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## WHAT'S NEW IN LUDINGTON – 2026

*(NOTE – businesses located in Ludington unless noted otherwise)*

### New Events

- **Art Reprize: A Showcase of ArtPrize 2025 Entries** – Feb. 6-28, Ludington Area Center for the Arts. Never before in Ludington, *Art Reprize* features a curated collection of artwork from [ArtPrize 2025](#), one of the world's most attended international art competitions. ArtPrize brought together hundreds of artists from around the globe, presenting thousands of works across diverse media in downtown Grand Rapids. The *Art Reprize* temporary exhibit highlights a selection of 20 of these exceptional entries from Michigan artists, giving visitors an opportunity to experience some of the most innovative and inspiring contemporary artwork. [ludingtonartscenter.org/art-reprize](http://ludingtonartscenter.org/art-reprize)
- **“Railroad on Water” movie premiere** – May 16, 10-11:45 a.m. (doors open at 9:30 a.m.) and 5-6:40 p.m. (doors open at 4:30 p.m.), Ludington Area Center for the Arts. A documentary film by Delay In Block Productions, *Railroad on Water* tells the extraordinary story of the SS *Badger*, the last operational coal-fired steamship in the United States. The 90-minute film explores the dramatic rise, fall and survival of railroad carferry service on the Great Lakes. Launched in 1952 for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, the *Badger* was built to carry up to 34 railroad cars across Lake Michigan, bypassing Chicago's congested rail yards and forming a vital floating link in America's rail network. At its peak, the C&O's fleet of seven carferries made thousands of annual crossings – moving freight, passengers and automobiles between Michigan and Wisconsin. Featuring never-before-seen builder's footage of the SS *Badger* and her sister ship, SS *Spartan*, plus hundreds of color photos, plus exclusive interviews with historians, sailors and railroaders, *Railroad on Water* brings this unique chapter of transportation history to life. Though railroad service ended in 1990, the *Badger* still sails between Ludington and Manitowoc, Wisc., as an autoferry — powered by its original coal-fired steam engines — a living, breathing monument to American ingenuity and determination. \$15 ticket purchased at the door.
- **Manistee North Pierhead Light Dedication and Tower Climbs** – May 25, 12 p.m. dedication/ribbon-cutting ceremony; 1-5 p.m. tower climbs. The Ludington-based nonprofit Lakeshore Keepers officially acquired the 1927-era Manistee North Pierhead Lighthouse in 2025 – making it the fifth historic lighthouse across four counties on Lake Michigan that the organization operates. Following a 15-month restoration, the Manistee North Pierhead Light will open to the public May 25 with a ribbon-cutting event at noon, followed by open hours for tower climbs until 5 p.m. Following the opening, the light will be open 7 days a week: Mondays 1-5 p.m. and Tuesdays - Sundays 10 a.m.-5 p.m. [lakeshorekeepers.org](http://lakeshorekeepers.org)

