

2025 GRAND LAKE REGION TRAVEL PLANNER





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BOARDWALK FEST



25



ARMSTRONG AIR & SPACE MUSEUM

ON THE COVER: NELSON, THE SASQUATCH

The Grand Lake Region 2025 Travel Planner is available free at the Visitors Center office, area Chambers of Commerce and other locations.

Grand Lake Region Visitors Center
900 Edgewater Drive,
St. Marys, Ohio 45885
419.394.1294 | 800.860.4726
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NOTE: While the listings in this guide were accurate when it went to print, please check hours of operation before visiting any of the sites listed in the book. Information presented in this guide is subject to change without notice.

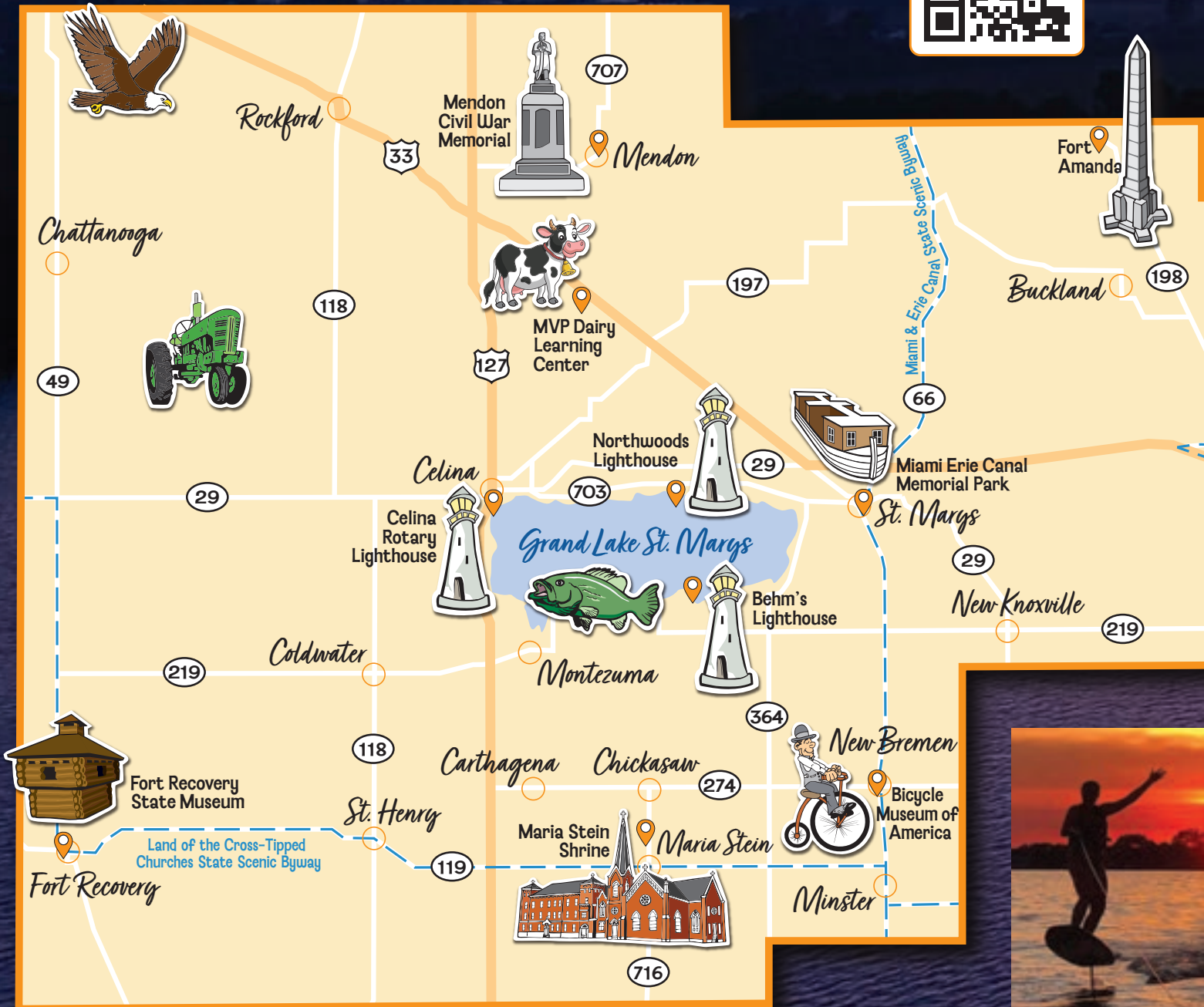
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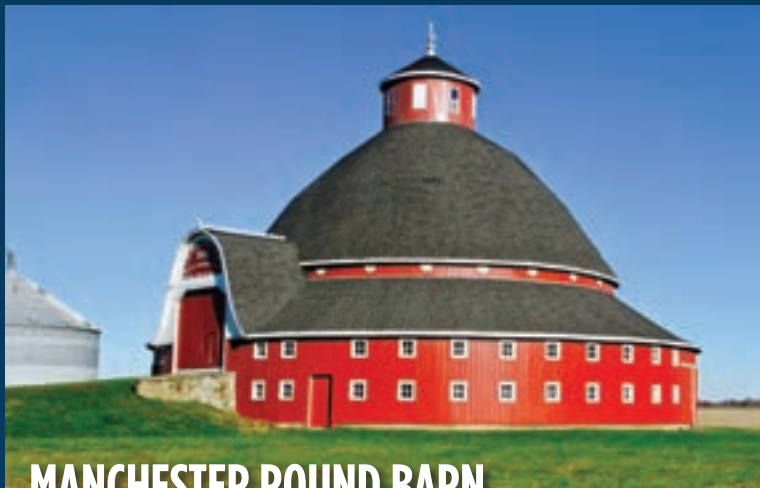
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FIND YOUR WAY

MERCER & AUGLAIZE COUNTIES

Navigate the region with our handy map >> or scan the QR code to see it all!





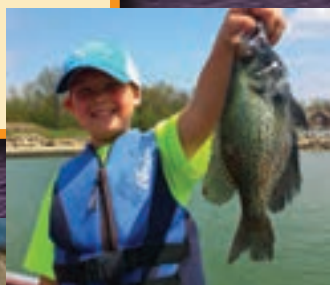
MANCHESTER ROUND BARN

Built in 1908 in Auglaize County, the J. H. Manchester Round Barn is the largest round barn in Ohio! This massive 102-foot-diameter round barn was built by Horace Duncan for wealthy and prominent farmer Jason H. Manchester. The three-story structure will hold over 150 tons of hay, 5000 bushels of corn, 15,000 bushels of oats, 16 horses and 100 head of cattle.

