

CHIPPEWA MORAINES ICE AGE RESERVE

Circle Trail

Main Attractions

Scenic kettle lakes, forest, open fields filled with wild flowers, excellent Interpretive Center.

Distance

4.7 miles, loop

Approximate Time

1 hour and 30 minutes to 2 hours (slow walk)

Trail Surface

Hard-packed dirt path, average width: 2 to 3 feet

Rocks & Roots

Occasional, often occurring on inclines and declines

Exertion / Intensity

Light

Trail Terrain

Hilly

Total Elevation Gain

690 feet

Assurance Markers

Yes, the trail is well marked

Camping

There are 2 hike-in sites called "Outpost Campsites" along the trail. Available on first-come, first-served basis. You must register at the Interpretive Center before you set-up camp.

Facilities

Staffed Visitor / Interpretive Center, a picnic area with tables, drinking water, restrooms, small garden.

Trail Management / Ownership

Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area, Wisconsin DNR
Tel: 715.967.2800

Hours / Season

Trails open year-round from 6am to 11pm daily. Interpretive Center is open year-round from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm daily.

Trail Access Fee \$

Wisconsin State Park Vehicle Admission Sticker is required.

Pets

Pets are allowed on the hiking trails but must be kept under control on a leash no longer than 8 feet long. Pets are not allowed in the picnic area or on the Mammoth Nature Trail (except where trails combine). You must clean up after your pet.

Directions

On US 53 in New Auburn, take exit 118 east onto County M and continue east on County M for 8.6 miles to the park entrance.

Nearby Trails and Parks

Mammoth Nature Trail, 0.7 mile loop. Dry Lake Trail, 1.8 mile loop. Both trails intersect with the Circle Trail inside the Chippewa Moraine. Enquire at Interpretive Center for maps and info.

Lake Wissota State Park and Brunet Island State Park are both nearby. Both have campgrounds.

Trail Notes

The Chippewa Moraine Ice Age Reserve is a 4000+ acre nature preserve that features three trail loops of varying lengths along with a segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. All three trails: The Circle Trail, Dry Lake trail, and the Mammoth Nature trail all begin at the same trailhead, just behind the Visitor Center, near the northwest corner of the paved parking lot. The trailhead sign is easily visible next to a mini-kiosk with paper maps and guides of all three trails. All three trails are well-worn dirt paths and are clearly marked with assurance markers.

There are two parking areas with direct access to the Circle Trail loop. It is recommended that you use the main parking area at the Visitor Center. Try to spend at least a half hour checking out the fantastic exhibits and displays inside the Visitor Center, many of which describe the last ice age and its effect on the geography of the surrounding area.

The Circle Trail is a 4.7 mile loop through hardwood forests, rolling hills, open fields, and numerous, small scenic lakes.

Recommend hiking the Circle Trail in a counterclockwise direction. Head west (left) at the first trail junction.

Visitor Center Trailhead

The trail enters the woods and you'll hit a T-junction within a few steps. This is the main trail and for a while is a combination of the Circle Trail, Ice Age Trail, Mammoth Nature Trail and the Dry Lake

Trail. For the **Circle Trail** head west (left).

The trail meanders along a hillside beneath maple, oak, basswood, and ash. Dense patches of ferns often surround the trail. You'll soon come upon the first of many kettle lakes within the first half-mile.

0.2 mile

At the **junction**, continue straight ahead on the combined Circle Trail / Ice Age Trail. The combined Mammoth Nature Trail and Dry Lake Trail intersects from the right.

The Circle Trail meanders over and around small hills under a dense forest canopy. Most of the gradients are easy to moderate.

0.4 mile

The Circle Trail makes a sharp right onto an abandoned logging road. A spur trail leads due south to an "Outpost Campsite", which sits along the west shore of North Shattuck Lake.

As you walk along the path, you are almost always within sight of one or more kettle lakes, some are quite small and intimate. Most of the lakes are ringed by tall marsh grasses and surrounded by forest covered hills. Red and white pines occasionally border the trail, especially when close to the shore of a lake.

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Circle Trail

0.7 mile

The trail crosses a wooden **footbridge** between North Shattuck Lake to the south (your left) and North of North Shattuck Lake to the north (your right).

0.9 mile

Ice Age Trail junction. The Ice Age Trail bears off to the north (right), while the Circle Trail continues on to the south (left).

1.2 miles

The trail passes through the **Weeks Lakes** area. Look for large birds nests in the trees on the opposite side of a small lake to the west (your right). This is a heron rookery.

1.3 miles

A second **trailhead** is located on County M. There is a small area for parking. The trail crosses the highway at the parking area entrance.

South of the highway, the trail runs west, parallel to the road for a short distance, then bends south and curves along the top of a low, narrow ridge. The small lake visible through the foliage to the east is **Jenstow Lake**.

After Jenstow Lake, you won't see any more lakes for a while as the trail slowly bends to the east. This section of the trail continues over and along small rolling hills under a tall forest canopy. Giant oak trees often tower over a light understory allowing you to see for long distances into the surrounding woods.

