



LUDINGTON WELCOMES VISITORS FOR SUMMER SEASON WITH RESUMED BADGER SAILS, LOVE LUDINGTON WEEKEND, LIGHTHOUSE ANNIVERSARIES AND LUDINGTON STATE PARK EVENTS

LUDINGTON, Mich. – *May 16, 2024* – With the summer season around the corner, the Ludington area is rolling out the welcome mat with a full season of activities, including resumed crossings of the *S.S. Badger*, historic lighthouse anniversaries and other summer events. And the [Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau \(LACVB\)](#) has plenty of resources for visitors to make plans, including a revamped website ([PureLudington.com](#)) plus [2024 Pure Ludington Destination Guide](#).

“This summer season is expected to be as busy as ever as we celebrate some significant milestones for our historic attractions, including getting our beloved *S.S. Badger* back out on the water,” said Brandy Miller, executive director of the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “We encourage people to make plans now for a Ludington getaway, especially if you want to attend some of our unique special events and enjoy Ludington State Park.”

S.S. Badger Resumes Lake Michigan Crossings May 17

A true sign of the Ludington summer season is when the [S.S. Badger](#), the last coal-fired steamship in operation in the United States, crosses Lake Michigan daily to Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Not only is the *Badger* resuming sails in 2024, but it is starting the season a month earlier than expected on May 17. Its 70th season in 2023 was cut short due to unexpected damage to its ramp system that involved extensive repairs that precluded the company from resuming sailing last summer.

“We are thrilled to welcome our passengers back more than a month earlier than originally anticipated,” said Sara Spore, general manager of Lake Michigan Carferry. “It’s a testament to the dedication of our staff and the hard work of local vendors to make sure we are ready to go. We know the important role our *Badger* plays in tourism, travel and adventure for our port communities of Ludington, Michigan and Manitowoc, Wisconsin. We can’t wait to get back to doing what we do best on the shores of our Great Lake.”

The *Badger* also will feature its popular two-hour shoreline cruises June 15, July 20 and Aug. 17 at \$58 per person, and it will resume twice daily crossings to Manitowoc starting in June.

Love Ludington Weekend June 7-9

This summer kickoff event has become a Ludington tradition and features new activities as part of the festivities – including a car show during the Friday street party, a new Mason County Historical Society exhibit unveiling and a 100th anniversary celebration of Ludington North Breakwater Light June 8. The schedule of events includes:

Friday, June 7

- ***Behind the Scenes Archives Tour*** – 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., Mason County Historical Society. Guided tour by the executive director who will unveil the secrets of the MCHS’s collections, from vintage photographs to rare documents. Purchase tickets [online](#).
- ***Corewell Health Lakestride Family Fun Run/Walk*** – 6 p.m., Stearns Drive between Snyder’s Shoreline Inn and Loomis Street Boat Launch parking lot. This one-mile event is held in conjunction with Ludington Lakestride. No fee and all ages are welcome. Pre-registration is not required but encouraged at [ludingtonlakestride.com](#).

- **Love Ludington Street Party** – 6-9 p.m., downtown. Evening of live music, kids’ games, bounce houses, and food and drink along the downtown streets that will be closed to traffic. New this year will be a car show on Ludington Avenue between Robert and William Streets with vintage cars, music and awards.
- **Mason County’s Lumber Legacy** – 6:30 p.m., Legacy Hall, Mason County Research Center. Step into Mason County’s lumbering legacy with an immersive presentation by MCHS President James Jensen that takes you into the forests where the echoes of Michigan’s timber industry still resonate. After the presentation, join a theatrical journey through time with "Ludington or Stearns? A City by Any Other Name," starring Dr. Rick Plummer as James Ludington and Professor Mike Nagle of West Shore Community College as Justus Stearns. Purchase tickets [online](#).

Saturday, June 8

- **Lakestride Half-Marathon/10K/5K** – 8 a.m., Stearns Park Beach. The 44th annual Lakestride attracts runners from across the country. [Register here](#).
- **Historic Homes Walking Tours** – 10 and 11:30 a.m., departing from Mason County Historical Society. This tour will transport participants on a captivating journey as they wander through Ludington’s new Historic District, with guides sharing captivating stories, historical context and architectural insights. In partnership with the Ludington Historic Bed & Breakfast Association. Purchase tickets [online](#).
- **Extended hours – Port of Ludington Maritime Museum** – 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Hours are extended in honor of the Ludington North Breakwater Light anniversary. Guests with a lighted wristband from SPLKA will receive a 25 percent discount on individual tickets to the museum (excludes combo passes).
- **Neal Family (House of Flavors) Legacy Exhibit Unveiling** – 2-4 p.m., Legacy Hall, Mason County Historical Society. A new exhibit celebrating Park Dairy’s history and the Neal family legacy will be unveiled, featuring the family’s contributions to Ludington – most notably the iconic House of Flavors. The Neal Family Legacy Exhibit will highlight the remarkable journey of the Neal family, from the founding of Park Dairy to becoming a staple of Ludington’s cultural and economic landscape. Historical presentation - 2-3:15 p.m.; Ice cream social & tours - 3:15-4 p.m. Free and open to the public.
- **Blessing of the Boats & 100th Anniversary Celebration of Ludington North Breakwater Light** – 4-10 p.m. [See detailed information below](#).

