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Excerpts from:

Michigan's *Inland Waterway*

Article by Tom Huggler

The Inland Waterway offers all the rewards of both sedate river cruising and wide-open running on two of the state's largest lakes.

Michigan's Inland Waterway is a 40-mile-long boating adventure across the top of the lower peninsula, beginning at Cheboygan on Lake Huron and ending at Crooked Lake, just a few miles from Petoskey and Lake Michigan. It winds through sprawling Mullett and Burt lakes along the Cheboygan, Indian, and Crooked rivers, passing through a pair of locks and beneath a rare swinging bridge. You can make the round trip in one long day. I recommend two days, however, because river travel has its own time schedule. Going with, not against, the flow of water and boaters is especially rewarding.

Like any good boating adventure, this one encompasses contrasts. The bottle-green waters of the wide-running Cheboygan River are completely unlike the darker Indian River and the pretzel bends of the Crooked River. One hour we were running 12 miles across wide-open but choppy Mullett Lake, and the next we were inching along the Indian River, where a no-wake rule is in effect and bankside birch and cedar provide a living wall close enough to touch. Along the way, beautiful custom-built homes gave way to rows of cottages, which in turn merged into stretches of wilderness.

The Inland Waterway is popular with thousands of boaters who visit each year. The summer months are busiest, but fall is an especially good time because of the spectacular colors and reduced boat traffic.

The journey up the Cheboygan River to Mullett Lake is peaceful, with beautiful homes lining the banks. A half-mile before entering the lake is a two-story log structure called the Hack-Ma-Tack Inn. Currently owned by former Detroit-area residents Michael and Susan Redding, the inn was built in 1894 as a private hunting and fishing lodge. No trip on the Inland Waterway would be complete without stopping here for drinks and dinner.