

SMALL TOWNS

Bayfield in fall.



BY THE NUMBERS

Here's what you'll find in this section:

17

Colorful murals that tell the story of a town.

22

Islands that will take your breath away.

5

Charming Wisconsin towns to explore.

OUR TOWNS

Discover the heart of Wisconsin in its quiet hamlets and lakeside villages.

FROM HEARTLAND TO HINTERLAND, craggy bluffs to tawny prairies, America is a land of grandeur: big skies, mighty rivers, great plains. But sometimes, the largest surprises come in little packages—like small towns, where simple pleasures are taken slow and smiles fly fast. With the sultry days of summer turning crisp, it's a fine time to hit the road and explore Wisconsin's hamlets. Just don't mistake small for sleepy. Alongside historic homes and majestic caves, the five towns on the following pages include historical murals and memorable restaurants. Add to the mix quaint inns offering easy access to recreational activities, and it's easy to see why their small-town charms hold such big-time allure. >>

SMALL TOWNS



[SMALL-TOWN SPOTLIGHT]

ENTERING
Bayfield
POP. 680

Even when you can't see Lake Superior, you feel its presence in Bayfield. Your skin tingles from its cool breezes. A seaside-like aroma freshens the air.

The largest Great Lake has always dominated life in this northwestern Wisconsin town. The original Ojibwe tribe—and the fur traders, loggers and anglers who followed—found it a fertile place for commerce and pleasure.

Bayfield stands apart from other Lake Superior towns, perched as it is on the doorstep of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The islands steal your breath with their rugged beauty and faraway feel. Set sail on a cruise and take in the wonders of the 22 Apostle Islands, where sea caves, historical lighthouses and rocky lakeshore cliffs beckon. Consider a ferry ride to explore Madeline Island, home to a world-class golf course, restaurants and quirky art galleries.

Inland, the area's bounty of fruits and berries flourishes at farms and gardens. Lakeside, the business district offers appealing restaurants, art and music venues, shopping, tours both historic and quirky, and lively festivals. No matter how long you're there, Bayfield will charm you with its grandeur and leave you wanting more. bayfield.org

Clockwise: Shops in downtown Bayfield; enjoying the Bayfield Apple Festival; sea caves in the Apostle Islands.



THE PERFECT DAY

What to see and do in Bayfield.

EXPLORE 22 ISLANDS.

The rocky islands off the Bayfield Peninsula reveal nature at its most creative. Shoreline sea caves are carved into the landscape. Hear tales of the mighty Superior aboard a boat tour of shipwrecks. Some companies offer boat trips to the islands—and special lighthouse tours this September as part of the 20th annual Apostle Islands Lighthouse Celebration. lighthousecelebration.com

REFRESH YOURSELF.

Fall asleep to the sounds of Lake Superior at the AAA Three Diamond-rated **The Bayfield Inn** (💎💎💎). The hotel's rooftop deck offers stunning views of the lake. Superior's bounty is on the menu at AAA Three Diamond-rated **Landmark Restaurant at Old Rittenhouse Inn** (💎💎💎). The Lake Superior chowder is filled with fish pulled from the waters outside your window. rittenhouseinn.com

SAVOR THE HARVEST.

Thousands of visitors fill the streets for the Bayfield Apple Festival to sample the fruit in many forms—tarts, pies, ciders and more. In its 54th year, the festival takes over the lakefront as vendors sell a bevy of arts, crafts and food. Don't miss the orchestra and parade—hundreds of local high schoolers form a massive band to entertain the crowds. Oct. 2–4. bayfield.org/applefestival

TAKE IN LIVE MUSIC.

A giant tent, a starry night, and the electric energy of live music make a night out at Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua a must-do for visitors. Since 1986, the venue has welcomed regional and national entertainers (Willie Nelson, Iris DeMent and Johnny Cash, to name a few) for twilight shows under the big top. Performances run through mid-September. bigtop.org

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JAMIEE MORSE; BAYFIELD CHAMBER AND VISITOR BUREAU (2)

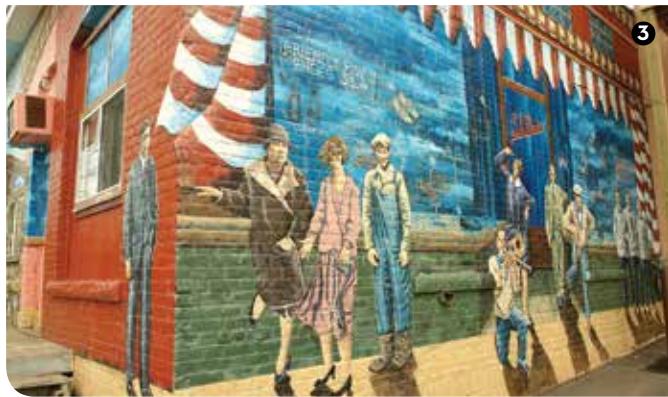


SMALL TOWNS

1



2



3



4

Small Wonders

Four more towns worth a visit.

