

Michigan's Isle Royale & Keweenaw Peninsula with Naturalist Journeys



Aug. 25 – Sept. 2, 2023

866.900.1146

520.558.1146

travel@naturalistjourneys.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook & Instagram at
Naturalist Journeys, LLC



Isle Royale, an island archipelago in Lake Superior, is a true wilderness gem. There are no cars allowed on the island, and all visitors must come ashore by boat or float plane. There is one simple lodge on the main island, where we stay, and miles of beckoning trails. Isle Royale National Park and the Rock Harbor Lodge concession staff provide a host of interpretive programs; we can choose from these and our own inspirations throughout the trip.

Far away from the rest of the world, enjoy an immersion in North Woods nature. At one time two miles of ice covered this island, set in the largest freshwater lake in the world. Today the park is recognized as a Biosphere Reserve, a pristine example of Northern Biome forests, lakes, bogs, and island shorelines. Its rock spine is ancient and scored by the movements of retreating glaciers some 10,000 years ago. We spend four nights on the island, and our tour price includes the round-trip ferry from Copper Harbor, Michigan. From Houghton at the start and end of the trip, we take two full days to explore the beauty of Michigan's U.P., in particular the Keweenaw Peninsula, where natural and cultural highlights abound.

This is a sampler trip with time for birding, natural history, scenery, and geography; we explore to gain a wonderful sense of place. Plan on an active trip with opportunities to hike, paddle (canoe or kayak), and take short boat trips to nearby islands of the archipelago and before returning to nice accommodations and dining at day's end. Hikes can be gentle or challenging; each day we have a group activity with our leader, or you can choose to explore on your own—we give you options to fit your energies each day. Experience the slowness of island time; the sense of place we gain on Isle Royale can be profound. As a special bonus, we time this trip for the fall migration as it peaks the last week of August on the Lake Superior shorelines.

Tour Highlights

- Experience history and grand scenery on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula
- Witness peak fall migration along Lake Superior's scenic coastline
- Cross the ocean-like waters of Lake Superior to Rock Harbor on Isle Royale
- Enjoy four nights in lakeside accommodations on Isle Royale, one of our most remote national parks
- Watch for Moose and listen to Common Loon
- Learn from experts about the exciting Isle Royale Wolf Project
- Walk trails through aspen and pine forests amid Lilliputian plants and Snowshoe Hare
- Watch Beaver feed and busily work on structures in their ponds
- View amazing night skies and relax by a lakeshore campfire

Tour Summary

9-Day / 8-Night Isle Royale Nature Tour

\$3890 DBL / \$4840 SGL, from Houghton/Hancock, Michigan, with option to depart Green Bay

Arrival Airport is Houghton County Memorial (CMX), departing airport is CMX or Green Bay-Austin Straubel International Airport (GRB)

Day-to-Day Itinerary

Fri., Aug. 25 Arrival in Houghton/Hancock, Michigan

Welcome to Michigan's Copper Country, a fascinating area for history, geology, and a sample of birds and natural history in Michigan's famed U.P. (Upper Peninsula). Today is a day to arrive and settle in; if some are in early enough, we do a bit of local birding.

Our hotel sits right on the waterfront of Portage Lake, a partially natural, partially manmade waterway that cuts across the Keweenaw Peninsula, making the Keweenaw effectively an island. A lift-bridge makes it possible for large ships to pass. We plan to meet on the porch for introductions, have dinner, and then with luck we watch the sunset over the lake—a great start to the trip!

Accommodations at the Super 8, Portage Lake Waterfront, Houghton/Hancock (D)

Sat., Aug. 26 Keweenaw Peninsula | Copper Harbor

We start the day with an optional early morning birding trip to the Pilgrim River mouth right in Houghton. The boardwalks through the marshes here offer great birding for land and waterbirds at very close range. We then return to our hotel for breakfast, after which we set off to explore the many highlights of the Keweenaw Peninsula, taking in natural and cultural sites. Few realize that the Copper Rush here brought in 10 times the fortune of California's Gold Rush. Today the story is told by abandoned mines and ghost towns, all part of the Keweenaw National Historic Park, part of our National Park system. The sites of the Park are scattered across the whole peninsula with excellent signs and interpretation of life here during the copper mining boom. If we drove straight through it's an hour up to Copper Harbor—we take most of the day to do it.

There are picturesque lighthouses, several nature reserves where we walk the trails, the Quincy Mine, the legendary Keweenaw Snow Thermometer, and in Calumet we take a look at the excellent displays and a local Theater/Opera House (circa 1900) built of gorgeous Jacobsville red sandstone. We have lunch at a historic restaurant right in town.

We explore the Lake Superior shoreline near Eagle River and Eagle Harbor, where we find granite-eroded sands of the Canadian Shield, picturesque coves, offshore rocks, and often resting Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. We may find a mixed flock of warblers high in the canopy of pines. Magnolia, Myrtle (Yellow-rumped), Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Green and Northern Parula are likely to be in on the action. For sure we stop by the Jam Pot, a bakery and store for jams and chutneys run by Byzantine monks.

The shoreline around Copper Harbor can be quite good for finding warblers and migratory songbirds in shrub habitat beside the harbor. A must here is to see the scenic Brockway Mountain Drive from Copper Harbor west, a route on which we stop at several overlooks before reaching the grand view of the very spine of the Keweenaw Fault. The viewpoint is over 700 feet higher than the lakeshore, and on a clear day it is possible to see all the way to Isle Royale, some 50 miles away. This landscape is richly clad in vegetation and dotted with lakes; several ridges run parallel before us adjacent to Lake Superior's pebble-clad shore.

