

Michigan's mystery maps

I stumbled across the idea one summer on my way to camp at the fabled Lake Gogebic at the western end of Michigan's upper peninsula. At Watersmeet, along US-2, we stopped at a way station to avail ourselves of the clean restrooms and replenish our supply of cold water.

The way station turned out to be a National Forest Service rest area and information station. A lonely clerk offered me a map and asked if I needed any information. She was kinda cute so I said yes, although I thought I had enough literature.

A lucky move! The map was the forest service guide to the Ottawa National Forest, and it introduced me to dozens of possible camping sites, boat launches and beaches that aren't on the official Michigan highway map.

Lake Gogebic State Park is all right if you don't mind a campground with the population of a small city, if you really need electricity, if you must wash in a hot shower (after standing in line) and if you want to buy your campfire wood in a bundle instead of finding it yourself.

But we spent the rest of our trip in an Ottawa National Forest campground on a 400-acre lake with a nice beach and plenty of tree growth between campsites and clean two-holers. Even had a couple of visits from bears.

The moral of the story is that you need two maps of any given area in Michigan to find your way around. The state map doesn't list federal sites, and the

federal map avoids any details about state sites.

The same thing happened recently when this confirmed inland laker decided to test the waters of Lake St. Clair. There's a book of slickly printed color maps called "Fishing Charts Published by the Lake St. Clair Advisory Committee." This \$3 gem tells you fishing hot spots, where to catch your favorite fish and in what months.

What it doesn't tell you is where to launch your boat. Not a single launch site is shown in the entire book. What I finally had to do was lay a map of Metropolitan Beach, in the Huron-Clinton Metroparks guide, alongside the fishing map and dope out where I could drop by boat.

Two maps it took. I don't care to promote commercial products usually, but a worthy exception is the big "Guide to Fun in Michigan" published by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. You can pick it up in most bookstores and many sporting goods shops.

The MUCC book has maps of every single road and path that will carry a car in every outstate county of Michigan. Its drawback is that major arteries are poorly shown and the type is small. To find your way, you need to use the MUCC guide in conjunction with the state highway map.

Another feature of the MUCC book is its chart, by counties, of every state and federal campground, revealing the number of campsites, whether it has elec-

tricity, a boat launch, a beach, picnicking and the rest. Again, use it in conjunction with your state and national forest maps.

A word about procuring those national forest maps: You can get them in advance by mail. If you're planning to camp:

- In the northeastern lower peninsula, write: Forest Supervisor, Huron National Forest, Cadillac, Mich.

- In the northwestern lower peninsula, write: Forest Supervisor, Manistee National Forest, Cadillac, Mich.

- In the eastern or central upper peninsula, write: Forest Supervisor, Hiawatha National Forest, Escanaba, Mich.

- In the western upper peninsula, write: Forest Supervisor Ottawa National Forest, Escanaba, Mich.

I can hear some tourist and auto-promoting outfits saying, "Hey, don't forget the private campgrounds." Frankly, I would just as soon forget the private campgrounds except in an emergency when you can't get in someplace else.

I'm all for General Motors and Detroit Edison when it comes to making cars and electricity, but free enterprise is ill at ease when it comes to operating rustic campgrounds. They pack you in because they make more money that way. They have pools and laundromats and pool tables and junk food machines. . . and all matter of things to turn a buck.

That's not my idea of camping.

—LEM MESEE

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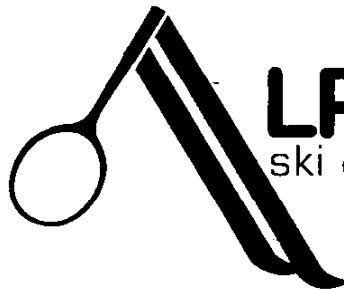


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