

Lakes, Trails and Streams Driving Tour



Photo Credit: Gail Boehm

From spectacular sunrises over Castle Rock Lake to calm canoeing on the crooked river of The Kickapoo, we invite you to enjoy serene summers, vibrant fall colors, and the winter playground of the lakes, trails, and streams region of Hidden Valleys of Southwestern Wisconsin. Activities for the entire family include swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, camping, canoeing, picnicking, hunting, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling for all to enjoy!

We begin the adventure at the **Lyndon Station** exit of I-90/94 in Juneau County, which was once an Irish settlement. Hwy HH north is the route to pursue, which encompasses the juncture of Lemonweir River and Wisconsin River. There are several locations to plunge right into fun.

Turning left onto Hwy 82, we now head west toward **Mauston**. Along this major route, no matter what season it may be, there is horseback riding or sleigh rides along the Lemonweir River at Red Ridge Ranch and breakfast on the trail at Woodside Ranch.

Refueling your body and your car, continue on 82 west and turn right at the corner of The Bank of Mauston, just one block before the intersection of Hwy 82 & 58. Several blocks down, is a four way stop sign, turn right. This leaves Mauston on Hwy G, which has several sharp curvy turns with plenty of scenic countryside between them.

At the next four way stop sign, Hwy G continues to the right followed by another

sharp curve. The intersection after that has Hwy HH and Hwy G coming together at Castle Rock Hideaway. Going straight leads you to fourth largest inland lake in Wisconsin of Castle Rock Lake. Castle Rock Park hosts fireworks, food, and family fun as it celebrates Waterfest the 1st Saturday in August.

After enjoying the park, turn right onto Hwy G heading west. There are campgrounds, boat landings & restaurants along the lake. Turn right onto 17th street and continue on as the road curves to the left and becomes 37th street, which will take you to Hwy 58. At Hwy 58 turn right to head north and then right again at the next junction, Hwy G, to Buckhorn State Park. Crossing the Buckhorn Bridge provides safe passage toward the state park. Stay and enjoy the park area awhile before turning right out of Buckhorn. Then follow Hwy G winding its way several miles towards Hwy 21 in **Necedah**. If turning left on Hwy 21, go approximately 4 miles to the entrance of the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. This is the home of the Whooping Cranes, Karner Blue Butterfly, Blanding turtles, and Trumpeter swans. If at Hwy 21 you turn right, you will cross over the Wisconsin River to go to the wayside for picnicking, boat launching, fishing, or just a rest stop.

Petenwell Rock can be seen looking across the river. Leaving the wayside, cross over the Wisconsin River again and take the first right turn (19th street), then right again on 18th. This takes you to Petenwell Dam on Petenwell Lake. Power dams on the Wisconsin River created both Castle Rock and Petenwell Lakes, the second largest inland lake in Wisconsin. Retrace the drive back to Hwy 21, turning right. Follow Hwy 21 west to Hwy G north. This time your destination is Wilderness County Park on Petenwell Lake for more camping, fishing, swimming, and boating. Upon leaving the park, take Hwy G (left) back to Hwy 21 west (right) to go into Necedah.

Before heading north on Hwy 80, turn left for Hwy 80 South and take time to explore the 1865 house that was almost demolished 15 years ago but now hosts The Red Hen Antiques. It is filled with many interesting old fashion items including a picture of one of the original owners of the house. Tea and coffee weekends are scheduled

for early spring and late fall. Continuing on Hwy 80 north to the **Sprague, Finley, Mather** area, turn left at the Wilderness Inn Bar & Grill to go thru part of the Sprague Mather Flowage in the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge has various educational events including the National Crane Count all year long.

When you get to Hwy H, turn left to get to the Eagles Nest Flowage for more water sports and fun. Hwy H south is a countryside drive into Camp Douglas, the start of the Omaha Bike Trail. Leave **Camp Douglas** headed west on Hwy 12 & 16 to Mill Bluff State Park. The village of **Oakdale** is next with the Antique Mall. Continuing on brings you into **Tomah**. Cross over Superior Avenue following Hwy 16 towards Tomah Recreation Park. Make a right turn onto Butts Avenue to get to Winnebago Park. The City of Tomah's Recreation Trail winds through Winnebago Park, Veteran's Park, and Butts Park. For more information, contact the Tomah Area Chamber at 800.948.6624.

