

For immediate release:

Contact: Susanne Thiede-Barnet, 608-242-8895

Four Great Family Trips For Tight Budgets

Here's four of Wisconsin's most affordable and exciting family summer travel options

(April 27, 2010)—Don't settle for the same-old boring vacation. This summer, go on an adventure. Here are four of the Midwest's best opportunities for a vacation that's out-of-the-ordinary and doesn't require a heavy investment—just time and a willingness to explore.

The Old Fashioned Road-Trip

[The Wisconsin Great River Road](#) is arguable the best drive in the Midwest. Each of the 33 river towns that dot the 250-mile route could be destinations in their own right. A dozen scenic overlooks provide some of the most outstanding scenery in the Midwest. And, all along the way, you'll stumble on historic markers, interesting shops, one-of-a-kind museums and excellent trails.

On top of that, the river itself, which runs along the Wisconsin Great River Road is a working waterway, full of boat and barge traffic. And at viewing stations located in Alma, Fountain City, Trempealeau, Genoa and Lynxville, you can watch riverboats pushing barges through the enormous locks. In addition, almost 100 trains a day pass along the rail lines that run along the Wisconsin Great River Road.

The river towns are also fascinating. Places like Potosi, Prairie du Chien, La Crosse and Pepin were home to some of the earliest European settlers in the area. Historic sites include Stonefield in Cassville, Villa Louis in Prairie du Chien and the Freedom Park Great River Road Interpretive Center in Prescott.

An audio tour is available for the entire route 250-mile route. It can be downloaded for free at www.wigreatriverroad.org. It's a great way to really connect with what you're seeing as you drive.

The journey can take between anywhere two days and one week, depending on how much you want to explore. For a low-cost vacation that's high on educational value and natural beauty, you can't beat a drive along the Wisconsin Great River Road.

Quality Time on the Trail

If spending time in the car with the family seems too daunting, try a bicycle trip. [Onalaska](#), located at the midway point of the Wisconsin Great River Road, is the perfect destination for a family bicycling adventure.

The community of Onalaska is located on the 24-mile Great River State Trail, which follows the Mississippi River as it winds its way up to Trempealeau. On its way, the trail crosses a 287-foot former railroad trestle. Views of the bluffs and breathtaking wetlands thrill riders at every turn.

In addition to the Great River State Trail, bicyclists in Onalaska can connect to the 21.5-mile La Crosse River State Trail, which in turn provides riders with more than 101 miles of interconnected state trails that run through some of Wisconsin's best bicycling country. All of the trails are relatively flat and quite family friendly. You'll also find amenities at regular intervals along the route.

The most intrepid bicycling families will find several camping opportunities at various points along the trails. But those seeking a bit more comfortable places to rest at the end of a long day's pedaling will find great lodging options in Onalaska. You'll also find shopping, dining and entertainment aplenty.

Bobbers, Bluegills, Bass (and Crappies Too!)

[Rice Lake](#) is a classic northern Wisconsin community. The area is full of lakes—big and small, including

the lake that gives the town its name. And although these lakes each have some interesting and unique qualities of their own, they all have one thing in common: great fishing.

In particular, the bluegills, bass and crappie in the lakes surrounding the community of Rice Lake are some of the best bass and panfishing lakes in Wisconsin. Bear Lake, Red Cedar Lake and Rice Lake are the most popular, with excellent populations of bluegill and relatively high population of large-sized crappie. On top of that, the bass population in these lakes have exploded in the past few years, particularly in Rice Lake. Mix it all together and you have the recipe for outstanding bobber fishing.

Bobber fishing is an ideal way for families to get children interested in the outdoors. The visual appeal of the bobber being pulled beneath the surface and the thrill of catching plenty of fish makes fishing entertaining for kids and adults alike.

Rice Lake features numerous boat launches as well as places where families can rent boats too. The Rainbow Home Center in Rice Lake has a great selection of fishing tackle and bait and expert staff who can give you solid suggestions and helpful angling tips to get you started. The long list of lodging and dining choices offer a number of affordable options. For a family fishing trip, you can't beat Rice Lake.

Wisconsin's Alternative to the Boundary Waters

In heavily forested, highly-undeveloped western [Oneida County](#), the 6,400-acre Willow Flowage spreads out across the wilderness in a series of lakes, pools and backwaters.

For those looking for a "Boundary Waters" type paddling experience, the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area is an affordable alternative to taking the drive up to the Canadian border. Paddlers on the Willow Flowage can access 117 islands that dot the waters and 35 remote, semi-primitive campsites that are available to paddlers on a first come, first serve basis.

Walleye, musky, crappie, largemouth and smallmouth bass and northern pike are found throughout the flowage. Deer, bald eagles, beaver, loons and blue heron flourish in this protected natural area. While some powerboats are present on the Willow Flowage, boat access to the flowage is somewhat limited. In general, paddlers will not feel pressured by boat traffic. Overall, it's an excellent paddling destination.

Best of all, there are no fees or registration to use the campsites. For paddlers who don't own their own canoes or kayaks, rentals are available in several Oneida County communities.

For more information about planning a road trip on the Wisconsin Great River Road, visit www.wigreatriverroad.org.

Learn more about Onalaska's trail opportunities at www.discoveronalaska.com.

Find Rice Lake travel planning resources at www.ricelaketourism.com.

Get complete Oneida County travel planning information at www.oneidacountywi.com

For more information on these and other family vacation options, contact Susanne Thiede-Barnet at 608-242-8895 or Susanne@pilchbarnet.com.