"Love Ludington weekend is a time for our community to come together and celebrate our rich history and vibrant culture, and we invite everyone to join us for a weekend of fun, learning, and community spirit," said Rebecca Berringer, executive director of the Mason County Historical Society.

Lighthouse Anniversaries

Two historic lighthouses managed by the Ludington-headquartered [Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association](#) (SPLKA) celebrate milestone anniversaries in 2024 – [Ludington North Breakwater Light](#) in Ludington’s Stearns Park celebrates 100 years, and [Little Sable Point Light](#) in Mears (30 miles south of Ludington) celebrates 150 years. Both anniversaries will be marked by celebrations.

Ludington North Breakwater Light 100th Anniversary

- **Blessing of the Boats** – 4-10 p.m. June 8, West End (950 W. Ludington Ave.) – The evening starts at 4 p.m. with a state tribute, followed by live music (5:30-7 p.m.), Blessing of the Boats ceremony (7-7:30), live and silent auction and raffle to support the light (7:30-8), and live music (8:30-10). Festivities are free other than food and drink purchases.
- **Laser Light Show** – 10-10:30 p.m. June 8, West End. This show with coordinating music broadcast by WMOM will project lasers onto the lighthouse and shoreline, including laser “mapping” of the lighthouse. Viewing is recommended from Maritime Heritage Park to the north end of Stearns Beach, and an area will be designated for boats to view from the water. A VIP viewing section sponsored by Jamesport Brewing is available for \$50 pp/\$40 in advance including appetizers, swag and a drink ticket; opens at 9 p.m.
- **Contract beer by Jamesport Brewing** – Jamesport Brewing launches a commemorative anniversary beer, Blood Orange Breakwater Hefeweizen, June 1 to sell throughout the season. Jamesport also will do a “bill roundup” in June where patrons can round up to the nearest dollar and Jamesport will match the roundup, with proceeds going to SPLKA.

- **Merchandise** – SPLKA will sell limited-edition centennial merchandise (tee-shirts, stickers) at Jamesport Brewing in June, Ludington North Breakwater gift shop throughout its season, and Stearns Park Beach merchandise area as well as on [SPLKA.org](https://www.splka.org) while supplies last. Additionally, SPLKA will have a commemorative anniversary stamp at its gift shop for those with a lighthouse passport book.
- **Evening tours/Extended hours** – June 27, July 25, Aug. 29. The light will be open for evening tower climbs 7-9 p.m. once a month June through August the same night as [Sunset Beach Bonfires](#) at Stearns Beach (fees, age restrictions). The light also will be open seven days a week in July, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Little Sable Point Lighthouse 150th Anniversary

The anniversary will feature a 150th celebration Aug. 17, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. that will start with a proclamation and poetry reading, followed by kids' beach games and activities (e.g., chalk drawing, knot-tying), a U.S. Coast Guard water safety session, 30-foot USCG patrol vessel on display for tours on land, sandcastle building, and other beach activities. SPLKA will sell limited-edition centennial merchandise (tee-shirts, stickers) at the lighthouse gift shop throughout the summer, as well as on [SPLKA.org](https://www.splka.org). SPLKA also will have a commemorative anniversary stamp at its gift shop for those who have a lighthouse passport book.

Other Summer Events

The Ludington area is hosting a number of other summer events (a full list is at [PureLudington.com/events](https://www.pureludington.com/events)).