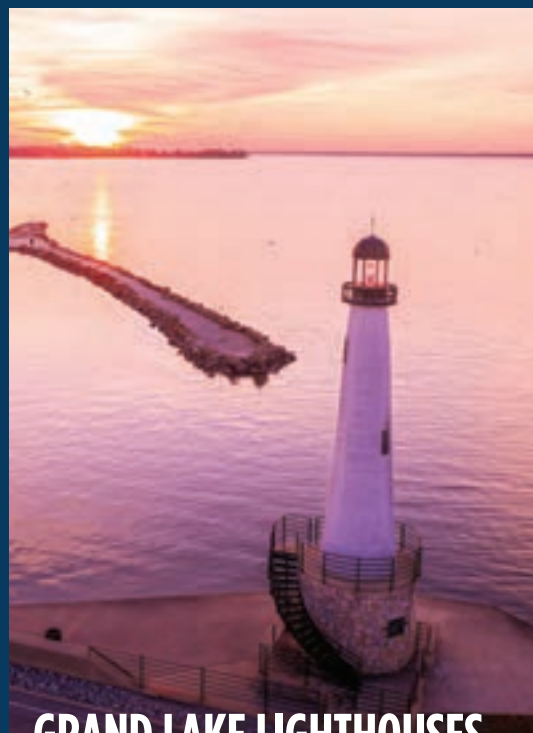


MIAMI-ERIE CANAL, LOCK 13

The restored Lock 13 is part of the Miami-Erie Canal, a 256-mile waterway from Cincinnati to Toledo. Started in 1825, the 20-year, 8 million dollar construction project played an important role in the development of Ohio providing easier transportation for settlers and goods.



LAKE LIFE



GRAND LAKE LIGHTHOUSES

Even though it is an oddity to see a lighthouse on an inland lake, Grand Lake boasts three fully-functioning, stunning lighthouses around its shores. They include the Northwood Lighthouse built in 1923, the Rotary Lighthouse built in 1986 (shown above), and Behm's Lighthouse built in 2003.

BREWS & VINES



TAKE A SENSORY SIPPING TOUR OF THE REGION'S BEST BREWERIES, WINERIES AND COFFEE HOUSES.

Quench your thirst with locally crafted beer, wine and coffee creations on the Grand Lake Brews-N-Vines Trail. Whether it's grapes, hops, or coffee beans, you'll find friendly small town charm, great hospitality and satisfying beverages to sip and savor. Gather your friends and hit the trail!



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Lake Rat Brewing, Celina
Tailspin Brewing Company, Coldwater
Second Crossing Brew Co., Rockford

WINERIES

Vineyard At Evergreen Farm, Coldwater
The Winery At Versailles, Versailles
5 Vines Winery, Wapakoneta
Gr8 Vines Winery, St. Marys

COFFEE HOUSES

New Bremen Coffee Co., New Bremen
Winans Chocolates + Coffee, Wapakoneta
Winans Chocolate + Coffee, Maria Stein
Winans Chocolate + Coffee, Celina
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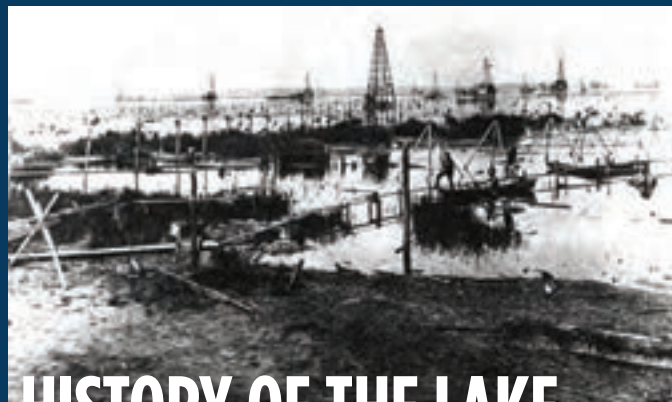
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WATER & NATURE

Whether you seek quiet solitude, an active outing or a full-on adrenaline rush, we have an array of natural attractions that have just the level of activity for you.





HISTORY OF THE LAKE

Constructed by man, without power equipment, Grand Lake served as a feeder lake for the Miami-Erie Canal. At its completion in 1845, it was the largest man-made lake in the world and is still the largest hand dug lake. Workers received 30 cents a day and a jigger of whiskey for their labors. In the early 1890's the lake became the site of the first off-shore oil drilling platform. By 1915 there were more than 150 oil wells in the lake. Other past business ventures on the lake included ice harvesting and commercial fisheries. The lake was also home to a large amusement park.




Whether your looking to unwind and relax or you want to get up and move, Grand Lake St. Marys provides plenty of reasons to hit the great outdoors. With 13,500 acres of water and 52 miles of shoreline, we offer the finest fishing and boating in the region.

Take a leisurely walk or bike ride along the shoreline and catch a breathtaking sunrise or sunset. Rent a kayak or canoe and paddle your way across the water.

Looking for a faster pace? Grand Lake is a boater's paradise. Spend the day catching rays, riding waves, and swimming at one of four boaters beaches. After you've worked up an appetite, cruise over to one of our excellent restaurants with lake access and spectacular views—we have 15.

We're also home to Grand Lake St. Marys State Park with nearly 600 acres of prime lakeside parkland to explore. You'll find a large, well-maintained state campground, trails, great access to fishing, swimming beaches, picnic amenities, excellent bird watching, and so much more!





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FAMOUS LOCAL

“Professional Fisherman”

Getting to know Matt Tuttle, Grand Lake fishing guide.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A PROFESSIONAL FISHERMAN?

I have been a professional fisherman for 24 years! In that 24 years I have fished from Ohio to Texas to as far south as Florida! I have guided for 13 years.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO FISH ON GRAND LAKE?

The best time to fish Grand lake is April and May and September and October and really up til the ice comes on if you don't mind fishing in the cold.

WHAT MAKES GRAND LAKE SPECIAL?

Grand lake is special due to its versatility of several different kinds of fishing and recreational boating space it offers. Grand lake is unique in the fact that it offers so many by boat restaurants around the lake. There is much to choose from. No where in all my travels across the country that any other lake offers that variety and number of places to eat and drink. Two to three times a year I have guide clients that ask about Grand lake being the first site in the world for the first off shore oil rig! That is amazing in itself!

WHAT DOES YOUR PERFECT FISHING WEEKEND ON THE LAKE LOOK LIKE?

Oh man, my perfect weekend is pretty amazing. An early morning sunrise launch at the boat ramp and hearing the woods and waters wake up with the birds chirping, the gray herring on point catching a fish while balancing on a log that is in the into the water, seeing the Eagle soar from the tree top and snatch a fish from the water and take it to its nest. Fishing until about noon and taking a break to eat lunch on the water and stopping by the boaters beach or one of the many places on the lake to relax and listen to a band play music until the sun sets out off the horizon of the lake!



2025 Events

*Find more events
on our free app!*



February 15: Winter Icebreaker Dance & Fundraiser

Featuring The Naked Karate Girls



August 9: Bar Stool Open

4-person team mini-golf tournament, T-shirt & pontoon decorating contest at the bars on Grand Lake



September 10: Kids Fishing Derby

A day of fishing, food & fun!

LakeImprovement.com

 Facebook.com/LakeImprovement

TAKE A HIKE OR RIDE YOUR BIKE

Experience the great outdoors with over 70 miles of trails running through quaint towns, along beautiful countryside, around magnificent lakes and waterways, and through woodland, wetland and prairies habitats.

You'll discover the splendor of the Grand Lake St. Marys shoreline, the historic grandeur of the Miami-Erie Canal, the rugged beauty of nature sanctuary and wildlife preservation areas, and the pristine, natural beauty of our state and county parks. While you're hitting the trails, there are great opportunities to fish, swim, picnic, bird watch and more.

