

Keep the Sand Dollars in Your Pocket with Local Lake and River Fun

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Can't justify a summer vacation because of high gas prices? You can still have a new adventure and make worthwhile memories without draining your gas tank and finances. Northeast Ohio offers plenty of opportunities for refreshing water adventures and quiet moments in nature.

Beach Day

Lake Erie's beaches provide all the fun of a seaside beach day without the threat of sharks or jellyfish. Don't let anyone fool you -- you can have a great beach day complete with sand castle building, swimming, sunbathing, body surfing and sea glass hunting -- right here in Ohio.

Fairport Harbor Beach offers a calm water beach experience (thanks to the harbor break wall), a playground, picnic shelter, volleyball courts, free use of lifejackets, shower and changing areas, a concession stand, inexpensive parking and a separate dog swimming area. You can also venture out on a rented kayak for only \$10 an hour for a single or \$15 for a double. 301 Huntington Beach Dr. Fairport Harbor 44077 (440) 639-9972.

Mentor Headlands Beach is a mammoth 120-acre lakefront park providing plenty of space to spread out and explore, complete with a lighthouse view. This one mile natural sand beach has a shaded picnic area with grills, a playground, outdoor showers, changing rooms, concession stand, fishing and free parking. Along with sand toys and life preservers, bring a boogie board because the waves get high enough for excellent body surfing. You can also explore trails and footpaths within the Headland Dunes State Nature Preserve, which is right next door to the east. 9601 Headlands Rd., Mentor 44060.

Tranquility and Exploration ... Kayaking and Canoeing

Your little ones won't be trapped in a boat for endless hours at the **Chagrin River Canoe and Kayak Livery**. With four islands and a private beach that's accessible by lake and river, there are plenty of opportunities for out-of-boat exploration. Co-owner Lisa Alford says,

"This is a great place for families. Kids can get in and out of the boat and search the beaches. Senior citizens have very little trouble getting in and out of our boats because they have special push up bars to help."

The livery offers guided and unguided tours of the scenic Chagrin River and Lake Erie in Eastlake, Boater's Safety Education and guided "Weekend Sunset Cruises" with a bonfire and refreshments. The True Doggie Paddle, a "Paddle with your Pooch," on August 6 will raise money for the Lake County Humane Society. They offer recreational (and adaptive) programming for senior centers, ladies' nights, school and camp field trips, singles and teen paddle experiences, couples cruises, family paddles, moon light paddles and "Workout Nights," in tandem with select gyms in the area. Rental costs range from \$12 to \$18 an hour and up, according to trip length. While canoes must stay on the river, kayaks can venture onto Lake Erie, weather permitting. Visit www.eastlakecanoe.com for details. 201 Erie Road, Eastlake.

Mentor Lagoons Nature Preserve & Marina, City of Mentor, Kayak and Canoe

Paddle your way through the Mentor Lagoons Water Trail or the Marsh Creek for more than a mile and a half of exploration and natural beauty. Rent kayaks and canoes for under \$20 through Labor Day daily. Boats must remain within the protected waters of the Lagoons and renters must be able to swim at least 25 yards. Not comfortable going solo? Take a class: learn-to-paddle, recreational kayaking, canoeing and sailing courses go from May through September. Jill Korsok with the Mentor Recreation Department says, "We provide a great opportunity for people to learn to paddle a canoe or kayak because it's on the protected waters of the Lagoon." Call (440) 205-3625 or visit www.cityofmentor.com for details.

Kick it up a notch!

Are you ready to move beyond the serenity of the rivers and feel the power of the Great Lakes? Then plunge out into the open waters of Lake Erie aboard a fishing charter or sailboat excursion or try your hand at windsurfing or stand up paddle boarding.

Schoney Charters offers open water fishing for walleye, perch, steelhead and smallmouth bass. Experienced fisherman Captain Jim Schonauer invites groups of up to six aboard his 32-foot Baha Sport boat, which is professionally equipped with electronics to spot fish, all necessary fishing equipment and amenities for a comfortable outing. Captain Jim offers eight hour charters for \$600 and five hour trips for \$500 per group. Launch site is adjacent to Brennan's Fish House and Pickle Bill's

Restaurant on the Grand River. See www.SchoneyCharters.com for charter details, a packing list and tasty recipes.

Additional charter operations are listed on www.lakevisit.com/lake_erie_fishing.html

JEO Sailing -- Sailing awakens something deep within your soul, so give yourself a well-deserved treat and book a morning, afternoon or sunset cruise aboard Captain Jim O'Donnell's 36' Catalina sloop rigged sailing vessel. JEO Sailing offers comfort and adventure for groups of up to six people. Trips usually last three to four hours, cost \$250 and launch from the Grand River. Bring your own cooler stocked with refreshments. "With a little luck we'll catch an offshore breeze and a nice sunset," adds Captain Jim. Sailing lessons are also available. Visit www.jeosailing.com or call 216-401-9017 for details.

Windsurfing and Stand Up Paddleboarding

For an exhilarating water adventure, consider windsurfing. Windsurf Ohio, located at 225 High Street in Fairport Harbor, offers private lessons and all the equipment for \$50 an hour at Mentor Headlands Beach. Steve Parker, who co-owns the business with his wife, says it takes two or three times to get the fundamentals. "What's really hot right now, though, is stand up paddleboarding. It's a big version of the surf board. You stand on them and paddle. It's getting huge," Parker said. You can rent a board and paddles for \$15 an hour or \$50 for the day. See www.windsurfohio.com for details.