the Lake Michigan shoreline became a graveyard for ships, the government launched an ambitious program to build lighthouses and establish lifesaving stations. That brought lightkeepers and surfmen to South Manitou.



In time, things changed, and the boom town gradually turned into a ghost town. They left as they had come. As coal became more commonly available and wood increasingly expensive, the importance of wooding stations declined, and the Island's wooders were the first to go. Without the frequent and regular arrivals and departures of

ferries and freighters, the cost of shipping became prohibitive, and one-by-one families abandoned their farmsteads for a better life on the mainland. Steel hulls and electronic navigation equipment turned lighthouses and foghorn stations into curious monuments to a simpler time. More out of sentiment than need, lighthouses were automated rather than closed, and after some 150-years of service the U.S. Lighthouse Service was merged into the U.S. Coast Guard. The day of the lightkeeper was over. There was no longer any work here for "wickies". Finally, in the early 1950's the Coast Guard, successor to the old U.S. Lifesaving Service, took down the flag for the last time. Most islanders simply locked their doors and left with little more than a few of their most treasured personal things, the rest of their possessions not being worth the cost of shipping to the mainland.

For twenty years, more or less, what people had built on South Manitou suffered the ravages of the elements. Our works quickly molder and crumble when not kept up, as if nature is no respecter of our creativity and is in a hurry to rid herself of it. Shameless vandals and looters wantonly assisted in the process of destruction. In the early 1970's fortune smiled once again on South Manitou when the island became part of the newly authorized Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. In time, the park and its partners began the process of stabilizing and restoring what was left of its historic and cultural resources.

Historical Timeline

10,000+ B.C.: Earliest known humans; Paleo-Indian hunters in the region

550 - 1620: Woodland Indians (Ottawa, Ojibway) visit seasonal encampments on island as hunters and gatherers

1600's - 1700's: Great Lakes area controlled by French and exploited by trappers; colonization is officially discouraged as threatening to fur trade.

1760: area falls under British control in settlement of French & Indian War

1776: area falls to American control in settlement of the Revolutionary War, and becomes a part of the Northwest Territory

1800's: Indiana Territory, divided from Northwest Territory, includes island

1805: the Territory of Michigan, divided off the Indiana Territory, includes islands

1812: briefly under British control during War of 1812

1818: first steamboat appears on Great Lakes

1827: Erie Canal opens between Albany and Buffalo, New York, providing natural waterway for immigrant travel from New York City to Chicago

1835-1836: First documented white settlers arrive on South Manitou; William Burton family begins logging to supply steamers with fuel-wood

1838 - 1863: South Manitou settlement phase

1840's: Island serves as refueling station for steamships 1840: First lighthouse became operational, first keeper was William Burton

1843: visiting essayist reports island inhabited only by "woodcutters for the steamboats", living in "slovenly huts"

1847 - 1970: era of agricultural use

1847 - 1868: eotechnic farming - subsistence farming by early settlers

1850's: White settlers begin movement onto mainland. Forest products industry begins in the lakeshore region

1856: Geo. J Hutzler brings family from Buffalo and begins homesteading (claim filed in 1863)

1860's: Census lists 74 people living in 17 households on South Manitou Island, including 7 Day laborers (probably woodcutters), 1 lighthouse keeper and 1 shoe maker

1862: Homestead Act passed by U.S. Congress in May. 15 homesteaders stake claims between 1863 and 1915

1863: first road opened on mainland from Benzonia to Traverse City (now US-31)

1868 - 1940: paleotechnic farming - farming for production, surplus commodities for sale to steamers and mainland settlers

1870's: Island development reaches its peak. Village begins to shift from Burton's "old dock" area to south bay (lighthouse/station) area. Census lists 76 people living in 14 households on South Manitou Island, including 12 farmers, 1 wood merchant and 1 retail grocer

1871: current lighthouse built; Michigan passes an act requiring all children 6-16 to attend school

1874: Michigan Supreme Court rules that communities could use local property taxes to fund schools. Islanders evasive.

1879: South Manitou Post Office Opens in Sept, Richard Kitchen first Postmaster

1880's: Census lists 98 people living in 20 households on South Manitou Island, including 13 farmers, 2 fishermen, 1 lighthouse keeper, 1 sailor, 1 book binder, 1 house keeper and 1 wood merchant

1890's: Wooding business closes down as steamers turn to coal.

1894: Manitou County (S & N Manitou, S & N Fox Islands) dissolved; Manitous join Leelanau County

1899: Schoolhouse built between farms and village

1900's: More rapid expansion of south bay village site begins as servicemen and families move in and logging and shipping operations decline in importance

1902: USLSS Station established on island; Chief Gus B Lofberg and crew of six Surfmen which included three local boys George I Haas, Martin Furst, David Furst

1905: Fisher & Morgan Saw Mill established, employing some 50 loggers.

1910's: USLSS becomes US Coast Guard (1915)

1918 - 1940: neotechnic farming - scientific agricultural discoveries begin to be applied

1920's: Burdick store moves from old dock area to USCG station area; "old dock" area prominence ended

1930's: John Tobin (last lightkeeper) appointed in September, 1935

1940 - 1970: island agricultural activity begins decline

1940's - 1950's: Exodus to the mainland leaves island essentially deserted by early 1950's.