13 **HIKING &
BIKING TRAILS**
FIND THEM ALL HERE >>



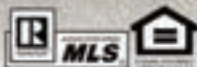
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MAN ON THE

**THE STARS ARE
IN REACH AT THE
ARMSTRONG AIR &
SPACE MUSEUM**



MOON

When a total solar eclipse put on a dazzling show across much of Ohio on April 8, 2024, our eyes turned to the heavens to witness the rare celestial event. Humanity has stared in wonder at the stars for millennia, and we've been exploring the nearest reaches of space for over half a century now. Ohio has played a larger role in those explorations than many people realize.

Astronauts Neil Armstrong and John Glenn are both from the state, and the Wright Brothers who first helped mankind take to the air over a century ago built their first plane in Dayton. While we're best known for our crops firmly rooted in our earthly soil, we should also be known for what we've done to help humanity leave that soil far below in our flights into the wild blue and beyond.

The Armstrong Air & Space Museum in Wapakoneta held a viewing party for the 2024 eclipse, seizing a rare opportunity to make the often abstract field of astronomy tangible for local residents and visitors. It was a great event, but just one day in their year-round efforts since 1972 to help Ohioans young and old—and visitors passing through—better understand and appreciate the universe we're traveling through. The museum not only celebrates the work and achievements of the titular astronaut who grew up in Wapakoneta and was the first person to ever walk on the moon, but also our ongoing pursuit to understand the mysteries of the universe.

For museum executive director Dante Centuori, that's a dream come true.

"I bought a telescope with my paper route money when I was in middle school," Centuori explains, his eyes lighting up with excitement even after a 35-year career in museum curation. "My friends back then always knew I was the space geek."

He recalls pulling out old issues of National Geographic as a kid to read all the space-related stories, and he still finds something as simple as witnessing the changing phases of the moon each month fascinating. He got his college degree in astronomy and physics, but quickly realized a career in academia wasn't for him. He wanted to see the wonder on people's faces when they first learned something new about space, and found his purpose in the informal science education opportunities museums provide.

He's been working in museums ever since. His most recent post prior to joining the Armstrong Museum in 2018 was at the Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland, which became the NASA Glenn Visitors Center for the Glenn Research Center during his tenure.

Centuori says the sheer scale of the sizes and distances involved in astronomy are often inconceivable for us, and a museum provides the opportunity to make those mind-boggling numbers resonate with people.

"I like sharing the excitement with people," he says. "This is fun, and I love getting kids and adults excited about science just as part of a fun day when they visit the museum and then seeing what sticks down the road."

There's certainly plenty to be excited about at Armstrong Air & Space Museum.

Centuori highlights the museum's Gemini VIII space capsule. The Gemini missions bridged our country's initial flights into space in the Mercury missions and the later Apollo program that saw us land on the moon. There were only 10 Gemini missions in total that carried astronauts, and the museum's capsule carried one of them in March 1966. The mission experienced a thruster malfunction that prevented the team from achieving all its objectives, but quick thinking from Command Pilot Neil Armstrong saved the lives of the crew. In addition to the actual Gemini VIII capsule inside, the museum also has full-scale recreation Gemini and Apollo capsules outside that guests can climb into and explore, allowing young astronauts-to-be to imagine their own trip to space.

The museum also has authentic space suits—including one of the A7L suits designed specifically for Armstrong on his Apollo missions—and one of the only moon rocks brought back from Armstrong's Apollo 11 lunar landing.

Before becoming a NASA astronaut, Armstrong first had to learn how to fly conventional aircraft, and the museum has several of these aircraft on display outdoors. Among these are the 1946 Aeronca 7AC Champion—the plane on which Armstrong first learned to fly—and the LearJet 28 in which Armstrong set several aviation records in 1979.

Wapakoneta is proud of its native son who took "a giant step for mankind" back in 1969, and after spending time at the Armstrong Air & Space Museum, visitors can head into the heart of the small town and see the original Armstrong house, statues and murals of the astronaut, and even the building that once housed the drug store where he worked in high school.

Ohio might not be the first place that comes to mind for many when they think of the U.S. space exploration, but it's played an outsized role in getting many of those voyages off the ground. Centuori says he doesn't think the humble beginnings of his Ohio youth were lost on Armstrong.

"You get the sense that growing up in rural Ohio imparted certain values to Neil that helped him even as an engineer, a test pilot, and an astronaut," he says. "His work ethic and modesty are reflected in the work he did."

One of the Armstrong Air & Space Museum's most impactful exhibits is not, on its surface, all that deeply scientific.

The "Infinity Room" is a small room lined entirely on all sides with mirrors and subtly lit with white holiday lights. A bridge leads through the otherwise dark room, and once the doors are closed, visitors can see themselves and all those points of light reflected all around them more times than they can count, the images bouncing off each other, receding ever farther away until disappearing out of reach. There are no complicated graphs in sight, no explanatory numbers, no abstract scientific theories to digest. It's all reduced to wonder, giving visitors the chance to reflect on the vastness of space and our place within it. It's a microcosm of the museum's goal of making the inconceivable tangible and real.

Beyond the sense of awe we can experience gazing into space, Centuori sees value in astronomical research and exploration that can lead us into the future. The acquisition of knowledge for its own sake can help us to contemplate new possibilities, but studying our neighboring planets specifically can help us understand our own better. We



really only understand one planet—Earth—very well, and studying others can provide insights we would miss otherwise.

"If you're studying a giraffe, you don't just look at one giraffe," says Centuori. "We have millions of giraffes throughout history we could study to understand how giraffes work. With just one earth, sometimes it's hard. Studying the atmosphere of Venus helped us better understand the greenhouse effect on Earth, for example. By understanding the other plants and moons, it can better help us understand earth."

In addition to taking in the museum's exhibits Tuesday-Sunday year-round (the museum is closed on Mondays, as well as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter Sunday), visitors can also enjoy several special events the museum hosts throughout the year.

Every October, the museum hosts Boo! On the Moon, a special evening event during which exhibits are taken over by spooky (but not scary) decor, and staff members throughout the museum give out candy. Guests are encouraged to come in costume. A quiet room hosted by the Auglaize County Board of Development Disabilities is available for guests who might be over-stimulated by the sensory experience.

Throughout the winter holiday season, the museum is lit up for the Holiday Lights & Grand Illumination, including space-themed displays utilizing tens of thousands of LED lights.

The entire town of Wapakoneta turns out for the annual Summer Moon Festival on the museum grounds each July to commemorate Neil Armstrong's Apollo 11 mission. The multi-day event includes food

trucks, educational talks, games, costumed astronaut appearances, model rocket launches, a bus tour to locations important to Neil Armstrong's life, and much more.

The museum also hosts school field trips and special group tours throughout the year, as well as special speakers (often astronauts!) and distance learning opportunities.

While much of Centuori's time as Executive Director involves the meetings and paperwork many of us are accustomed to, there's nothing he'd rather be doing than working in a top space museum. He still can't believe he gets to do what he dreamed of all those years ago as a child gazing into a telescope.

"Every once in a while, I really do think about what 10-year-old Dante would think about where I am now," he reflects. "I talk with old friends and they remember when we went to the Kennedy Space Center on a high school band trip and I spent the last of my money buying NASA patches in the gift shop."

