



4/2000

LUDINGTON STATE PARK CANOE TRAIL

The Ludington State Park Canoe Trail is a near-shore paddling trail for the canoeist with minimal experience. The length of the trail is four miles, and may take 1 to 3 hours to complete. There are 3 portages across marshy areas, so visitors should be prepared to carry the canoe short distances.

Canoeists may encounter a large variety of waterfowl, birds, or other animals including swans, herons, and eagles.

Recommended Supplies:

- Drinking water
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Bag for trash
- Waterproof camera

Reminders:

- Check the weather in advance, especially the wind direction (trail is exposed to wind from the north and east).
- Personal flotation devices are required by law.
- Dispose of all waste materials appropriately.

The Ludington State Park Canoe Trail begins at the Hamlin canoe concession near the swimming beach. From there, head across the river and east into Hamlin Lake. Stay close to the right (south) shore. As you travel, be aware of the old submerged tree stumps—a minor hazard to canoes.

Soon after you pass out of sight of the swimming area, you will see a narrow bay extending into the woods on your right. At the end of this bay are foundations of the former Outdoor Center group camping facility originally built in the 1930s.

After passing this bay, continue to the east. You will travel near the foot of two large, sandy hills, called Desperation Point by the local sailors because of the unpredictable shifting winds found here. The base of the second hill is a popular sandy landing for swimmers and sunbathers.

After Desperation Point, turn southeast as Hamlin Lake opens up ahead of you. There will be a shallow bay full of stumps and a point of land with several fallen trees near its end.

As you gradually turn south following the shore, notice the land becoming lower and swampy with large stands of reeds and cattails. These swamps are excellent wildlife habitat. Wildflowers are also abundant at various times of the year.

Further along the shore, you will come to two fairly large bays, both full of stumps and surrounded by reeds, pine trees, and white cedar. The first of these is a dead end, but the canoe route enters the second one, leading you through the reeds and ponds.

Notice that the bottom turns from clean sand to mud and silt. Follow the shore, edged with reeds, into this bay. Toward the back or west end of the bay, look for the canoe trail marker sign on a post. This locates the point where the trail enters the reeds, which can be hard to see later in the season until you are near it.

Follow this little stream as it curves to the left and heads toward a gap. You arrive in a small pond which may be covered with lily pads later in the year. There are a few shallow stumps which may impede your progress.

Follow the west side of the pond where the land rises to form a ridge until you can go no further south. This is your first portage, a land crossing of about 100 feet over a narrow neck of land into “John’s Pond.” Continue south along the west shore until you come to the next portage which is similar to the last.

The next pond you enter is completely landlocked with no outlet into Hamlin Lake, and it contains fewer lily pads and reeds. Continue across this pond, following the west shore until you reach the next portage to the south.

You are now entering the “Carp Ponds,” named for the carp that spawn here in the spring. The canoe trail winds in an easterly direction through these ponds before entering the open water of Hamlin Lake. This is approximately the halfway point through the ponds. If you wish to return to the canoe concession, turn left (north) along the lakeshore until arriving back at the Hamlin beach area. To continue on, follow the shore to the right (south) and enter the next bay. Stay generally to the south shore,

and proceed to the west. Soon your path will be blocked by a line of cedar trees which have grown up along a segment of old logging road. Notice the uniform “browse line” where deer have eaten all the low growth from the cedars in winter. There is an opening at the north (right) end of the road where you can push your canoe through. Dense reeds can make this difficult, so a portage is also available across the road.

Once you are past the road, the ponds become more open, and the trail continues in a southerly direction from one to the next until you reach the south end of the park. Here you will see some private cottages. Follow the trail past the cottages, heading east to Hamlin Lake. Turn to the north to go back along the shore to the Hamlin beach area which was your starting point. If you find that the wind has shifted to the north and paddling is difficult, it may be easier to wade in the shallow shoreline and pull the canoe alongside.

We hope you have enjoyed the Ludington State Park Canoe Trail and plan to visit again soon.

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