Early fisherman's camp on South Manitou Bay

Getting There

Getting to South Manitou involves a boat ride. You can either take your own, or take advantage of the passenger ferry service provided in cooperation with the Lakeshore. The dock at South Manitou is 7-miles from Sleeping Bear Point or Glen Haven, and 15-miles from Leland. A regular park pass is required for visits to the island.

If you're planning on making the voyage yourself, be mindful of the Passage's penchant for kicking up rough seas on short notice. Squalls and passing weather fronts can create damaging wave conditions. Emergency assistance comes from the Coast Guard Air Station in Traverse City. Cellular service is spotty at best in the passage, and should not be relied upon for emergency use. There are no marina, docking or fueling facilities on the island. The National Park's dock may be used to land passengers and equipment at the Ranger Station, but docking is limited to 20 minutes. Plan on anchoring in the bay. The bay has a *bold beach*³ and is well protected from prevailing winds, but set your anchor with wind shifts in mind.

The passenger ferry *Mishe-Mokwa* makes the trip at least once most days during the visitor season, sailing from Leland's historic and charming *Fishtown Docks*. The boat sails promptly on schedule, departing Leland at 10:00 AM and departing the Island at 4:30 PM, the crossing ordinarily taking 1½ hours. Advance ticketing is recommended. Make your arrangements directly with Manitou Island Transit (see page i). MIT personnel will direct you to a secure off-dock parking area for your vehicle.

Whether sailing on the ferry or private watercraft, dress for the cooler climate you'll encounter out in the Passage. Conditions can change rapidly, so when the weather seems unsettled bring rain gear. Wave conditions can also become quite threatening. Although the ferry can be relied upon to safely negotiate high seas, those subject to seasickness should be prepared for the possibility of discomfort. Chewing candied ginger sometimes helps.

³ Water depth drops off sharply to deep water.

Amenities

When you come to the Island, don't look for hotels and restaurants. The Lakeshore provides toilets and drinking water, and wilderness campsites for those planning to stay overnight. The rest you'll need to figure out for yourself.

There are no stores or inns on the Island ... no food, shelter, no emergency medical assistance, Cellular telephones are often useless, and should not be relied upon for emergency use. (Rangers are equipped for direct communication with Lakeshore headquarters.)



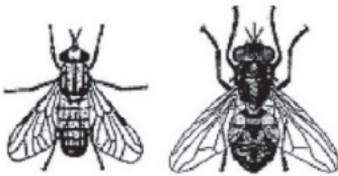
Getting There

Hazards and Nuisances

The island has, for the most part, no unique natural hazards. Prudence and good judgment used anywhere else keep visitors safe and secure on the Island.

One exception: *Toxicodendron Rydbergii* (formerly *Rhus radicans*) is common on the island. Commonly called "eastern poison ivy", this native but invasive pest favors disturbed habitats such as edges of trails, fence lines, old fields, and logged forests. Until eventually replaced by natural vegetation, it serves to stabilize the soil and provide food and habitat for wildlife. To humans, it can cause rashes that itch severely.

Susceptibility varies from one person to another, and even from time to time for the same person. The best "remedy" for poison ivy is to avoid it. Having failed that, the irritating Urushiol oil is water soluble and can easily be washed off, if done before infection is established, else a doctor may be needed to treat it. Liberal applications of very hot water (as hot as can be tolerated) sometimes helps release histamine, the substance in the cells of the skin which causes the intense itching, giving several hours of relief.



DEER FLY

STABLE FLY

Insects can also be a nuisance. Stable flies and female deer flies are vicious, painful biters. "Fly season" is four to five weeks during June and July for deer flies and all warm summer months for stable flies. Keeping windward of forests

and marshes is a good way to avoid these pests. Commercial insect repellents are also effective in preventing their painful and itchy bites. Once bitten, medicated anti-itch creams usually provide relief.

The squeamish will not be happy to learn that the island abounds with snakes, and unusually large centipedes. Centipedes are harmless, of course. The serpents are mostly all *Thamnophis sirtalis*, otherwise known as the common Garter Snake, and cute little Northern Ringneck Snakes, a.k.a. *Diadophis punctatus*. They're easy to catch, and tend to be placid and sometimes even

cute and seemingly friendly. They rarely bite, and if they do, their bite is harmless. Your bigger risk, if you upset one, is that you might get pee'd on with a somewhat offensive-smelling secretion which they generate for defensive purposes.



Whether it's poison ivy, flies, or fleas, sensible attire is always a good idea. Exposed skin, especially legs and feet, might seem macho or sexy, but is apt to result in discomforts that impair the richness of your wilderness adventure. If you don't like using chemicals to repel insect nuisances, petroleum jelly or baby oil usually works. Or make your own all-natural bug repellent by combining two parts olive or coconut oil with one part citronella oil, and add a dash of lemon oil.



As mentioned elsewhere, some of the island's larger little critters will be happy to eat your lunch if you let them. Sealed containers are a good preventive measure. The chipmunks are not good climbers, so when you leave your campsite for hikes, hang your edibles high off the ground in a nearby tree.