Whether gazing into infinity in a room of mirrors or imagining what the first astronauts experienced as you take in space capsules, astronaut suits, and moon rocks, The Armstrong Air & Space Museum is a place for contemplating the wonders of the universe and our place within them in fun, hands-on ways.


HERE, THE STARS ARE WITHIN REACH.

BY DAVID NILSEN






Visit the Shrine today!

Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics is the original Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Precious Blood, founded in 1846. Now houses one of the largest collections of relics in the United States, including relics of the True Cross and over 850 Saints. The beautiful setting is perfect for group tours, company luncheons, and peaceful meditation.



Attractions include: Heritage Museum, Adoration and Relic Chapels. Outdoor sacred spaces, including a courtyard and grottos. Daily prayers and Saturday morning Mass. Pilgrim Gift Shop and Brunner Bake Shop.

2291 St. Johns Rd, Maria Stein, OH 45860
419-925-4532 | mariasteinshrine.org



LAND OF THE CROSS-TIPPED CHURCHES



This 45 mile state scenic byway consists of more than fifty buildings representing the German Catholic settlements of southern Auglaize and Mercer Counties, and portions of northern Darke and Shelby Counties, which were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Take a trip through the rural countryside and follow the magnificent churches with their cross-tipped "spires to heaven" symbolic of the cultural and historical uniqueness of the region.



ARMSTRONG AIR & SPACE MUSEUM



BICYCLE MUSEUM OF AMERICA



FORT RECOVERY MUSEUM

HISTORY

Shaped by a multitude of people, cultures, experiences, and moments of tension and triumph, our history lives on in museums, historic buildings, churches, monuments—and in the spirited hearts of our locals. From arrowheads to moon rock, discover the inspiring stories of our past.

ARMSTRONG AIR & SPACE MUSEUM

500 Apollo Drive | Wapakoneta, OH 45895
800.860.0142 | armstrongmuseum.org

Named in honor of astronaut and Wapakoneta native Neil Armstrong, the museum chronicles Ohio's contributions to space flight. The museum is home to some of the nation's most prized artifacts including the Gemini VIII spacecraft, two of Armstrong's spacesuits, three planes flown by Armstrong, and an Apollo 11 Moon rock. With special features including interactive and hands-on exhibits, free simulators, and the ever-popular infinity room, this is a must-see destination for the entire family!

BICYCLE MUSEUM OF AMERICA

7 West Monroe Street, New Bremen, OH 45869
419.629.9249 | bicyclemuseum.com

Opened in 1997 in downtown New Bremen, this three-floor museum is one of the largest and most comprehensive public bicycle displays in the world. The museum boasts an ever-expanding collection of approximately 800 bicycles with over 200 on display, including the Schwinn family collection formerly displayed at the Navy Pier in Chicago. Take an exciting journey through the evolution of the bicycle from 1816 to present day. The displays rotate regularly, to ensure a unique experience each time you visit.

FORT RECOVERY MUSEUM

1 Fortsite Street | Fort Recovery, OH 45846
800.238.8920 | fortrecoverymuseum.com

Fort Recovery is the site of two of the most dramatic Indian battles in American history—St. Clair's Defeat and the Battle of Fort Recovery. Visitors see history come alive through the reconstructed fort and two-story blockhouses, a connecting stockade, two log cabins, accurately detailed figures of a soldier and Indian warrior, and one of the largest Indian artifact collections on display in Ohio. You'll also find a Greenville Treaty Line marker and the Fort Recovery Monument, a 101-foot limestone obelisk commemorating the two important battles.

**DID YOU KNOW WE ALSO HAVE
10 LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUMS?
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BITES TO DECADENT
DESSERTS, TASTE
YOUR WAY AROUND
THE REGION.





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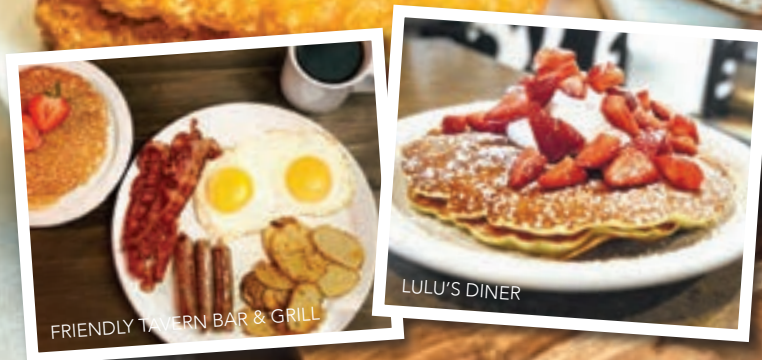
SEE OUR FULL MENU AT GUARNIERIPIZZERIA.COM

OPEN AT 4:00PM WEDNESDAY THRU SUNDAY

Stop by the pub or the patio or give us a call for carry-out!

SOME SAY BREAKFAST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY.

There are plenty of lakeside options to start your day off right, including **The Bay** and **The Fountain** in Celina or **Friendly Tavern Bar & Grill** in St Marys. A little further inland? Check out **Lulu's Diner** in Wapakoneta for an out of this world breakfast!



Experience high-end dining with a family-centric atmosphere at 17 West, an American bistro located in historic downtown New Bremen.

17west.com
17 West Monroe | New Bremen, Ohio
419-629-3800



Discover over 200 years of bicycle history at the Bicycle Museum of America, in scenic downtown New Bremen.

bicyclemuseum.com
7 W. Monroe St. | New Bremen, OH 45869
419-629-9249



FAMOUS LOCAL

“Ice Cream Master”

Get to know Dena Wireman, owner of Krave Creamery in Wapak.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO OPEN KRAVE?

The inspiration to open Krave Creamery began in 2020 when my husband Justin and I purchased an empty building in downtown Wapakoneta with the goal of contributing to the area's revitalization. Through extensive research, we discovered a unique batch ice cream maker that was unlike anything available locally. Recognizing the opportunity to bring something special to our community, we developed a plan. After many challenging months of hard work and dedication, Krave Creamery proudly opened its doors in October 2021.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE YOUR ICE CREAM?

Each ice cream flavor at Krave Creamery has its own unique creation process, with varying timeframes for preparation. Every batch begins with our signature vanilla dairy base, and from there, we add specific inclusions to craft each distinctive flavor. For example, our classic vanilla takes just about 7 minutes from prep to extraction, while more intricate flavors like our caramel apple cheesecake can require up to 20 minutes to achieve perfection.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT OWNING A BUSINESS IN DOWNTOWN WAPAKONETA?

The most rewarding aspect of owning a shop in downtown Wapakoneta is the sense of community among fellow shop owners. We regularly collaborate to create unique events that offer experiences you won't find anywhere else. Unlike the fleeting interaction of a drive-thru, our shop invites customers to step inside, breathe in the fresh aroma of waffle cones, and engage in personal conversations that leave a lasting impression. It's not just me—every downtown business owner here is dedicated to making each visit truly special.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FLAVOR?

Personally, my favorite flavor is the peanut butter—it's a staple that you'll always find in our dipping cabinet. However, if I had to choose from our rotating selections, I'd pick the Strawberry Rhubarb. It's a delightful seasonal treat that perfectly balances sweet and tart, making it a standout among our offerings.

