

Crystal Caves by Day, Golf-Cart Bar Hops by Night — A 3-Day Lake Erie Islands Road Trip

A 3-day Lake Erie Islands road trip: golf-cart cruising and Heineman's Winery on Put-in-Bay, a climb up Perry's Victory Memorial and South Bass Island Lighthouse, and a day trip to Kelleys Island's glacial grooves and petroglyphs.

The Lake Erie Islands turn a slice of northern Ohio into its own little archipelago: golf carts instead of cars, wineries instead of vineyards, and a ferry ride standing in for a flight. Three days is enough to settle into Put-in-Bay, Ohio's busiest lake town, and still make time for Kelleys Island's quieter beaches and 400-foot glacial grooves. Jet Express and Miller Ferry run passenger boats to Put-in-Bay from the Marblehead Peninsula all summer, and a second short hop from nearby Marblehead gets you to Kelleys Island and back in an afternoon.

DURATION
3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO
**Late May - Early
September**

FROM
\$360 USD / person

Day 1 Crossing to Put-in-Bay

Drive to the Marblehead Peninsula, catch the passenger ferry across to South Bass Island, and settle into downtown Put-in-Bay before an evening at Perry's Victory Monument.

Ferry — Jet Express to Put-in-Bay

~18 min crossing from Port Clinton · \$41.99 adult round trip

Jet Express runs high-speed passenger catamarans from the Port Clinton mainland to downtown Put-in-Bay in under 20 minutes, with bikes carried for a small extra fee and departures roughly every half hour in peak summer.

Jet Express · jet-express.com

Check-In — Bayshore Resort at Put-in-Bay

Check-in 3pm · rooms from \$175/night

A lakefront resort a short golf-cart ride from downtown, with its own pool deck and private dock — one of South Bass Island's larger hotels and an easy base for a car-free three days.

Bayshore Resort at Put-in-Bay · www.visitputinbay.com/accommodations/bayshore-resort/

Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial

~45 min · free · open May–September & October weekends

A 352-foot Doric column run by the National Park Service, built to mark Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's 1813 Battle of Lake Erie victory — the observation deck at the top is the highest point on the islands and takes in Canada on a clear day.

Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial · www.nps.gov/pevi/index.htm

Dinner — Cameo Pizza at Mr. Ed's Bar & Grille

Dinner · \$10–18 per person

A downtown institution serving late-night pizza, subs and wings until 3am most summer nights — the easiest first dinner in Put-in-Bay's compact bar district.

Day 2

Island Wineries, Caves & the Lighthouse

Rent a golf cart for the day and circle South Bass Island: a 138-year-old winery built over a crystal cave, and the lighthouse at the island's quiet southern tip.

Golf Cart Rental — Boathouse Cart and Bike Rental

Around \$90–\$140/day for a 4- to 6-passenger cart

Golf carts are the default way to get around Put-in-Bay's hilly, car-light roads; Boathouse rents by the hour or full day and is a short walk from the ferry dock, with bikes available too.

Boathouse Cart and Bike Rental · www.visitputinbay.com/transport_services/boathouse-cart-and-bike-rental/

Heineman's Winery & Crystal Cave Tour

~45 min tour · \$13 adult / \$8 child (6–11)

Ohio's oldest family-run winery, open since 1888, runs combined tours of its vineyard and the enormous celestite-crystal cave beneath it — now lit and walkable — followed by a tasting of the estate's wines in an outdoor wine garden.

Heineman's Winery · heinemanswinery.com

South Bass Island Lighthouse

~30 min · tours run limited days, check ahead

A restored 1897 lighthouse at the island's south end, now part of Ohio State University's Stone Laboratory — climb to the top on one of its scheduled open days for a close-up view of the lake and the Bass Island chain.

Dinner — Chicken Patio at the Round House Bar

Dinner · \$15-25 per person

Put-in-Bay's oldest bar pairs its patio with a half-century-old barbecue chicken dinner, basted in a house wine sauce and served family-style at picnic tables a block from the harbor.

Chicken Patio · www.visitputinbay.com/business/chicken-patio/

Day 3

Kelleys Island & the Trip Home

Ferry back to the mainland, then make the short hop to Kelleys Island for glacial grooves, a Native American petroglyph and a lakefront lunch before heading home.

Ferry — Put-in-Bay to Catawba, then on to Marblehead

~20 min crossing back · short drive to Marblehead

Miller Ferry's boats run frequently between Put-in-Bay and Catawba Point; from there it's a quick drive east along the Marblehead Peninsula to the dock for the Kelleys Island ferry.

Miller Ferry · www.visitputinbay.com/transport_services/miller-ferry-boat-line/

Glacial Grooves Geological Preserve & Inscription Rock

~1 hr combined · free

A National Natural Landmark where Ice Age glaciers carved grooves up to 10 feet deep into the island's limestone bedrock, plus a roofed limestone slab nearby carved with Native American petroglyphs dated to roughly 1200-1600 AD.

Kelleys Island State Park

~1-2 hrs · free

A 677-acre state park covering a quarter of the island, with hiking and mountain-biking trails, a sandy swimming beach, and kayak rentals — the easiest way to see the island beyond its one small village.

Lunch — Dockers Waterfront Bar and Restaurant

Lunch · \$12-20 per person

A seafood-leaning menu and a wraparound patio steps from the Kelleys Island ferry dock, with lake views that make it worth timing lunch around the next boat back.