

Wisconsin

Wisconsin is located in the Great Lakes region of America. It is bounded by the shorelines of both Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, and shares borders with Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan and Illinois. Wisconsin is affectionately called the Cheese State as it produces more cheese than any other state in the nation -- however, it is officially known as the Badger State. Many early settlers, who came to Wisconsin to mine lead, lived in caves they dug in the side of the mountains -- which brought to mind the underground tunnels that the small mammals called badgers dig to make their homes. The lead miners, and eventually all the people in the state, took to being called badgers -- and thus the nickname the Badger State.

Native Americans lived in Wisconsin before it was explored by the French and British in the 1600s. The Menominee, Chippewa, Potawatomi and Winnebago people are among the original inhabitants of Wisconsin. The area became a U.S. territory in 1783, soon after the American Revolution, and became a state 65 years later in 1848. After that, an influx of European settlers populated Wisconsin. The largest group came from German-speaking Europe and came from a variety of regional, occupational and religious backgrounds -- from farmers to skilled craftsmen.

Today, Wisconsin boasts a population of 5.8 million people, and around 3.5 million cows! It should come as no surprise that in 1987, milk was named the official state beverage. In a nod to the state's Central European heritage -- bratwurst and craft beers made by independent breweries are popular at sporting events, fairs and family gatherings all over the state. Other culinary favorites are deep fried cheese curds and Kringle, a Danish pastry.

In addition to producing 2.8 billion pounds of cheese per year, Wisconsinites provide over half the world's supply of cranberries. Cranberries are grown in marshes and bogs near sources of freshwater, so the bogs can be flooded to aid in harvesting - making Wisconsin an ideal area for their growth as the state is home to 84,000 miles of rivers and streams and over 15,000 lakes.

Wisconsin experiences all four seasons with red and orange foliage dominating the fall landscapes, followed by bitterly cold winters, then blossoming springs and warm summers. Wisconsinites and tourists enjoy many recreational activities, such as skiing, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and sledding in the winter and watersports like sailing and waterskiing in the summer. Wisconsin is also home to the world famous motorcycle manufacturer Harley Davidson, which was founded in Milwaukee over a hundred years ago. In the summer, thousands go to Milwaukee to enjoy Summerfest, the largest music festival in the world. Or, if you are a pilot -- or just like airplanes -- think about flying to Oshkosh in July to take part in the yearly Experimental Aircraft Association airshow, in which over 10,000 aircraft from around the world are displayed.

Wisconsin is home to many beautiful sites and fun activities, but I suggest you check out a Green Bay Packer football game where can become an honorary Wisconsin

“cheesehead.” While wearing your cheesehead, you can be a tourist in Sturgeon Bay – my hometown -- where you can go sailing or fishing, and of course you must eat a bratwurst and cheesecurds while enjoying a local beer.

I look forward to seeing you in Wisconsin!