THE AREA'S BEST! Pizza, Tacos, Burritos & Subs



716 W. Logan St.
Celina, OH
419.586.6416



182 W. Bank Rd.
St. Marys, OH
419.394.5555



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Food, drinks, music,
arts, sports and more –
our events calendar is
chock-full of fun with a
little something special
for everyone.



Keep up with
the latest details
and find more
events around
the region.

Mark your calendar for this year's biggest events!

MAY

BOARDWALK BOAT & BIKE SHOW

Celina, OH | boardwalkvillage.com

JUNE

HARVEST JUBILEE

Fort Recovery, OH | fortrecovery.org

MARIA STEIN COUNTRY FEST

Maria Stein, OH | mscountryfest.com

JULY

SUMMER MOON FESTIVAL

Wapakoneta, OH
summermoonfestival.com

BOARDWALK FEST

Celina, OH
[Facebook.com/boardwalkfestcelina](https://www.facebook.com/boardwalkfestcelina)

LAKE FESTIVAL

Celina, OH | celinalakefestival.com

NTPA TRACTOR PULLS

Fort Recovery, OH | fortpull.com

AUGLAIZE COUNTY FAIR

Wapakoneta, OH | auglaizecountyfair.org

AUGUST

WORLD'S LONGEST YARSALE

US 127 | 127sale.com

MERCER COUNTY BANNER FAIR

Celina, OH | mercercountyohiofair.com

LIA BARSTOOL OPEN

Grand Lake St. Marys
lakeimprovement.com

SUMMERFEST

St Marys, OH | stmarys.org

SEPTEMBER

SEAFOOD FEST

Celina, OH | boardwalkvillage.com

WAPAKONETA CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL

Wapakoneta, OH

SHIPYARD FOOD & TRUCK RALLY

Celina, OH | boardwalkvillage.com

OCTOBER

MINSTER OKTOBERFEST

Minster, OH | minsteroktoberfest.com

WALK WITH NATURE ALONG THE MIAMI-ERIE CANAL

St Marys, OH | stmarys.org

Please confirm listed dates. Information is subject to change without notice.



BOARDWALK FEST



BOARDWALK FEST



SUMMER MOON FESTIVAL



SUMMER MOON FESTIVAL



MINSTER OKTOBERFEST



MINSTER OKTOBERFEST



DISCOVER OUR SPECTACULAR CONCERT & EVENT SCENE

You won't believe what our region has to offer. From music, drama, arts, sports, and more—our concert and event scene rivals big city entertainment.

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WAPAKONETA
OHIO**

wapakoneta.com

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- Shop
- Experience

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- Special Events
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- Live Entertainment
- Indoor Winter Market

celinafarmersmarket.com



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THE BIGFOOT SIGHTING INSPIRES FUN, NOT FEAR

His name is Nelson,
and he's a sasquatch.

OHIO'S SASQUATCH

Sitting just inside the main gate of the Mercer County Fairgrounds sits a gentle giant, a nearly three-story greeter welcoming the world to this beautiful agrarian county in western Ohio.

The hairy ambassador sports a friendly smile, an ample beard, and a big thumbs up for the many cameras who have captured his likeness since he arrived in early 2024. He sits back on the ground with his legs tucked to the side, and he appears to be playing with an old Farmall tractor, as though the entrance to the fairgrounds were his own personal sandbox. His name is Nelson, and he's a sasquatch.

Mercer County is known for its rich soil and thriving agriculture industry, the natural beauty of Grand Lake St. Marys, and the countless cross-tipped churches dotting the landscape. Great food and drink brings folks from surrounding areas to Celina and other nearby towns, and numerous festivals and celebrations throughout the year have made the county a destination. Now, it's becoming known for one of its newest—and undoubtedly largest—residents.

"The conversation we'd been having was, 'How do we make the fairgrounds stand out for more than just agriculture and the fair?'" says Cara Muhlenkamp, Fair Manager for the Mercer County Fairgrounds. The fair and its celebration of farming and community was the crown jewel in the fairgrounds' annual calendar, but the group felt the large property could bring more to the community throughout the rest of the year as well. They began searching for a way to put the fairgrounds on the map in a big way. That "big way" turned out to be Bigfoot.

Muhlenkamp and her husband have been good friends for years with Cindy and Jason Emmons, the owners of Bear Hollow Wood Carvers in French Lick, Indiana. The company has a team of carvers who do both small and large-scale chainsaw carvings both for display and demonstration, ranging from animals like eagles and wolves to characters like gnomes and Smokey the Bear, and one-off creations to a customer's liking. Muhlenkamp first got the idea for a sasquatch sculpture from visiting the Emmons' small cabin resort in Indiana, where she met Otis, the resident sasquatch sculpture. Otis sits on a broken dock in the midst of a "lake" of blue wood chips.

"Our cabin's front porch faced Otis, and we noticed that when we got up at 8 a.m., people were there looking at him, and at 10 p.m., there were still people there looking at him," she recalls. "They would shine their headlights on him after dark and take pictures, and they're on a dead end road, so people were driving down there just to see him. It was amazing the traffic he was getting."

She brought the idea to the fair board of creating a sculpture of some kind at the fairgrounds as a way to bring people in year-round.

"They kind of looked at me like I was crazy, but then we all agreed it would be really neat," she says.

The hardest part of the process was deciding on a design for the sculpture itself. In French Lick, Otis is sitting on a broken dock, holding a fishing pole. Grand Lake St. Marys is already well-known for its fishing, and the fair board wanted to give the fairgrounds its own flair. Everyone agreed the county's agricultural heritage should be represented, but wanted to

make sure they weren't excluding any branches of that industry. There were even discussions early on evaluating—if they were to include a tractor—whether it should be green or red (the last thing you want to do is upset loyalists on either side of that divide).

The problem was solved for them when a local gentleman approached the board and offered to donate an antique Farmall tractor for the display. He didn't know what the sculpture was going to include, but if an old tractor would help, it was theirs for the taking and just needed a little TLC. The group decided to commission a Bigfoot likeness and have him playing with his toy tractor, honoring both the area's farming heritage and its most precious resource for the future: the next generation.

Over the weekend of the total solar eclipse in April 2024, Bear Hollow sent nine wood carvers to assemble the sculpture. Locals gathered at the fairgrounds to watch the once-in-a-lifetime celestial event, and had the chance to watch the sculpture take shape while they were there. Over five and a half long days, the carvers built a skeleton frame using several hundred feet of treated 2x4' boards, and covered it with 5,000'—nearly a mile—of poplar shakes to create the appearance of hair. The most intricate work was done on his face, carved from catalpa wood and weighing 600-700 lbs. when completed. Mercer County's very own sasquatch greeted the world as a 27' tall and 18' wide friendly giant.

Muhlenkamp knew locals would want a voice in naming their newest resident, and started a naming contest on Facebook. Over several rounds, the options were whittled down—forgive the pun—and eventually a winner was chosen: Nelson.

Mercer County has welcomed Nelson with open arms and eager cameras,

and his bright smile has been reflected back by both locals and travelers of all ages from all across the country.

"There was a lady here over the summer from Washington state," says Muhlenkamp. "She had found Nelson on a list of state-by-state roadside oddities, and she loves checking out giant sculptures. We've seen others from Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, all over."

The Mercer County Fairgrounds Fair Board asked,

"How do we make the fairgrounds stand out for more than just agriculture & the fair?"

