

A Trip Worth Taking Right Here

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/trempealeau-co-bikes-s5.jpg>



We can enjoy all of the great things Wisconsin has to offer, opportunities to go outdoors and explore in these summer months, while staying safe and social distancing.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - Sometimes it seems like we forget what a beautiful state we live in. It's easy to do when we're so accustomed to the beautiful, great outdoors surrounding us. Thousands of years ago glaciers carved our northern region and left behind rich soils and minerals and an iconic landscape.

While we may sometimes forget what we have right down the road from our front door, out-of-state visitors have flocked here for decades to escape their own flat or treeless landscape. Over the years, thousands have built their summer homes in northern Wisconsin because of the breathtaking natural beauty and recreational opportunities. But we tend to just drive by the natural landscape and forget how lucky we are. Many of us plan our vacations traveling to other states because it's a chance to get away from work and explore someplace new.

This year is different, though. COVID-19 has changed how we plan our vacations and interact with others, where we go and how often we go anywhere. Fortunately, we have all we need right here in Wisconsin.

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If some Wisconsinites flew to distant places in the past, they're staying closer to home this summer. If they booked a hotel, they're now looking at other options like camping in a tent or renting an RV. If they went to a waterpark before, they now feel safer social distancing on a river or lake in their own kayak or boat.

COVID-19 has forced many to look at vacation through a different lens. I've heard RV sales are through the roof, and kayaks and boats are hard to find because they just can't build them fast enough for the demand this year.

There are plenty of ways to enjoy the summer while being responsible and practicing social distancing during the pandemic. And what better place is there to live than in the state where the rest of the nation would come to unwind if they could?



Wisconsin has over 2,500 miles of hiking trails and 66 state parks. Here in Wisconsin, we're framed by two great lakes and the Mississippi River. We have over 15,000 lakes and countless streams and rivers meandering through Wisconsin making it a great place to fish, kayak and canoe.

We have Door County, which is nationally renowned for its beauty surrounded by Lake Michigan. If you drive north to the south shore of Lake Superior, you'll be amazed by the immensity of the largest freshwater lake in the world. And, while you're there, enjoy some fresh fish from any of the many fisheries around the lake. And don't forget the wild rice!

There are still ways we can support local Wisconsin businesses while staying safe. If you're up in Hayward, check out the giant musky, then pick up and enjoy some of that tasty, fresh toffee in

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the area. Check in with a nearby supper club to enjoy Wisconsin's infamous Friday fish fry or a local brewery to try creative, new beer.



And, of course, there's also a lot to enjoy right here in western Wisconsin, including the most beautiful drive on Highway 35, which runs through the 31st Senate District, stretching from Prescott all the way south through Platteville, known as the Great River Road. The Great River Road has been rated in national reports to be the most scenic drive in America, which you may not have known because we live it every day. You'll know it when you take the time and plan your trip on the Great River Road along the Mississippi River. Stop at all the markers and read the historical significance of the river to our predecessors.

So, while some may feel bummed that they couldn't go to that faraway city or destination, this may be the time to rediscover Wisconsin. We can remind ourselves what we have right here all around us. Take a slow trip and stop at all the unique and interesting places along the way; you might be surprised at what we have missed by leaving. Wisconsin is worth the time. Wisconsin has it all.