

GETTING THERE: The closest airport, and one where parking is free, is in Pellston, about 17 miles from Mackinaw City and less than 20 miles from Indian River. But you may find cheaper fares flying into Traverse City, Saginaw/Bay City/Midland (SBM) or Flint. Heading up to the trail from the south, all the major trailheads, except in Cheboygan, are right off Interstate 75. (For Cheboygan, you can take Highway 27 from Indian River or Highway 23 from Mackinaw City.) For more specific directions and amenities at each trailhead, contact the Top of Michigan Trails Council (www.trailscouncil.org; 231.348.8280).



RENTALS: There are hopes for bike rentals closer to the trail, but right now the closest vendor is in Petoskey, about a 20-minute drive from Indian River, and right along Lake Michigan at Little Traverse Bay—itself a wonderful destination stop. Latitude 45 (<http://latitude45.com>; 231.348.5342) on West Mitchell Street rents racks and Giant bicycles perfect for the trail surface.

Snowmobiles are allowed on the trail during the winter. You can find rentals near the trail on Fairview Road in Gaylord at Alpine Snowmobile Rental (www.michigansnowmobile.com/alpinerentals; 989.731.1276).

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT: In Indian River you can find a number of lodging options within a block or two of the trail, including several directly across the street. The Indian River Chamber of Commerce is a good place to start (www.irchamber.com; 231.238.9325); their Web site even lists accommodations by proximity to the trail.

For dining, each community along the trail offers readily accessible choices. Often you won't have to travel more than a few yards to find refreshment, such as casual, low-priced burgers and sandwiches at Breakers Bar & Grill (www.breakersbar.com; 231.238.7544), across a boardwalk from the trail in Topinabee. If you stay in Indian River, other ideas include the Brown Trout (231.238.9441) for great trout chowder and heaping portions of bread pudding, or the Dairy Mart (231.238.1111), directly across from the Chamber of Commerce, for cold treats.



WANT MORE: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources owns and operates the trail, and has an office in Gaylord (www.michigan.gov/dnr; 989.732.3541). For an interactive GIS map, visit www.trailink.com and search in Michigan for the North Central State Trail, formerly the Gaylord to Mackinaw City Trail. The Top of Michigan Trails Council is another good source of information about trails and trail projects in northern Michigan.