The Answer: Bigfoot

Beyond the fun of knowing out-of-towners are stopping to admire a local landmark, Muhlenkamp says this notoriety is having an economic impact as well. When folks stop to admire the sculpture and take photos, they're likely to grab a bite to eat, spend time in the town, and fill up their gas tanks on the way out. Local school groups have also added Nelson as a popular field trip destination.

Nelson will of course be incorporated into annual events throughout the calendar year going forward, from the Merry and Bright Christmas Lights drive-thru display every December, to the weekly farmers

market during the warmer months, which sets up all around Nelson with the sculpture as the focal point.

Nelson can be visited every day through the Main Gate of the fairgrounds, and there is no cost for admission. The local Moose lodge donated the funds for a sidewalk to be built all around him, and the path is fully wheelchair-accessible. Muhlenkamp hopes to have Nelson memorabilia available for sale soon, both on site and online.

While there are no known legends in Mercer County of a sasquatch-like creature roaming the fields and forests, a new part of local lore is already growing at the entrance to the fairgrounds. Sightings are daily, and there are plenty of photos to prove it: Nelson the sasquatch is already a Mercer County legend.



VISIT NELSON!

**NELSON IS AVAILABLE TO VIEW
24/7 AT THE MERCER COUNTY
FAIRGROUNDS!**

**NELSON IS 27' TALL AND
ENTIRELY BUILT OF WOOD. HE
WAS CONSTRUCTED DURING THE
2024 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE.**

**1001 W
MARKET ST.
CELINA, OH
45822**

MERCERCOUNTYOHIOFAIR.COM | 419-586-3239

TOP 10

**7 CATCH A SUNSET
AT WINDY POINT**
Sink into a Grand Lake
sunset at Windy Point.

MUST-DOS WHILE VISITING

Whether it's your first trip or your 50th, we offer a wealth of experiences to explore and discover—or rediscover—for a fresh visit every time.

1



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Enjoy breakfast at the famous restaurant by the lake.

2



LAUNCH INTO SPACE & SEE THE MOON

Become an astronaut at the Armstrong Air & Space Museum.



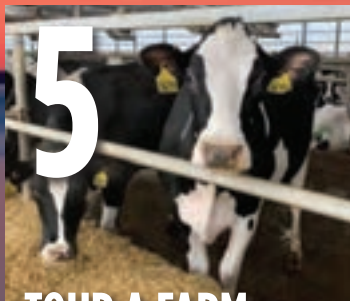
4 PONTON RIDE ON THE LAKE

The best way to experience "lake life" is on the lake!



3 PHOTO WITH NELSON

Get a picture with Bigfoot at the Mercer County Fairgrounds.



5 TOUR A FARM

Visit a working dairy farm at MVP Dairy.



8 RIDE A HIGHWHEELER

Go back in time and ride a highwheeler at the Bicycle Museum of America.



6 NIGHTCAP ON THE FLIGHT DECK

Enjoy the best views on the back deck of Tailspin Brewing Co.



9 GRAB A BIER AT OKTOBERFEST

Do the polka and grab a bier at Minster Oktoberfest!



10 FLOAT OVER TO LAKESIDE FOR DINNER

Tie off at Lakeside Hideout for a bite to eat on the water.



FAMOUS LOCAL

“Milk Making Specialist”

Get to know Dot,
a milking cow from
MVP Dairy.



WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO ON THE FARM?

Riding the carousel is always the highlight of my day! I remember the day I joined the milking herd, it was legendary! At that time, I was 2-years-old and it was one of the most exhilarating 8 minutes of my life. After a few days, I learned the routine and now I get to show off to the visitors who come from all over the world to see me and the girls! My farmer even put in a viewing deck so people can learn more about how we make milk

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR BARN?

Holy cow, the service here is 5 star. The housekeepers are always on top of making sure that my barn is in tip-top shape. When I go get milked, they clean my barn and make my bed for me. They don't fold a towel swan or leave a mint on my pillow, but we can't all be perfect. My farmer knows I am a cool weather girl, so in the summer, they turn misters on and speed up the fans to keep me cool. My nutritionist, A.K.A my private chef, makes a recipe tailored to me. I'm like a professional athlete. It's an all-you-can-eat buffet, so I usually eat about 100 pounds of feed to keep my figure.

HOW DO PEOPLE VISIT YOU?

I always get so excited to see the visitors at the Dairy Learning Center! I like show off by getting on the carousel first or using my spinning brush. People are always jealous of my back massaging brushes. To visit me, you can contact my human friends in the office at **567.324.7100 (Ext. 6)** or go to **dairylearningcenter.com**. You will learn about milk's journey from soil to yogurt cup, how my farmers take care of me, and see my friends and me get milked on our 80-stall carousel. All types of people and groups come to visit us, so there is something for everyone!



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at MVP Dairy

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WHAT WE'RE BY THE NUMBERS

Think you know the Grand Lake Region?
Dig a little deeper with these facts & figures.

88,489
Greater Grand Lake Region Population

MILEAGE TO MAJOR CITIES

(FROM I-75 IN WAPAK)

59 miles to Dayton

89 miles to Columbus

160 miles to Indianapolis

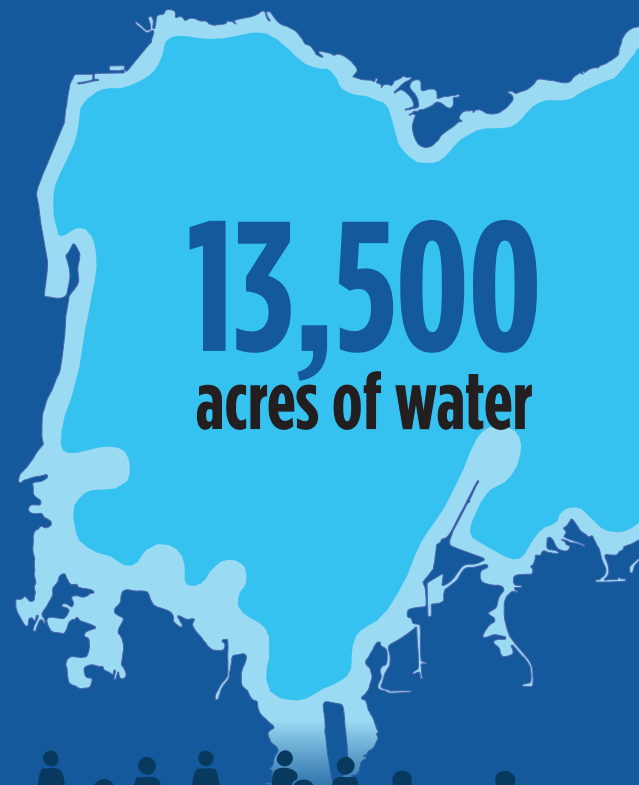
153 miles to Detroit

113 miles to Cincinnati

67 miles to Fort Wayne



3 million
cups of yogurt
can be produced each
day at Dannon Yogurt
factory in Minster



13,500
acres of water



21 Million
People Pass through the city of
Wapakoneta, OH Every Year at
the I-75/US-33 Interchange



MADE OF

35 boat
ramps
(7 free to
the public)

