

HISTORIC

River Road

Viveen's Guide to Three Great Half-Day Adventures

Beyond the Booklet

Follow the instructions in the Historic River Road booklet and enhance your experience by following these suggestions...

1 The *Merriment and Misery* Tour: Life along the Grand offered both Sites 1-14

Pack a picnic lunch – wear hiking shoes – a camera and umbrella are always a good idea.

Pull into the **Odawa/Battle Point Launch** and walk to the river's edge. Imagine 80 million feet of logs in front of you and the impact that would have on our community today.

Stop at **Felix's**. Yes, it's a gun shop and you may not be interested in that, but this is like no other. It's a time capsule full of personality, just like Bernie himself. You can rent a kayak here, too. See the Grand River Heritage Water Trail on the Ottawa County Parks website.

Spend some time at **Connor Bayou County Park**. See the kiosk in the parking lot for hiking instructions. If it's dry, head upriver, stopping first at the upper bayou overlook. If the river is in its high water spring mode, feel free to window peek at the Woodland Cabin (you can actually rent this place for your next party), then take the west loop starting at the river overlook.

Riverside County Park is not to be missed. Enter the park and take the first right to the far east end of the property. Stop at the trailhead, where you will find an informative kiosk. This is a peninsula loop trail. Hike to the tip of the peninsula (#4), then double back and take a left at trail marker #3 to assure you loop and not do a "there and back." Follow the trail to #8 and turn right to return to your car. The total distance is about 2 miles... about the distance for most hikes posted in this tour guide.

If you're touring in the spring, don't miss the upstream bluebell extravaganza at **Eastmanville Bayou Open Space** (at the end of the east trail) or an opportunity to kayak, if you brought your boat. There's a kiosk to guide you along trails up and down stream and two really well done story boards telling river history at this strategic site. Hungry? Time for that picnic.

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The Cemetery and Scenery Tour Sites 15-24

Pack your breakfast – wear hiking shoes – Site 15 is your first cemetery.

After visiting the Reals and little Henry Miller, continue on to **Eastmanville Farm Park**, the original site of the **Ottawa County Poor Farm**. Immediately to your left along the driveway is the “Memory Grove.” Take time to read the history of this place and the surprising life stories of select residents.

Pull straight ahead to a second parking area closer to the iconic barn. Grab your breakfast, check out the barn, and head north up the two-track to the kiosk. Look to the northwest and you will see a line of fencing. Follow the trail to that location, the **Poor Farm Cemetery**.

If you were riding a horse (this is, after all, an equestrian park) you could tie up here. The story board and memorial rock will take you back in time. Get comfortable on one of the benches and enjoy your breakfast in this pastoral setting. Return to your vehicle or continue along the trail looping the property. You could snowshoe or cross-country ski here in the winter... beautiful!

Follow directions to **Bur Oak Landing**. You might think you’re getting lost, but you’re not. En route you will pass the charming 1854 Ottawa Center Cemetery. Oh yes, stop! Then continue on to Bur Oak. Hug that huge tree, pocket a couple of its weird acorns for “show and tell” later, and continue on to **Jubb Bayou**. There you’ll find an abandoned barn. Snoop around thoroughly. Follow the trails out back to create your own adventure.

Now head for **Crockery Creek Natural Area** as directed. Check out the old Kirkby farm and kiosk at the trail head. Both the Kirkby and Woodland Trails are great hikes, promising you surprises along the way.

There’s one more cemetery on the tour, likely another you didn’t know about. After visiting **Bruce Bayou**, continue the drive to **Indian Channel**. As you approach the parking area, note a row of boulders along the left side of the road. They were placed there by MDOT to keep vehicles out of what is an Indian burial site. There are no markers left and the forces of river erosion have swept numerous graves away over time, but there remain burials here requiring the upmost respect. Please tread very lightly.

The remainder of your journey is about as scenic as it gets. Check out Lewis Cross’s “Castle” (private property) and enjoy the ride along beautiful Boom Road. Wind through Spring Lake to trail’s end today at **Mill Point Park**. Don’t miss the Grand River Greenway Walk, the perfect ending to a great morning.

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The Abandon Your Car, Bring a Bike Tour Sites 25-30

You'll need your bike, a helmet, the River Road booklet, and some cash.

Pull into **Linear Park** and continue on to the automobile parking area. Ditch your car there and unload your bike. Ride or walk to the observation deck at the end and return, picking up the tour as directed. Check out the Coal Tipple, Engine 1223, and if it's a Wednesday or Saturday, June through October starting at 8:00 a.m., nibble your way through the Farm Market. On Sundays, from 11:00 to 2:00, there's an Art Market there.

Now, this is important... stay on the sidewalk, not the Boardwalk. At the corner of Harbor and Washington you will find a number of interesting things. A visit to **The Depot** is time well spent, and how fitting that a **Transportation Museum** should be located along our historic auto/bike tour route! Enjoy two floors of artifacts. Outside, between the museum and the Chamber of Commerce building (site 28), you will find the Brass River and Sundial. Follow the Brass River to tract your own journey to this point.

Continuing on you'll probably notice a line at the Pronto Pup stand. There's a yummy reason for that. Join the queue.

Moving on down Harbor Avenue you will see the sign for the YMCA. Read the information posted for #29, but also it may interest you to know that Mulligan's Hollow and the terminus of the road from Detroit was the site of Indian annuities payments long ago.

Bike to the entrance of the fisherman's parking lot and look up to the dune at the site of the old light house. The original building has been converted to a cottage. If you took the Cemetery and Scenic Tour, you will have come full circle with the likes of Captain Harry Miller.

Enter **Grand Haven State Park**, enjoy the pier and all the delights along the Boardwalk on your return trip. Take time to read the story boards, relax on a bench, have a beer and a salad at Snug Harbor, and if you had fun along the way, tell others about the Historic River Road tours.