



RECREATION OPPORTUNITY GUIDE

REMOTE CAMPING

The Ottawa National Forest provides a variety of wilderness and remote camping opportunities.

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With few exceptions, Ottawa National Forest System lands are open to remote camping. Campers should be prepared for remote and isolated conditions, to pack in necessary supplies and water, and pack out all trash. No waste disposal facilities or safe drinking water are available in the general forested area.

Remote camping, otherwise known as “dispersed” camping, is limited to 16 consecutive days. After 16 days, the camp and equipment must be either removed from National Forest System land; or moved to another location at least five miles from the initial camping location for an additional stay not to exceed 16 days.

Campfires are generally permitted, however the use of camp stoves is highly recommended. During periods of extreme fire danger a burning ban may be issued by the State or Forest. During a burning ban, campfires are not permitted in the general forested area of the Ottawa. Please call ahead during periods of high fire danger for the most current burning information. Low impact camping techniques that leave an area undisturbed after your passing are also recommended. Printed materials, videos and general program information on “Leave No Trace” land ethics may be obtained online, or by calling 1-800-332-4100.

Use of a current Forest map is advisable, as 40% of the land within the forest is privately owned. Maps can be purchased at Ottawa National Forest offices or at the Ottawa Visitor Center. These maps are sold for \$14 each. Topographical maps of the Ottawa National Forest are available at the Ottawa National Forest Supervisor’s office at a cost of \$8 each. Select topographical maps are available at District Offices and the Ottawa Visitor Center. To assist you with trip planning, these maps are also available for purchase online.

- To purchase the Forest map online: www.nationalforestmapstore.com
- To purchase topographical maps online: <http://store.usgs.gov>

Campers are responsible for knowing when and where they can ride or drive motor vehicles on Forest System roads and trails. Visitors are encouraged to get a current copy of the Ottawa National Forest’s Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM’s), which are the official travel management maps for motor vehicle use on the Forest. These maps display roads and trails open to motor vehicles on National Forest System lands. Maps are updated annually in April, and are available free of charge. Motorized cross country travel is not permitted anywhere on the Ottawa National Forest, and motorized use is restricted on many roads and trails from March 15 to May 15.





Wilderness Camping:

If it's solitude and pristine beauty you are after, as well as a personal challenge, you may want to consider camping in one of the three Wildernesses on the Ottawa National Forest. Few amenities are provided in wilderness, and users have a special responsibility to leave the wilderness in a natural state.

Sylvania Wilderness: This 18,327 acre wilderness is located on the Watersmeet Ranger District. Here you will find old growth forest and crystal clear lakes. Travel to the area's interior is either by foot or paddling only.

Camping is permitted only at designated sites by permit only. Campsites can be obtained on a first-come, first served basis at the Sylvania Entrance Station, or by reservation at www.recreation.gov, or by calling 1-877-444-6777. All campsite permits must be obtained at the Sylvania Entrance Station. Camping in the same campsite is limited to 14 consecutive days.

Designated campsites have a fire ring with cooking grate and a wilderness latrine. Special fishing regulations do apply on Sylvania lakes. Sylvania fishing regulations can be obtained at Ottawa National Forest offices, the Ottawa Visitor Center, or the Michigan Department of Natural Resources annual Fishing Guide.

McCormick Wilderness: This 16,850 acre wilderness is part of the Kenton Ranger District and boasts a variety of landscape types ranging from nearly level to rocky cliffs and outcrops. Within the wilderness you will find

pristine lakes and the Wild and Scenic Yellow Dog River. Access is by foot. Some paddling opportunities exist, but are limited by lengthy portages. There are no designated campsites within this wilderness, however, dispersed camping is allowed and is limited to 16 consecutive days. After 16 days campers must move to another site.

Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness: This 14,139 acre wilderness is located on the Kenton Ranger District. Here you will find the Wild and Scenic Sturgeon River and its tributaries with steep rugged gorges up to 300 feet deep and half to one-mile wide. Access to the interior is by foot on historic logging roads, which may be difficult to navigate and follow. There are no designated campsites within this Wilderness, however, dispersed camping is allowed and is limited to 16 consecutive days. After 16 days campers must move to another site.

Wilderness Safety Considerations

Some safety items to consider while recreating in a wilderness: in general, trails and trail intersections are not signed; trails may be difficult to find and follow; there may be user created and animal trails that appear to be trails that are not; the use of a map, compass, and/or Global Positioning System (GPS) unit is best; and leave your trip itinerary with someone detailing your route of travel, emergency contact numbers, and arrival and departure times. Please keep in mind, due to the remoteness of wilderness, emergency response times are much longer and cell phone reception is often limited or nonexistent for many miles.

Ottawa National Forest information is available in large print upon request from the Forest Supervisor's Office in Ironwood, MI (906) 932-1330, TTY 771