Backtrack on Butts Avenue to Hwy 16 to continue this adventure headed west toward **Sparta**. In Sparta, walking or bicycling the 32-mile Elroy-Sparta National Bike Trail is a great adventure for the entire family to enjoy the scenery along the La Crosse River or Beaver Creek. Leaving Sparta via its downtown may bring shopping adventures to a new level with the unique stores and historical buildings. Definitely a must see before traveling on



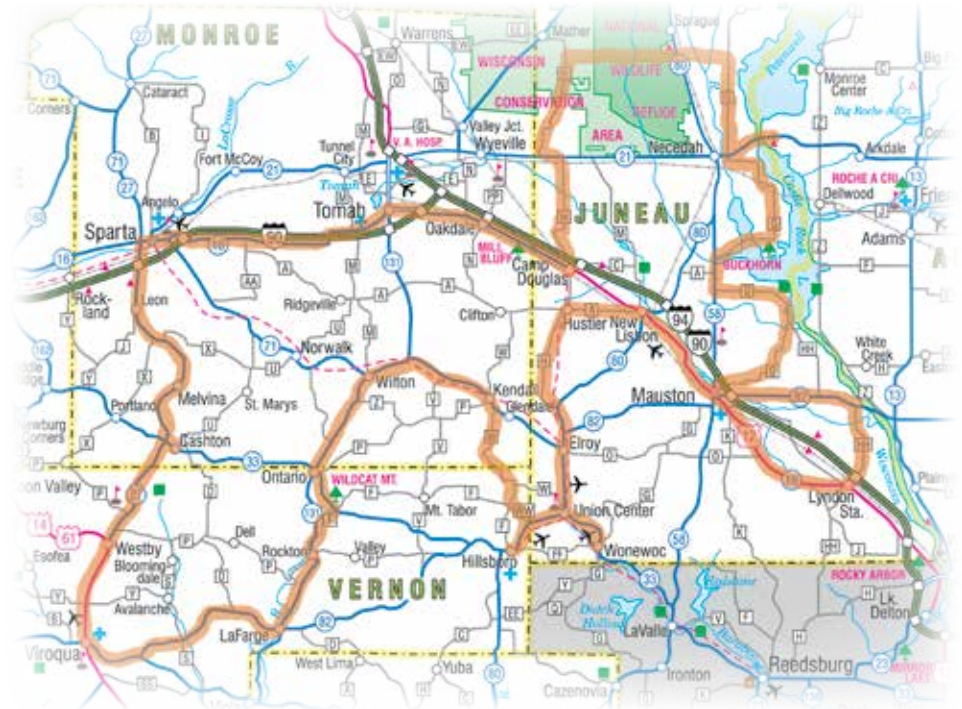
Photo Credit: Gail Boehm

Hwy 27 south to **Cashton**, “the heart of Amish Country.” Cashton has panoramic views of the hills and valleys throughout the Amish community.

Staying on Hwy 27, continue into **Westby** where there is “always a big Velkommen waiting for you!” Westby celebrates its Scandinavian heritage in all seasons with annual Snowflake Ski Jumping Tournaments and Syttende Mai Festival in spring. Westby has over 200 miles of trout streams as well as paved biking roads, handcrafted Amish furniture, and studios run by local artists. Hwy 27 then takes you into **Viroqua**, “the heart of Vernon County.” Viroqua’s Wild West Days of rodeos, civil war encampments, and a cattle drive enhance the variety of commerce in Viroqua’s historic downtown. Viroqua is definitely worth more than a day to drive through. When you are ready to move on, take Hwy 82 east headed for La Farge which lies along the Kickapoo River adjacent to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Hwy F runs through the Kickapoo Valley Reserve and gets you into Wildcat State Park. Hwy 33 west then takes you from Wildcat State Park to canoeing, tubing or kayaking on the Kickapoo River north of La Farge in **Ontario**. From Ontario, travel north on Hwy 131 into Wilton for more biking adventures or even to stop at Dorset Valley School Restaurant and Bakery further down the road before heading east to Kendall on Hwy 71. Kendall is the headquarters for the Elroy Sparta Trail. Leaving Kendall, take a leisurely back road route of Hwy W to Hwy WW to get into **Hillsboro**. Hillsboro is the “Czech Capital of Wisconsin” and is the trailhead for new rails to trails bikeway. The seven mile route follows the West Branch of the Baraboo River and crosses several times on wooden bridges to link up with the 400 State Bicycle Trail in Union Center.