Visitor Check List

What you might wish to bring, or not, to the Island depends, of course, on how long you'll be staying. Experienced campers probably won't need this advice, but those coming for just the day might make their visit more pleasant by considering the items on the following list.

1. Check the weather forecast and plan to dress accordingly. Conditions out in the Passage are likely to be windy and much cooler than on the mainland. If rain is a possibility, line your knapsack with a plastic bag to keep things dry ... and bring your raincoat.
2. Hiking boots or favorite walking shoes. Sandals are not recommended because of poison ivy. Jeans or slacks and long-sleeves might prove more appropriate than shorts and tee shirts during fly season.
3. Camera and film or extra memory
4. Swim suits and towels
5. There is no food service of any kind on the island. Day-trippers should bring a simple picnic lunch.
6. Sun block. (Balding? A cap might be a good idea.)
7. Insect repellent
8. Medicated anti-itch cream
9. Do not bring the dog (or cat, bird, monkey or any other pets.) Pets are not allowed on the island.
10. Advance ferry reservations – assure there'll be room for you and avoid the hectic last-minute rush on the dock. Check in at least 30-minutes prior to your scheduled departure.

Visiting for a Day

Too much to do ...not enough time!

That's the day-tripper's lament. But don't let that discourage you. The island is sure to make a favorable impression, and once bitten, you'll surely wish to return again. Because there's so much to see and do on the island, you'll be tempted to bite off more than you can chew during the short 5½ hours between your arrival and departure times. With a little forethought and planning, you'll be able to enjoy some of what the island offers at a leisurely pace, including quiet, solitude and beautiful vistas.

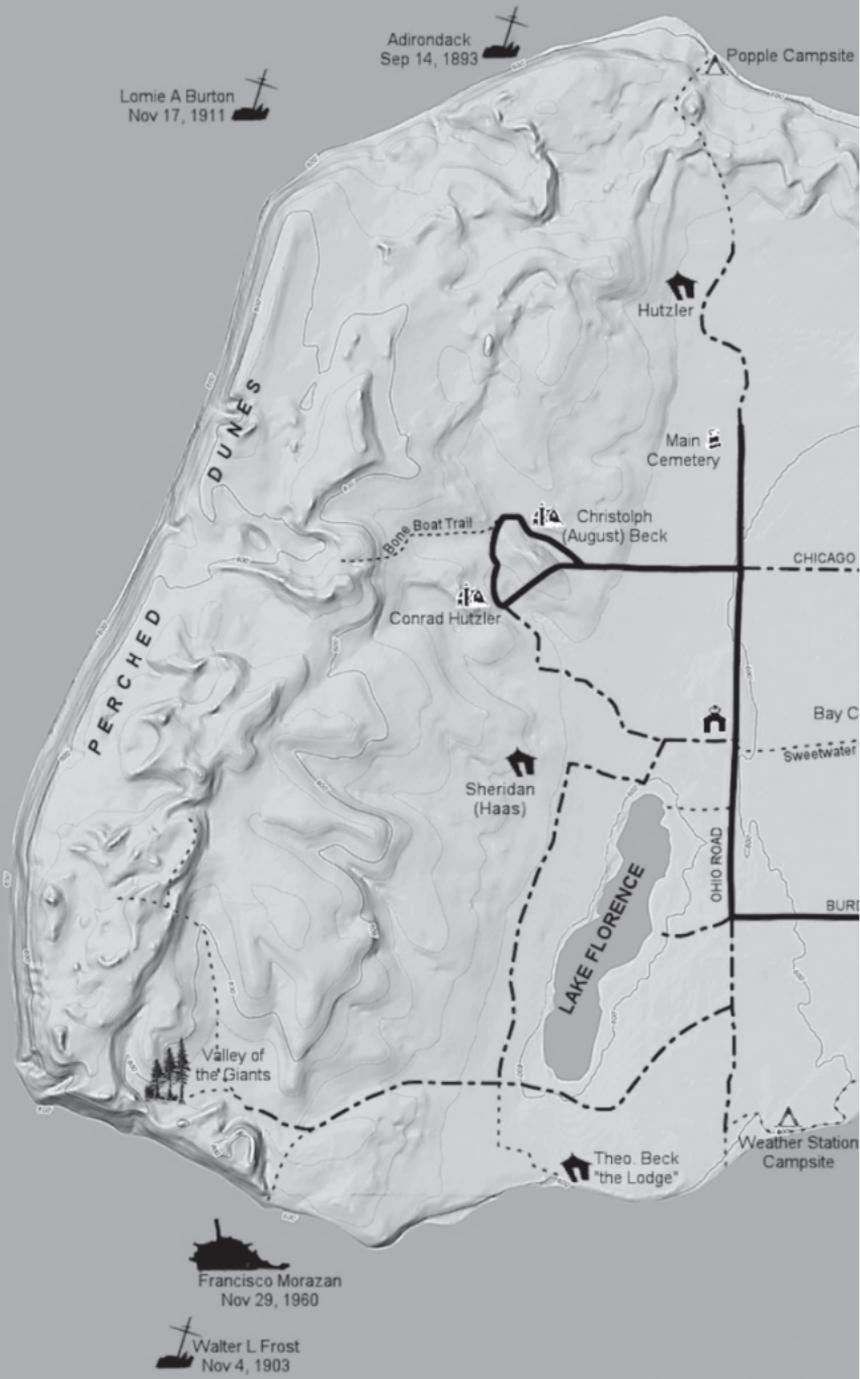
Whatever you do, if sailing on the *Mishe-Mokwa* be sure to be back on the dock at departure time. The ferry always leaves promptly on schedule. If you miss the boat, the Park Service won't let you remain exposed to the elements over night, but the amenities will be minimal at best ... sleeping on the hard floor in the boathouse and eating whatever campers might have left behind, if anything.

