



Lake Erie Shores & Islands® Backgrounder

Contact:

Jill Bauer
Public Relations Coordinator
Lake Erie Shores & Islands Welcome Center – East
jill@shoresandislands.com
(419) 625-2984 or (800) 255-3743
www.SHORESandISLANDS.com

Lake Erie Shores & Islands® is a cooperative marketing partnership between the Visitors & Conventions Bureaus of Erie County (East) and Ottawa County (West), Ohio.

About the Area

All the fun of a genuine shore vacation is closer than you think. Nearly 7 million people visit the Lake Erie Shores & Islands each year, solidifying its position as one of the most appealing vacation destinations in the Midwest. From Top-Thrill coasters to unspoiled natural coastlines, the Lake Erie Shores & Islands offers year-round fun and relaxation for the whole family.

With a mainland area that spans from Vermilion, Ohio to Genoa, Ohio and inland, plus Kelleys, Middle Bass and South Bass islands, the Lake Erie Shores & Islands boasts more than 150 miles of freshwater coastline and some of the greatest attractions around.

Cedar Point amusement park offers more rides and roller coasters than any other park on the planet, and has been voted “Best Amusement Park in the Worlds” for 11 years in a row by *Amusement Today* readers. Besides exhilarating rides, Cedar Point provides quality family entertainment including live shows, PEANUTS™ characters on ice, and Extreme Biking show and numerous games of skill. Often overlooked though, is Cedar Point’s differentiating feature of being located on a peninsula surrounded by beautiful Lake Erie. From the incredible coastal scenery at 420 feet in the sky to the pristine sandy beach, Lake Erie truly does offer MORE to Cedar Point’s guests.

Islands have always been an appealing escape, and Ohio’s Lake Erie Islands are no exception. Middle Bass Island has a tranquil atmosphere and refreshing natural landscape that lures visitors to its shore for carefree, relaxing getaways; conversely, South Bass Island, often referred to by its village name Put-in-Bay, offers unparalleled adventure around every corner. Kelleys Island, the largest of the three, offers a combination of the exquisite natural beauty with a milder blend of adventure and attractions.

Waterpark Capital of Ohio? Absolutely! Not counting Lake Erie – the area’s natural water park – the Lake Erie Shores & Islands boasts four indoor and two outdoor water play lands. Great Wolf Lodge, Castaway Bay, Kalahari and Rain all combine lodging, entertainment and aquatic fun under one roof and attract visitors year-round with 80° temperatures.

Known as “the Walleye Capital of the World” this region also brings in anglers seeking yellow perch, smallmouth bass, steelhead trout and many other species. Fishing is productive year-round and can be enjoyed from a variety of shoreline locations or through charter captains or walk-on head boats that make the experience easily available for all ages and levels of experience. Tens of thousands of anglers head here each year to take home impressive catches. In fact, more fishing licenses are sold here than any other place in Ohio!

History and educational opportunities for enrichment are plentiful, and the variety of experiences is dizzying! Only a few miles separate a 135 year-old Chautauqua community, the birthplace of Thomas Edison, a former U.S. President’s home and various museums, animal adventures, historic sites, cultural entertainment and underground caves. The list of things to see and do goes on and on.

Story Ideas

1. **Cedar Point:** Named “Best Amusement Park in the World” for eleven consecutive years, this Sandusky park/resort continues to impress. Home to more rides and roller coasters than any other park in the world, Cedar Point debuted its 17th coaster, the \$21 million **Maverick**, in 2007. 2008 saw the addition of a fourth children’s area, **Planet Snoopy**. For 2009, the park premiered an all-new **Starlight Experience** on the Frontier Trail. Starlight Experience features lighted displays, music, splashes of light and more than one million LED lights each evening at Twilight from May 23 – September 6. Cedar Point also features live entertainment, delicious dining options, beach-front family resorts and RV campgrounds, the family-fun Challenge Park, and Soak City.
2. **Making a Splash in Sandusky:** Get ready for some wet and wild fun at one of Sandusky’s four indoor waterpark resorts. In the “waterpark capital of Ohio” you can visit Ohio’s first indoor waterpark - **Great Wolf Lodge**, Cedar Point’s Caribbean-themed **Castaway Bay**, the United States’ largest indoor waterpark at the African-themed **Kalahari Resort** and **Rain Waterpark** at the Quality Inn & Suites. During warmer weather you can splash the day away at Cedar Point’s **Soak City** and **Monsoon Lagoon** in Marblehead.
3. **Island Fever:** Who couldn’t use an island getaway? Take a ferry, cruise or a catamaran jet-boat to the Lake Erie Islands to experience life at a more relaxed pace or full of fun sightseeing and adventures. Sample island life on **Kelleys Island**, **Put-in-Bay**, or **Middle Bass Island**. Experience an island-hopping cruise on the **Goodtime I** or **Jet Express** from downtown Sandusky. Island ferry service is available from Port Clinton, Catawba, Marblehead and Sandusky.
4. **Lake Erie Shores & Islands Wine-making Heritage:** Celebrate with August’s *Toast of Ohio* wine tasting festival in Sandusky and October’s *Island Wine Festival* on Put-in-Bay. Visit both historic and modern wineries; **Firelands Winery**, **Hermes Vineyard & Winery**, **Quarry Hill Winery & Orchard**, **Kelley’s Island Wine Co**, **Heineman’s Winery**, **Mon Ami Restaurant & Historic Winery**, and **Paper Moon Winery** for tours and tasting.
5. **Doing What Comes Naturally:** Butterfly Festival on Kelleys Island, Feathers and Foliage Festival, Great Black Backed Gull Watch, Lake Erie Wing Watch Weekend, plus birdwatching and hiking at **Sheldon Marsh**, **Old Woman Creek**, **Eagle Point Preserve**, and **Magee Marsh**. Lake Erie Shores & Islands is part of a region that plays host to some 300-bird species during the spring and fall migratory bird seasons. Take a stroll through a

