

# 10 great campsites in Minnesota and Wisconsin

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Pioneer Press

TwinCities.com-Pioneer Press

Article Last Updated:

I don't do a lot of camping when I travel around the Upper Midwest. Camping is a leisurely kind of travel, and I'm always moving too fast. But that doesn't stop me from admiring a great campsite when I see one. Here are 10 of the campsites that have made me say, "Wow, this is really choice."

- 1. Saxon Harbor County Park on Lake Superior.** I found this Iron County park while seeking out nearby Superior Falls, on the Montreal River between Wisconsin and Michigan. It has everything anyone wants in summer -- a sand beach for swimming, a protected bay for kayaking and a bar that serves burgers and pizza. Last year, showers were added. Sites are first-come, first-served - weekends fill fast - and cost \$10,
- 2. Mantrap Lake Campground in Paul Bunyan State Forest.** I was staying at a lake resort on Bad Axe Lake and was on a run when I discovered this beautiful lake campground northeast of Park Rapids. Hmm, I thought - sites here have the lake, the beach and the forest, but they're a tenth the cost of a cabin. As in all Minnesota state forests, sites are \$12 and first-come, first-served. 218-266-2100, [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us).
- 3. Newport State Park in Wisconsin's Door County.** Hiking along Europe Bay on a warm day in August, I saw a tent pitched just off the trail, on the sandy edge of Lake Michigan. It was Backpack Site 16 - not luxurious, not convenient, but oh, so well-located. With Backpack Site 14, it's between Europe Lake and Lake Michigan - perfect for water-lovers and only \$13 per night. As at all Wisconsin state park sites, sites can be reserved up to 11 months in advance at 888-947-2757, [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com).
- 4. Rainy Lake in Voyageurs National Park.** I spent an afternoon swimming and reading on the dock at one of the park's Lost Bay sites and gladly would have spent a week. It had two raised sand tent pads, a grove of white pine, a picnic table, a privy and a lot of privacy. All sites in Voyageurs National Park sites are reached by boat only and are first-come, first-served. Permits are free and available at park visitors centers. 218-286-5258, [www.nps.gov/voya](http://www.nps.gov/voya).
- 5. Hok-Si-La Municipal Park near Lake City.** This wooded campground is like a little resort. Sites overlooking Lake Pepin book up first, especially B10-12, G0 and G2. But no site is far from the beach, and there's a store, bathhouse, playground, nature trails and free use of basketballs, volleyballs, horseshoes and footballs. All sites are for tents, and they go for \$15 Monday-Thursday and \$25 weekends and holidays. Mosquitoes can be a problem, but the park sprays weekly. 651-345-3855, [www.ci.lake-city.mn.us](http://www.ci.lake-city.mn.us).
- 6. Kandiyohi County Park 7 on Games Lake.** There's nothing particularly tranquil about this park near New London, just down the road from Sibley State Park in western Minnesota. But kids love it. There's a long, broad sand beach lined with tree-shaded grass and picnic tables, a slide and two swimming rafts, two volleyball nets, a baseball diamond and a store where attendants scoop ice cream and take orders for the next day's breakfast pastries, just like European campgrounds. Like all Kandiyohi County parks, it charges \$22.52 per night, \$27.85 with electricity, and takes reservations only for stays of seven days or more, starting Jan. 1 at each park. Shorter stays are available for walk-ups; call 320-354-4453 in advance to gauge availability.
- 7. South Pike Bay on Cass Lake.** I found this rustic campground while bicycling on the paved Migizi Trail through Chippewa National Forest. There are 24 first-come, first-served rustic sites, all shaded by red pines and half with their own little stretch of beach. The 17-mile trail winds around the lake to Norway Beach Recreation Area, which has a more luxurious campground and some sites that can be reserved. 218-335-8600, [www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa).
- 8. St. Croix National Scenic Riverway near St. Croix Falls.** I was hiking on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail when I came across this sweet little campsite with its own sand beach. The trail starts in town and winds north along the St. Croix; half a mile past Lions Park, there's a site with a picnic table, tent pad, fire ring and vault toilet. Being close to water, all of the river sites are great in summer. Camping is first-come, first-served, and permits aren't required this year, though campers may want to stop by the new visitors center in St. Croix Falls anyway. 715-483-2274, [www.nps.gov/sacn](http://www.nps.gov/sacn).
- 9. St. Croix National Scenic Riverway near Grantsburg.** The very scenic Sandrock Cliff Trail goes past another great site along the St. Croix, the rustic Sandrock Cliffs Campground north of Wisconsin 70. Red pines on a hillside create a room-like atmosphere for tent campers, who will sleep on a thick bed of fragrant needles. 715-483-2274, [www.nps.gov/sacn](http://www.nps.gov/sacn).
- 10. Lake Agnes on the Superior Hiking Trail, near Lutsen.** This is one of the prettiest spots on the trail, and there's likely to be competition for it. One campsite is on the lake, and one overlooks it; both have four tent pads and a vault toilet. Water comes from the lake, so bring a filter. All of the trail's sites are first-come, first-served, and others are near rivers and waterfalls. 218-834-2700, [www.shta.org](http://www.shta.org).