

Snowshoe Wisconsin's Door County

By Hazel M. Freeman

It was a beautiful winter morning. A foot of new powder turned the snowshoe trails in Peninsula State Park, in Wisconsin's Door County, into a winter wonderland. Branches of evergreen trees had a generous layer of snow frosting. The solitude of the woods was as welcome as a warm blanket tucked around you on a cold night.

No doubt there are hundreds of winter destinations out there to choose from. For a Midwest winter retreat that gives you plenty of opportunity to snowshoe amid a beautiful landscape but also immerses you in a wonderful Cape Cod like atmosphere, than you'll want to keep in mind a winter getaway to Door County Wisconsin.

An easy 40-mile drive from Green Bay brings you to bustling Sturgeon Bay. Once you leave Sturgeon Bay and head out into the open countryside of the Door Peninsula you leave all traces of cookie cutter chain stores, fast food restaurants, and box stores behind. You'll find only unique, independently owned, shops, cafes, art and craft galleries, restaurants and lodging that cater to their visitors no matter the season.



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Often called “The Cape Cod of the Midwest,” the 75-mile Door Peninsula, with the bay of Green Bay lapping against one shore, and Lake Michigan, lapping against the other, makes for a wonderful winter travel destination. At about 18 miles wide at the widest point it narrows to less than two

miles at the tip.

With it’s more than 300 miles of scenic shoreline, almost a dozen historic lighthouses, and over 10,000 acres of state and county parks, Door County has much to offer in the way of its stunning natural beauty and four-season outdoor recreation. A lack of snow is usually not a problem with almost 50 inches of average snowfall, mid-December into March, is prime winter recreation time.

When the hustle and bustle of a busy tourist season is behind, local residents wind down into a relaxed winter pace. A quiet calmness settles over the pristine countryside. The acres and acres of cherry and apple orchards, and vineyards are at rest waiting for the warmth of spring. The busy hiking and biking trails that wind through the many state and local parks, nature preserves and sanctuaries, are transformed into miles and miles of snowshoe and cross-country ski trails. The county’s state





parks tally up more than 50 miles of snowshoeing trails.

The Ridges Sanctuary in Baileys Harbor offers guided snowshoe hikes on five miles of trails, at 1 p.m. on Fridays in January and February. Naturalist Karen Newbern leads hikes along the trails that wind their way among the ridges. The ridges themselves are actually old shorelines. Over the last 1,200 years Lake Michigan has formed about 30 ridges that

extend inland for almost a mile.

The 1,600 acres that make up the sanctuary are a state wildflower preserve that contains one of the largest concentrations of rare plants in the Midwest. Once there's plenty of snow cover during the winter months, to protect the delicate flora and fauna, visitors are allowed to stray from the designated paths. The Ridges Sanctuary also offers snowshoe-making workshops on occasion.

At Whitefish Dunes along the Lake Michigan shore you'll find a mile of sandy beach and the highest sand dunes in Wisconsin. Whitefish has about 15 miles of trails that meander through its 863 acres of forest and dunes. Peninsula State Park offers five miles of trails one of which takes you to the historic Eagle Bluff lighthouse. On another trail you can hike near the shore and look out over Green Bay and view the rocky bluffs.

When your done snowshoeing for the day you can hop on the heated Door County Trolley in Fish Creek, for a scenic tour of some of Door County's most beautiful locales. The trolley makes stops at some of the peninsula's finest wineries for tours, tasting, and



shopping. One such winery is the Orchard Country Winery & Market, where the shop and market are jam packed with specialty Door County goodies. You can also enjoy the scenery from a horse drawn sleigh.

A visit to Door County wouldn't be complete without experiencing a traditional fish Boil. The White Gull Inn, established in 1896, has the fish boil perfected. I had my doubts about how good boiled fish could taste but was eager to give it a try at the White Gull, where they've been perfecting the boil since 1959.

A traditional fish boil features fresh Lake Michigan whitefish caught from local waters daily and a Master Boiler oversees the cooking process on an open fire outside. The Scandinavian settlers to the Peninsula brought this tradition with them.

With a boiling cauldron, fish chunks, small red potatoes, and a bit of salt, the Master Boiler knows just when to toss a small amount of kerosene on the fire. With a great





reservation.

burst of flames the cauldron boils over, and over the sides wash the foamy fish oils, leaving the fish and potatoes perfectly done, ready for the Inns guests to devour.

As hungry patrons eagerly sit down to the meal, platters of steaming fish and potatoes arrive along with fresh baked bread, melted butter, creamy coleslaw and to top the menu off, homemade Door County cherry pie. The White Gull fish boil is served only on Friday nights in winter. Come early to see the whole cooking process and to be safe make a

For a serene, Midwest recreational snowshoeing destination the Door Peninsula may be just what you're looking for.

For more info on Door County visit: <http://www.doorcounty.com/> or call 800-52-RELAX

Door County Snow Report - Find out the latest winter trail conditions in Door County.

<http://www.doorcounty.com/outdoor/snow-report.aspx>

Snowshoe or cross-country ski rentals:

Bayshore Outdoor Store in Sister Bay (920) 854-7598

Ecology Sports in Sister Bay (920) 854-5724

Nor Door Sport & Cyclery in Fish Creek (920) 868-2275

Door County has five state parks. For Wisconsin State Park Camping Reservations call:

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