garden at the 70-acre **Schoepfle Garden & Arboretum**, **James H. McBride Arboretum**, or historic downtown Sandusky's many beautifully landscaped parks.

6. **Artists, Craftsmen and Performers:** Cultural events and activities, such as the **Huron Playhouse**, Ohio's longest, continuously running Summer Theater, the Merry Go Round Museum's Carver's Weekend, Bay Days, and the **Lyman Harbor Entertainment Complex**, **Huron Amphitheater** and **Sandusky Bay Pavilion** live summer entertainment schedule. See craftsman at work at the **Berlin Fruit Box Company** – the oldest basket making business in Ohio (and second oldest in the nation.)
7. **Eerie Ohio:** Spotlighting Halloween events and attractions such as **HalloWeekends®** at Cedar Point, or **Ghostly Manor** high tech haunted attraction, open year-round. **Captain Montague's Bed & Breakfast** in Huron hosts "Murder Mystery Weekends" in the fall and winter and the Sandusky hosts **Boo at the Bay** and the **Haunted Sandusky Ghost Walk** in October.
8. **Underground Railroad:** Because of its location on Lake Erie, the number of railroad lines, the Huron and Vermilion Rivers, and the Milan Canal, Erie County was a leading Great Lakes port and a major terminal on the Underground Railroad. Occasional guided tours and educational programs are offered by the Friends of The Sandusky Underground Railroad Education Center.
9. **Walleye, perch, and smallmouth bass fishing:** Charter a fishing boat or fish along Lake Erie's shore from a pier, park or beach.
10. **History only found in Lake Erie Shores & Islands**
 - **Thomas Alva Edison's Birthplace** in Milan, Ohio
 - **Merry Go Round Museum** watch wood carvers make a carousel animal
 - Learn about Shipwrecks and Lake Erie's role in the War of 1812 at the **Inland Seas Maritime Museum**, the **Maritime Museum of Sandusky**, and **Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial** on Put-in-Bay.

Annual Events

Events are as frequent as waves on the beach in the Lake Erie Shores & Islands. Following are just some of the many special activities held in the region each year. For more details on these events and a complete up-to-date list, visit SHORESandISLANDS.com or call 800.255.3743 or 800.441.1271.

February: *Arctic Ice Festival*, Sandusky

April: *Lake Erie Wing Watch Weekend*, location varies between Erie and Ottawa counties

