



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gaylord, Michigan IS All OUTDOORS!

Northern Michigan's Premiere Biking Destination - Home to Fresh Air, Unparalleled Scenery, Variable Terrains and Convenient Trail Access for Hikers and Bikers

GAYLORD, MICHIGAN – Located in the exact center of northern Michigan on the 45th parallel, Gaylord is known as Michigan's Alpine Village. The newly updated Alpine-themed downtown district offers visitors a quaint, friendly setting with a variety of unique boutiques and trendy eateries. The downtown pavilion offers seasonal entertainment, a twice weekly farmers market and a vast array of events and activities.

In addition to premier golf and a revamped downtown, the area is quickly being recognized as a cycling and hiking destination. The cycling and hiking scene in Gaylord is diverse, from single tracks at Aspen Park, Pigeon River State Forest, Shingle Mill Pathway, Pine Barron Pathway, and High Country Pathway to the crown jewel of trails – the **North Central State Trail**.

Experience all that is northern Michigan along one of the many trails in Otsego County used for hiking and biking. The area abounds with pathways for outdoor enthusiasts of every skill and age level, and all are free to use with no trail passes required.

Before starting your journey, don't forget to make a stop at White Birch Outfitters. Located right in downtown Gaylord, this full service bike shop provides bicycle sales, rentals and repairs, along with carrying a full line of clothing and gear. Check them out at

<https://www.facebook.com/WBOutfitters> or call (989) 732-2223 before hitting the trails!



North Central State Trail

This former railroad line that was refurbished and improved with a crushed limestone surface is a haven for bikers, runners and walkers of all ages. Running from Gaylord all the way to Mackinaw City, the view along this 73-mile trail showcases some of the prettiest landscapes in the north. Farms, forest and open fields share the scene with sparkling lakes, rivers and marshes buzzing with wildlife. Whether you're a family out for an afternoon ride, a novice seeking something energizing but not too over-the-top or an experienced rider seeking adventure, this trail delivers. Routes from one town to the next and back are great short rides – most are 20 miles or less. Do just one hamlet-to-hamlet jaunt, or combine several for a longer excursion. Just keep in mind that the trail is primarily downhill between Gaylord and Indian River, with a net elevation loss of a very gradual 777 feet.

The recently completed Iron Belle Trail extension runs from the current trailhead near the Otsego County Fairgrounds south to the quaint village of Waters. This additional segment passes through downtown Gaylord and traverses along scenic Otsego Lake. Cyclists will find

plentiful parking at the Otsego Lake Township Hall and can look forward to a variety of local restaurants and convenience stores along this lovely ride. Give yourself a break and take a quick dip in Otsego Lake at the trailside State Park or Wah Wah Soo public access site.

Fans of the North Central State Trail will be excited to know a new trailhead located right in downtown Gaylord is scheduled for completion in 2020.

SINGLE TRACKS

Pine Baron Pathway

If a short family outing is what you're looking for, the Pine Baron Pathway, situated in the Mackinaw State Forest, is only six miles from the heart of Gaylord. To reach it, take Otsego Lake Drive west to Old Alba Road, continue west to Lone Pine Road and go north to the trailhead. This system of gently rolling to flat terrain has four short loops which average two miles each. The total outside loop is only 6.25 miles, so it makes a nice hike with the kids. There are several benches along the way for resting, as well as some nice clearings perfect for a trailside picnic. All the trails are clearly marked and easy to follow through peaceful pine forests and mixed hardwoods. Wildlife abounds, so keep your eyes open for the natural inhabitants of the Pine Baron Pathway.

High Country Pathway

Feeling ambitious? Ready for some real wilderness adventures? Pack your gear and head north to Vanderbilt, then take Sturgeon Valley Road east to the High Country Pathway. High Country is a 70-mile loop that meanders east through Pigeon River Country, Thunder Bay State Forest and Black Lake State Forest. With rustic camping available at several points along the way, an ambitious hiker can cover the trail in 7-10 days. The terrain is varied, taking in scenic vistas, challenging hills, stream crossings and thick growth.

This extensive and rustic trail was recognized as having “Epic” status by the International Mountain Bike Association in 2019. This list of impressive trails is created each year by IMBA through a public nomination process and showcases trails that provide a true backcountry experience. There are only 52 trails in the world recognized by IMBA as “Epic,” 42 are in the United States and the High Country Pathway is the only one in the state of Michigan.