Hwy 82 east (running with Hwy 80) exits Hillsboro and brings the journey into **Union Center**. Go straight on Hwy 33 east going into **Wonewoc**. The 400 State Bicycling Trail runs through Wonewoc where specialty shops, a bakery, and Beyond Boundaries canoe/kayak/bike rentals are located in the historic old Taig’s Feed Mill. Wonewoc is the midpoint on the 400 State Bike Trail. Fine dining can be experienced just east of Wonewoc on Hwy 33 at Club Chaparral and shopping in historic Wonewoc.



Return on 33 west to Union Center and take a right onto Hwy 82/80. Union Center is located on the 400 State Bike. Continue on 82/80 to the right, heading for Elroy—home of former governor Tommy Thompson. Elroy is the hub for bicycling, as it lies where 3 bicycle trails come together; Omaha Trail between Elroy and Camp Douglas, the 400 State Trail connecting **Elroy with Reedsburg**, and the Elroy-Sparta Trail. Leaving Elroy, Fertile Grounds Cave provides tasty food to take you on Hwy 80 north out of Elroy onto Junction H. This scenic and leisurely route brings you into “the one and only” **Hustler**. Hustler not only hosts a section of the Omaha Trail but also, Hustlerfest held the last weekend in August. There is lots of food, including Friday night fish fries at the Hooterbowl, Tuesday steak & shrimp at Hustle Inn. Now on Hwy A, head east toward **New Lisbon** for more festival fun.

Dine at The Opera House, (great homemade pizza). Walk along the Lemonweir River (river of memories) at Riverside Park. Wa Da Shu Da Days is held at the park the beginning of July. Camping is available at Riverside Park as well as Kennedy Park on Hwy M. Also on Hwy M is the seven miles of Oak Ridge Trail, great for cross country skiing.

Historic Indian relics can be viewed in Raabes Pharmacy or New Lisbon’s Public Library. Effigy mounds are located east of New Lisbon on Hwy 12 & 16. A mile further east brings you to the Burr Oak Winery

which hosts a spring festival at the winery the last weekend in April and a fall harvest the weekend after Labor Day. Continuing past the winery is the New Lisbon-Mauston airport where Juneau County EAA offers a Pancake Breakfast Fly-in every Labor Day Saturday.

After a few miles, stop in **Mauston** to take a walk by the river flowing behind the beautiful Hatch Library. Enjoy delicious lunch specials Beyond the Daily Grind. On summer Saturdays you’ll find the Farmers Market. Continuing east on Hwy 12/16, Carr Valley Cheese also offers tasty treats as you head back into Lyndon Station. Whether for camping, biking, train rides, or paintball, this route also takes you to the borderline of the Dells with Rocky Arbor State Park. Just before the park, turn left to get to The Riverside and Great Northern Railway where 15” gauge steam locomotives take you through picturesque woods.

Hikers, cyclists, trail riders, naturalists, birders, bikers, boaters, swimmers, water-skiers, canoeists, hunters, anglers, cross-country skiers, and snowmobilers can all enjoy two of Wisconsin’s largest inland lakes; as well as the numerous trails, the abundant wildlife, the thousands of acres of parks, and the lakes, trails, and streams of southwestern Wisconsin’s Hidden Valleys.