- **SS Badger/Lake Michigan Carferry Events –**
  - **Murder Mystery Events** (Ludington dockside) – Experience an evening of intrigue and entertainment aboard the SS Badger with new Murder Mystery Nights – interactive events inviting guests into a world of suspense where secrets unfold, clues emerge, and everyone plays a role in solving the case. As the story develops, you’ll mingle with fellow participants, question suspicious characters, and piece together the mystery while enjoying the unique atmosphere. Costumes encouraged. Food and beverage not included, but Port Side Bar and Badger Galley will be open for purchases.
    - **SOLD OUT - [I Love the 80’s... to Death – An 80s Murder Mystery Night](#)** – May 30, 8:30-11:30 p.m. (Boarding starts at 8 p.m.) Step back into the decade of big hair, neon dreams, and killer hits—literally. The music is radical, the fashion is outrageous, and someone won’t make it to the end of the evening. As the synths play and the clues unfold, guests will mingle with suspicious characters, uncover secrets, and work together to solve a totally tubular whodunit—all in 80s style.
    - **[A Dance with Death – A 1950’s Sock Hop Gone Sour](#)** – June 12, 8:30-11:30 p.m. (Boarding starts at 8 p.m.). Join this interactive murder mystery where the tunes are jumpin’, the threads are snazzy, and someone’s night gets cut short. You’ll rub elbows with shady characters, dig up clues, and piece together what went down before the last dance ends.
  - **Pilothouse/Engine Room Tours** – *Starting spring 2026 (May 29, June 5 and June 12 - **SOLD OUT**) and continuing in the fall* – Experience the heart of the historic SS Badger with never-before-offered tours of the Engine Room and historic Pilot House, providing a behind-the-scenes look at this coal-fired steamship while it is docked (no crossing ticket required). Visitors will witness the historic steam engines that power the vessel and feel the heat of this incredible maritime powerhouse, and they will see a unique perspective from the bridge where the ship’s course is navigated. Tours are limited to 20 spots for these exclusive excursions. Tours last two hours and are available during the spring and fall sailing season. Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased online at [ssbadger.com](http://ssbadger.com) (click “Buy My Tickets” and select “Dockside Pilot House & Engine Room Tours”). Visit [website](http://ssbadger.com) for tour dates. *NOTE: Involves climbing stairs, ladders, and hot, narrow passages and is not recommended for young children or those with mobility issues.*
  - **“Open Boat” Nights** – *Spring and fall 2026, with first May 16, 8:30 p.m. \$10 cover.* Enjoy a relaxed evening during Open Boat Night aboard the SS Badger, dockside! Guests can explore the passenger areas and outer decks at their own pace or enjoy live music by Joe Stickney in the Cabana Room. The gift shop, concessions, and full-service bars will be open, selling snacks, beverages, and unique souvenirs. *NOTE: More Open Boat Nights will be added throughout the sailing season - check [ssbadger.com](http://ssbadger.com) for updates.*
- **Historic White Pine Village 50th Anniversary – Honoring Our First 50. Inspiring Our Next 50** – July 3, 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Historic White Pine Village will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a full day of community-focused activities honoring the Village’s 50-year legacy, including:
  - 9:30-11 a.m. - Pioneer-style breakfast in the morning (ticketed event; 150 max)
  - 11 a.m. - noon - Anniversary ceremony with reflections on the past and a look ahead, and the unveiling of new exhibits at the Phoenix Fire Barn and Blacksmith Shop as well as a new Heritage Trail with markers at multiple buildings throughout the village.
  - 12-3 p.m. - Hands-on historical experiences such as an ice cream social, vintage games, craft demonstrations, sawmill operations, and flint knapping, with the village open all afternoon for exploration and engagement with staff and docents.

- **America 250 Celebrations** – The Mason County Historical Society will host a number of events commemorating America’s 250th anniversary across its three sites, with more added in the coming months (check [masoncountymihistory.org](http://masoncountymihistory.org)):
  - **Maritime Museum — National Maritime Day** - Friday & Saturday, May 22-23
  - **Historic White Pine Village** –
    - Revolutionary War Encampment - Friday & Saturday, June 19-20
    - Historic White Pine Village 50th Anniversary - July
    - Colonial Cooking by Alisa Crawford - Thursday, Aug. 20
  - **Mason County Historical Society - Rose Hawley Archives** –
    - [Winter Speakers Series](#) - Second Wednesday January to March, 7-8 p.m. at the Rose Hawley Archives, 130 E. Ludington Ave. \$10 admission. This annual Winter Speaker Series features a new topic each month about some aspect of Mason County history with stories that shaped the community. Sessions include Soldiers & Tactic of the Revolutionary War presented by Military History Academy (3/11).
    - *Love Ludington Weekend* (June 5-7) - Join a Historic Homes Tour Saturday, June 6 and enjoy \$2.50 off tickets to the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum or Historic White Pine Village.
    - *Cultural Corners* - Fall (Date TBD) - Mason County Historical Society, along with Sandcastles Children's Museum, Ludington Area Center for the Arts and the Mason County District Library, will host a block party with music, crafts, and more.
    - *Lumber Days* (Oct. 2-4) - Events will be held at both the Rose Hawley Archives and Historic White Pine Village, including Sawmill and Lumber Camp reenactments Saturday, Oct. 3 and \$2.50 off tickets at the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum.

