

TRAVEL

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Getaways close to home — Ohio parks



An open letter to N.Y. robber

Dear Sir, Or maybe it's "Dear Madam," although I didn't see any women on Crosby Street north of Houston when the thieves struck.

You were fast. You had my suitcase, camera bag and raincoat out of the locked trunk of that black 1990 Mazda in a flash, and you didn't even pop the trunk lock out.

Sorry your screwdriver and hammer didn't work on the driver's side. I guess we rounded the corner too fast. When Eric said "heads up, be alert!" out of the corner of his mouth, you were already drifting away.

It was the first time I had been in New York City for a couple of years. I enjoyed the theater, saw the Seurat exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum and had just finished dinner at K Paul's when you struck. The big room with the small wooden tables was almost empty at 7 p.m. on a Friday night.

There was lots of action on Broadway. No place to park under the bright lights, of course. Nobody ever parks in a dark street by choice, even half a block from the bright lights, but this is New York City.

You weren't very menacing looking men: 30s, poor, baseball caps, a shuffling gait. One beside the Dumpster, two on the driver's side of our car, a third on the opposite side. You saw us and drifted away.

We were eager to get into the car without confrontation so the only thing we noticed was that the key wouldn't go into the driver's door; obviously somebody had tried to get in. We didn't notice until we opened the trunk an hour later that my suitcase, camera bag and raincoat were gone. We reported the theft to the Ninth precinct. I called the airline to notify them of the stolen ticket and to ask the procedure for replacing it. Common sense suggested that if you didn't show up with my ticket, and I could identify myself as the traveler who bought it, I could use the seat that I reserved and paid for on my flight home. Not so.

The agent told me that I would have to buy a new ticket home, submit a lost-ticket report, and the airline would then consider refunding me the cost of the second ticket minus \$50 for the trouble they had taken to replace it.

I objected. It was obviously a great deal more trouble to me than to them.

"I don't make the rules," she said.

I arrived early for my Sunday flight and went through it again. The only ticket available was first class for \$315, despite the fact that my seat, bought on a non-refundable \$198 round trip ticket, was presumably still aboard.

"If you find your ticket..."

"The ticket is not lost, it's stolen..."

I bought the \$315 return ticket with the one credit card that I still possessed. I am home, waiting for my refund.

You robbed a reasonably affluent business traveler with more than one credit card, friends in New York City and Detroit. I'm lucky. I still have keys to the car was waiting for me at the airport and money to pay the parking fee.

The question I would like to ask you, and the airlines, is what would I have done if I didn't have all these good things going for me? No credit cards, money, friends, car. Would I be sleeping now on the airline terminal floor trying to figure out how to get home?

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

QUESTION: Can you recommend some good weekend getaways now that it is too cold for camping in Michigan? We love the state parks, but we would be interested in any natural setting where we can vacation without spending too much money.

ANSWER: I suggest you go south of the border. Not across the U.S. border to Mexico but across the state border to Ohio, where there are 72 state parks, eight of them with resort lodges and cabins.

It is not exactly summer in Ohio, but it is still a little warmer than it is in Michigan, and of course it gets warmer as you go south.

Most of us don't think of Ohio as a destination except during the theme park season. We drive through it on the way to Florida, but we usually don't stop until we get south of Cincinnati. You may have explored the state park resorts in Kentucky, Tennessee and even Indiana, but have you explored the state park resorts in Ohio?

You can trick or treat from campsite to campsite on Halloween. Dig for fossils in Hueston Woods. Walk through the fall colors from Old

Man's Cave to Ash Cave at Hocking Hills. Stay in a horse camp at Malabar Farm. Rent a cabin or a lodge room at Maumee Bay near Toledo.

Camp in downtown Cleveland.

Ohio state parks don't turn out the lights and go to sleep for the winter, like Rip Van Winkle. They launch one of their busiest seasons, with festivals and other events on the calendar through the fall and into winter.

Go fishing at one of the 13 state parks reserved only for day use. Reserve one of the 600 cabins or one of the 600 lodge rooms at the eight Ohio State Park Resort and Conference centers. They don't just call them lodges anymore, because they want

you to hold meetings, play golf, buy gift certificates, reserve for dinner and otherwise find a new way of looking at a state park resort.

Several pieces of state land, including land surrounding canal feeder lakes, came under the jurisdiction of the Department of Natural Resources when the DNR was formed in 1949. Now they run 72 parks, each with its own personality.