May: *International Migratory Bird Day*, Oak Harbor

Lakeside Daisy Day Festival, Marblehead

Nest with the Birds, Kelleys Island

May Days, Sandusky

Walleye Festival, Port Clinton

June: *Ohio Bike Week*, various locations in Lake Erie Shores & Islands

Founder's Day, Put-in-Bay

Festival of the Fish, Vermilion

NHRA Summit Racing Equipment Nationals, Summit Motorsports Park, Norwalk

Elmore/Portage River Fest, Elmore
July: *Huron River Fest, Huron*
Mid-Summer Antiques Fest, Milan
National Trophy Pistol & Rifle Matches, Camp Perry, Port Clinton
Cold Creek Festival, Castalia
Islandfest, Kelleys Island
Christmas in July, various locations in Lake Erie Shores & Islands
Ottawa County Fair, Oak Harbor
August: *Basket Festival, Berlin Heights*
Night Under Fire, Summit Motorsports Park, Norwalk
Erie County Fair, Sandusky
Toast of Ohio Wine Festival, Sandusky
Huron County Fair, Norwalk
Big Splash Raffle, Sandusky
September: *Lake Erie Boat Week, Port Clinton*
Melon Festival, Milan
Woollybear Festival, Vermilion
Harvest Festival, Port Clinton
October: *Harvest Happenings, Huron*
Boo at the Bay, Sandusky
Cedar Point's HalloWeekends, Sandusky
Lighthouse Festival, Marblehead
Island Wine Festival, Put-in-Bay
Apple Festival, Oak Harbor
Oktoberfest, Put-in-Bay and Sandusky
Tombstone Derby, Elmore
November/December: *Christmas Point, USA, Sandusky*
Festival of Lights, Huron
Walleye Madness at Midnight, Port Clinton

Location/Getting Here

We're easy to get to! Lake Erie Shores & Islands is located on Lake Erie, midway between Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio. Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE) is just 55 miles from Sandusky and Toledo Express Airport (TOL) is 65 miles. Amtrak and Greyhound both service Sandusky.

To reach Lake Erie Shores & Islands by car from the east and west, use the Ohio Turnpike/I-80 or Ohio State Route 2. From the south, access to the area is via US Route 250, State Route 2, or State Route 53.

Lake Erie Shores & Islands® is within one day's drive of more than 60 million people.

Cultural History/Diversity

The Lake Erie Shores & Islands is a vacation destination on Lake Erie in north central Ohio. It covers a land area that primarily includes all of Erie and Ottawa Counties plus outlying areas beyond those borders. Its origins can be traced to the 1700's, when it was a part of a huge tract of land called the Western Reserve owned by the British colony of Connecticut. In 1792 the Connecticut legislature granted 500,000 acres of the Western Reserve to Connecticut landowners whose property had been burned by the British during the Revolutionary War. The

granted acreage became known as the “Firelands,” and extended from northeast Ohio to the Marblehead Peninsula.

The territory west of the Marblehead Peninsula was named the Great Black Swamp. It encompassed 300,000 acres of wetlands and included swamps and marshes that provided the ideal habitat for wildlife, but created hardship for eager early travelers. Many detoured around its inky waters and thick canopy of trees, but a few hardy souls settled along the perimeter of the swamp.

Soon after the War of 1812, the Firelands territory attracted increasing numbers of enterprising and industrious pioneers from the east. Settlement camp quickly, as the Black Swamp was drained. Rich clay soil surfaced and attracted settlers who dreamed of agriculture riches. Because the Ohio and Erie Canal system never reached this area, goods were hauled to port towns on the lake or along its rivers. Shipyards sprang up along the area, and Lake Erie boat traffic grew. With the arrival of the Mad River & Lake Erie Railroad in 1835 and the completion of the Milan Canal in 1839, the area became a major transportation center. Shipbuilding, fishing, ice cutting and lumbering contributed largely to the area’s success and prosperity.

With its location on Lake Erie and accessibility from other cities, the region soon became a popular recreation destination too. Tourists arrived regularly by steamship and excursion trains from throughout Ohio, Michigan and Indiana to the Columbus Avenue dock in downtown Sandusky. Many then transferred to large ferries carrying hundreds of passengers across the bay to Cedar Point, Put-in-Bay and Kelleys Island. That tradition continues today.

Climate

Lake Erie Shores & Islands® Average Temperatures

Winter

Average High 35°

Average Low 22°

Spring

Average High 54°

Average Low 40°

Summer

Average High 80°

Average Low 64°

Fall

Average High 61°

Average Low 46°

Mean Temperature 49°

Average Rainfall: 45.03”

75% of Lake Erie Shores & Islands® visitors visit between June and September. However, fall is also a very popular time to visit and the shoulder seasons are growing due to indoor watermark resorts.

Economy

The Lake Erie Shores & Islands® region enjoys a successful and diverse economy, dating from its early history as a seaport and transportation center. In addition to tourism, there is a significant amount of manufacturing, and a variety of service and retail business.

Industries include:

Manufacturing --- automotive systems, rubber products, paints, coatings and resins, commercial stoves and food processing equipment, filter and filter cartridges, packaging materials, decorative metal products, decorative baskets, roofing shingles, stone and gravel, popcorn, seed corn, meats, poultry, pork products, nuts, bolts and award-winning wines.

NASA John Glenn Research Center's Plum Brook Station operates four world-class testing facilities including the Space Power Facility, Spacecraft Propulsion Research Facility, Hypersonic Tunnel Facility, and the Cryogenic Propellant Tank Facility.

