Apostle Islands

National Lakeshore
Wisconsin

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



Tom Algire

Wisconsin's northernmost landscape juts out into Lake Superior as the scenic archipelago of 22 Apostle Islands. Long a vacation mecca, the area realized new recreational value in 1970 when Congress named 20 of the islands and 2,500 acres of the peninsula as a National Lakeshore managed by the National Park Service. In 1986, Long Island was also included. Early French fur traders dubbed this region the Chequamegon, after a Chippewa (Ojibway) Indian description. The fur trade, which was mainly in beaver pelts, was one of the region's longest lasting commercial enterprises. Among these forested, sheltered islands on the world's most expansive freshwater lake, traders built posts for shipping furs bound for Europe via Montreal and, later, down the Mississippi River. Shipping itself, symbolized by the lakeshore's light stations, became an economic mainstay making eastern and midwestern markets accessible to local fishing, quarrying, logging, mining, and tourism enterprises. Today's National Lakeshore offers myriad water and wilderness recreation pursuits amidst occasional glimpses of our attempts to wrest a living from the archipelago's natural heritage. The beaver, superbly adapted to a woodland waterways lifestyle, symbolizes the region's ecological makeup and its early exploitation. Loggers cut both conifers and deciduous trees extensively in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The sandstone cliffs on the lake's edge were quarried to provide building materials for the Midwest's growing cities. As industries following the fur trade rose and fell, an ebb and flow of tourists pilgrimaged here for the natural beauty and lakeshore recreation of the Apostle Islands and Bayfield Peninsula. That tradition continues and grows.

The Rock

During the million-year Ice Age, huge glaciers intermittently advanced and retreated through the region, scouring the sandstone bedrock and enlarging channels between what would become the Apostle Islands. During glacial retreat, Glacial Lake Duluth formed. Sand beaches formed and cliffs were exposed as it receded. These beaches rest 500 feet above today's shoreline.

The Lake

At 360 miles long, 160 miles wide, and 1,402 feet deep at its lowest point, Lake Superior is the world's most expansive freshwater body. Lake surface altitude lies at about 602 feet elevation, and its bottom, gouged out by Ice Age glaciers, reaches 800 feet *below* sea level. Offshore surface water temperatures rarely rise above 65°F.

The Forests

Boreal forests of balsam, spruce, and paper birch advanced slowly northward onto the moist tundra following the Ice Age glaciers' retreat. As the climate warmed, northern hardwood forests of sugar maple, yellow birch, and oak, plus pines and hemlock succeeded boreal forests farther north. The Apostle Islands lie within a transitional zone where boreal and northern forests meet.



Fur Trade

From about 1660 to 1840 this was a major fur trading center. European robes and felt hats made from beaver pelts fostered a lucrative trade with high profits. Traders first exchanged European knives, needles, cook pots, and other goods for furs trapped by Indians. Fur companies later hired trappers, and voyageurs who hauled the goods in 25- and 36-foot birchbark canoes on the 2,500-mile Voyageurs Highway.

Chippewa Indians



Chippewa (Ojibway) Indians accompanied traders visiting here in 1659, settled here in the late 17th century, and today live on two nearby Indian reservations. This bust of Chief Buffalo, who helped his people keep some historic territory, stands in the U.S. Capitol.



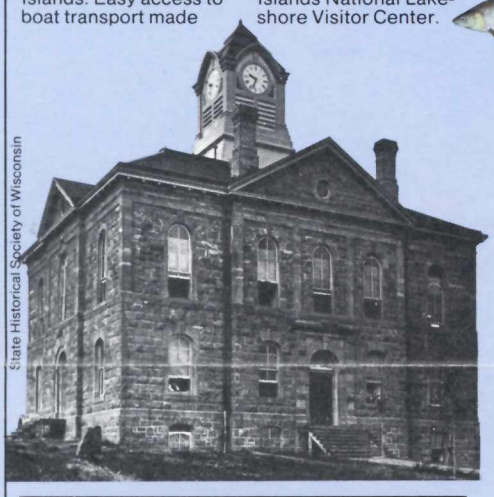
National Geographic Society



Public Archives of Canada

Quarrying

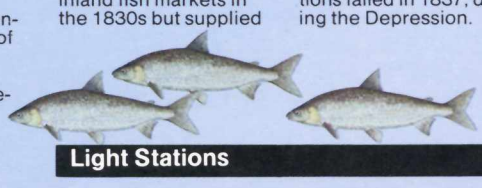
Shoreline sandstone supplied top grade brownstone for urban Midwest buildings for about 30 years beginning in 1869. Quarry pits remain on Stockton, Hermit, and Basswood Islands. Easy access to boat transport made quarrying economical until extraction costs increased and architectural styles changed. The Old Bayfield County Courthouse, built of brownstone in 1883, houses the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Visitor Center.



