

Paddle Hard Brewing Marathon IPA

Grayling, MI
paddlehardbrewing.com



Those who live in Michigan understand the meaning of “Up North”. Michiganders do not refer to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan as Northern Michigan but instead call it the “U-P” and consider those who live there to be “Yoopers” (U-Pers). “Up North” is a reference to the northern part of the lower peninsula, an area filled with stunning wilderness and endless access to crystal clear freshwater, and among Northern Michigan’s many small lakes and streams is the Au Sable River, which translates from French to “in the sand”.



Crossing the finish line

The Au Sable River twists and turns for 138 miles until it pours out into Lake Huron. It passes through small towns like Grayling (the home of Paddle Hard Brewing), Roscommon, Oscoda and Mio and offers a stunning and simple canoe ride as well as world-class fishing. In fact, it is considered one of the best brown trout fisheries east of the Rocky Mountains. Much of the land it crosses is preserved by National and State Forests which provide a home to many amazing creatures like the Kirtland’s warbler, a songbird that, with the aid of environmental recovery efforts, became famous for its incredible comeback from near extinction in the latter half of the 20th century.

But perhaps the most exciting part of the Au Sable River is its incredibly unique yearly sporting event called the Au Sable River Canoe Marathon. Inaugurated in 1947, “The Marathon” is a non-stop 120-mile overnight canoe race that pits some of the most talented paddlers and athletes in the world. Starting in Grayling and running to Oscoda (where the Au Sable River meets Lake Huron), paddlers begin at 9:00 pm by running their canoes four blocks through town, placing them in the river and then paddling away. Racers paddle for about 14 to 19 hours before reaching the finish line which results in an astonishing rate of 50 to 80 strokes per minute, non-stop, all night long. Many teams never finish.

The all-time record was set in 1994 by Serge Corbin and Solomon Carrière at 13 hours 58 minutes and 8 seconds (13:58:08). They are the only team to ever complete the race in less than 14 hours.

The nicest boats used for the race are usually made of carbon-fiber, weigh less than 30 pounds and cost upwards of \$5,000. The race includes portages around six hydroelectric dams and racers must battle darkness, river obstructions, weather and pure exhaustion. “Feeders” are allowed to meet racers along the route and give them food, water, changes of clothing and other supplies. The race has earned the nickname “The World’s Toughest Spectator Race” due to the fact that some spectators will follow the canoes all the way from start to finish.

The race is always held on the last full weekend in July and in 2018 brought over 50,000 fans to the area as well as more than 80 race teams from Canada, Australia and over a dozen U.S. states. Sixty-seven of the 88 teams that started the journey crossed the finish line with Andrew Triebold of Grayling and Steve Lajoie of Québec winning the race and, in doing so, they became the first duo to ever win the race ten times. The first place winner currently receives \$5,000, second place is \$3,500 and \$2,500 for third. It is the longest non-stop canoe race in North America and is probably the oldest canoe race in the United States.

The Au Sable River Canoe Marathon is considered one of the three races of the Triple Crown of Canoe Racing. The other two races are the 70-mile long General Clinton Canoe Regatta, held on Memorial Day on New York’s Susquehanna River, and the four-day, 125-mile La Classique Internationale de Canots de la Maurice, a race that is held on Labor Day weekend on Québec’s St. Maurice River.

*From the Brewer: Delicate, clean and crisp with hints of lemon zest and hop forward. ABV 6%, IBU 85
Dave Vargo - Owner*