Several activities are suggested in the following pages. The Island Ranger permanently stationed on the island is there to provide more information, give directions and help you make the most of your visit. If you're arriving by ferry, the Ranger will be on the dock to greet you. Otherwise stop by at the Ranger Station or check with any Ranger found in the field.

Motor Tours

Mishe-Mokwa crewmembers provide guided tours in open-air "dune buggies". The tours are set up enroute to the island and can be customized to accommodate special interests, groups and abilities. Whether running in rain or shine, the atmosphere is informal and fun for all ages. Each tour takes about 1½ hours. Everyone is welcome; this service is not limited to *Mishe-Mokwa* passengers. For information, just check with any member of the MIT crew when the boat arrives at the dock.

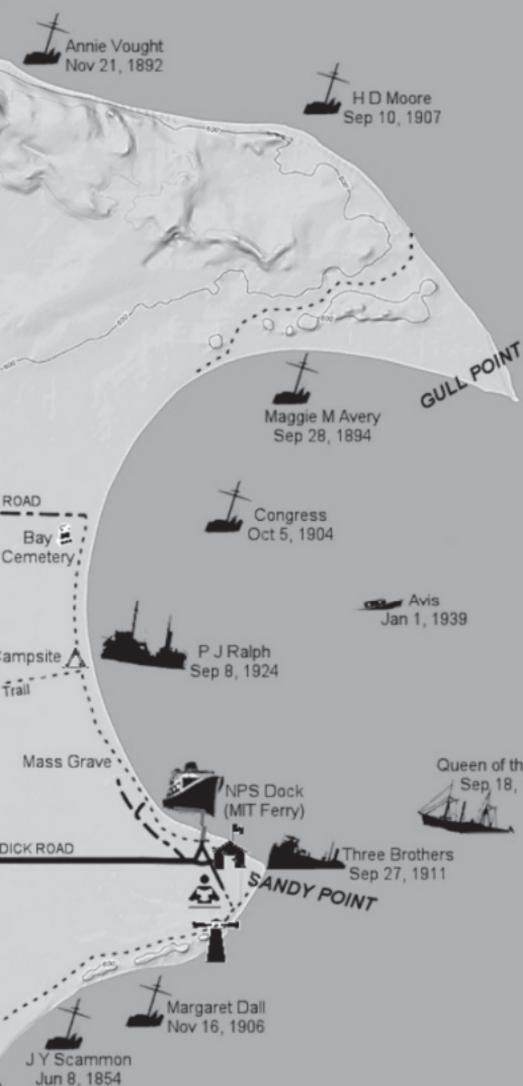




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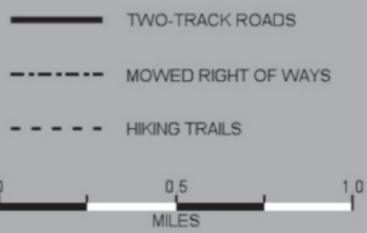
SOUTH MANITOU ISLAND

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore



Legend

-  SHIPWRECK
-  CEMETERY
-  FARMSTEAD
-  GIANT CEDARS
-  HOMESTEAD RUINS
-  RANGER STATION
-  SCHOOLHOUSE
-  VISITOR CENTER



Short Walks

When moving around on the island, it's good practice to stay on the walkways, roads and trails ... for two reasons. The first one is that certain parts of the island's environment are rather fragile. This is especially true in dune areas. Your low impact use of these areas will assure that they'll remain as beautiful and interesting for your next visit, and for visitors in years to come. The other reason is poison ivy, which has taken over many formerly "improved" areas. Remember, this is nature's first step in returning those areas to their previous wilderness splendor. (Perhaps it's no accident that only humans are affected by it resins.) You'll probably hear someone suggest ...

*Take nothing but pictures;
leave nothing but footprints!*

What's in the Village

The shortest of all walks is discovering what's in the village. The government first set up shop here with the coming of the U.S. Lifesaving Service, predecessor to the Coast Guard, in 1902. At that time, the main settlement was also on the bay about $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile north, the site of the original Burton dock. After the decline of the wooding business, non-farm residents left, and those remaining gradually moved to the area around the station. Nearby neighbors were important in the early island culture for entertainment and security.

The Lifesaving Station served this area of the Passage for some 56 years, being decommissioned in 1958. The fine two-story building with the flag tower in front was formerly home for U.S.L.S.S. Keepers and Surfmen, and later on U.S.C.G. Chiefs and Seamen. The building was divided such that its north side served as a private residence for the Keeper and his family, while Surfmen occupied the south side. At the rear of the building a common area included a kitchen and day room. In addition to the stars 'n strips and the service ensign, the service flew storm warning flags from the tower as weather information visible to passing vessels. The station now serves as the Ranger Station and dormitory for the island unit.

