

*Sanctuary in North America's Largest Lake*

## THE APOSTLE ISLANDS

Bayfield, Wisconsin

Strewn across 450 square miles of Lake Superior's pristine waters, the 22 Apostle Islands present a striking tableau: tiny jewels on an immense inland sea, the largest freshwater body in the world. With the exception of

Madeline, the largest of the Apostles, all of the islands are undeveloped and uninhabited, a showcase for craggy shorelines, remnant old-growth hemlocks and hardwoods, and sculpted sandstone cliffs and caves. From tiny 3-acre Gull Island to 10,000-acre Stockton, the islands are protected as the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, along with 12 miles of mainland Wisconsin shoreline on the adjacent Bayfield Peninsula. Natural beauty and outdoor recreation take center stage here, with more than 50 miles of trails crisscrossing the islands, and native populations of black bears, bald eagles, and more than 200 species of migratory birds. This watery playground is best explored by boat, and opportunities abound. The Apostle Islands Cruise Service offers a variety of narrated cruises that sail past rich russet sandstone formations, lighthouses, and other historic sites, sometimes dropping off passengers to explore for a few hours. Captained sailboat charters are another option. Guests and the wind determine the day's itinerary, which often revolves around beachcombing, hiking, and swimming in sun-warmed bays. The national lakeshore is home to six historic lighthouses—more than any other national park—some of which are staffed in summer months for tours and interpretation.

Kayaks have become a popular way to explore the archipelago, perfect for open-water passages between islands and for ducking in and out of the sea caves that pock the sandstone shoreline. Loaded with food and camping gear, kayaks are the ticket to seeing

the Apostles' island backcountry. Those with plenty of experience can tackle Superior's vast waters alone, but even beginners can paddle safely with a reputable outfitter.

With sweeping island views and a yacht-filled marina, the gateway village of Bayfield (population 600) makes a great "base camp" to explore the national lakeshore and arrange island excursions. Start at the handsome National Park visitors center, built in the 19th century with sandstone quarried from Basswood, Hermit, and Stockton islands. Bayfield also offers appealing entertainment like the acclaimed Big Top Chautauqua, featuring music and maritime-themed theater inside a huge tent. The Old Rittenhouse Inn pampers guests in a lovingly restored Queen Anne, and serves some of the best meals in town. Local favorite Maggie's, and its upscale cousin, Wild Rice, offer more great dining, with fresh whitefish and other local catch on the menu.

**WHERE:** 90 miles east of Duluth, MN. *Park info:* Tel 715-779-3397; [www.nps.gov/apis](http://www.nps.gov/apis). *Bayfield visitor info:* Tel 800-447-4094 or 715-779-3335; [www.bayfield.org](http://www.bayfield.org). **APOSTLE ISLANDS CRUISE SERVICE:** Bayfield. Tel 800-323-7619 or 715-779-3925; [www.apostleisland.com](http://www.apostleisland.com). *Cost:* tours from \$25. *When:* mid-May–mid-Sept. **KAYAKING:** Living Adventure offers guided sea kayaking trips. Tel 715-779-9503; [www.livingadventure.com](http://www.livingadventure.com). *Cost:* half-day trips from \$52. *When:* June–Sept. **BIG TOP CHAUTAUQUA:** Tel 888-244-8368 or 715-373-5552; [www.bigtop.org](http://www.bigtop.org). *When:* June–Sept. **OLD**

**RITTENHOUSE INN:** Tel 800-779-2129 or 715-779-5111; [www.rittenhouseinn.com](http://www.rittenhouseinn.com). *Cost:* from \$109; prix fixe dinner \$49. **BEST TIMES:** Jul–Aug for warm weather and calm waters;

Sept for the annual lighthouse celebration and clear, warm days; Feb–early Mar for hiking to the ice-coated caves that form along the Bayfield Peninsula.