

TRAVEL

Culinary, cultural getaways await in Wisconsin's Door County

Our neighbors to the north really have a good thing going. Often called the "Cape Cod of the Midwest," this 75-mile long peninsula offers an abundance of outdoor, culinary, and cultural activities throughout the year. Surrounded by (dare I say it?) Green Bay to the west and Lake Michigan to the east, Door County is known as an art colony that houses talented painters and potters who've taken up residence in these



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pristine woodlands. With five state parks and 10 lighthouses, as well as wineries, orchards, performing arts theatres, renowned galleries, and shops, the Door is truly a special retreat. Drive up and down Highway 42. You'll discover many little towns, each with its own special charm, making Door County an ideal family or romantic getaway. There's a good reason it was named one of the top 10 vacation destinations in North America by *Money Magazine*.

Garden Gate Inn, Sturgeon Bay. Bed and breakfast innkeeper Robin Vallow has a sign above her foyer that says, "Come as a guest, leave as a friend." I would agree. Her warm, welcoming hospitality and gracious accommodations made for a delightful stay. It's a convenient walk to downtown dining and shopping, too. Breakfast is theatre here and you'll catch a different act each morning, accompanied by music and candlelight. Ingredients are fresh grown, some even in her yard. Prepare for a feast every morning with Cherry Baked French Toast, Piña Colada Muffins, or a 3-Cheese Egg Bake. Open year-round. 920-217-3093; doorcountybb.com.

Take your pick of the crop. Door County is Montmorency red tart cherry country. So whether you want to pick your own in July or visit one of the many orchards for cherry-based delicacies, this is the place. Country Ovens in Forestville makes a full line of delicious Cherry De-Lite products, including juice, chocolate-covered cherries, and jams. Countryovens.com.

At Orchard Country Winery and Market, enjoy complimentary wine tasting, plus bring home cherry pies, artisan cheeses, salsa, and tasty pie fillings. Watch the video while you're there and see how the cherries are harvested. Orchardcountry.com.

Catch a Door County Fish Boil. Brought over by the Scandinavians who settled in upper Wis., the Fish Boil continues to be a popular Door County diversion. You'll find many to choose from, but one of the most popular is hosted at White Gull Inn, Fish Creek. I'll admit it: I've never seen this before and it was great fun to watch as well as taste.

It all starts with freshly caught Lake Michigan whitefish, cut in chunks and cooked outside in a pot over an open fire with small red potatoes. (Some add onions for extra flavor.) When the fish oils rise to the surface, the Master Boiler tosses kerosene on the flames under the pot. A huge burst of flames causes it to boil over, spilling the fish oils over the side of the pot and leaving the fish perfectly done and steaming hot. The fish and potatoes are served with garden fresh coleslaw, homemade breads, and Door County Cherry Pie for dessert. Additionally, the White Gull Inn's Cherry-Stuffed French Toast was awarded "Best Breakfast in America" by *Good Morning America*. Whitegullinn.com.

Art everywhere. You'll not only find many art galleries throughout the county, you'll find studios where you can see artists at work or have an opportunity to create your own masterpieces. The Door County Plein Air Festival, July 18-23, is the annual fundraiser for the Peninsula School of Art in Fish Creek. Watch 40 nationally-recognized artists paint all around the county, including such notable landmarks as Black Smith Inn in Baileys Harbor, historic Noble House in Fish Creek, and Sister Bay's spectacular sunsets. Peninsulaartschool.com.

Or, watch artist Chad Luburger create hand-crafted stoneware at Plum Bottom Pottery in Egg Harbor. Plumbottompottery.com.

Hands-On Art Studio, Fish Creek. This is a great place for families and girls' getaway groups. Just walk in and start creating! What blew me away was the number of different projects you could work on, all under one roof. Fused glass, jewelry, metal sculpture, mosaics, wood, spin art, and ceramics are just some of the options. Each participant pays a low studio fee of \$7, plus the cost of the project. I had a great time working with cut glass; others enjoyed creating unique jewelry. Handsonartstudio.com.

Other recommendations: Outstanding dining at the Lautenbach family's Log Den, a 10,000 foot cabin in Egg Harbor. Best Root Beer ever at Wilson's Restaurant and Ice Cream Parlor, in Ephraim, Wis. since 1906. Take an old time Trolley Tour around Door County's scenic bluffs and area lighthouses; they have ghost tours, too. Door County Coffee and Tea in Sturgeon Bay is a must-stop, just to take in the rich coffee aromas – and to bring some home!

Oh yeah, about those Cheese Curds: they're a Wisconsin specialty. Mild flavor, smooth texture, and they squeak, so you know they're fresh. Great fried, too!

Looking ahead to Fall. Door County plays host to many Fall festivals this season. Here are a few to check out.

Corn Fest. Sept. 10. Walk through the 20-acre corn maze and enjoy children's games, bakery items, a raffle, silent auction, and corn- and pie-eating contests. Proceeds benefit Sunshine House. Schopf's Hilltop



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Try a different take on fresh fish at one of Door County's popular fish boils.

Dairy, Carlsville; sunshinehouseinc.org.

Harvest Festival. Sept. 17. Celebrate autumn at a festival that features a craft and car show, food booths, music, and children's activities. *Sturgeon Bay; sturgeonbay.net.*

Pumpkin Patch Festival. Oct. 8-9. One of Door County's largest festivals includes entertainment, art and crafts, rides, and live music. Street vendors offer roasted sweet corn, caramel apple sundaes, turkey legs, and more. *Egg Harbor; eggharbordoorcounty.org.*

Season after season, Door County will

tempt you and treat you right. Check out the Door County Visitor Bureau by calling them at 920-743-4456, visiting doorcounty.com, or stopping by the Visitor Center on Highway 42/57 as you enter Sturgeon Bay.

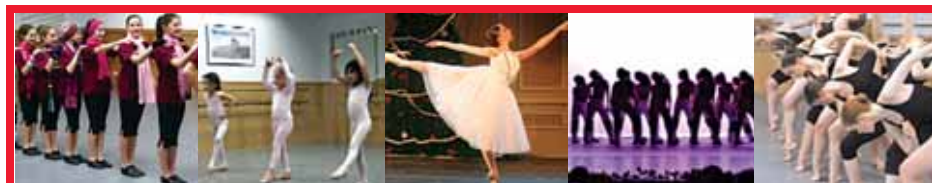
Contributed by Mira Temkin

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Chad Luburger crafts his latest clay creation at the Plum Bottom Pottery in Egg Harbor.



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