What now serves as the island's check-in center was the station's boathouse. The unit had a conventional surfboat with oars and a tiller, and a 36-foot TRS class self-righting motor lifeboat. Both were kept in this building, its elevated position and

sloped launching rails permitting rescue parties to put to sea in a hurry.

Watches were kept around the clock. The complex included a lookout tower about ¼-mile south of the station near the beach. Its massive concrete pillions are all that remain of that important facility, which permitted men on watch to observe activity between Point Betsie 20-miles to the south and North Manitou Island's light five miles to the north. Beach patrols were also a regular duty during the shipping season, with men from the station walking the beach in regular shifts. Gerald Crowner's little book *The South Manitou Story* provides an excellent account of what life was like for Seamen stationed at South Manitou when this facility was in its prime.

One of the island's most distinguished alumni, Admiral Willard J Smith (1910-2000) spent a significant part of his youth at this station, as the son of Captain Oscar Smith, Keeper of the station during the World War I era. Just six years old when his father took command, the boy received his early education in the island's little schoolhouse. While a student at the University of Michigan, he received an appointment to the Coast Guard Academy. He served with distinction during his military career, which culminated with his appointment as Commandant of the U S. Coast Guard with rank of Admiral effective 1 June 1966.



Most of the little houses behind and around the station are listed on the register of historic places. Married Coast Guardsmen and their families occupied many. Others served as a general store, as the island's Post Office or homes for other islanders. Today they still find use as temporary housing for maintenance personnel, contractors and volunteers. Be sure to stop by at the former General Store, which now serves as the island's Visitor Center. An interesting collection of photos and artifacts tell the story of what life was like for those hardy individuals who once called this place home.

Lighthouse Complex

Just around "Sandy Point" from the station is the Passage's best-known landmark, and the island's distinctive emblem. Take the narrow concrete sidewalk just to the left of the station's front porch, past "the Johnson house" with its rather unique peaked roof (thought to be a Montgomery-Ward kit house), then continue along the beach, or take the boardwalk just beyond the Visitor Center, which leads right to the lighthouse complex. It's about ½-mile from the station.

Commissioned in 1872, this third and final Manitou Passage lighthouse served Lake Michigan shipping for over 100-years.



Towers in this class, designed by Army-trained engineer Orlando Poe, are considered among the most graceful and beautiful ever built. A familiar landmark for sailors navigating the Manitou Passage, this gleaming white structure is also clearly visible

from the mainland, and now stands as a symbol of the Island's rich history and romantic cultural traditions.

The keeper's quarters, connected to the tower by a covered passageway, was built in 1858 to replace the original 1839 lighthouse. This building originally served as both lighthouse and keeper's residence; the shorter tower being built atop the roof on the seaward end of the building.

In 1875 a fog signal was added. The little white building, which still remains on the site, once housed a wood-fired boiler, which powered a powerful steam driven foghorn. For many years the South Manitou Light was equipped with a three-wick kerosene lantern within a third-order Fresnel lens system. On a clear night, it was visible as far south as Point Betsie, some 45-miles away. The small circular steel building provided a safe storage place for the supply of kerosene. The facility was decommissioned in December 1958, after more than a century of faithful service.

Standing 104-feet high, this is one of the tallest lighthouse towers on the Great Lakes. Its hollow walls are five-feet thick at the bottom, tapering to three-feet at the top, where its deck

affords a stunning panoramic view of the area. It is open for tours during the season while day-visitors are on the island. Bring your cap, and don't look up, else you might get sand in your eyes as you climb the 117-step winding stairway to the top. Be sure to also bring a camera.



Lake Florence

The island's single inland lake was named after Florence Haas (1863 - 1943), an island woman who became a legend of sorts. Her father was a sea captain, so Florence took easily to sailing. She married an island farmer and served as postmaster for the island. She was granted a pilot's license to operate a motor launch in 1911, making her one of the first women to achieve this status on the Great Lakes. She was also the first woman postmaster to carry the mail between the island and Glen Haven, beginning in 1912. Because of her role in delivering mail, Florence Haas is cited in *Michigan Women: Firsts and Founders*. As a midwife she delivered many of the island children, and



spent several of her later years as a crewmember on Pere Marquette railroad carferries sailing between Michigan and Wisconsin. She then moved on to Texas where she invested her carferry earnings in real estate, profiting

handsomely in the boom that overtook the Galveston area.

To hike to the lake, follow the curving road behind the boathouse to the right, past a few of the little village houses, to Burdick Road. Turning right, follow Burdick Road west to the point where it ends at Ohio Road. Rather than turning north (right) on Ohio Road, follow the trail straight ahead and in about ¼-mile you'll come to a little sandy beach on the eastern shores of Lake Florence. This was a favorite bathing spot for island children, and mothers often choose to scrub their toddlers here in warm weather, rather than go to all the work of drawing fresh water from the well and heating it up for the traditional Saturday night washtub bath, usually near the kitchen stove.

If instead you continue north on Ohio Road, in about ten minutes you'll come to a sign with an arrow pointing left indicating a trail that leads, in about five more minutes, to the very picturesque north end of the lake. Looking along the shoreline you might catch a glimpse of America's symbol in the treetops. A pair of bald eagles sometimes decides to call this area home.