1 Horicon POP. 3,655

Canada geese, great blue herons—these are just two of the 300-plus species of birds at Horicon Marsh (pictured), the largest cattail marsh in the nation. The town of Horicon, located in southeastern Wisconsin, is the gateway to the marsh, where silence and bird symphonies can be enjoyed in equal abundance. The brand-new “Explorium” offers an interactive, museum-quality exhibit sharing how humans and wildlife have interacted since the last ice age. horiconmarsh.org

2 Ephraim POP. 288

This waterside gem in Door County is a haven for history buffs and water lovers. Ephraim’s Scandinavian heritage has been preserved in more than 30 historical sites (11 of these are listed on the National Register of Historic Places). Plus, Ephraim offers a great launching spot for a sailing adventure on Green Bay. From your boat, take in the forested bluffs and ample beaches that make up the Peninsula State Park shoreline. For amateur sailors who need a ride, some sailing companies offer daily guided tours. ephraim-doorcounty.com

3 Ashland POP. 8,216

Art and history converge in plain sight in this Lake Superior town. Take a self-guided tour of Ashland’s 17 colorful murals (pictured), many of them painted on the sides of historic buildings by local artists. The murals tell the story of the town, from the original Ojibwe tribe to lumberjacks and lighthouses. After, grab a bite at AAA Two Diamond-rated **The Platter Restaurant** (💎💎). The menu includes locally sourced favorites such as Lake Superior fish cakes and Wisconsin cheese fondue. thehistoricplatter.com

4 Trempealeau POP. 1,756

In the early 1800s, French fur traders christened this riverside town on the western border Trempealeau, or “mountain soaking in the water.” Two centuries later, the town offers the same stunning views of the Mississippi River and its bluffs. Trains still lumber by, a reminder of the town’s once-prominent place on shipping routes. A circuit of bike trails and nearby Perrot State Park (pictured) invite visitors to work up a sweat surrounded by natural beauty. trempealeauwi.com

THE FIRST CAPITAL?

Madison is widely known as Wisconsin’s capital city. But tiny Belmont hosted the first meeting of the Legislature. In 1836, a small group of lawmakers there established Wisconsin’s territorial government. They voted on a new capital city: Madison. The original Council House and lodging house in Belmont are open to the public.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SARA SONNITAG; DENNIS FLAHERTY/ALAMY; TRAVEL WISCONSIN; ANDRE JENNY/ALAMY

Get Up and Go!

Ways to enjoy Wisconsin this season.



WE LOVE ...

Cruising

RHINELANDER Consider Sunday brunch aboard the *Wilderness Queen* through mid-October. Enjoy **picturesque views** along the Wisconsin River. wisconsinrivercruises.com/schedule

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN Bald eagles thrill nature lovers on a **wildlife cruise** aboard the *Mississippi Explorer*. Dates until Oct. 18. mississippiexplorer.com

HUDSON Breathtaking fall foliage awaits on a **cruise along the St. Croix River**. Take in the amber and scarlet hues as you sail along, Saturdays and Sundays in September and October. stcroixrivercruises.com

3 FACTS ABOUT ... Watermelons

The watermelon seeds fly during the **U.S. Watermelon Speed-Eating and Seed-Spitting Championships** at the Pardeeville Watermelon Festival, Sept. 12. Until then, mull over these tidbits:

- The world's heaviest watermelon weighed in at 350.5 pounds in 2013 in Ohio. That's about the average weight of a fully grown male panda!
- One variety of watermelon has a bright-yellow interior. So if you want the standard red, ask for a "crimson sweet" at the grocery.
- Watermelon juice can help athletes. A study in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* found that participants who drank the juice before exercise had less muscle soreness after 24 hours.



DON'T MISS ...

Learn the secrets of renowned food and wine experts during the **Kohler Food & Wine Experience**, Oct. 22-25. Guests have the chance to interact with chefs (and sample their creations) during book signings, presentations and dinners. kohlerathome.com



ON COURSE ...

Dive elbows-deep into the art of **bread making** during a two-day course at L'ecole de la Maison in Elkhart Lake, Oct. 23-24. Enter as a beginner and leave knowing how breads differ in their characteristics—and master the methods of developing dough. cookingschoolatosthoff.com

FESTIVAL FOCUS ...

The scents of chili powder, onions and savory beef will fill the air in Edgerton during **Chilimania**, Sept. 12. The Upper Midwest's largest chili cook-off features live music, a salsa contest and even a rock climbing wall for kids. chilimania.com



MADE IN WISCONSIN

Dress Shoes

Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush all wore **Allen Edmonds shoes** on their respective inauguration day. Since 1922, the company has made men's casual and dress shoes from calfskin and cordovan, right in Port Washington. If you're in a store, you may be helped by a Master Fitter—these "shoe experts" earn their title by fitting more than 3,000 customers. Find your fit in stores across the nation, and at allenedmonds.com.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: TRAVEL WISCONSIN/KOHLER CO.; DANIEL RETTER/LAMY; ALLEN EDMONDS; PARDEEVILLE WATERMELON FESTIVAL.COM