As evening approaches, enjoy some time to walk around the small village of Copper Harbor. Enjoy a delicious dinner at a favorite local restaurant (try the local Lake Superior Whitefish!), then rest up before our adventure—four fabulous nights on Isle Royale National Park.

Accommodations at the King Copper Hotel, Copper Harbor (B,L,D)

Sun., Aug. 27 All Aboard the Ferry to Isle Royale National Park

This morning after an early breakfast, we head down to the ferry docks to join other comrades going to Isle Royale.

We set off in the morning on the *Isle Royale Queen IV*, a 100-passenger ferry, for a four-hour crossing to Rock Harbor. There is comfortable seating in several lounges and plenty of room on deck. Before you know it, the Rock Harbor light comes into view and soon staff members from the National Park Service are welcoming us ashore and giving us a brief orientation. We arrive at the island in time for lunch. As we wait to check into our

rooms later this afternoon, we orient to the canoe docks, visitor center, trailheads, and general Rock Harbor area.

Enjoy the smell of pines and sound of lapping waves on the shoreline as we settle into our rooms. Those that wish can meet for a first walk and some local birding. Dinner is in the lodge's cozy dining room; our rooms have porches overlooking Lake Superior!

Accommodations at Isle Royale Lodge (B,L,D)

Mon., Aug. 28 – Wed., Aug. 30 Isle Royale National Park

With four nights here, we have three full days to explore the island, and each day we offer a mix of hikes at varied paces, opportunities to canoe or kayak, boat excursions with our guides, island birding, studying geology, learning about the Moose and Wolf studies, exploring a true bog with pitcher plants and sundews and free time to just relax.

This is a wilderness park, with just the one lodge, and little other development other than trails and the marina. Fall asleep to the lapping of waves on Lake Superior. Enjoy the simple rhythm of all meals at the lodge, unpack once for the four nights, and immerse yourself in North Woods nature. We time the visit for lack of crowds, and lack of pesky mosquitoes and black flies. We also time our visit for fall migration, and we hope for a good show of warblers!

Isle Royale is a treasured Biosphere Reserve, a fine example of the Northern Biome, with forests, lakes, bogs, and Lake Superior shorelines. Enjoy learning more at park ranger talks and explore from our home base at Rock Harbor; a water taxi is available so we can take shuttles to facilitate the best hiking. Avid hikers can return from one of our trips on the trail that follows the Island's backbone, the Greenstone Ridge. You might even enjoy fishing or an evening kayak or canoe. Isle Royale is the home of the Peterson Wolf Research Center which provides information on wolves and moose over time, as this is the longest-running predator-prey study known, commencing in 1958. A strong supporter of conservation, Naturalist Journeys helped to fund the recent restoration of additional wolves to the island by providing matching funds of \$2500 and encouraging donors for this vital project.

Accommodations at Rock Harbor Lodge, Isle Royale (B,L,D each day)

Thurs., Aug. 31 Isle Royale | Copper Harbor

It's always hard to say good-bye to island life, so blessedly removed from the busy pace of life for the rest of the world.

We still have the full morning on the island, as the ferry departs at 2:45 PM. The journey across is four hours, so we arrive with time to retrieve our luggage from the ferry and travel the short distance to our convenient hotel in downtown Copper Harbor. We then have a bit of free time to explore Copper Harbor, followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodations at the King Copper Hotel, Copper Harbor (B,L,D)

Fri., Sept. 1 Keweenaw Peninsula | Houghton/Hancock

Today, we have an early morning bird walk at scenic Hunter's Point Park, just across the harbor from our hotel and the boat dock. We then return and, after breakfast and loading our vehicles, we drive back to Houghton exploring parts of the Keweenaw Peninsula on the way, either visiting new places or stopping again at some of our favorites. Time-permitting, we may visit historic Fort Wilkins before leaving town, some nature reserves and state parks, or the abandoned Central Mining District on our way south. We return to the Super 8 in Houghton

tonight so if you wish to store some belongings there you can do so. We want to be here so those that need the early morning flights out can take them as there are not that many flights each day.

Accommodations at the Super 8 on Portage Lake, Houghton/Hancock (B,L,D)

Sat., Sept. 2 Departures

Those flying out today can depart at your leisure; transportation will be provided to Houghton County Memorial (CMX) for morning departures and to Green Bay Austin Straubel (GRB) for flights out after 1:00 PM. (B)

Tour Details

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Their website will show a grid of tour cost and your age category for you to make selections. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the tour is \$3890 DBL / \$4840 SGL from Houghton/Hancock, Michigan.

The tour price includes airport transfers, all accommodations, most meals as specified in the itinerary, round-trip ferry ride to and from the island, professional guide services, local guides, local park entrance fees, and miscellaneous program expenses.

It does not include roundtrip airfare to Houghton/Hancock, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone, drinks from the bar, gratuities for portage, or personal services.

Travel Information

Please arrive in Houghton, Michigan at Houghton County Memorial (CMX) at your leisure on August 25. We officially meet for dinner as a group, but if you arrive earlier in the day, you can join in some casual birding. Please plan your departures at leisure from CMX on September 2, or if you prefer to depart from Green Bay, your guides will be returning the vans there and you are welcome to transfer with them. If you would like to depart from Green Bay-Austin Straubel International (GRB), please plan flights out after 1:00 PM on September 2.

Photo Credits: Grey Wolf, Greg Smith; Common Loon, by Ray Hennessy on Unsplash; All other photos are Naturalist Journeys' Stock.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.