The Island Schoolhouse

Compulsory free education for children between ages six and sixteen came to Michigan in 1871. Everyone thought that was a good idea ... except property owners, who were forced to pay for it through the assessment of property taxes. Being charged according to the value of one's property rather than the number of family members actually using the school didn't seem to make any sense, especially to those having no children. And worse, those owning property felt they were being forced to pay for the schooling of the children of those who didn't. Collecting taxes from islanders, who received little else in exchange for their contributions to the county's kitty, proved to be somewhat of a challenge. Nevertheless, all island children were offered a quality education in a little schoolhouse that was finally built at the turn of the century.

The one-room school, built in 1899, accommodated students of all ages, beginning with the first grade. Eighth grade graduates were typically thirteen or fourteen. An eighth-grade education was considered sufficient for any practical person. Those who wished to do so could go on to high school on the mainland.



Teachers were usually young men or women who went on to attend a County Normal teacher's school for a year or two after graduating from high school. The wages were low; \$50.00 a month during the mid-30's, with \$20.00 of that going for room and board. For that kind of money, the teacher also served as Principal, school nurse and custodian. The day began early, hauling out the ashes from the previous day's fire, then starting a new fire in the stove to heat the room. There was then water to pump for drinking and washing, and as time permitted, wood to

split. At day's end, after the children left, there was cleaning to do ... sweeping, mopping, dusting and occasionally window washing. The School Board also expected to find the outhouses clean and well supplied with Montgomery-Ward catalogs.

The little schoolhouse also served as a place for meetings and social activities. Spelling bees, recitals, skits and plays were popular diversions for islanders. Today it remains, albeit deserted and lonely. But if you come here and listen with your heart, you may hear the sounds of children reciting their lessons inside or playing nosily in the yard. Or you might hear islanders engaged in earnest debate over some local issue, or rewarding a special Christmas performance with a round of applause. Or you might just hear the teacher bumping around alone inside as she sees to her daily chores.

The Cemetery

There are several burial places on the island. Homesteaders were often buried on their home place, midst the beauty of an orchard or on a hill overlooking the farm. Workers and transients were more likely to be hurriedly buried in unmarked and now forgotten graves. There's a ghost story, for example, of a ship arriving quietly in the middle of the night, many of its passengers having been stricken with cholera. The dead and hopeless were taken ashore and buried in a mass grave just south of today's Bay Campground. It's said that on certain nights if you go near that place, you might hear the muffled moans of the pitiful victims who were buried alive that awful night many years ago.

The island's main cemetery is preserved as the final resting-place of several descendants of the island's earliest settlers and other island notables. The list includes Burdick, Beck, Haas, Hutzler and Peth.



The story of Bertha Peth is particularly intriguing and poignant. Her grave lies at the very back of the cemetery, outside the family plot containing the grave the husband who divorced her, but remained her life-

long helpmate. A small cross near Bertha's grave marks the burial place of the small son of a poor family who lived briefly on the

island around 1914. Bertha evidently adopted his grave and cared for it as a surrogate for that of her own young son, her only child, who had suffered illness or injury on the island, and died in Chicago a few years before. Most books about the island include stories about Bertha, and a locally popular play *Barta's Path*, is based on her story.

The graves of Ronald Riker and Wayne Shirk hold yet another touching story of two boys who grew up together on the island as inseparable companions. A favorite activity during warm weather was swimming out to the derelict Morazan wreck and diving to see what treasures might be found in and around the ship. One afternoon while playing at the wreck, Ronald disappeared. Wayne swam back to shore alone, expecting to find his friend waiting there, perhaps hiding in the trees, but Ronald had become trapped or lost somewhere within the interior of the ship and drowned.

Wayne finished school, going on to college with the goal of someday coming back to the islands as a park Ranger. Unfortunately, an auto accident took his life before that dream could be realized. Nevertheless, his family honored his wishes to return to his boyhood paradise. The two boys now rest eternally near each other on the island they loved, where they enjoyed so many happy days together.

You'll find the little cemetery north of the schoolhouse near the end of the Ohio Road. It's a little over two miles from the Ranger Station.

Longer Hikes

The Farms

At one time, the island had seven successful family farms; only two survive today. You'll find them on the "farm loop" in the middle of the island, the road leading off to the left (west) of Ohio Road about ½-mile beyond the schoolhouse. The farm loop is about 1¾ miles around, so this hike is almost a 6-mile trip from the Ranger Station and back. Nevertheless, walking the loop is a great way to experience the beauty and serenity of the island's interior.

After leaving Ohio Road, in less than ¼-mile you'll come to a fork in the road; keep to the right and the first farm you'll encounter will be the August Beck homestead. Beck was a German immigrant who came to the island as a teenager in 1860. At 19 he married the 16-year-old daughter of another nearby German immigrant-farmer, and this place became their home. He became the most progressive and influential farmer on the island. Noteworthy at this location is the small family cemetery on the hill overlooking the farm, and the "stovewood" foundation (log sections laid in mortar) of Beck's main barn.