13 
Hiking &
Biking Trails


500,000+

Acres of
Farmground in
the Region

4 full
service
marinas

52 miles of
shoreline

4 boater's
beaches


20 Nesting
Pairs
of Bald
Eagles

15
restaurants,
clubs & bars
with lake access


198
Campsites at the State
Park Campground


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Holstein cows
are raised at one facility at
MVP Dairy in Mercer County



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10 CAMP GROUNDS



3 BED & BREAKFASTS



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Room
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Whirlpool
Exercise
Room
Restaurant
Adjacent
Breakfast
HS-Internet/
Cable
Pet Friendly

Additional Amenities
& Services

CELINA

America Best Value Inn Celina
1421 State Route 703, Celina, OH 45822
419.586.4656 | VantageHotels.com

42/5

• • • •

Lake view, coffee makers, refrigerators, microwaves, hair dryers, irons, local paper, free HBO

Best Western Celina
2020 Holiday Dr., Celina, OH 45822
419.586.4919 | BestWesternOhio.com/
hotels/bestwestern-celina

53/2

I • • •

Complimentary hot breakfast, digital safes, hair dryers, iron & ironing boards, voice mail, coffee makers, microwaves & refrigerators available, fax, copier, HBO, YMCA passes

West Bank Inn
1055 West Bank Rd., Celina, OH 45822
419.584.3625 | WestBankInn.com

14

• •

Rooms with king bed or king & queen available, in-room safes, hair dryers, iron & ironing boards, voice mail, coffee makers, microwaves & refrigerators available, fax

LAKESIDE RESORTS

Romer's Westlake Hotel Villas
1101 West Bank Rd., Celina, OH 45822
419.584.1444 | WestLakeVillas.com

30

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Villa's have 2 bedroom, sleeps 6, furnished kitchen, living room, washer/dryer

Boardwalk Village
729 West Bank Rd., Celina, OH 45822
info@boardwalkvillage.com

21

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Fully-furnished units, kitchen essentials, bedroom & bathroom linens, lakefront views, boat dock rentals, boat trailer parking, outdoor heated pool, community grills, close proximity to restaurants, coffee shops, bars, boutiques, music & events at Boardwalk Grill, corporate rental options available, pet-friendly units

MINSTER

Crescent Motel
14 South Hanover St., Minster, OH 45865
419.501.2611 | TheCrescentMotel.com

5

•

Smart TVs, free high-speed internet & Wi-Fi, iron & ironing boards, and Kuerig coffee makers

ST. MARYS

America Best Value St Marys
1321 Celina Rd., St Marys, OH 45885
419.394.2341 | VantageHotels.com

46/16

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TV Japan, coffee makers, refrigerators, microwaves, hair dryers, irons, laundry, USA Today, Showtime, playground, YMCA guest passes, onsite restaurant

Quality Inn & Suites
1410 Commerce Dr., St. Marys, Ohio 45885
419.394.2710 | ChoiceHotels.com

56/5

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Complimentary continental hot breakfast, digital safes, hair dryers, iron & ironing boards, coffee makers, microwaves & refrigerators available, fax, copier

WAPAKONETA

Best Western Wapakoneta Inn
1008 Lunar Dr., Wapakoneta, OH 45895
419.738.2050 | BestWesternOhio.com/
hotels/bestwestern-wapakoneta-inn

54

I • • • •

Complimentary hot breakfast, in-room digital safes, hair dryers, iron & ironing boards, 2-line phone, voice mail, coffee makers, microwaves & refrigerators available, fax, copier, HBO

Holiday Inn Express
1510 Saturn Dr., Wapakoneta, OH 45895
567.356.4151 | IHG.com/holidayinnexpress/
hotels/us/en/wapakoneta

89

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Super 8 Motel
1011 Lunar Dr., Wapakoneta, OH 45895
419.738.8810 | WyndhamHotels.com

38

• • • •

Complimentary breakfast, in-room hair dryers, coffee makers, microwaves & refrigerators available, fax, copier, HBO

Red Roof Inn & Suites
1659 Wapak-Fisher Rd., Wapakoneta, OH 45895, 419.738.2184 | RedRoof.com

56/4

• • • •

In-room hair dryers, coffee makers, microwaves & refrigerators available, fax, copier, cable TV

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25

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COMFORT ACRES GUEST




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BEAR**



**PUTT &
PADDLE**

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SLEEPS	12	12	10
BATHROOMS	2.5	3.5	2.5
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MOVIE THEATRE		✓	
GAME ROOM	✓		✓
FIREPIT	✓	✓	✓
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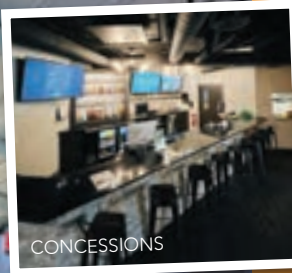
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For more information about our facility, sports and events calendar, rental options, or to book your next event, visit ShipyardOhio.com.





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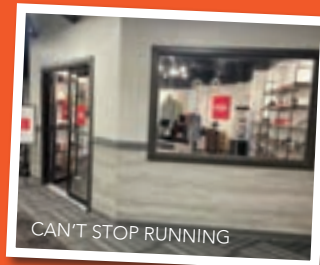




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MARION TOWNSHIP GREENWAY

The new Marion Township Greenway is a Big Chickasaw Creek headwaters stream preservation project with 2.1 miles of biking and walking path and 5.4 acres of Ohio Department of Natural Resources Green Space Conservation space. Parking is available at Marion Township Park on St. John's Road and Booster Drive just east of The Edge Sports Complex.

Enjoy the great outdoors with scenic views of the Big Chickasaw Creek, woodlands, and vast farmland. Be sure to make stops at the Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics and the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein, located along the path.



OUR COMMUNITY

The Grand Lake Region is full of communities on the move, and making investments in things that make their towns more livable – and lovable. From new parks and bike trails to DORAs (designated outdoor refreshment areas) and historic preservation, find the latest and greatest all over the region!

A SPACE ODYSSEY WITH WATER

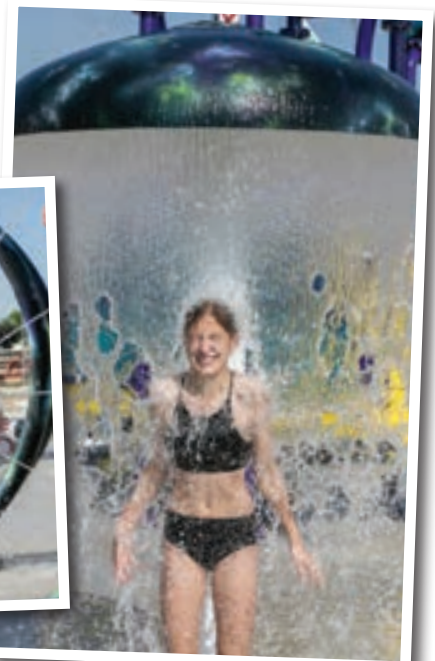
The new space-themed splash pad at Wapakoneta YMCA is making a big splash.

From alien water cannons to rockets, and even astronauts, there is something for everyone at this space-themed splash pad. The \$700,000 project was funded through private donations and state dollars, and is truly unique.

The sophisticated splash pad is not just pipes blowing up water. It's computer-controlled and visitors are able to control the programming by pushing buttons to turn things on and off or override features. It's a great feat of engineering and great fun for the entire community.