### **New Attractions and Experiences**

- **Manistee North Pierhead Light** – *Opening May 25, 2026* – The Ludington-based nonprofit Lakeshore Keepers officially acquired the 1927-era Manistee North Pierhead Lighthouse in January 2025 as the fifth historic lighthouse across four counties on Lake Michigan that it operates. Following a 15-month restoration, the Manistee North Pierhead Light opens to the public in May 7 days a week – the first time the Manistee North Pierhead Light will be open on a regular basis. Visitors can climb the tower for a fee or visit the gift shop at no charge. Open Mondays 1-5 p.m. and Tuesdays - Sundays 10 a.m.-5 p.m. [lakeshorekeepers.org](http://lakeshorekeepers.org)
- **Historic White Pine Village – Exhibit Enhancements and New Heritage Trail** – *Estimated completion – July*. As part of its 50th anniversary, Historic White Pine Village will unveil a new generation of exhibits and interpretive signage designed to transform the visitor experience. Guided by a comprehensive Interpretive Master Plan, the Village is introducing a Heritage Trail with professionally researched markers at each historic building, along with new indoor and outdoor interpretation at the Phoenix Fire Barn and Blacksmith Shop. Together, these enhancements tell the story of Mason County in a clear chronological journey—from the lumbering era, through agriculture, to early modernization—helping visitors better understand how communities were built, how people lived and worked, and how the past continues to shape the present. These updates honor the Village’s first 50 years while setting the stage for the next 50, ensuring history remains engaging, accessible, and meaningful for generations to come.
- **Ludington Self-Guided Walking Tours** – *Opened Summer 2025* – Grab a brochure from the Pure Ludington Visitors Center or download [online](#) and follow a few different self-guided walking tours – one of historic landmarks, and one of historic homes in the East Ludington Avenue Historic District. The map also lists coastline landmarks plus other places to explore history and culture in the Ludington area. [pureludington.com/listings/historic-self-guided-walking-tours](http://pureludington.com/listings/historic-self-guided-walking-tours)

- **Lighthouse Webcams** – *Installed May 2025* – Lakeshore Keepers installed webcams at the top of the Ludington North Breakwater Light (two cams in different directions) and Big Sable Point Light (one cam at the top of the tower), allowing viewers to watch the SS Badger go by (Breakwater Light), check weather conditions, and watch sunsets. Sponsored by Safe Harbor Credit Union, the webcams are part of Lakeshore Keepers’ efforts to make its lighthouses accessible to all. Big Sable Point Light feed: [lakeshorekeepers.org/big-sable-point/](https://lakeshorekeepers.org/big-sable-point/). Ludington North Breakwater Light feed (May through September): [splka.org/what-we-do/our-lights/ludington.html](https://splka.org/what-we-do/our-lights/ludington.html)

