

The **North Shore** of Lake Superior runs from Duluth, Minnesota, USA at the southwestern end of the lake to Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada in the north to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario in the east. The shore is characterized by alternating rocky cliffs and cobblestone beaches, with rolling hills and ridges covered in boreal forest inland from the lake, which a number of scenic rivers and waterfalls descend through as they flow into Lake Superior. Americans often refer only to the Minnesota shoreline from Duluth to the international border at Grand Portage as the *North Shore*.

History of the North Shore

Pre Colonization

Lake Superior was settled by Native Americans about 8,000 BC when the Wisconsin Glaciers began to retreat. By 500 BC, the Laurel people had established settlements in the area and had begun to trade metal with other native peoples. The Laurel people were animists and probably created many of the pictographs present on rock faces along the North Shore and other Canadian rock faces in order to communicate with spirits. In the 12th century AD, on the easternmost portion of the North Shore, the next wave of migrants came into the area, people who would later become the Ojibwa. These people primarily left behind small pits dug in the ground which archaeologists now call Pukaskwa Pits. On the Minnesotan portion of the north shore, there are only three archaeological sites whatsoever, so it cannot be determined who lived here at this time. By the 18th century, the Ojibwa had settled the length of the North Shore approximately as far as the modern Canadian-Minnesotan Border. The Minnesotan portion of the North Shore was settled mostly by the Cree, and the Dakota lived to the south.

Fur Trade

The first white explorer to reach Lake Superior was a Frenchman named Etienne Brule who discovered it sometime before 1620. Charles Raymbault and Isaac Jogues, Jesuit missionaries, were the next significant explorers, who tried to establish a more permanent missionary post further west than Sault Ste. Marie. In 1658, Radisson and Groseilliers, two more French explorers, circumnavigated Lake Superior by sailing south along the North Shore, being the first Europeans to do so. When they returned, they brought a flotilla of Native Americans with fur pelts, beginning interest in the fur trade in this part of America.

Conflicts between native tribes began to escalate towards full scale war during this period when an alliance of Anishinabe tribes was formed and defeated the Ojibwa in a battle west of Sault Sainte Marie in 1662. This warfare between the tribes along Lake Superior prevented European trade in the area for several years. In 1670, the Hudson Bay Company was founded, which began the fur trade nonetheless. In the late 1670's, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut, helped negotiate a

more permanent peace between these tribes, thus providing safe trade across Lake Superior for the French. With this, the foundations for European settlement on the North Shore were laid. Fort Kaministiquia, around modern Thunder Bay was established in 1683. A war between Britain and France, followed by a sharp drop in fur prices, slowed colonization for several decades, however in 1732, the French built Fort St. Pierre on the Pigeon River in order to gain access to the west.

In 1763, according to the terms of the Treaty of Paris, the British took possession of all French holdings east of the Mississippi, including the north shore. In 1868, the North West Company, the newly organized rival to the Hudson Bay Company, started moving traders into its new fort at Grand Portage. With new headquarters on the North Shore itself, the North West Company began to build 40 new forts and ports all along the North Shore and northern Minnesota. However, with the depletion of fur-bearing animals, the fur trade and associated settlement collapsed.

Early American Settlement

When American settlers moved westward, the governments of the United States and Britain began to dispute the border between the territory that would become Minnesota and the territory which would become Ontario. Many geologic surveys were taken because of these disputes, which revealed the rich mineral resources in this area. In 1854, the LaPointe Treaty ceded all Ojibwa lands to the United States. Because of this, white settlers moved into the region, in order to mine the natural resources, thus beginning American settlements on the Minnesotan portion of the North Shore. Land claims were made near modern Duluth, Knife River, Beaver Bay, Buchanan, Burlington Bay, French River, Stewart River, and Silver Creek. 99 fishermen had settled in northern Minnesota in 1857. In this year, an economic panic led to most of these claims being abandoned. In 1865, the Vermilion Lake Gold Rush brought a new wave of settlement to the North Shore.

American settlement began in earnest in 1869. When the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad was built, people could easily move across the country in days instead of months. Duluth grew from 14 families in January of 1869 to a population of 3,500 by July of the same year. Construction on the Duluth Harbor was started to allow steamboat shipping between Duluth and Buffalo, Detroit, and Chicago. The town of Beaver Bay was founded in 1869 as a fishing community, and Grand Marais was founded by Henry Mayhew and Sam Howenstine in 1871. Another panic in 1873 put an end to this growth, and Duluth shrunk to a population of 1,300.

