
Stop 60. Maume Bay

Arrival datetime: Monday, July 29, 1:00PM
Sites visited: Maumee Bay State Park
Accommodations: Maumee Bay Resort
States traveled: Michigan, Ohio

We took off at 7:00AM, hoping to avoid the Traverse City traffic we had encountered along the way. It was Sunday morning so our strategy actually worked. We were listening to NPR comedy shows and so resisted stopping for breakfast in Traverse City, a mistake, as there was no other town for many miles around. We finally found a small diner just before getting on the interstate. It rained off and on all the way to Maumee Bay. We had one bad incident where a bird flew directly into our windshield, but he was long gone before we recovered from the initial shock.

It was too early to check in, but we got the State Park map and the local Sunday newspaper and perused them over lunch. Then we surveyed the State Park by car, and then tried to check in again. This time we got in. Our room was a first floor handicapped access room. As we were the only people within a twenty-mile radius who were not traveling with a family, they must have assumed we were retired. We optimistically changed into hiking clothes and sure enough, it had stopped raining by the time we hit the two-mile nature trail. We need not have bothered with the hiking boots as we walked on a wooden boardwalk for the entire two miles. Michael was curious to see a buckeye tree, but we confirmed with the clerk in the Nature Center that the

only tree we thought might be a buckeye was actually a buttonbush.

It was about 85° but the humidity made it feel like 90°. The sun came out for our walk, and it felt very hot. We scurried to the shade where we could as Jennifer neglected to put on suntan lotion due to the earlier drizzle. The boardwalk was mostly through swampy green woods, but some parts branched out over fields that overlooked Lake Erie.

The woods appeared magical, grasses reached over our heads even though we were standing on a four-foot boardwalk. Most of the bushes were new to us on this trip, though they comfortably reminded us of similar venues in our home state of New Jersey. We were getting close and were a bit startled by the recognition that we knew better how to recognize plants in a western forest at a 7000-foot elevation than those in our own backyard.

Very hot from our hike, we put on our bathing suits and headed for the Lake Erie beach. But Jennifer detected an odor that prevented us from going into the water. Lake Superior had been a cold deep dark, but serene presence. Lake Michigan had been a sparkling, inviting recreation land. But Lake Erie was murky, threatening and



View of Lake Erie from Maume Bay Nature Trail.

smelly. We had noticed that the State Park had a small lake with a lifeguard just across the parking lot from Lake Erie, so we asked the lifeguard what the difference was in the swimming between the two lakes. She smiled at us as if we were children. “Well,” she said, with a gesture toward the small lake in front of her, “this one is clean,” then a gesture toward Lake Erie, “and that one is dirty.” To our shocked expressions, she added, “there is oil and pollutants from boats over there.” We immediately recognized the odor we had smelled as oil.

We swam in the clean lake. It was very shallow. The lifeguard had warned us that it was low due to drought. We laid

out in the sun for a bit, amusing ourselves with the lifeguard’s announcements on a bull horn.

“Do not feed the seagulls.”

“Do not throw other swimmers into the water.”

“Attention swimmers, the Ranger is about to fire a shot to scare away the seagulls. Do not be alarmed.”

Sure enough, the Ranger’s three loud bursts from a starting pistol sent dozens of seagulls flying away from the shores for our little lake toward Lake Erie. Eventually, the sun faded once again into gray skies and threatened rain, so we left to get ready for dinner.



Lake Erie was murky and threatening.

We got a table overlooking a large pond on the long and wide lawn between the hotel and Lake Erie. No sooner had we been seated than the dark clouds we had first seen threaten the beach broke open into lightening and rain outside our window. Several people were caught in the downpour and could be seen running for shelter, picnics or cocktails in hand obviously ruined.

By the time our mediocre dinner was over, the rain had stopped. The sun was not shining, but it was light enough to take an evening stroll. There was still lightening hovering at the edges of the clouds, so we refrained from walking along the water. We stayed in the vicinity of a tree-lined path around a lit fountain near the lodge.

Miles traveled:	346
Departure datetime:	Tuesday, July 30, 8:00AM
Departure weather:	74° Partly Cloudy