

## PLAN IT

More to do

### WHERE TO STAY



The 385-room **Grand Hotel** celebrates its 125th birthday this summer. Famously featured in the film *Somewhere in Time*, this fancy yet family-friendly hotel has the world's longest porch (660 feet!). \$254 per adult, double occupancy (kids under 12 free), includes three meals daily; packages and other meal plans available ([grandhotel.com](http://grandhotel.com)).

### WHERE TO SNACK



Famous for **fudge**, Mackinac Island packs more than a dozen such shops, mostly on Main Street. Watch flavors get mixed in copper kettles and spilled onto marble slabs. Try Murdick's, first on the island in 1887 ([murdicks.com](http://murdicks.com)), May's ([maysfudge.com](http://maysfudge.com)) or Ryba's ([ryba.com](http://ryba.com)).

### WHERE TO EAT



Enjoy lunch under yellow umbrellas on a bluff overlooking the strait at the **Tea Room** at Fort Mackinac. The menu features soups, salads, sandwiches, pizza and sweets. Fort admission required to enter ([mackinacparks.com](http://mackinacparks.com)).

## GET MORE!

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PHOTOS: TOP LEFT, BOTTOM LEFT, BOTTOM RIGHT, KATHERINE RODEGHIER

# Final Frontier



### YOUR CARRIAGE AWAITS

Along with bicycles, horse-drawn buggies are the niftiest way to navigate this summer-resort island.

## Final Frontier

# Island clopping

Your family won't miss the car while hoofing it around Michigan's Mackinac Island by carriage. By **Katherine Rodeghier**

"Daddy, can I pet the horse?" As I wait my turn to climb aboard a horse-drawn carriage, I watch a five-year-old hoisted in her father's arms reach out and stroke the muzzle of the bay mare hitched to my ride.

What is it about kids and horses? They seem to have a natural attraction. On Mackinac Island, best known for the annual sailboat race (July 21–24 this year), kids find plenty of horses to love—about 500, outnumbering the year-round human population. Since cars are banned on this speck of land in the strait between Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas, your choices for getting around are three: bicycle, horse or your own two feet.

During the tourist season, May to mid-October, a horse-drawn carriage ride is the No. 1 way to see the island, covering the hot spots in a couple of hours—longer if you linger at attractions along the way. Powerful draft horses, mostly Belgians and Percherons, pull fringed surreys while drivers splice corny jokes into their spiel, encouraging interaction with riders. Everyone asks about the poop, which makes kids giggle. Horse manure, the guide tells us, is composted in the center of the island far from little (and big) noses.

We clip-clop along Main Street and head uphill past the Governor's Mansion and Grand Hotel before stopping at the first

attractions, the Surrey Hills Carriage Museum and Wings of Mackinac Butterfly Conservatory. We look at the old carriages in the museum before crossing the lawn to the butterfly house. Farms from around the world ship butterflies here in a wild assortment of sizes and colors. Patience is rewarded for kids who sit still long enough for a butterfly to land on an arm or leg.

The horses take us deep into the woods, part of the state park that covers 80 percent of the island, and stop at **Arch Rock**. Parents hold tight to little ones as they peer through the arch—146 feet down to the sandy beach below.

At the last stop, Fort Mackinac, you have a choice: Stay on the carriage, or tour the fort and either catch another carriage or walk back to the town. We pay the fort admission and hoof it, stopping to watch costumed soldiers give a rifle-firing demonstration on the parade ground. A military post from 1780 to 1895, the fort's 14 buildings house a museum with interactive exhibits for kids. Here, a brother and sister try on 19th-century costumes; on a rampart, soldiers ask a boy in the crowd to help load a cannon. But down at the harbor, there are no enemy ships today, just sailboats—perhaps a few that have made the Race to Mackinac from Chicago.



**GET THERE** Drive to Mackinaw City, about seven hours from Chicago, or fly to Pellston Regional Airport about 20 minutes from Mackinaw City (from \$300 on Lakeshore Express Aviation, [lakeshoreexpress.com](http://lakeshoreexpress.com); from \$490 on Delta, [delta.com](http://delta.com)). Then take a ferry to the island (round trip about \$24, ages 5–12 \$12). *Writer's carriage tour courtesy Mackinac Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.*