Signature Events

- [NEW - Ghost Tour 2024: Trains, Towns, & Lumber Camps of NE Mason County](#) – June 1
- [Gus Macker 3-on-3](#) – June 15-16
- [Coast To Coast Gravel Grinder](#) - June 22
- [Sunset Beach Bonfires](#) – June 27, July 25, Aug. 29
- [Ludington Freedom Festival](#) – July 3-4
- [West Shore Art Fair](#) – July 6-7
- [Ludington Offshore Classic Fishing Tournament](#) – July 15-21
- [West Shore Bank Rhythm & Dunes Concerts](#) – July 27 and Aug. 3
- [Gold Coast Artisan Fair](#) – Aug. 10-11
- [Suds on the Shore Craft Beer + Wine Festival](#) – Aug. 17

Ongoing Events

- [Downtown Ludington Farmers Market](#) – Fridays May 24 – Sept. 20
- [Live in the Plaza](#) (live music) – 6-8 p.m. Thursdays June 6-Aug. 29 and Fridays May 24 – Sept. 20
- [LACA Summer Concert Series](#) – Wednesdays June 19 – Sept. 4

Ludington State Park Open all Summer; Some Sections Accessible after Project Starts

As Ludington State Park prepares for a partial closure in the fall for a major improvement project, it will remain fully open throughout the summer into early September (exact start day of project TBD) and include additional opportunities to access some of its favorite features. Beyond enjoying the park's two beaches, three modern campgrounds, 21 miles of trails, summer interpretive programs and other popular amenities, below are some additional ways people can enjoy Ludington State Park this summer:

- ***Additional Bus Days and Extended Hours for Big Sable Point Light*** – [Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association](#) (SPLKA) added two more Bus Days to its annual schedule (May 11 and May 25) for a total of eight bus days this summer (May 11 & 25; June 22; July 6 & 18, Aug. 3, 15 & 31; 12-5 p.m.). It also will be open seven days a week in the month of July, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Bus fee for one-way or round-trip ride.
- ***Summer Concert Series*** – Tuesdays and Saturdays, 7 p.m., June 11 - Aug. 31. The Friends of Ludington State Park, in conjunction with Ludington State Park and the LSP interpretive program, will host its summer concert series June 11 through Aug. 31 featuring 22 live music programs. Concerts are free with a Recreation Passport and begin at 7 p.m. at the amphitheater south of the Big Sable River footbridge, with Lake Michigan Beach House as the rain location. The July 2 concert featuring Nashville-based, Mason County-raised singer-songwriter Chloe Kimes will take place at Waterfront Park in downtown Ludington to accommodate more people. Also included in the lineup are the favorite annual Live Birds of Prey program from Outdoor Discovery Center June 18 and Aug. 22, and the Michigan Reptile and Amphibians program by Nature Discovery June 22. Safe Harbor Credit Union is the series sponsor.

The park improvement project, which is scheduled to begin in September and run through June 2025, will provide major upgrades and traffic flow improvements to the park entrance, Hamlin Lake day-use area parking area, and Lake Michigan and warming shelter parking lots. The warming shelter area also will be upgraded with multiple lanes and crosswalk to connect paths with the beach. The Skyline Trail will be rebuilt, adding new supports, stairways and boardwalk.

While visitors will not be able to enter the park north of the Sable River bridge, use the campgrounds, nor visit the beach areas past the fee area during that time, other areas will remain open and accessible during the project, including:

- Lake Michigan beach/shoreline along M-116 before the fee booth
- North part of the park from Nordhouse Dunes for hiking access, including walking to Big Sable Point Light from the north (though the lighthouse will be closed during the project)
- South Hiking Trails and Piney Ridge Trails accessed from Piney Ridge Road (not maintained/signed)
- Waterways via boat, except for Hamlin Lake beach near the playground (and boats will not be allowed to moor in that area or at the Beechwood Campground boardwalk)
- Main entrance on sporadic weekends as construction schedule allows, with visitor safety a priority

The park's partial closure is estimated to begin around Labor Day, but a firm date will be provided as the construction process unfolds. Follow [Ludington State Park on Facebook](#) for the latest project status updates.

The Ludington Area CVB can assist visitors looking for alternative recreation amenities in Mason County during this partial closure, with the region offering [11 private and public campgrounds](#) in Mason County in addition to Ludington State Park. [Mason County Campground](#) in particular is extending its season into October to accommodate campers who might normally camp in the fall at Ludington State Park. Operated by the Mason County Parks and Recreation Commission, the 56-campsite wooded campground also features four camper cabins, a new playscape for 5-to 12 year-olds, and family-friendly Tinderbox Disc Golf Course.

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ABOUT LUDINGTON

On the shores of Lake Michigan with miles of beachfront and water access, Ludington offers a quintessential "Up North" experience close by. Ludington and Mason County deliver the perfect combination of unspoiled natural resources and unrivaled outdoor recreation with quaint, small-town charm – all within easy reach at the intersection of U.S. 31 and U.S. 10. For information on the Ludington area including lodging, events, and other tools to help plan a Ludington getaway, visit [PureLudington.com](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#); or call (800) 542-4600.