

DESTINATIONS

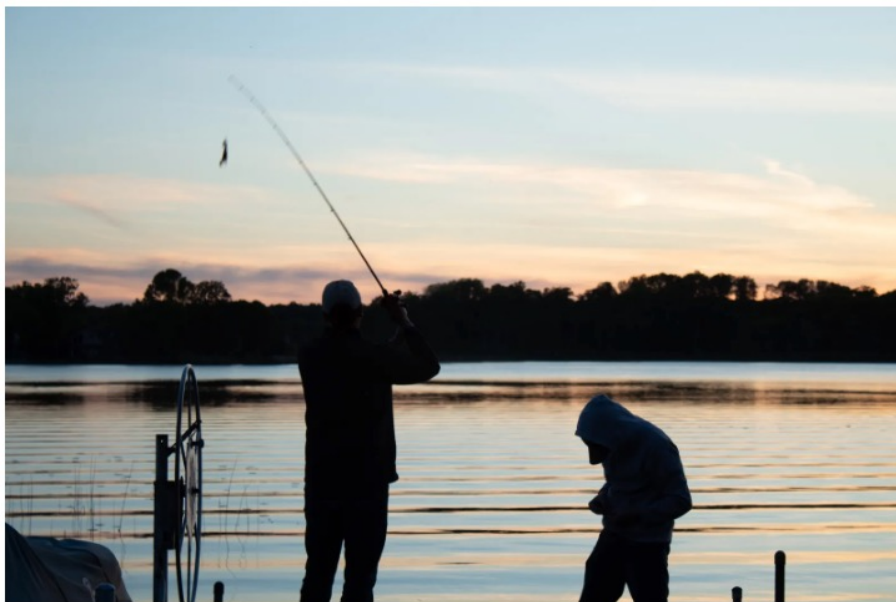
The Best Beach Towns in the Midwest

Along the scenic shores of the land-locked region's finest lakes and rivers, these all beckon for a summertime visit.

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The 12 states that constitute the **Midwestern United States** might not have oceanic coastlines, but they certainly deliver waterfront—with tens of thousands of river miles and **lakeshores** that make up some of the best beaches in the Midwest. This north-central region includes Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Kansas, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois' beach towns worthy of a summertime visit.

Unsurprisingly, many of our picks come from the scenic Upper Midwest; yet there are still plenty of selections from across the region, from a famous **island** paradise, to a peninsula dubbed the Cape Cod of the Midwest, to a National Scenic River known for its free-flowing azure waters. Here are the best beach towns in the heartland, in no particular order.



Nisswa is nestled between a number of Minnesota's fine watering holes. *Laura Lessler/Unsplash*

Nisswa, Minnesota

As the land of 10,000 lakes (there are actually even more, but who's counting), Minnesota is chock full of gorgeous waters, including Lake Superior, multiple mighty rivers, and tons of inland lakes. The north-central town of Nisswa rises above for being effectively sandwiched between multiple crystal-clear watering holes. Located just north of Brainerd, considered the capital of "lake country," Nisswa boasts a cute main street with locally-owned shops like **Found: a curated life**. **Big Axe Brewing**, a charming northern nod to Paul Bunyan, is another great spot in town.

Where to stay: Base your trip at the **Grand View Lodge** on Gull Lake, with its 2500-foot beach, rustic chic accommodations, stellar eateries, and newly renovated spa for the ultimate Minnesota nice getaway.

Mackinac Island, Michigan

This is technically a town *and* an island, but it belongs on this list either way. Mackinac is a legendary Midwestern destination set in the turquoise waters of Lake Huron. Charmingly, it's only accessible via plane or ferry. No cars are allowed, so visitors can walk around or ride in one of the iconic horse carriages. Plus, most of the area is **protected state park land**, so there are tons of recreational opportunities. Enjoy a sunrise kayak with **Great Turtle Kayak Tours** or **rent a bike** and ride all the way around Mackinac Island; this journey takes roughly an hour cycling and up to four by foot. Then, sample a glass of Michigan dry riesling at the waterfront **Pink Pony** and don't miss a slice of fudge (or five) from **Murdick's**.

Where to stay: While the island's grand dame hotel, the aptly named **Grand Hotel**, reigns supreme, plenty of other lodging options like **Mission Point** or the **Island House** exist.



Stillwater, Minnesota sits on the shores of the St. Croix River and has its own aerial lift bridge and riverfront park. Per Breiehagen/Getty