In the 1880's, growth began again in both Minnesota and significant growth began for the first time in Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway was opened in 1881 and brought a wave of settlers from the west. In Minnesota, Two Harbors was founded and became a major iron ore port and a source of labor for the inland iron mines on the North Shore. Besides mining, fishing became the other major industry of north shore communities at this time. In 1885, 195 commercial fishermen lived in Duluth. Duluth fish catches increased to a peak of 10,000 tons of fish caught in 1915. It has since declined. Current annual fish catches have fallen to under 1,000 tons a year.



One of the engines that took iron ore to Two Harbors. This engine is preserved near the lakeshore in Two Harbors to this day
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Growth of the Iron Industry

In 1875, Philadelphia financier Charlemagne Tower, who owned extensive interests in the Northern Pacific Railroad, began to investigate the possibility of iron mining inland from the north shore. Although the scare of 1873 had depressed the price of iron to \$5.50 per ton, by the 1880's it was back to about \$9.25 per ton. Tower started acquiring land in the Vermilion Range, where ore had an iron content of 69%. Tower also acquired the rights to the Duluth Iron & Railway Co., which entitled him to ten square miles of land for every mile of rail built between Duluth and Agate Bay (Two Harbors), 25 miles northeast along the shore. Speculators bought up land at Agate Bay, but the rail line wasn't completed until 1887, so all travel to Agate Bay was originally done by steamboat. Between 1884 and 1885, two large wooden loading docks were built in the harbor for shipping iron. In 1887, when the railroad was completed, the Minnesota Iron Company owned 95.7 miles of track, 26,800 acres of property, 13 locomotives, 340 cars, the loading docks at Two Harbors, and five pit mines.

This growth attracted the interest of Henry H. Porter, a Chicago railroad owner, who bought 25,000 acres of land further up the North Shore than Tower's holdings around Two Harbors and Tower, a mining settlement named after its founder. Porter coerced Tower into selling the Minnesota Iron Company for 8.5 million dollars. He built Chandler Mine, Pioneer Mine, Zenith Mine, Savoy Mine, and Sibley Mine between 1889 and 1899. In 1896, the iron traveling through Two Harbors reached 2,000,000 tons. Two Harbors steadily built more docks and replaced the wooden docks with concrete over the course of the next several decades.

Iron production continued steadily for many more decades, but in the 1950's, traditional iron mines had exhausted most of their resources. However, it had been known for many years that northern Minnesota had an ore called taconite, which could be refined into iron through a process called beneficiation. A taconite processing plant was built further north along the North Shore at

Silver Bay, and it quickly became the major taconite shipping port. Minnesotan taconite produces over half of the iron mined in Minnesota at the present date.

Growth of the Lumber Industry

Northern Minnesota is essentially covered with one large forest. Although the potential for a lumber industry was recognized early in the course of European settlement, the distances that it would have to be shipped made it uneconomical. However, in the 1880's, Michigan exhausted most of its forests. With the new branches of the Northern Pacific Railroad running through Duluth, lumber industries moved into Wisconsin and Minnesota. Duluth and Superior began milling large amounts of lumber to be shipped by rail, but in the 1890's, Duluth began shipping logs out across the lake to the east. Lumberjacks in turn began moving north and rafting logs down to Duluth along the lake from Knife River, Castle Danger, Grand Marais, and the Pigeon River. Because of conservation efforts, most of the forests along the North Shore are now protected from deforestation, essentially ending the lumber industry. Duluth had only one remaining lumber mill by 1925, but still receives shipments of lumber which are used in its paper mills.

Recreation, Conservation, Vacation

In 1855, when a lock system first allowed steamboats onto the lake, rich Americans from the east began to travel onto Lake Superior for recreational purposes. The rich would then canoe or be ferried from Duluth up the North Shore, and would stay in hunting and fishing camps. In the 1920's, the North Shore highway was built, which helped make the North Shore accessible by land. At the same time, commercial fishermen began to go out of business as catches declined. Many of these fishermen built cabins and resorts, which were inhabited by more rich people on recreational trips. Certain exclusive clubs also bought land for resort and sport purposes. In the far north, the Naniboujou holding company built an exclusive lodge for the rich and famous, which was frequented by, among others, Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey. Further south, a group of Duluth businessmen, the Tettegouche Club, bought 9,346 acres of land for use as a private retreat.

During the early 20th century, the government decided that continued exploitation of the north shore would destroy it. In 1909, Teddy Roosevelt organized the Superior National Forest, putting over three million acres of the forests between the North Shore and the Canadian boarder under protection. At this time, the government of Minnesota slowly began to acquire the lands which became the modern North Shore state parks. The first park to be formally organized on the north shore was Jay Cooke State Park, in 1915. In the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps established several camps organized along the North Shore and built rustic structures in what would become Gooseberry, Temperance River, Cascade, and Judge C.R. Magney State Parks.

