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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Summer 2026

Gaylord Is Pure Michigan's Water Wonderland! Superior Fishing, Pristine Paddling, Kayaking, Rafting and Swimming



GAYLORD, MICHIGAN – Our geographically-gifted position right in the center of Michigan's Northern Lower Peninsula offers the state's best base camp for any outdoor pursuit, whether on land or water! After you hit the trails, be sure to explore Pure Michigan's Water Wonderland, Otsego County, with over 90 inland lakes and the headwaters of five premier rivers.



LAKES

Gaylord area lakes range from clear water with sandy, white beaches perfect for relaxing in the sun to glistening gems hidden deep in the forest, lined with trees. Whether you're looking to lounge in a beach chair at the Otsego Lake State Park, play a game of volleyball at the Otsego Lake County Park or kayak along still waters that feel away from it all, we have the best sparkling lakes for you to get your feet wet.

And speaking of kayaking, the Gaylord area is the perfect place to dip your paddle! Whether you prefer a kayak, canoe or stand-up paddle board, our seemingly endless selection of lakes will beckon to all water lovers.

PUBLIC ACCESS SITES

Once you have all your gear ready to go, there is nothing more scenic and relaxing than paddling on one of our pristine lakes, which also offer great wildlife viewing opportunities. Here are a few of our favorite places to drop a kayak in the water:

BIG CHUB LAKE – This gorgeous and quiet spring-fed lake feeds the mighty AuSable River. Nearly half of the lake is undeveloped and there are frequent sightings of eagles, hawks and

deer along the shore. It is a very tranquil lake with crystal-clear water. An intriguing canal connects the upper and lower Chub Lakes, with both offering an amazing afternoon adventure.

OPAL LAKE – Opal Lake is known as one of the clearest, most stunning lakes in Otsego County. With gentle turquoise waters and a sandy bottom, it's no surprise that paddlers frequent this gem. Its quaint size and visible undeveloped island make it a perfect lake to loop all the way around. Located near the Michaywe development, it comes with a large boat launch area, ample parking and a restroom.



THUMB LAKE – Sometimes called Lake Louise, this picturesque lake is located just north of Otsego County. Known for having a number of small coves and points that are perfect for exploring, Thumb Lake also boasts many undeveloped areas which makes for great scenery. There are two parts to this lake and the east side contains a designated swimming area with plenty of parking and restroom facilities. We recommend dropping in at the boating public access site located at the extreme west end. Parking and restroom facilities are available.

BIG LAKE – Closer to downtown Gaylord you will find Big Lake. While this fairly circular lake is a bit more developed, you'll still find a few nice little coves for exploring. Big Lake also has an

island with a house on it, which you won't find anywhere else in Otsego County. Paddling along its crystal-clear waters will make for a delightful afternoon. It has a paved parking and launch area with a dock as well as a restroom.



DIXON LAKE – Dixon Lake is a true gem and a favorite among locals. Its spring-fed, crystal-clear water is a great place for a quick dip to cool down. A good portion of the south end is undeveloped and excellent for wildlife viewing, fishing and exploring. This quaint lake is home to Sojourn Lakeside Resort, which in its heyday, was one of the swankiest dude ranches in the Midwest. Dixon Lake has one of the nicest launches around with a paved launch and parking area, a wide public dock and a restroom.

[RIVERS](#)

If you're looking for a scenic trip along our waterways at a different pace, our rivers are the way to go! Gaylord is home to the headwaters of five major rivers: the Sturgeon, Pigeon, AuSable, Black and Manistee.



The Sturgeon River is the fastest in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It's not whitewater, but still exciting, especially when navigating through numerous narrow passages and sharp turns. With its quick and often tricky current, along with leaning trees, stumps and logs, the Sturgeon is a challenging adventure. The current does most of the work, but it's up to you and/or your partner to maneuver your watercraft down the crystal-clear, spring-fed stream as it winds its way through a beautiful state forest.

Take a short drive north and check out Sturgeon River Paddlesports in Wolverine or Big Bear Adventures in Indian River to experience all the Sturgeon River has to offer. With kayak, canoe and raft rentals, you can find the exact experience you're looking for.

With its headwaters located just a few miles outside of Gaylord, the Pigeon River flows north to its mouth at Mullet Lake, a 42-mile float through the Pigeon River Country State Forest and the rustic northern woods. There are a multitude of places to get in and out of the river, with nearby livery services available in Indian River.

While on the AuSable River, just south of Gaylord, you stand a good chance of seeing bald eagles along the river during any season. The AuSable guarantees a leisurely, tranquil float, and there are plenty of liveries available if you do not have your own boat.



FISHING

For those looking to drop a line, dozens of lakes are stocked with various species of fish. Otsego Lake, the largest in our county, offers an assortment of freshwater fish species and a variety of seasons in which to pursue them. The water is alive with walleye, perch, small and large-mouth bass, pike, sturgeon and crappie, among other sport fish. Ice fishermen find this a great place to shanty up when the ice grows thick in the heart of Michigan's winter. Otsego Lake is also one of only a handful of places in all of Michigan where you can catch a true living fossil – the elusive lake sturgeon.

Beyond Otsego Lake, fishing enthusiasts seem to all have their own favorite locations. While no one will disclose their secret sweet spot, we can tell you both Dixon Lake and Big Bear Lake are popular for catching smallmouth bass and Heart Lake is known for its abundant yellow perch and largemouth bass.

Sure, Gaylord has loads of fantastic fishing lakes, but did you know the area is also prime for reeling in the north's famous trout?



The **BLACK RIVER** is just 20 minutes from downtown Gaylord and jumping with the Midwest's premier brook trout. The best stretch of fishing is said to be from the bridge located on Tin Shanty Bridge Road to the bottom of the steps at Town Corner Lake.

The **PIGEON RIVER** is where fishing enthusiasts will find the best in brown, brook and rainbow trout. The Pigeon River is easily accessed via the Pigeon River Campground where the water is generally jumping from the second week of May through August.

The **AUSABLE RIVER** is a blue-ribbon trout stream. Michigan's legendary AuSable draws anglers from all over the world. Those visiting the north branch will be rewarded with the brookies and browns that made this river famous. Access at the Sheep Ranch is public and just one half-mile north of Twin Bridge, about two miles north of Twin Bridge Road and County Road 612.

The **MANISTEE RIVER** is nearly 250 miles long and seems to offer as many fishing holes as it does lunkers. The headwaters inside the 4,700-acre preserved DeWard Tract has the most pristine stretch that makes way for breathless river views.

The **STURGEON RIVER** is one of the most unspoiled and high-gradient streams in Lower Michigan. It is one of Michigan's top cold-water streams and a notable blue ribbon trout stream. This rapidly flowing river is a sought-after destination for the outdoor enthusiast.



Whether you are a beachgoer, kayaker or hoping to reel in your next trophy, our All Outdoors Water Wonderland welcomes you!