There are 358.5 miles of bridle trails, 500 miles of hiking trails in 64 of the parks, and dozens of things to do that only the insiders know about.

Have you ever hiked Hope Lake, walking the trail into the middle of Zaleski State Forest? You hike past the old Hope Furnace smelters. "If you go far enough, you'll stumble over an old whiskey still, see beaver dams, turn a corner and startle a flock of wild turkeys."

That's Cindy Gates, information specialist at the DNR, who grew up in Maumee, site of the newest Ohio state park, Maumee Bay, and has had a love affair with almost all of the state parks.

"Southeast Ohio is the most scenic area. The lay of the land is gorgeous so there are vistas year-round. In the southwest, you can get permits to dig for fossils in Hueston Woods, Stone Lick and Caesar Creek."

"Hocking Hills State Park is geologically unique. You can hike past the outcroppings, the waterfalls, formations like Devil's Bathub and Sphinx Head, Old Man's Cave and Ash Cave, which is 770 feet around and the largest rock shelter in Ohio."

Some other favorites: Shawnee, in the Little Smokies. The picture postcard lake tucked into the hills at Pike Lake. A campsite on Lake Erie at Geneva on the Lake, or in downtown Cleveland in Cleveland Lakefront State Park. Kelly's Island in the South Bass Islands.

Fishing at Burr Oak or Punderson. Touring Malabar Farm, where author Louis Bromfield made a show-

'Southeast Ohio is the most scenic area. The lay of the land is gorgeous so there are vistas year-round.'

— Cindy Gates

place out of 600 acres of worn-out farmland. Bogart and Bacall were married in the Big House on Malabar Farm.

As for the horse camps, it's strictly BYO! Bring Your Own Horse. Clubs all over the state have found them at places like East Fork and Caesar Creek.

Not everybody likes roughing it. In Gates' words "some people think that they're camping when room service is late." Seven of Ohio's state parks have lodges, cabins and other resort facilities run by TW Recreational Services Inc., a division of Canteen Corp. of Chicago. Shawnee, Hueston Woods and Deer Creek are in the southern half of the state; Salt Fork, Burr Oak and Punderson are central and east; Maumee Bay is 15 miles east of Toledo.

Mohican State Park Resort, is run by Service American Corp. Why? The management of each state park resort is put up for bid every year and that's the way the cookie crumbles.

Resort rates are \$69 to \$86 for two people in a room April through October, \$400 to \$465 a week for cabins that sleep at least six people. The resorts take reservations up to one year in advance: Oct. 1, 1991 for Oct. 1, 1992. Cabins fill first. Lodge rooms are booked heavily for high season weekends, but often have cancellations.

Ohio state park resorts are a moderately priced way to spend a close-to-home weekend in the fall. Greens fees on the golf courses are typically less than \$10.



Visitors can get permits to dig for fossils in Hueston Woods, Ohio, near Oxford. This is the view from the path to the lake.

Ohio State Park scene

Ohio State Park resorts have lodges, cabins, golf courses and swimming pools as well as the usual campgrounds, hiking trails, etc.

• Punderson State Park, Newbury

Boasts an English Tudor mansion with views of a glacier-carved lake. Located in northeast Ohio, it is minutes from Sea World, antique shops and Amish farms.

• Maumee Bay, Toledo

Features indoor racquetball and other spa facilities on the shore of Lake Erie. It's 15 miles east of Toledo. Located near Toledo.

• Salt Fork, Cambridge

Has a lodge in a secluded, hilly setting in eastern Ohio.

• Burr Oak, Glouster

Nestled in the hills of southeast Ohio, lure visitors with its meadows and crystal clear lake.

• Shawnee, Friendship

Ninety minutes southeast of Cincinnati in the "Little Smokies."

• Hueston Woods, College Corner

Ohio, is near Oxford and popular during Miami of Ohio football games.

• Deer Creek, Mount Sterling

Has a contemporary hotel in a country setting. If you're looking for a heated indoor pool, sauna and ping-pong table, this is the place. Located south of Columbus.

These seven Ohio State Parks Resort and Conference Centers can be reserved by calling toll free (800) AT-A-PARK.

Mohican State Park, Perrysville, Ohio, is run by another concession and can be reached toll-free at (800) 472-6700. The park has 96 units and offers guests an indoor pool, sauna and table tennis.

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