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Early Fisheries

As fur trading declined, the American Fur Company tried to develop inland fish markets in the 1830s but supplied only shoreline communities on Lakes Michigan and Erie. Operations failed in 1837, during the Depression.



Light Stations

Six light stations were built on the islands to aid ships navigating the sometimes stormy channels. All of these remain in operation today.



Tourism Begins

Excursion steamers, then railroads, brought tourists to Bayfield Peninsula hotels—and the wealthy to summer homes beginning in the mid-1850s. The Depression and World War II saw tourism falter between 1930 and 1950.



Logging

Rapid population gains in 19th-century America spurred a huge demand for timber construction. After exhausting white pine and hemlock, loggers went after the hardwoods. Island forests were logged first because pine logs could be rafted on the lake inexpensively to sawmills at Bayfield, Washburn, Ashland, and Duluth, or to rail shipping points.



Ice Cutting

During winter, fishermen cut and put up the ice that would be used to pack the next summer's catch. This gas-powered Bayfield Rotary Ice Saw used an automobile style radiator.



Modern Fishing

With deeper and colder waters than the other Great Lakes, Superior supports fewer fish, yet its lake trout, whitefish, and lake herring have been exported in quantity. Commercial fishing never fully recovered from sea lamprey depredations of the lake trout beginning in the 1950s.



The Land Heals

Let lie since the 1930s Depression, denuded forest lands became covered with brush and saplings that made deer, beaver, and other species favored by the diversity of second-growth forests proliferate. Today's traveler finds islands slowly returning to their primeval state.

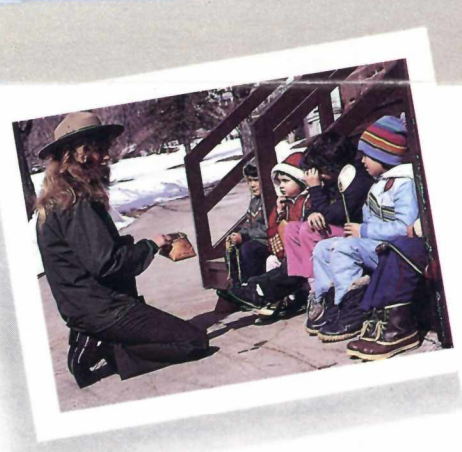


Erwin Bauer

Apostle Islands



Lakeshore Map and Guide



Information. For more information about the park write to: Superintendent, Route 1, Box 4, Bayfield, WI 54814; or telephone (715) 779-3397 and request the information desk.

Visitor Centers and Exhibits. Bayfield's old county courthouse building houses the **Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Visitor Center** (see map). Here you can view audiovisual programs and exhibits portraying the park's history, natural history, and recreation opportunities. Books, maps, nautical charts, and other publications are offered for sale by a nonprofit group that supports the park's information and visitor services programs. **Little Sand Bay Visitor Center** provides exhibits about aspects of the park's story. Current boating and weather information is available here. Visitor centers on Stockton and South Twin Islands are open in summer, as are ranger stations on several other islands. Rangers have radio contact with the mainland. **Rangers on park patrol boats and the U.S. Coast Guard monitor marine radio Channel 16.**

Programs and Activities. Schedules for ranger-led programs and activities are available at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore visitor centers or from any ranger. Events include fish camp and lighthouse tours, bird walks, children's hours, island tours, bog and beach walks, and campfire presentations about the area's natural and cultural history.

Accommodations and Services. Island campsites are the only overnight facilities within the Lakeshore. Nearby communities offer motels, restaurants, and stores. Nearby private, tribal, city, county, state, and national forest campgrounds offer a range of facilities.

Respect Property Rights. Many cabins and docks within National Lakeshore boundaries are still privately occupied. Please respect property owners' rights; do not trespass.

Madeline Island. Not part of the National Lakeshore, Madeline Island attractions include Big Bay State Park and a state historical society fur trade museum. Car ferries—printed schedules available—run from spring breakup to winter freeze.

