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Midwest summer lakeside retreats offer family fun

April 20, 2008 [Recommend](#)

WISCONSIN

Little Sister Resort: A 60-guest family-style resort on the Green Bay peninsula since 1947, nestled on a cove in Sister Bay. Here in Door County, on the peninsula's protected west side, summer fun includes swimming off the resort's two piers, sailing in the cove, biking into Little Sister village or exploring the north end of the peninsula.

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Use the resort's rowboats, paddleboats and fat-tire bikes or bring your own inflatable rafts, kayaks and small sailboats. There's no beach, except for a man-made bit of sand perfect for toddlers. An all-day pass to the adjacent nine-hole, par-three golf course is \$20.

Twenty-two cottages, cabins and newer rooms offer a choice of lodging. Owners Sue and Greg Sunstrom serve a full breakfast from mid-June to mid-July (included in the room charge). The romantic Tiki Bar & Grill serves lunch and dinner. The lowest shoulder-season rates for two start at \$80 a night. High season rates run around \$1,000 a week. Here, as at many established resorts, most guests are repeaters.

Drive time from Chicago: 5.5 hours.

Information: [Littlesisterresort.com](#), (877) 715-9405.

Gordon Lodge: Located on 130 private acres near Bailey's Harbor, the property is on the eastern, more exposed side of the Green Bay peninsula. That means the lodge is on Lake Michigan itself, where the water is shallower and warmer. The beach is long and sandy. The setting, among 100 acres of old-growth cedar and pine, is unique.

Sporty types will have plenty to keep them busy. The tennis court recently was resurfaced and it's lit for night play. There are volleyball and basketball courts, and recreation equipment is free to guests, including paddleboats, kayaks, road bicycles and fat-tire bikes. Three miles of new hiking trails wind through the forest.

All 39 rooms and cottages are renovated and have water-side views; together they sleep up to 115 guests. Lunch and dinner are served in the Top Deck Restaurant. Posh lodge rooms start at \$200 a night; rustic cottages start at \$150. Breakfast is included.

Drive time from Chicago: 5 hours.

Information: [Gordonlodge.com](#), (800) 830-6235.

MICHIGAN

Lake Shore Resort: With 30 double rooms in Saugatuck, Michigan's so-called "art coast," the resort overlooks Lake Michigan's southwestern shore and its most splendid shoreline. The dunes here, a stunning backdrop to endless stretches of sandy beaches, create a scene as alluring as anything you'll find in Hawaii.

The beach, inviting on a hot summer's day and breathtaking when the sun sets, is a perfect setting for an adults-preferred resort, which is how the Lake Shore Resort describes itself.

The hotel wisely offers little more than a heated swimming pool, kayaks and some fat-tire bikes. The assumption is that you're here to relax, rejuvenate or even fall in love. The biggest draw for most guests is Saugatuck, a pretty place with a charming downtown, attractive shops and art galleries.

Rooms for two in high season start at \$150 a night and include breakfast. In mid and low seasons, they start at \$95 and \$80.

Drive time from Chicago: 2.5 hours.

Information: [Lakeshoresortsaugatuck.com](#), (269) 857-7121.

MINNESOTA

Lost Lake Lodge: This resort on 80 forested acres in central Minnesota looks like typical summer camp for kids. Instead, the lodge, with comfortable cabins on the shores of Brainerd Lake, is geared toward families.

Daily activities are planned for all ages. There's enough to keep children busy by themselves, or parents and kids can share horseshoes, nature hikes, canoeing, kayaking, bird watching and paddle boats. Ice cream socials are a regular event, and a family campfire is held nightly.

The lake has a sandy beach that's ideal for smaller kids. By June, the water is warm. The setting is relatively isolated, a relaxing getaway for parents of older children. Other recreation includes golf at several top-rated courses off the property, massage treatments and fishing outings.

Prices seem high: one-bedroom cottages cost a minimum of \$320 a night in mid-summer; a two-bedroom cottage goes for at least \$480 a night, depending on the number of guests -- but they include gourmet breakfasts and four-course dinners served in the lodge's dining room and bistro.

Drive time from Chicago: 9 hours.

Information: [Lostlake.com](#), or call (800) 450-2681 or (218) 963-2681.

Anne Z. Cooke

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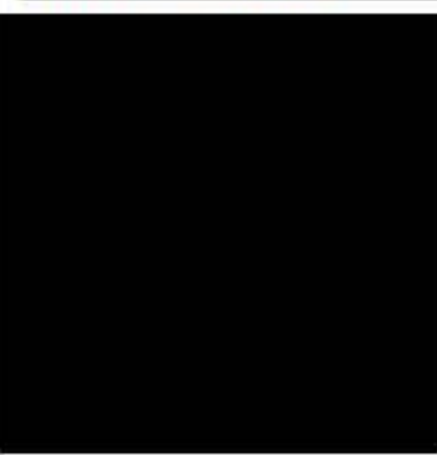
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