1.9 miles

The trail elbows around another ridge called an '**esker**'. A wooden post stands next to the trail with the number 5 on it. The esker is a sediment deposit created by a stream that tunneled through the ice sheet during the last ice age.

A couple of small bogs are located in the southwest segment of the Circle Loop. As the trail continues to the east you will begin to see small kettle lakes more frequently, often filled with water-lilies and surrounded by tall marsh grasses.

2.9 miles

White pines tower overhead and pine needles cover the path as the trail passes along the southeast shore of **South Shattuk Lake**. This area is a scenic highlight of the Circle Trail.

3.3 miles

Continuing east past South Shattuk Lake, a short **boardwalk and footbridge** passes through a small opening in the forest and provides excellent views of a small lake to the south and grassy wetlands to the north. Popple and birch are common along the trail.

3.5 miles

The trail heads north after combining with the **Ice Age Trail** and follows along a forested ridge between two lakes, both visible through the foliage to the east and west.

3.9 miles

the trail crosses **County M** for the second time. A short spur trail leads to the north to an "**Outpost Campsite**" overlooking a small,

scenic lake.

Only a few steps up a short incline on the main trail and you will come upon a trail intersection with the Dry Lake Trail, which joins the Circle Trail from the south (left). The combined Circle Trail, Ice Age Trail, and Dry Lake Trail continues straight ahead (west).

The trail angles northwest and goes straight for a while beneath a tall forest canopy along the north slope of a large hill. A small, narrow lake lies just to the north (your right). After a few bends, the trail closely follows along the east shore of another long and narrow lake, this one often filled with waterlilies and surrounded by tall marsh grasses.

4.4 miles

The trail crosses two **wooden footbridges**. After the second footbridge, the trail reaches a junction. The Circle Trail and Ice Age Trail turns south (left). The Dry Lake Trail and the Mammoth Nature Trail continues ahead (west). From here, a long segment of the Circle Trail is uphill and is one of the steepest gradients of the Circle Trail loop.

4.6 miles

At the **Dry Lake Trail junction**, turn west (right) to return to the Visitor Center Trailhead.

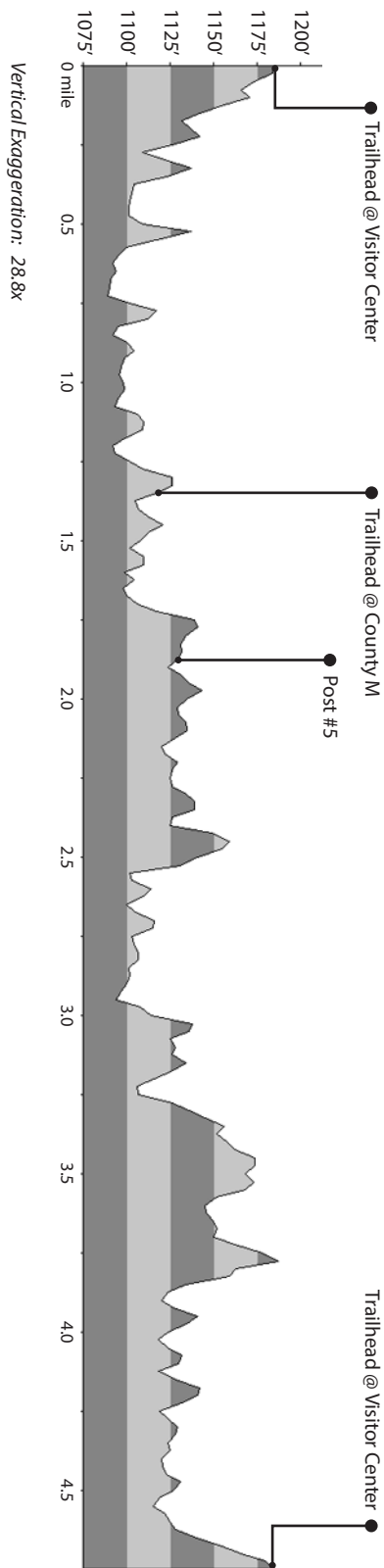
4.7 miles

Turn south (left) at the next junction to reach the **Visitor Center Trailhead**, which is just a few short steps uphill.

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Circle Trail

Elevation Profile



Highest Elevation: 1187 ft
 Lowest Elevation: 1089 ft
 Average Grade: 6%
 Steepest Grade: 22%
 Total Elevation Gain: 690 ft

GPS - NAD83 / WGS84

Visitor Center Trailhead	45.22369,-91.41387
Outpost Campsite	45.22615,-91.41867
Low Elevation Point	45.22655,-91.42209
Ice Age Trail Junction	45.22611,-91.42476
County M Trailhead	45.22061,-91.42742
Post #5	45.21480,-91.42670
Ice Age Trail Junction	45.21807,-91.40220
High Elevation Point	45.22126,-91.40250
Outpost Campsite	45.22264,-91.40329

For best results, set waypoint arrival radius to minimum of 100 feet

Driving Directions (Google Maps)



Visitor Center Entrance



County M Parking