

Chasing the Sunset

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Looking for summer fun? Hit the road, and head west. Drive Interstate 94 from soulful Detroit to the lakeside charm of Harbor Country. Along the way, you'll find a bounty of events, activities and dining options.

Detroit/Dearborn

As Michigan's largest city, Detroit offers numerous activities and events throughout the year, but summertime is the season for Hart Plaza festivals. Almost every weekend during the summer, you can visit the waterfront plaza in Downtown Detroit to explore the sites, sounds and tastes of various cultures at themed events, such as the Afro-American Music Festival (July 21-23) and the Arab and Chaldean Festival (July 29-30).

Art, history and music are well-represented at venues throughout Detroit, and new alternatives debut regularly—especially dining options. A good example is Detroit Breakfast House, which is a must-stop before heading off for your I-94 adventure. Less than a year old, the nearly 4,000-square-foot restaurant features upscale couches and flat-screen televisions that combine with flavorful dishes to create one of the city's most popular breakfast stops.

Once on the road, head west on I-94 to Dearborn, home of Ford Motor Company. Many attractions highlight the family and the company. Five are collectively known as The Henry Ford—the Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, the IMAX Theatre, the Benson Ford Research Center and the Ford Rouge Factory Tour.

Earlier this year, Henry Ford Museum opened "With Liberty and Justice For All," a new permanent exhibit that explores the struggle for freedom in the United States, including key historical events from the Revolutionary War through the Civil Rights Movement. Take a trip back in time by visiting Greenfield Village's seven historic districts that include Henry Ford's farmhouse, Railroad Junction and Thomas Edison's "idea factory." Films comes to life at the IMAX Theatre. During the theater's

3D Film Festival, get up close and personal with a T-rex, NASCAR racing and creatures that live in the deep, blue sea. Historical records and archives at the Benson Ford Research Center represent all aspects of Americana, including Ford Motor Co.'s early 20th-century history from its humble beginnings in 1903. The Ford Rouge Factory Tour, which celebrated its two-year anniversary in May, lets you watch the automobile production process first hand at the nearby Dearborn Truck Plant.

Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor

Continuing west on I-94, make time to explore the historic 19th-century homes in Ypsilanti's remarkably well-preserved downtown area. One of the largest historic districts in the state lies just down the hill from Eastern Michigan University in Depot Town. Here, you will find pedestrian-friendly shopping and a host of museums, including the RM Classic Car Headquarters on Forrest Avenue, the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection on East Cross Street and the impressive Old Fire Station, which was built in the 19th century and displays original firefighting equipment. Park by the antique caboose on Rice Street for easy access to Depot Town and the "tridge"—triple bridge—that spans the Huron River between Depot Town, Riverside Park and Frog Island Park.

For a self-guided walking tour of downtown Ypsilanti homes, begin at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum, 220 N. Huron. The museum is open Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. For more information, call 734-482-4990.

If you are in town in August, get a full dose of history at the city's annual Heritage Festival (August 18-20), which includes arts, crafts, music, food, parades, a children's tent, contests and tours at several venues across the city.

Ann Arbor's variety of cultural offerings includes theatres, museums, galleries and restaurants within walking distance of the University of Michigan. The Ann Arbor Art Fairs (July 19- 22) have become summer staples for locals and visiting art lovers.

The art fairs attract about 500,000 people every year. Getting to the fairs is simple thanks to free rides on the purple Link buses. Park at Briarwood Mall or Pioneer High School, just south of the football stadium, and pay a nominal fee for a shuttle bus trip. For more information, visit <http://www.artfair.org/>.

Jackson

Jackson's performance art options range from the classic to the contemporary. Michigan Theatre, established in 1930, is in the midst of restoration efforts while hosting films and live performers, such as Jeff Daniels. The George E. Potter Center consists of three theatres at Jackson Community College that host touring shows from Broadway and beyond. The Jackson Comedy Club, a relatively new nighttime option in downtown Jackson, features dancing, karaoke and stand-up performers. This year's Michigan Shakespeare Festival (July 20–August 6) consists of Hamlet and A Midsummer Night's Dream. After the show, grab a reasonably priced, hearty meal at Steve's Ranch, which offers an all-day lunch menu.

Battle Creek

As the home of the Kellogg cereal Empire, Battle Creek has become synonymous with breakfast. Kellogg's Cereal City is one of the area's most well known attractions. A great stop for kids (and kids at heart), Cereal City offers a simulated cornflake production line as well as interactive games and exhibits.

Battle Creek's Binder Park Zoo and the American Museum of Magic in Marshal also appeal to a broad spectrum of visitors. Binder Park Zoo houses one of the nation's largest herds of giraffes in its newest and most popular exhibit, Wild Africa, which spans 50 acres of lush woodlands. With 600 animals to see, there are plenty of favorites for everyone. At the American Museum of Magic, the largest privately owned magic museum open to the public, you will find more than 250,000 items, including books, illusions, magazines and magic kits. Be sure to call ahead for an appointment.

Kalamazoo

This city has several hometown restaurant favorites, such as Rykse's at 5924 Stadium Drive. Its baked goods, including its famous, sticky, sweet cinnamon

rolls, are meals in themselves. For homemade Italian fare, nearby PawPaw is home of La Cantina, 139 W. Michigan. The eclectic menu and fresh fish at Oakwood Bistro make it another local favorite. To explore a uniquely American dish along with music, visit Kalamazoo in early August for Ribfest (August 3-5).

Before dinner or after lunch, treat the family to activities at venues such as the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, a small facility with numerous informative, hands-on events throughout the year. "Science in Toyland" (June 17–September 4) uses toys to demonstrate scientific principles. Or, at the Air Zoo, learn about aviation in its aircraft museum or on fun rides, stomach-turning simulators and the all-too-real 4D Theater.

Harbor Country

As you near Lake Michigan, I-94 turns south and parallels the lakeshore to the Indiana border. Here, Harbor Country is a compilation of eight Southwestern Michigan communities situated on the shores of Lake Michigan: Michiana, Grand Beach, New Buffalo, Three Oaks, Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, and Sawyer.

It is no surprise that the Ship 'N Shore Art and Music Festival (August 11–13) is a popular event. The festival includes fine art displays, a beer garden, food vendors, live music and family activities.

Anytime of the year, though, is a good time for antiques shopping in Harbor Country. The area abounds with art studios and antique shops. For a casual ending to your interstate travels, experience the signature burgers at Redamak's in New Buffalo.

After driving west through such dynamic and culturally diverse towns, don't feel badly if you missed one or two along the way—there's always time to stop on the roundtrip home.