



Summer Visitor's Guide 2008

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Biking & Hiking - Limitless trails to explore

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Some of the most popular and enjoyable summer activities in the Marquette area also happen to be free and often don't require even one gallon of gasoline.

The biking and hiking paths that wind through the city and county of Marquette can provide opportunities for those looking for day hikes, leisurely rides, hardcore mountain bike runs or week-long backpacking trips.

For those who are not familiar with the trails available, there are several resources where maps and directions can be found. The Noquemanon Trail Network, a local non-profit group that is dedicated to preserving non-motorized trails, has a Web site that provides prospective hikers and bikers with information on trails in the area.

NTN Director Susan Brian said the Marquette area is unique because of the close proximity of challenging trails.

"You can ride anywhere from the center of

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Marquette and be at a trail within 10 minutes," she said. "This is one reason Marquette was chosen as a livable city."

Marquette was also chosen as one of the top 10 places to live and ride in the U.S. by Mountain Biking Magazine. Brian said one reason for this is the trail system that is available on Marquette Mountain.

Several single-track mountain biking trails are available at the mountain, all for intermediate to advanced riders. Brian said the trails' reputation as some of the best in the country are because of the volunteers who have spent countless hours designing them.

"The trails in South Marquette have gotten that award because of the huge volunteer effort to build the trails — it's an amazing design," she said.

Other intermediate and advanced trails can be found at Al Quaal Recreation Area and the Noquemanon Trail.

For those looking for a more laid-back ride, a 13-mile loop path winds through Marquette, offering sights of the historical downtown as well as the natural wooded settings that surround the city. The path also extends out to Harvey for those looking for a longer, paved ride.

Hikers who are interested in finding more places to explore this summer can use the North Country Trail Hikers Association as a resource for trails. The North Country Trail is a national trail established by the National Park Service. About 100 miles of the 4,600-mile trail winds through the Upper Peninsula, from the Hiawatha National Forest to the Ottawa National Forest. The national trail extends from New York to North Dakota.

NCTA member Denise Herron said that maps showing access points, parking areas and areas that provide facilities can be obtained by visiting the NCTA Web site. Currently, the NCTA is working with Global Positioning System devices to provide more detailed maps of the trail — a half dozen are available so far and within a year, there should be two dozen maps, she said.

"This is intended to be the premiere hiking trail that avoids other types of travel," she said.

Herron also added that the availability of trails in Marquette County is wide open — from Sugar Loaf Mountain to Little Presque Isle, the Little Garlic River area, the McCormick Wilderness to the Mead Trails near Wetmore Landing.

"There are exciting hiking trails for people who want to backpack or go for day hikes," Herron said. "Hiking as a way of life is a good way to get out and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the outdoors in a way that is quiet and pleasant."

On the Web:

Resources for hiking and biking trails

www.noquetrails.org

www.northcountrytrail.org/nct/index.htm

www.marquettecountry.org

Places to go for info:

Marquette Country Convention & Visitors Bureau

Lake Superior Community Partnership