

Family Activities

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Visiting a National Park with family members is one of the most special experiences people can have. This brochure provides an overview of what families can do together here at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. For details, please see our website for maps and topic related brochures.

Spring, Summer, and Fall:

Interpretive Programs – Join a park ranger for a guided walk, lighthouse tour, or evening campground program. Check on bulletin boards or at a visitor center for schedules.

Become a Junior Ranger – Pick up a Junior Ranger book at one of our visitor centers. Work through the age-specific activities until completed, then take it back to a visitor center for a badge.

Take a Hike – Walk one of the self-guiding nature trails in the Lakeshore at the Sand Point Marsh Trail (watch for beaver!), White Pine Trail at Little Beaver Lake Campground (huge trees), White Birch Trail (coyote tracks?) at Twelvemile Beach Campground. Or - walk into Miners Falls, Log Slide, or see the shipwrecks near Hurricane River.



Fishing – Take a kid fishing on Little Beaver, Beaver, or Grand Sable Lake. Check local regulations on bait as some restrictions exist. Fishing by canoe, kayak, or boat is best. Be sure to wear your personal flotation device (life jacket). Help us prevent the spread of harmful non-native aquatic species by washing your boat before and after you visit.

Get Out on the Lake – Take the Pictured Rocks Cruises, rent a pontoon boat, join a commercial kayak tour, or take your own sea kayaks on Lake Superior (pick up a kayak safety brochure first). The best way to see the cliffs is from a boat, so go for it! Remember - conditions on Lake Superior can change quickly, and the lake can be rougher where you plan to go than it is where you launch.

Seton Watching – Named after famous early naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, this activity can be done almost anywhere in the park. Find a quiet spot in the woods, dunes, by a creek, or next to a lake, and sit down in a comfortable position. Leave some space between each person, but keep at least one person in sight. Sit for 10-20 minutes just listening, watching, and smelling your special spot. If you'd like, quietly write a short poem or sketch a picture of your special place. When time is up, get back together and share your experiences.



Visit Three Waterfalls – After obtaining a Lakeshore map at a visitor center, seek out three different waterfalls to visit in one day. Many are accessible by a short walk. Others are deeper in the park and require more effort. What is the highest waterfall you saw? The smallest? The loudest? How else are they different? What kinds of plants were growing along the trail to each one? Match your energy with your special waterfall!

Watch Those Birds – Bring a pair of binoculars and look for some of the 300 species of birds found in the park. The Sand Point Marsh Trail is a great place for birding, especially in May and June when the nesting season is in full swing. Watch bird behavior for a while. Can you tell what they eat? Do they stay along the shoreline or on the ground? Do they perch in trees? Why do you think gulls soar so high? What types of birds do you think stay all year around?



Hang out at the Beach – Twelvemile Beach, Hurricane River, Miners Beach, and Sand Point Beach are all incredible places to build sand castles and watch the gulls soar. Take a picnic and spend an afternoon or evening on a beach reading your favorite book, playing tag or frisbee, or watching boats go by.

Be a Photojournalist – Use a camera to record your visit to the Lakeshore. When you get home, make a scrapbook of things you have seen.



Pedal Your Bike – Though bicycles are not permitted on trails, many access roads in the park and H-58 are ideal for a leisurely bike ride. Be sure to wear a helmet, watch for traffic, and take plenty of water.

Share Your Experiences – Write a note, text your friends, or post on Facebook. Take a few quiet minutes to tell them about what you are doing here at Pictured Rocks. Draw a picture or write a poem about the most fun thing you have done. What animals have you seen?

Stargazing – Stay up WAY past your bedtime and go stargazing. Find a dark part of the park away from Munising and Grand Marais and watch stars and meteors late into the night. Take a star chart and flashlight covered with a red balloon. You might even see the northern lights!



In the Campground – How many different license plates can you spy parked in the campground? How many different kinds of butterflies and other insects do you see on the same exploration? Listen for owls, frogs, and coyotes. Can you see bats or fireflies? See how many kinds of trees you can identify? Sketch or make notes about bark, branches, and leaves/needles.

On Rainy Days:

Splash in a Puddle – if it's not thunderstorming and you have rain gear, take a walk in the rain. Listen to the waves from a safe distance. Watch ducks, waterfowl, and shorebirds. Do they change their behavior when it's raining? Do forest birds sing when it's raining? How does the forest smell? Look for animal tracks after a rain.

Visit a Museum – Check out the former U.S. Coast Guard life saving boathouse on Sand Point or the maritime museum at the Au Sable Light Station. Visit the Alger Historical Society Heritage Center on Washington Street in Munising or the Grand Marais Historical Society Lighthouse Keepers Museum in Grand Marais.

If you don't mind driving, visit the Marquette County Maritime Museum, the Marquette County History Center, or the Iron History Museum in Negaunee. The Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum on Whitefish Point is another great destination on a rainy day.