Shingle Mill Pathway

If you would like just a taste of the High Country experience, check out the Shingle Mill Pathway. It is a popular trail system that begins at the Pigeon Bridge Campground, just off Sturgeon Valley Road, 11 miles east of Vanderbilt. The shortest of the five-segment pathway is 3/4 mile and the longest stretches for 12 miles. Trail difficulty increases with the length of each trail, with some steep terrain along the 6, 10 and 12 mile stretches.

Aspen Park

Paved and unpaved trails for walking, biking and in-line skating are well suited for family adventures close to downtown Gaylord. Don't forget to stop by the boundary shared with Elk Park to view the elk, sika and fallow deer herds. Trails are groomed in the winter for cross-country skiing, or break your own trail on a pair of snowshoes. The entire park is lit until 11:00 p.m. year round.

If mountain biking is more to your liking, then you'll be impressed by the series of undulating trails developed in cooperation with the Northern Mid-Michigan Chapter of Michigan Mountain Biking Association (NMBA).

Featuring 100 acres of woods, paved and unpaved trails, tennis courts and some of the best scenery in northern Michigan, Aspen Park is a not-to-miss stop on your next visit to Gaylord.



If the paved trails at Aspen Park don't quench your thirst for road biking, consider one of the following recommended routes:

PAVED RIDING

If you have not done any road biking in Gaylord, you are in for a pleasant surprise! With the highest elevation of any city in the Lower Peninsula, over 100 small lakes and the headwaters of 5 major rivers, you will delight in the scenery. The gently (and sometimes not so gently!) rolling terrain offers some of the best vistas and challenging riding in Michigan.

Northeast Route

This route is a part of the former Starker Mann Biathlon and includes great scenery! It covers rolling farmland dotted with a variety of trees, crosses the Sturgeon River, has a few challenging climbs and the potential to see lots of wildlife. Park at the soccer fields off North Ohio Street (also the current start of the North Central Trail), and head north on Morgan Road. The road winds around to the right and crosses Old 27 North. Cross Old 27 North on to Whitmarsh Road and head due east. This is a nice flat area, and the farther east you go, the better your chance is of seeing elk and deer. Bear right on Winnie Hill Road and you will pass the Smith Golf Course and begin a long climb through the woods. This road will eventually wind around and turn into Marquardt Road, where you will pass Treetops North. Enjoy a long descent and some gorgeous farm country with gentle streams. Stay on Marquardt Road and after a long climb, take a big turn and the road becomes Wilkinson Road. Going right past the main entrance of Treetops, stay on Wilkinson Road until it takes you to M-32 and right back into town. This is a hilly, challenging 26 mile route with plenty of scenery.

Lake Route

Riding around Otsego Lake is always fun! You can park at either the Otsego Lake State Park or Otsego County Park. This very enjoyable circular route winds around the largest lake in the County, Otsego Lake. It is scenic and hilly in places, with plenty of views of the lake. You will have plenty of chances to stop on this route, which is about 18 miles long. If starting at the State Park, head south on Old 27 to Mancelona Road. You will then turn on West Otsego Lake Drive, heading north on a fairly newly paved road with nice wide shoulders. It is a bit hilly on this side, where you will also pass Beaver Creek Resort. Follow the large curve, which brings you to Old 27 South. From here, a right turn takes you back to your starting point. Riders will also appreciate the option of taking the North Central State Trail extension running along the east side of Otsego Lake.

South East Route

If you are looking for an extensive, scenic and relaxing ride with an opportunity to stop for a meal or beverage, then take this route! Bordering the Pigeon River State Forest, wildlife abounds on our south east route. Starting in town, head east on M-32 then take a slight left onto Wilkinson Road. After passing Treetops Resort, you will come to a large curve. Stay right on the curve to remain on Wilkinson Road, which rolls up and down through gorgeous farmland. Stay on Wilkinson until it eventually takes a hard left turn and brings you to the Sparr Road intersection. Turn right on lovely Sparr Road and go for a long distance. At the intersection with Meridian Line Road, turn right. This is a beautiful, but lengthy, uphill climb. Turn right on Heatherton Road to visit the peaceful community of Johannesburg. Consider stopping at The Old Depot Restaurant or Paul's Pub to refuel. When finished, turn onto M-32 and head south for a short distance. At the large curve, turn right onto Finnegan Road, which eventually intersects at Turtle Lake Road. Stay right on Turtle Lake Road. When you reach the corner of McCoy and M-32, turn left on McCoy Road to head west. Your journey on the wide paved shoulder will take you past Dixon Lake, a picturesque lake with a great public access site. Stay on McCoy Road to the Kryz Road intersection, then turn right and follow to M-32. A left on M-32 will return you to downtown Gaylord. It is approximately 40-45 mile route with plenty of scenery and gorgeous farmland.

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