Health and Medical Technologies

Tourism Economic Impact

- Visitors generated almost \$1.1 billion in business activity in Erie County in 2007, up 6.7% from 2006. Comparatively, Northwest Ohio sales growth was 3.7% and state of Ohio sales growth was 4.9%.
- 24% of the total tourism sales in Northwest Ohio (4.7 billion in 22 counties) are generated in Erie County.
- 30% of the total tourism sales in Northwest Ohio (4.7 billion in 22 counties) are generated in the Lake Erie Shores & Islands region (Erie and Ottawa counties).
- Tourism supports 1 in every 4 (over 26%) private sector jobs in Erie County.
- Tourism generated \$83.5 million in state and local taxes in 2007.
- Tourism is a diverse composite of economic activities, including transportation, recreation, retail, lodging, and food & beverage sectors.

(Data compiled by Tourism Economics and Longwoods International, 2007)

Major Employers

Erie County

Company	Sector
Cedar Fair / Cedar Point	Service
Kyklos Bearing Inc	Manufacturing
Firelands Regional Medical Center	Service
Ford Motor Co / ACH	Manufacturing
Freudenberg NOK	Manufacturing
International Automotive Components	Manufacturing
Kalahari Resorts	Service
Meijer Inc.	Trade
Sandusky City Board of Education	Government
State of Ohio	Government

Ottawa County

Company	Sector
Benton-Carroll-Salem Local Board of	Government

Education	
Brush Wellman Inc	Manufacturing
First Energy Corp	Utility
Luther Home of Mercy	Service
Magruder Hospital	Service
Ottawa County Government	Government
Port Clinton City Board of Education	Government
Silgan Holdings Inc	Manufacturing
USG Corp / US Gypsum Co	Manufacturing

Lodging

Lake Erie Shores & Islands® offers a variety of lodging options to fit every budget; romantic bed and breakfasts, rustic campgrounds for tents and RV’s, quaint lakeside cottages, modern hotels, motels and luxury resorts.

Hotel/Motel rooms.....	8,093
Bed and Breakfast Rooms.....	218
Campground Sites.....	2,934
Vacation Rental Units.....	1,099+
Marinas.....	95 marinas with 13,500+ docks

Did You Know?

Lake Erie Shores & Islands people and places played important roles in the growth and development of the United States.

- Milan’s most famous son - Thomas Alva Edison - revolutionized the world with his inventions.
- The first railroad in Ohio had its origin here.
- Local residents developed dustless chalk for classroom blackboards and corrugated boxes.
- Johnny Appleseed is said to have stopped in the Lake Erie Shores & Islands along his journey across the nation.
- During the Civil War, this area in Ohio was the final stop before freedom for many runaway slaves.
- Harriet Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” is set, in part, in Sandusky.
- Johnson’s Island Confederate Officers Prison, in Marblehead, was home to nearly 9,000 Confederate prisoners during the Civil War.
- Ten U.S. presidents have visited the area for both business and pleasure.
- The Himmelein House, erected in 1849, was home to John Himmelein. Known as the King of Repertoire, Himmelein brought theatrical friends to his family’s summer home to rehearse shows during the summer. He eventually owned several theatrical companies and theaters.
- Johnny Kilbane, one-time featherweight champion, opened Johnny Kilbane’s Recreation and Health Camp a few miles east of Vermilion on Lake Erie in 1924.

- The Great Western Band Orchestra entertained folks in the Milan Town Hall on Feb. 9, 1877. This gala event charged 25 cents per person.
- Sandusky native Jay Cooke was a major financier for Union troops during the Civil War.
- The Marblehead Lighthouse, first lit in 1822, is the longest continuously operating and the most visited lighthouse on the Great Lakes.
- The Lakeside Daisy is the rarest flower on the endangered species list and can only be found in Lakeside, Ohio.
- Cedar Point Amusement Park's tallest roller coaster at 420 feet, the Top Thrill Dragster, is taller than the depth of Lake Erie.
- Vermilion's Woolly Bear Festival is Ohio's largest one day festival, bringing nearly 10,000 visitors to Vermilion for one-day in early October.
- The National Postmark Museum at Bellevue's Historic Lyme Village holds the world's largest collection of postmarks --- 600 volumes, mounted on special acid-free pages and covered in plastic.
- Erie and Ottawa Counties are part of the region know as "The Firelands," because the State of Connecticut gave these lands to her citizens who were burned out by the British Army during the Revolutionary War.
- Kelleys Island is the only island in the United States to be designated as a National Historic District.
- Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial at Put-in-Bay is the third tallest national monument in the United States.
- More fishing licenses are sold annually in the Lake Erie Shores & Islands area than in any other part of Ohio.

For more information on Ohio's Lake Erie Shores & Islands® visit SHORESandISLANDS.com or call Jill Bauer, Public Relations Coordinator, at 800.255.3743 or jill@shoresandislands.com