The main industry of the North Shore after the decline of the fishing industry was and remains to this day tourism. However, there was concern that tourism would be restricted to the very rich only. For this reason, north shore state parks were organized with cheap, state run campgrounds in them. The first to open formally was Gooseberry Falls State Park in 1937. There are currently eight state parks with relatively cheap camping facilities for public use on Lake Superior and its tributaries, which are regularly used for rustic vacations. The North Shore is still littered with the old resorts which were built for the very rich, but they have since changed hands to less elitist management.

Physical Characteristics



Shovel Point, formed from a lava flow pouring from a continental rift into the Lake Superior basin.

Geology

The North Shore lies on the north side of an old continental rift which ran 2000 kilometers northwest from Michigan, through what is now Lake Superior, and southwest again into Kansas. As the granitic crust was torn apart by continental drift, lava flowed out from 50-100 kilometers under the crust and formed a basalt crust instead. Tectonic forces were not strong enough to continue to separate the two sides of the continental rift, and when the rifting stopped, the lava cooled and the heavy crust sank and was filled with sediment.

During recent glaciations, a large amount of the basalt and sandstone, which erode much more easily than granite does, was removed by the glaciers. This formed the rough, rugged shoreline on the North Shore today. As the glaciers retreated, they took with them eroded igneous material, much of which covers the rocky beaches on the north shore. The Wisconsin side of the basin and the bottom of the basin itself, however, filled with the residue from the eroded sandstone and thus are sandy beaches today.

The melting water from the retreat of the glaciers ran into the basin and began to fill what would become the Great Lakes. The shoreline at its maximum reached over 500 feet above its current

height, and at its minimum fell to 250 feet below its current level. When the levels of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron fell 2,000 years ago, it created a rapids at Sault Sainte Marie, which restricted the release of water from the lake, and brought the shoreline to its present level.

The modern shoreline is composed of basalt lava flows. In the south, near Duluth, other materials, such as slate, greywacke, and sandstone, are found a short distance inland, however in the north, the entire bedrock made of basalt and gabbro is exposed in patches miles from shore. When the bedrock hits the surface of the lake at a shallow enough angle, the beach is covered with washed up rocks. When it hits the lake at too steep an angle, it breaks off and makes sharp cliffs ending at the lake. This composes most of the shoreline on the north shore.

Attractions

There are many natural and man-made attractions along the North Shore of Lake Superior:

- Duluth and its attractions
- Superior National Forest
- Superior Hiking Trail
- North Country Trail
- Gunflint Trail
- Lutsen Mountain ski resorts

Minnesota State Parks

To people who camp in the state parks along Minnesota's North Shore, the term *North Shore* refers to both the shore of the lake and all the rivers which run into the lake. Thus there are a number of "North Shore state parks," Most of which are not actually on the lakeshore, and several of which are not even particularly close to it.

- Jay Cooke State Park is on the Saint Louis River, which enters into Lake Superior through the Duluth harbor several miles away.
- Gooseberry Falls State Park has campgrounds fairly close to the lake itself, however its main attractions are the five falls on the Gooseberry River and the Gitchi Gummi Trail, which overlooks the north face of the river gorge.
- Split Rock Lighthouse State Park is very popular for its historic Split Rock Lighthouse, however because the lighthouse is separately run by the Minnesota Historical Society, there is a fee for admittance to the lighthouse itself.
- Tettegouche State Park lies at the base of the Baptism River and is famous for the high cliffs overlooking Lake Superior. Palisade Head, the highest cliff in Minnesota, is

accessible outside the main entrance to the state park, although a slightly smaller but more scenic area of lake cliffs, Shovel Point, is within the main park.

- George H. Crosby Manitou State Park is the only state park on Lake Superior to offer only backpacking campsites, all of which are on the Manitou River at some distance from the actual lakeshore.
- Temperance River State Park also has camping very close to the shore of Superior, however the main attractions are the falls on the Temperance River. According to legend, the *Temperance* River was named for a very bad pun: the mouth of the river has no sand *bar*.
- Cascade River State Park is well known for the seven cascading waterfalls on the Cascade River.
- Judge C. R. Magney State Park is the northernmost place along Minnesota's North Shore where people can camp. The crowning jewel of this state park is the Devil's Kettle waterfall on the Brule River. The river splits into two streams right before the waterfall, and one continues down the river while the other disappears into a hole in the rock face of the waterfall called the Kettle.
- Grand Portage State Park, which is near but not the same as Grand Portage National Monument, includes the High Falls on the Pigeon River which separates Minnesota and Ontario. Unlike every other state park on Minnesota's North Shore, there are no camping accommodations in this park