Entry to the splash pad is included in the Wapakoneta YMCA membership and guest passes available for purchase.

Find out more about the splash pad at WapakyMCA.org > > >





GRAND LAKE MARINERS BASEBALL

The Grand Lake Mariners joined the Great Lakes Summer Collegiate League (GLSCL) in 1989 and played its inaugural season in the summer of 1990. The Mariners currently rank second in longevity in the GLSCL. The League is supported by Major League Baseball and uses wood bats. The Mariners offer high-caliber collegiate baseball and excellent entertainment for all ages.



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Check out the latest hot spot at Caddy's Bistro & Golf Lounge. Play a round of golf, watch the game, and indulge in your favorite drinks and a delicious lineup of food like Range Sticks, Flamin' Birdie Taco, or Texas Wedge Flatbread.

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ST. MARYS THEATER AND GRAND OPERA HOUSE RENOVATION

Originally opened in 1895, The St. Marys Theater and Grand Opera House is considered to be one of the finest old theaters that still exists in the United States. The theater was still used for movies and live stage acts until it closed around 2015.

In 2021, spurred by the upcoming St. Marys' 2023 bicentennial, The Friends of the Saint Marys Theater and Grand Opera House group was formed to restore, preserve, and promote the historic building by transforming it into a vibrant performing arts center serving the greater St. Marys community for generations to come with artistic and educational performances.

A majority of the funds have been raised by individuals, businesses and state grants, and three of the four stages of renovation for the \$3 million project are complete. The theatre was reopened in (date???) and has been hosting events ever since.



Find information and events at GrandOperaHouseLive.com > > >



Rich in history, opportunity and natural beauty, St. Marys has so much to offer. Head outdoors and walk the towpath along the Miami-Erie Canal, play a round of miniature golf, or visit Memorial Park and check out the replica canal boat, clock tower and Memorial Covered Bridge. Head downtown and see a show in the newly renovated St. Marys Theatre & Grand Opera House or treat yourself to some retail therapy and a delicious meal in one of our excellent restaurants. There's so much to see and do in St. Marys.

FIND IT ALL HERE! >>

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cityofstmarys.net





FAMOUS LOCAL

“Historical Preservationist”

Get to know Doug Spencer, Auglaize County Commissioner and chair of the St Marys Theater restoration project.

What inspired the revitalization of the theater and opera house?

The impetus for re-opening the 1895 Vaudevillian theater in 2021 after many years of closure revolved around St. Marys' upcoming 2023 bicentennial. It was decided by a few founding members that the doors to the St. Marys Theater & Grand Opera House shall not remain chained as St. Marys celebrated its 200th birthday all year long and that the theater should play an integral role in celebrating. A 501c3 non-profit organization was formed and the building purchased July 30, 2021 with the mission to transform the beautiful, majestic, and iconic downtown theater into a vibrant performing arts center serving the greater St. Marys community for generations to come with artistic and educational performances.

What has been the most challenging aspect of the restoration?

The most challenging aspect of the restoration has been raising the needed \$3 million to meet our vision, which is broken into four phases. We have been extremely blessed to receive support through individual and business donations along with obtaining several state grants. We are closing in on the final amount needed and now are working on the funding of Phase 4, which consists of professional sound system, lighting, and curtains for the stage.

What impact will the restoration have on downtown St Marys?

We have already seen the impact of having local patrons tell us that they cannot believe the caliber of entertainment that they have seen in downtown St. Marys and not have to travel to the big cities. They comment, "...and we were pulling into our driveway in five minutes." Also, we have had people travel from all parts of Ohio and surrounding states to come enjoy our venue and performance. That is very heartwarming knowing that a small town like St. Marys, OH, can attract people to travel to take in a performance. This means local hotels, restaurants, and shops should be positively impacted by the activity at The Grand.

What is your favorite movie?

I have a difficult time saying anything is my favorite, which is why I usually classify responses with "my second favorite" movie is On my list of second favorites would be Airplane, It's a Wonderful Life, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and Shawshank Redemption.

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ST. MARYS RESERVOIR MILL RESTORATION PROJECT



PRESERVING A PIECE OF OUR HISTORY

The Miami & Erie Canal played an important role for industry in the Greater Grand Lake region.

In 1845, the Miami & Erie Canal was opened. Two years later in 1847, the St. Marys flour mill built by Scott, Linzee and Co. became the first industry to be powered by water from the canal. Between 1860 and 1870, Robert B. Gordon added eight more mills, including three grist mills, a woolen mill, a whip stock factory, a linseed oil mill, a stave factory and a saw mill.

Twenty-five years later in 1895, a fire destroyed several of the mill buildings, but the original mill remained safe. A year later, the Gordon, Hauss & Folk company was formed to rebuild some of the mills. They also built a grain mill, which they operated from 1900 to 1955 until all their holdings were purchased by the Heinrich family. The mills were operated by Arthur Walther.

In 1972, the Walther family sold the property back to the Heinrich Leasing Co. and the grain mill stopped operation and was used as a storage building for St. Marys Hardware.



In 2010, the "Save the Mill" group was formed to promote preserving and restoring the mill as an important historic building. In 2015, St. Marys Hardware closed, and the mill was emptied. Two years later, the City of St. Marys acquired the Mill property and developed a renovation plan.

In 2020, the renovation of the mill began and was completed in 2021. Today, it is called the St. Marys Reservoir Mill.

Find more information > > >



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"Creating exposure to our downtown while enhancing our community through family centric events."

Community Events brought to you by SMART!

- FIRST FRIDAYS - May thru August
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- Chocolate Walk
- Purse & Tool Bingo
- HallowNeon Night
- SCREAM Haunted Trail
- Christmas Parade
- Santa Comes To Town



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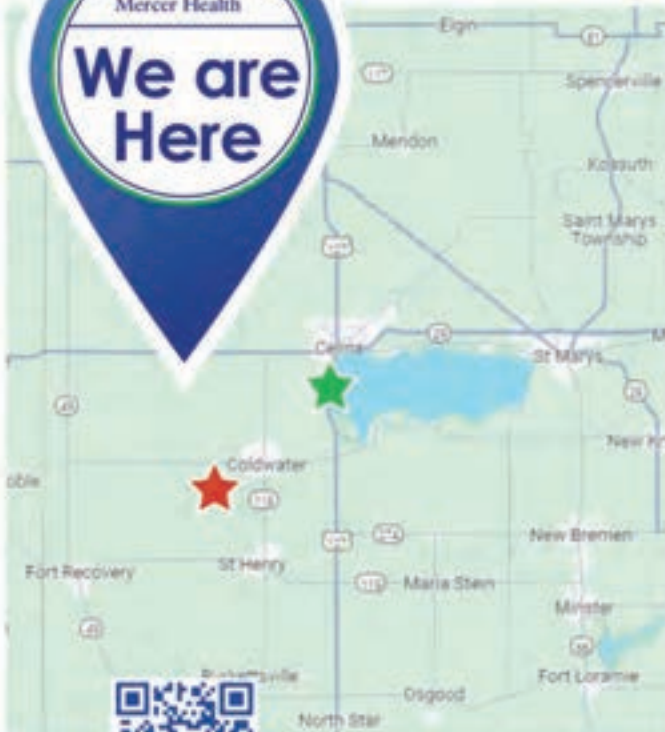
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