

North Manitou Island Hiking – HIGH ADVENTURE TRIP 2007

June 12 -16, 2007

The High Adventure Outing for 2007 was a backpacking trip on North Manitou Island. North Manitou Island is part of the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. It is a special area because it is designated 'backcountry'. This means that hikers and campers on the island enjoy a true wilderness experience, i.e. there are no wood fires allowed, there is only one well on the island that provides drinking water (all other water used for drinking must be filtered or purified), there are no outhouses/bathrooms in the backcountry....so, hikers on the island are truly "roughing it". Indeed, this was the attraction to the scouts.

We got to the island by taking a ferry from Leland on the morning of the 13th. We had spent the previous night camping at the D.H. Day group campsite at Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. The group campsite was situated adjacent to the big climbing dune near Glen Haven. We arrived at the group campsite and pitched our tents and then immediately decided to go for a swim near Glen Haven since it was very HOT! After we all cooked tin-foil dinners we relaxed (with Smores) and prepared for the trip to the island the next morning.

The weather the next morning was perfect and the ferry ride over to the island was on glass-smooth water. The boat ride took about an hour and when we arrived and unloaded our gear we went to the Ranger Station to get our backcountry permit and our camping instructions from the island Rangers. They gave us all the pertinent information – the north side of the island was currently highly populated with insects!

Therefore, we decided to hike to the south. We started our hike around noontime walking along the eastern side of the island eventually cutting through the interior of the island to avoid the restricted southeast corner of the island. This portion of the island is restricted to campers since it is a refuge for piping plovers – beach nesting birds that prefer to be left alone. We hiked through the southern part of the island headed for a spot called Fredrickson's Place. This was where we thought we would camp for the first night. Fredrickson's Place is an abandoned farm site on the southwest side of the island. We arrived at Fredrickson's only to find that it wasn't really an accommodating site. We pushed on along the west coast of the island to a spot called Johnson's Place and found a nice flat area overlooking Lake Michigan with a great view of South Manitou Island – perfect! Again, after a long hot day of hiking everyone wanted to get into the water and cool off even though the ranger had said the water temperature was only about 50 degrees. Everyone was asking each other if they had gone under yet, and if they hadn't the general idea was to make them take the plunge. We cooked our dinner and relaxed in the wonderful shade and cool breeze. We were all ready for an early night to sleep after planning that we would try to get to an area further up the west coast of the island the next day called Swenson's Barn near Crescent City Dock Ruins.

We slept in the next morning and had a leisurely breakfast. After breaking camp and packing up all the gear we headed north to Swenson's Place. The actual hiking time to Swenson's wasn't that long but we had to search for some time to find an acceptable campsite. By the time we found one up in the dunes everyone was ready for another dip in the nice cool water of Lake Michigan. We spent some time on the beach and then

returned to camp to prepare dinner. After dinner we sat around a bit but the bugs were very persistent and eventually everyone retired to their tents.

The next morning we arose early since we had to hike through the heart of the island back toward the ranger station so that we would be at the dock the following day in time for the ferry ride back to Leland. We hiked for a few hours through the forested inland until we found another ideal campsite about a mile south of the ranger station on the east coast of the island. Swimming was great here as well! Since we had been hiking for three days there were some feet that needed attention and rest. We had our last dried food dinner and the conversation was really starting to focus on things like Subway sandwiches and milk shakes.

The next morning we made the short hike to the ranger station and found some shade to rest in while we waited for the ferry. Eventually we went out to the dock and loaded the ferry with our gear and made the ride back to Leland. We were blessed with sunny warm weather for the whole trip.

We loaded the cars and started the drive home after stopping at Subway of course and gorging ourselves on our favorite sub sandwiches. There was a lot of snoring in the car on the way home !

This was a very fun, successful trip and I think everyone would agree that we should definitely consider doing it again.

Thanks to one of the participants, who provided the following photos:



West Side of island near Crescent Dock Ruins – searching for a campsite.



Group Photo taken at our first night's campsite



The interior of the island



Campsite for our last night on the island