

Horse-Drawn Streets, Fudge Shops & a Root-Beer Waterfall

A 3-Day Mackinac Island Road Trip

Three days in northern Michigan built around the one place in America where cars have been banned for over a century — horse-drawn carriages, bicycles, and fudge shops on Mackinac Island, then a finish at a waterfall so tannin-stained by cedar swamps that locals call it Root Beer Falls. Real ferries, a real carriage company, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

Late May – early October

warm days and open ferry schedules; June–August is busiest, September brings smaller crowds and cooler air (highs 65–80°F / 18–27°C)

FROM

\$520 USD / person

for 2 people sharing a rental car, ferry tickets & hotels, excluding travel to Michigan



Dinner: Pink Pony Bar & Grill

~1.5 hours · \$20–\$35 USD / person

The island's best-known bar and restaurant, right on the Main Street waterfront across from the marina — whitefish and burgers alongside a porch full of boaters and day-trippers.

Pink Pony Bar & Grill · www.pinkponymackinac.com

DAY 2

Mackinac Island — Carriages, Fort Walls & Fudge

A full day exploring the island the way everyone has since 1898 — on foot, by bike, or behind a horse.

Mackinac Island Carriage Tours — Grand Tour

~1.75 hours · ~\$40 USD / person

A horse-drawn tour covering the island's landmarks — Arch Rock, Skull Cave, and British Landing — narrated by drivers who've been doing this route for decades; the island's only public transit.

Mackinac Island Carriage Tours · www.mict.com

Fort Mackinac

~2 hours · ~\$18 USD / person

A restored 1780s British-built fort on the bluff above town, with costumed interpreters, cannon and rifle demonstrations, and sweeping views out over the straits.

Bike the 8-Mile Shoreline Loop

~3 hours · bike rental from \$12/hour (Mackinac Wheels)

Michigan Route 185 circles the island's shoreline with no cars to share it with — the only state highway in the country that's never seen a car — passing Arch Rock and British Landing along the way.

Mackinac Wheels

Fudge Stop: Original Murdick's Fudge

~20 minutes · fudge from \$20/pound

The island's oldest fudge shop, making it the same way in full view of Main Street since 1887 — the source of the island's nickname as the "Fudgies" destination of choice.

Original Murdick's Fudge · www.originalmurdicksfudge.com

DAY 3

Root Beer Falls & the Soo Locks

Back across the straits and northeast into the Upper Peninsula for a tannin-dark waterfall and a close-up look at the busiest lock system on the Great Lakes.

Ferry: Mackinac Island to Mackinaw City

~20 minutes · included with round-trip ticket

The return crossing to the mainland and the waiting rental car — morning departures leave the most daylight for the drive north.

Self-Drive: Mackinaw City to Tahquamenon Falls

~1.5 hours, 75 miles

Over the Mackinac Bridge into the Upper Peninsula, then east on M-123 through state forest toward Paradise, Michigan.

Tahquamenon Falls State Park

~2.5 hours · vehicle entry ~\$11 USD (Recreation Passport)

The Upper Falls span over 200 feet and drop nearly 50 feet, stained root-beer brown by tannins leached from the cedar swamps upstream — one of the largest waterfalls east of the Mississippi.

Soo Locks Boat Tour, Sault Ste. Marie

~2 hours · ~\$36 USD / person

A boat trip through the Soo Locks, which lift and lower Great Lakes freighters between Lake Superior and Lake Huron — a close-up look at one of the busiest lock systems in the world before the drive home.

Soo Locks Boat Tours · www.soolocks.com