Pets. Pets must be leashed and under physical control at all times. Maximum leash length is 6 feet. Pets are prohibited on excursion boats.

Red Cliff Indian Reservation and the Buffalo Art Center. Red Cliff Indian Reservation lies 3 miles north of Bayfield. Its Buffalo Art Center is open year round and sells handcrafted items. Exhibits and artifacts tell the story of the Chippewa Nation. **Camping and Boating Services.** Next to the art center are a campground, boat launch ramp, and marina (fees).

Hiking. Hiking trails are available on many of the islands. Trails range from South Twin's ¼-mile trail to Stockton's 14.5 miles. Oak Island's interesting topography, scenic overlook, and backcountry camping opportunities make its 11.5 miles of trails popular for hikers seeking seclusion. If you get lost, stay near the water's edge and signal for help. **Hiking near cliffs can be dangerous** because of slippery and loose rock. **Backcountry hikers**—please tell your plans to a ranger and report back when your trip is completed.

Island Camping. Camping is permitted only at designated campsites (see map) or in the backcountry. The brochure "Camping on the Apostle Islands" indicates areas closed to camping. Permits, available at visitor centers and ranger stations, are required. Build fires only in grills, pits, or rings at campsites. Pack out all trash. **Do not bury refuse.** Be prepared to store food out of the reach of black bears.

Winter Activities. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and winter camping grow in popularity yearly. Park hiking trails may be used for skiing and snowshoeing. Snowmobiles are not permitted on the National Lakeshore's islands or mainland unit, except on established and unplowed county and township roads. There are more than 350 miles of marked snowmobile trails on the mainland outside the National Lakeshore. Over-ice travel is permitted but extreme caution is recommended because conditions can be unpredictable and hazardous. **Winter campers must register at park headquarters** in the old courthouse building in Bayfield (see map). Winter's beauty masks harsh conditions that pose extreme dangers to the unwary and unprepared. Temperatures of -30°F and wind chill factors of -60°F are not uncommon. Up to 100 inches of snow falls each year.

Boat Trips. Excursion trips (fee) leave from Bayfield daily in summer. Apostle Islands Cruise Service (fee) offers a variety of excursion trips and a camper shuttle to several islands. Apostle Islands Water Taxi (fee) provides services from Bayfield to island points for one to six passengers. Obtain information on schedules and rates for boat trips and services from the visitor center in Bayfield.

Boat Rentals and Charters. Rent power and sail boats and arrange full- and half-day trolling trips for trout and salmon at area marinas.

Boating. Boat launch facilities are available at Little Sand Bay and at several locations outside the National Lakeshore boundary. Marinas in the Bayfield-Madeline Island area offer equipment, gear, and fuel and mooring and storage for boats up to 60 feet long. See map for locations of public docks. Obey posted regulations and information signs. Tune in to radio 1610 AM for National Lakeshore information and activities and events schedules.

Holding Tanks and Bilges. Pumping of holding tanks and oily bilges into the lake violates state and federal regulations, which are strictly enforced here.

Swimming. Lake Superior waters seldom are warm enough for comfortable swimming except in shallow, protected bays. **No lifeguards are on duty within the National Lakeshore.**

Fishing. Islands offer no inland fishing, but Lake Superior provides good sport fishing for lake, brown, and rainbow trout and other salmon species. Peninsula streams harbor brook, rainbow, and brown trout and spawning salmon. A State of Wisconsin fishing license and a trout stamp are required; state regulations apply. Refuge areas are closed to fishing.

Drinking Water Warning. Lake water should be boiled at least 5 minutes before drinking. Do not pollute the lake with soap, fish entrails, human waste, or other contaminants.

☆ GPO: 1989—242-345/00040 Reprint 1989

WARNING, Dangerous Waters. Lake Superior waters are dangerously cold and sudden storms arise. The lake's history is replete with shipwrecks and violent storms. Small boats, canoes, and kayaks should be used with extreme caution on Lake Superior. Just offshore, 50°F waters can cause even strong swimmers to suffer hypothermia in 15 minutes. Swimming is not recommended in Lake Superior. Keep an eye on the weather even on calm days. Before you set out, get the current weather forecast from the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Bayfield or at an island ranger station. The marine weather frequency on your marine radio is 162.55 MHz (Duluth). For safe navigation, you should refer to Lake Nautical Chart #14973 or #14966.

