

THINGS TO DO FOR KIDS

Mackinac Island isn't just a playground for grown-ups. Kids of all ages enjoy one of the world's most extraordinary places.

Start your adventure...

1. VISIT A MACKINAC ISLAND BUTTERFLY HOUSE

There are two butterfly houses on Mackinac Island: *Wings of Mackinac* (\$) is located in Surrey Hill and *The Original Butterfly House* (\$) is on McGulpin Street behind historic St. Anne's Church. Both offer a wide variety of exotic butterflies from around the world. You can put yourself right in the midst of all the fluttering color as you walk through the lush, flowering gardens. Maybe even one of those beauties will land right on your arm! The butterfly houses are a wide-eyed experience for little tykes, yet a blast for older kids and grown-ups, too. Find out for yourself *why butterflies are such a big deal on Mackinac Island*.

2. EXPLORE HISTORIC FORT MACKINAC

None of us are old enough to remember what it was like in the 1800s, of course. And that makes visiting *Mackinac Island's Fort Mackinac* (\$) a ton of fun, whether you're 8 months old or 80 years! All age groups get a kick out of seeing the soldiers marching and hearing the cannons blasting at Fort Mackinac during the exciting reenactments each day.

Your fort ticket also includes access to *Historic Downtown Mackinac* (\$) attractions including the McGulpin House, Biddle House Mackinac Island Native American Museum, the Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, the fascinating American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum and more.

3. TAKE A HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE TOUR OF MACKINAC ISLAND

Nothing gets you in tune with the pace of life on Mackinac Island quite like a horse-drawn ride with *Mackinac Island Carriage Tours* (\$\$). Kids of all ages can appreciate the sights and sounds as you clip-clop through downtown and Mackinac Island State Park. Plus, kids ages 5-12 get a discount and those age 4 and under are free! A narrated horse-drawn carriage tour is the best way to get an overview of everything Mackinac, from the bustling downtown and the island's distinctive history to the iconic limestone rock formations that make spectacular photo ops. (Money-saving tip: You can package your carriage tour with other attractions such as Fort Mackinac or the Wings of Mackinac butterfly house and get a discount.)

For older kids who love horses, *horseback riding through Mackinac Island State Park* (\$\$) is a memorable activity. You can take a guided tour through one of Mackinac Island's liveries or take the reins and head off your own adventure.

4. RIDE A BIKE AROUND MACKINAC ISLAND

Take your own bikes on the ferry boat or *rent from one of several Mackinac Island bike vendors* in town (\$), then pedal all the way around the outer rim of Mackinac Island for a memorable family experience. The 8.2-mile route is completely free of cars and manageable even for little ones, with many beautiful places to stop for a rest along the way including restrooms at the British Landing Nature Center halfway around. Burleys and tag-alongs are available from bike rental vendors for younger children not yet ready to handle their own bike the whole way. *Here's what to expect on the 8.2-mile trek around Mackinac Island*.

For older kids, ride up into the interior of Mackinac Island on some of the 70-plus miles of trails and find landmarks including Skull Cave, Cave of the Woods and Crack in the Island. You could even pick up some grub from Doud's Market and pedal all the way up to Fort Holmes, which is one of the *best spots on Mackinac Island for a picnic*.

5. EXPERIENCE MACKINAC ISLAND'S MAZE OF MIRRORS AND HAUNTED THEATRE

Families with school-aged kids and older will have fun at a couple of classic attractions in downtown Mackinac Island. The *Maze of Mirrors on Mackinac Island* (\$) is a 3D labyrinth of reflective glass that tricks your eyes and challenges you to find the way out. For some "spooky" fun, check out the legendary wax monsters inside *Mackinac Island's Haunted Theatre* (\$).

6. STONE SKIPPING AND KITE FLYING ON MACKINAC ISLAND

Mackinac Island's Windermere Point, the rocky beach at the west end of downtown near the ferry docks, features some of the best skipping stones on the planet. Ditto for the waterfront near the *Lawn at Mackinac Island's Mission Point Resort*, on the east end of Mackinac Island. Both are relaxing places to let the kids splash around by the shoreline for a bit. And they're both totally free! They're also fantastic spots for flying kites up in the lake breeze.

7. ART CLASSES ON MACKINAC ISLAND

Watercolor Café offers children's art classes on Mackinac Island (\$) on certain days, in addition to a regular schedule of adult classes. Kids can create with guidance from café owner Kate and take a little masterpiece home with them. The Kids Art Studio at the *Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum* (\$) is another place where kids can try their hand at making a fridge-worthy painting or other work of art.

8. PLAYGROUNDS OF MACKINAC ISLAND

There are a couple of great *Mackinac Island playgrounds* for kids to enjoy in town. One is located at the public school overlooking the water and another is in the far corner of Marquette Park at the foot of Fort Mackinac. Away from town, in the middle of *Mackinac Island, is Great Turtle Park*. There you'll find a soccer field, sand volleyball court, basketball court, softball field, disc golf course and a pavilion with a fireplace and seasonal bathrooms.

9. GET OUT ON THE WATER SURROUNDING MACKINAC ISLAND

While adults enjoy *Mackinac Island's Sip 'n Sail Cruises, sailing charters and rides on the Ugly Anne* (\$\$-\$\$\$), Star Line Mackinac Island Hydro-Jet Ferry has a special water adventure for kids, too: A *ride to Mackinac Island on the "Good Fortune" pirate ship* (\$\$)! Grab your best mates and go on an evening cruise between the mainland and Mackinac Island. You'll experience a real cannon blast as you pull into the harbor.

See the Guide to Family Travel on Mackinac Island for more tips.