

OZAUKEE LIFESTYLES

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Be a tourist in your own backyard

Ozaukee County offers miles of beautiful trails that come alive in spring

After a long, snowy winter, even the most casual hiker is thrilled when spring is officially on the horizon. March is a wonderful time to head outdoors, hit the trails and explore the beauty and wonderment provided by nature in Ozaukee County.



Observation tower at Mequon Nature Preserve

The Ozaukee Interurban Trail provides 30 miles of paved, multi-use trail that winds through the entire county, connecting to Milwaukee County trails to the south and Sheboygan County trails to the north. The majority of the trail is off-road and family-friendly. Views include wetlands, woodlands, Cedar Creek, the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan. There are also numerous on- and off-trail birding hotspots. Whether you are walking, running, in-line skating or riding your bike, the trail also offers the opportunity to rest and enjoy Ozaukee County's beautiful and vibrant communities along the way.

In the southern part of the county you will find the Mequon Nature Preserve. Enjoy 444 acres of fresh air and beautiful vistas from the 5-plus miles of hiking trails, 40-foot observation tower and a new pollinator's garden recently installed near the education center. With much of the land formerly in agriculture, this

treasured sanctuary is carefully being restored to pre-settlement conditions of prairies, wetlands and woods, creating habitat for wildlife and improving the local ecosystem. Trails are free and open to the public 365 days a year from sunrise to sunset.

Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve, part of the Ozaukee County Park System and located along Lake Michigan in the town of Grafton, offers striking views of Lake Michigan and undeveloped 130-foot high clay bluffs. The preserve also protects a significant natural area, Lion's Den Gorge, and is adjacent to a 44-acre U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Ulao Waterfowl Production Area. The preserve includes 73 acres of hiking trails, boardwalks, bridges and a staircase that weave along the bluffs, over significant ravines, through the wetlands and down to the shore of Lake Michigan. Bird watching, including waterfowl, raptors and migrants, nature photography, picnicking and hiking are some of the recreational features offered.

Heading north to Belgium along the beautiful shores of Lake



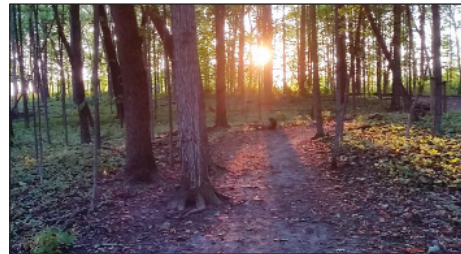
Harrington Beach State Park

Michigan, you will find 700-plus-acre Harrington Beach State Park. The park offers a wonderful beachfront, summer camping and nature trails, including a hiking trail around Quarry Lake that highlights the history of Stonehaven, a mining community that was once located in the park. Puckett's Pond provides fishing opportunities, and the entire park is a great place for bird watching. A Wisconsin State Park sticker or day pass is required for entry.

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust offers a wonderful series of hikes in Ozaukee County. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded at the Forest Beach Migratory Preserve in Port Washington. Ten migratory habitats provide stopover support for species that follow the Lake Michigan migratory corridor – viewable to hikers from numerous trails and two watch platforms. Grafton



Photo by Daniel Schmitz



Forest sun, Mequon Nature Preserve

MNP photos by Larry Meihnsner



Riveredge Nature Center

offers the Bratt Woods Natural Area, where you can enjoy trails that loop close to the Milwaukee River, giving spring hikers the rare opportunity to watch the ice leave the river and the short-lived spring flowers emerge. Also in Grafton, the forest floor of the Kurtz Woods State Natural Area is a great place to see spring flora – spring plants carpet the area, which is similar in terrain to parts of the Kettle

Moraine. The hike takes about an hour – be aware, the rocky terrain can be difficult in icy conditions.

Riveredge Nature Center in Saukville offers 10 miles of trails, which are open to the public year-round from dawn to dusk. Enjoy the beauty of these wonderfully restored natural sanctuaries, where you will find prairies, ponds, woods and more than a mile of Milwaukee River shoreline.

In the town of Saukville, the 300-acre Hawthorne Hills County Park complex through the Milwaukee River Mesic Woods Natural Area (Shady Lane Natural Area) offers miles of beautiful trails with spectacular views of the rolling natural terrain, spring ephemeral flowers and a mature canopy of native hardwood trees as well as access to the Milwaukee River, where you can enjoy the view or fish. Also in the town of Saukville, discover the 123-acre Tendick Nature Park, part of the Ozaukee County Park System, where you can experience a walk through a cedar swamp, wetlands, maple-beech forest and restored native prairie grasslands and savannah, or play a round of disc golf at the professional 18-hole disc golf course, use your bow at the archery range or launch your kayak or canoe on the Milwaukee River.

Keep in mind, spring is a seasonal transition time. Dress accordingly; wear proper clothing, especially footwear. Many of our parks and natural areas offer classes throughout the year – before heading out, consider visiting websites for special events, pet-friendly areas, classes, fees or seasonal updates. Then get out and enjoy the beauty of the trails throughout Ozaukee County.

For information on all these activities and more, pick up a copy of the Ozaukee County Tourism Guide available at area chambers and visitor centers, visit www.ozaukeetourism.com and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping to make Ozaukee County a wonderful place for all to live, work and visit.



Trail running at Riveredge Nature Center