Continuing down the road about another ¼-mile, you'll find the George Conrad Hutzler homestead. Hutzler, another German immigrant, was the half-brother of one of the island's first settlers. This farm is historic as the place where Conrad's son and grandson, in cooperation with

Michigan State College, developed special highly productive varieties of rye and beans⁴, which became the standard for the nation. Conrad lies in a grave on the hill overlooking his homestead. Pea beans became, and still are, one of the most valued cash crops in Michigan and Ontario.

The Morazan

Over 130 ships have been lost in the Manitou Passage since the middle of the 19th century, at least a dozen of them in the

⁴ Rosen rye and the Michelite pea bean

South Manitou area ... the Annie Voight, schooner H.D. Moore, the M.L. Collins, steamer Congress, schooner Margaret Dahl, steamer P.J. Ralph, schooner Lomie Burton, steamer Three Brothers, schooner J.Y. Scammon, steamer Walter L. Frost, and freighter Francisco Morazan.

The gales of November have proven a match for many a mariner tempted to make just one more run before the close of the season. Such was the luck of the young captain of the Francisco Morazan. Departing Chicago bound for Rotterdam on November 23, 1960, he met the northwest winds the following day. With decks awash and blinded by heavy snow squalls, his reckoned location proved to be off by more than 70-miles when he turned to port and ran his 246-foot freighter aground on the southern shores of South Manitou. The crew, the captain, his wife and unborn child were rescued. The 38-year-old Norwegian-built ship and her cargo were lost.



The remains of the Morazan can still be seen offshore. From the south end of Ohio Road take the "South Island Dunes Trail", which follows an old farm road west past the southern end of Lake Florence, to a bluff overlooking the wreck. The round-trip distance from the Ranger station is about 2½ miles.

Valley of the Giants

The white cedar was once commonly found all over Michigan. However, the wood's natural resistance to moisture and insects created a demand that resulted in the decimation of every known stand of these valuable trees ... except for one tucked into the southwest corner of South Manitou. If you return to the main trail from the Morazan overlook and then continue on to the left, you'll come to a small trail leading to this special place.

Although by no means the equal of California's giant redwoods, these trees are more than 500-years old and are over twice the average size for this species. Some say these trees were



spared because their bark is infused with wind-blown sand, a discouraging prospect for lumbermen of old who had to sharpen their saws by hand.

The Bluffs

For the most spectacular panoramic view in the Lakeshore, continue on along the main path for another ½-mile on a path that leads through the forest, then up the steep slope of the western dunes. It's an arduous climb up the sandy path on the back side of the bluffs, but your effort will be well rewarded once you reach the top. You'll be near the highest spot on the island, and looking over the treetops you'll see Lake Michigan in every direction. On a clear day you can see all the local features such as the crescent-shaped bay, the island's lighthouse, the North Manitou Island "Crib" and Sleeping Bear Dunes. Under ideal conditions, you might even see the Fox Islands to the north, and the Wisconsin shoreline, some 40-miles to the west.

From your high vantage point, you'll see a trail descending a little as it heads westward. If you have time, follow the high escarpment north for another three miles. On a beautiful day this could be the most ethereal and exhilarating hiking experience you'll ever know. Let your imagination take you soaring with the gulls from this place; high above the lake ... halfway to heaven.

Hiking the Beach Around the Island

Walking the beach is a popular pastime wherever water meets the shore. Visitors often get the urge to go walking all the way around the island for the same reason Mallory wanted to climb the world's highest mountain ... because it's there". You can indeed walk the beach all the way around the island, if you're so inclined. The round trip is about 14-miles of fairly easy walking, especially during years when the Lake's water level is low. Healthy and energetic hikers can easily make the trip as a single day's adventure.

"Sandy Point", just southeast of the Ranger Station, is a good starting place. Just off the point lies the wreck of the Three Brothers, its Captain grounding the sinking vessel here in September 1911. The ship lies on the steep slope just off the beach, with her bow in fairly shallow water and stern sunken into the depths. Around the point to the west, you'll pass the lighthouse, and two miles along the beach a close, eye-level view of the wreck of the Francisco Morazan may leave you with a

haunting feeling of empathy for those aboard one late November day many years ago.

In another mile, you're sure to be awed by South Manitou's bluffs, second only to Sleeping Bear on the mainland. As you walk along the next four miles with nothing but lake on your left, and towering walls of sand up to 35-stories high on your right, you might experience an "other world" feeling ... being alone in a strange, beautiful and isolated place.

The Popple Campground at the very north end of the island provides a shortcut for those not wishing to continue along the beach. Otherwise, if continuing on to Gull Point and around the bay, take care to find the bypass path about ½-mile beyond the short section of north-facing dunes, because Gull Point is literally "for the birds" and off limits to humans. It's a protected nesting place for the island's Herring and Ring-Billed gulls.



Towards the bluffs on South Manitou Island

Camping on South Manitou

Unfortunately, day trips to the island afford only enough time to visit near-by points of interest, and no opportunity at all to experience the early morning sunrise, breathtakingly beautiful evening sunsets and the awesome splendor of the Milky Way on a moonless night. But if you're up to doing some low-impact wilderness camping, you can stay longer. The island has three widely separated sites where camping is permitted. Each site has a source of fresh water, an outhouse and fire pits. You'll need to pack in all other needed equipment and supplies.