### **Food & Drink**

- **AndyS**, 129 W. Ludington Ave. – *Scheduled to open in 2026*. Built on the former site of Michael’s Bar and Grill at the corner of Ludington and Rath Avenues, this latest business endeavor by Dr. Andy Riemer (who opened STIX Ludington) will be a two-story sports bar and entertainment venue featuring upscale bar food, including wood-fired pizzas. Plans include a rooftop bar with glass floor, mezzanine for live music, a private dining area, and a section with indoor sports simulators. [Facebook.com/andysludington](https://www.facebook.com/andysludington)
- **The Side Room**, 222 W. Ludington Ave. – *Opened November 2025*. A new addition to [The Pier Ludington](#), The Side Room serves high-class cocktails and Michigan beer and wine with a speakeasy vibe, along with gourmet flatbread pizzas and charcuterie boards prepared by [Pier to Pier Picnics](#). [Facebook](#)
- **Fins Beach Club**, 7786 US-10, Branch – *Opened September 2025*. Formerly Emerson Lake Inn, this waterfront restaurant was revitalized by local business owner Dr. Andy Riemer after being shuttered since fall 2022. Guests can enjoy dinner or cocktails with their toes in the sand, thanks to the restaurant’s private beach and picturesque sand dunes. Open Monday - Saturday, 4-9 p.m. [Facebook](#)
- **The Perch on Hamlin Lake**, 3264 Piney Ridge Rd. – *Opened June 2025*. This new restaurant on the grounds of [Hobby Crest Resort](#) on Hamlin Lake offers elevated lakeside dining for lunch and dinner – all with views of Hamlin Lake, including on a large outdoor patio. The lower-level bar opening onto a patio is a perfect spot while waiting for a table. Also accessible by boat, with eight boat slips available on a first-come, first-served basis. [Theperchonhamlinlake.toast.site](https://theperchonhamlinlake.toast.site)
- **Tokyo Hibachi and Sushi Bar** – *Opened June 2025*. This new Ludington restaurant, located at 4743 US-10, features an Asian-fusion menu including a full sushi menu, poke bowls, and Korean dishes. Hibachi dinner choices include steak, lobster, shrimp, scallops, salmon and more. [Facebook](#)
- **Burger Bliss**, 604 S. James St. (food truck) – *Opened May 2025*. Born from years of expertise in the culinary industry and a deep passion for crafting the perfect burger, Burger Bliss brings mouthwatering, made-to-order smash burgers to downtown Ludington. [myburgerbliss.com](https://myburgerbliss.com)
- **PITBowls**, 88 S. Pere Marquette Hwy. – *Opened May 2025*. The owner of the popular Cluck Bucket restaurant has a new business concept with this food truck serving fresh, flavorful, PIT-inspired bowls, including build-your-own bowls as well as its signatures: Chipotle, BBQ, Teriyaki, Mediterranean and Hot Honey. It also offers fresh Acai Bowls, brewed iced teas and lemonades, and cold brew. In other news, PITBowls and Cluck Bucket can cater events – from a small luncheon of 12, to picnics or receptions of hundreds. [Facebook.com/cluckbucketfoodtruck](https://www.facebook.com/cluckbucketfoodtruck)

### **Shopping**

- **Vintage Bloom**, 303 S. James St. – *Opening December 2025*. This new store offers antiques, collectibles, gifts, clothing and repurposed items. [Facebook](#)

- **Vendor Row**, 5762 West US-10 – *Opened June 2025*. This locally curated marketplace brings together small businesses, artisans, makers, vintage collectors, and boutique owners under one roof – selling goods from handcrafted home décor and unique gifts to custom jewelry, vintage finds, and specialty foods. [Vendorow.com](http://Vendorow.com)
- **Pier Joy Art Gallery & Gifts**, 222 W. Ludington Ave. – *Opened April 2025*. Featuring work by local artists, this shop creates and curates a vibrant collection of happy art, fun stationery, whimsical jewelry, tote bags and more – all inspired by the beauty of Ludington. Visitors can also pick a piece to paint in the store’s drop-in art cafe daily except Wednesday. [pierjoy.com](http://pierjoy.com)

### Lodging and Meetings

- **Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton**, 3667 W US-10 in Ludington – *Scheduled for completion April 2026; accepting reservations for arrivals beginning June 14*. This 59,768 square-foot property will be four stories with 101 rooms, featuring an indoor pool and 24-hour fitness center, complimentary hot breakfast, Wi-Fi and free parking (including EV charging). Pets up to 75 pounds are welcome with a \$75 nonrefundable charge. The hotel has an 800-square-foot meeting room accommodating up to 50 people in rounds and 40 people in classroom-style seating. [hilton.com/en/hotels/ldmhxhx-hampton-suites-ludington-michigan](http://hilton.com/en/hotels/ldmhxhx-hampton-suites-ludington-michigan)
- **Sunset Bluff Resort**, 6075 N. Victory Park Rd. – *Renovations completed summer 2025*. This 30+-acre resort on a forested bluff with 1,500 feet of Hamlin Lake shoreline has new owners who have lovingly restored the 13 cottages one by one – ranging from 1-5 bedrooms, as well as replaced all the beds and upgraded in size if possible. The resort now provides bed linens, fluffy bath towels and complimentary toiletries, and all cottages have air conditioning, smart TVs and Wi-Fi. The new online booking system allows guests to easily see availability and book directly. The resort is also now pet friendly, with eight cottages allowing up to two dogs. Other amenities include a heated pool, playground, basketball and volleyball court, onsite pontoon and fishing boat rentals and kayaks. [sunsetbluffresort.com](http://sunsetbluffresort.com)

### Expansions or Improvements

- **Ludington Downtown Alley Redevelopment** – *Renovations started July 2025, with final sculpture and art installed before summer 2026*. This initiative transformed a neglected downtown alley through resurfacing, retaining wall, upgraded lighting and light poles and a reimaged layout into a revitalized pedestrian-friendly environment.
- **Pere Marquette Conservation Park – New Entrance and Trail** – *Renovations to start in spring/summer 2026 with expected completion by the end of 2026*. Pere Marquette Township is continuing work on its new 300-acre public park, constructing a new entrance off of South Lakeshore Drive across from Historic White Pine Village, as well as a three-quarter mile, 10-foot wide paved, non-motorized trail that will connect the park to Buttersville Campground. [pmtwp.org/government/departments/parks/index.php](http://pmtwp.org/government/departments/parks/index.php)
- **Mason County Park – New Trail** – *Estimated completion – 2026*. The Mason County Parks Commission expects to open a 1.1-mile long paved, universal access, multi-use trail from the west side of Mason County Campground along Chauvez Road into Mason County Picnic Area ending at the Consumers Energy Lake Michigan and Pumped Storage Plant pond overlooks.

- **Ludington State Park –**
  - **Skyline Trail project** – *Project estimated to start in summer 2026 and finish in late fall 2026/early spring 2027.* Winding a half-mile through the treetops at the top of a 100-plus-stair climb, the Skyline Trail will receive a major upgrade thanks to a collaboration between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Friends of Ludington State Park. The \$3.5 million reconstruction project will ensure the Skyline Trail meets modern safety and construction standards. The Friends are raising 10 percent of the cost, up to a maximum of \$350,000, with the DNR using dedicated capital outlay funds to cover the remaining amount. [friendsofludingtonstatepark.org](http://friendsofludingtonstatepark.org)
  - **Outdoor amphitheater** – The Friends of Ludington State Park approved an almost \$100,000 improvement project to replace the existing concrete stage, add a protective canopy, refresh the seating, and explore tiering the grassy area to create additional seating for this amphitheater built in 1998. This project will occur in the same timeframe as the Skyline Trail replacement to minimize disruption on the south side of the river. Funding includes a \$50,000 donation from Pennies from Heaven Foundation, continued support for the summer concert series from Safe Harbor Credit Union, and proceeds from Brrewfest 2026, which will directly support the amphitheater improvements. [friendsofludingtonstatepark.org](http://friendsofludingtonstatepark.org)

### Accessibility Updates

- **Able Eyes 360 Virtual Tours** - *Installed first 15 videos July 2025; adding videos in 2026.* Ludington visitors can get a preview of what to expect *before they visit* – especially important for travelers with accessibility needs – at top attractions and accommodations through the launch of 360 Virtual Tours at [PureLudington.com](http://PureLudington.com). The Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau uploaded 15 360 virtual tours on its [website](#) plus an overall [accessibility map](#). Powered by Michigan virtual tour-hosting site [Able Eyes](#), the video tours provide important information to help visitors understand what to expect before visiting Ludington. Featured businesses include Hemlock Golf Club, Historic White Pine Village, Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Lakeside Links, Legacy Plaza, Lincoln Hills Golf Club, Ludington Bay Brewing Co., Ludington Area Center for the Arts, Ludington East/Pere Marquette KOA, Peter Copeyon Park & Splash Pad, Port of Ludington Maritime Museum, Sandcastles Children’s Museum and Waterfront Park.
  - *New 360 virtual tours in 2026:* Videos of Ludington State Park and SS *Badger*

### 2026 Anniversaries/Milestones

- **250 – America** - *Special events will be held at Historic White Pine Village throughout the year*
- **50 – [Historic White Pine Village](#)**