The Bay Campground

This spot is the closest camping site to the dock, so if you're not up to taking a long hike with a heavy backpack, this might be your choice. Located about half way between the Ranger Station and the location of the old South Manitou Dock, this site overlooks the bay with easy access to the beach. As far as the campgrounds go, it's the most centrally located with respect to the various points of interest accessed from Ohio Road. Because it's relatively close to the dock, contact with other visitors is more likely here than at the other campsites. The short trek to the dock also makes this a good choice for your last night on the island.

The Weather Station Campground

The weather station campground overlooks Lake Michigan on the island's south side, about a mile beyond the lighthouse. The campsites are located within a forested area and are fairly well secluded from each other. This location affords inspiring views of the Manitou Passage and Sleeping Bear Dunes. The lighthouse, Lake Florence, the Morazan and the Giant Cedars are all within easy walking distance. Follow the signs to take a very pleasant walk along a woodland path, past the lighthouse to this campsite or follow Burdick Road, turning left at Ohio Road for a less scenic but easier walk. Prevailing southerly summer breezes help with the "fly problem" at this location.

The Popple Campground

If it's splendid isolation you seek, the Popple Campground will be your choice. Located on the island's north end, some 3½ miles from the Ranger Station over sometimes fairly rigorous terrain, it's about ½-mile from its source of drinking water, and has lots of poison ivy. This campsite therefore draws the fewest

visitors. Who comes here? Those seeking seclusion, who are often among the more serious and seasoned outdoors type. Naturally, these campsites provide easy access to, and great views of the Big Lake, and of nearby North Manitou Island.

Camping Arrangements

Camping is permitted only at these three locations. Low impact camping is the rule. Please plan on packing out everything you pack in. There is no transportation for camp gear so you must pack it in yourself. Food should be stored in hard containers or hung from a line to thwart island predators ... such as the chipmunks.

Individual sites are limited to 4 persons and 2 tents. You'll need a Backcountry Use Permit before camping. Passes and permits are available at the Fishtown dock in Leland during the season, and at Park Headquarters in Empire. Advance arrangements and ferry reservations are recommended.

Several larger campsites can accommodate groups of up to 20 campers. These sites are available by reservation only, made through the NPS Reservation Center (page i).

If you arrive on the Mishe-Mokwa (fees do not include the cost of ferry transportation,) a park ranger will meet you at the dock, or in the boathouse at the end of the dock, to complete your registration and to help you plan your visit. Otherwise, check in at the Ranger Station office.

Fares and Fees⁵

Park Passes

7-Day Pass: \$25.00*

Annual Park Pass: \$45.00

Camping/Backcountry Use Permit: \$10.00

America the Beautiful Pass: \$80.00

Military Pass: free

Lifetime Senior Pass: \$80.00

Park passes include everyone in your vehicle. Backcountry camping permits are for groups of up to 10 people. Passes otherwise include yourself, your spouse, your children and your parents. Alternative \$15 Per Person pass available for individual hikers and cyclists. Weekly and Annual Passes for SLBE only. America the Beautiful Pass is for all national parks and most other federal agencies. Passes for Americans with disabilities are free. Passes are available at any park charging entrance fees.

Island Ferry

Manitou Island Transit
(Manitou Isle)

Round Trip Rates

Adults: \$45.00

Children (12-under): \$23.00

Tickets are available at the MIT office on the Fishtown dock in Leland, or by telephone using credit cards. Advance reservations recommended. Cancellation policy is 2-days for an 80% refund. Fares include transportation, and space for personal equipment and supplies. Children two and under ride free. Motor tour on South Manitou is \$12 for adults and \$7 for children 12-under. Parking is available for \$3 per day.

⁵ As of Summer 2022

About ManitouIslandsArchives.Org

The ManitouIslandsArchives.Org website is privately financed and operated by volunteers as a not-for-profit enterprise.

The website's mission is to help preserve the history and cultural traditions of Michigan's Manitou Islands, archive information useful to genealogical researchers, provide educational and interpretive materials and resources, and support the Park Service in cultivating interest in, and disseminating information about, the Islands.

We Want You

Financial contributions are neither solicited nor accepted by ManitouIslandsArchives.Org. The sharing of material of historic, cultural, or genealogical significance is encouraged. If you are in possession of such material, please contact us about adding it to the online collection.

America has so many beautiful places and points of historic significance. Our National Parks are treasures that we all own, and have proudly passed on from one generation to the next



North and South Manitou Islands are the southern-most in a group of islands that extends north to the Straits of Mackinac. South Manitou marks the southern end of this fourteen-island archipelago.



The Manitous became important to the westward settlement of the country during the 1800s, when water was the predominate mode of travel into the interior ... mainly the rapidly-developing cities of Chicago and Milwaukee. They first provided a refuge for sailing vessels, then wooding stations for steamboats, and finally became a source of agricultural produce and lumber.

In the late 20th century, they became part of a national park, the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and a favorite hiking and camping venue for the park's more adventurous visitors. This pocket booklet contains a little geological and historical information, plus some notes on the island's former cultural traditions and favorite hiking trails ... all with the aim of helping make your visit to North Manitou Island more richly rewarding.