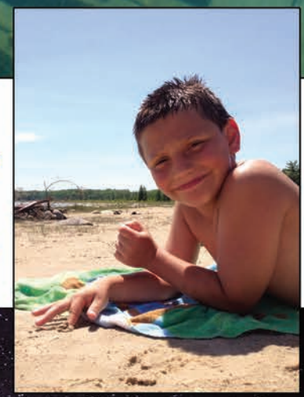
Above: Melissa Smith and her son William spent a day at Rockport filled with adventure. Below: Matt Muszynski shows off his fresh Lake Huron catch.



Above: Sue Peterman kayaks over a shipwreck in Bell Bay, north of Rockport; Right: Ethan Alexander enjoys Bell Bay Beach, courtesy Robin Alexander; Below: This mesmerizing Rockport night sky was captured by Paul Gerow Landscape Photography.

Anna Turri and her mom, Stephanie, have a splash war on the beach at Rockport State Park Recreation Area.

History Adventure Memories

Quarry mining and shipping at Rockport began in 1914 and continued until the location was closed in 1948. Very little remains of the many buildings from the operation. A few pieces of steel beams remain. At left is a picture of the pier dock; ca. 1940.

Fossils in the Quarry

Today, the terrain of the abandoned 300-acre limestone quarry is like something from another planet and hiking through the quarry is an interesting and intriguing experience. As you walk be careful not to trip over fossils. The landscape is dotted with fossilized remnants of the Devonian Period some 400 million years ago. Don't forget a bucket! Each visitor is allowed to take home up to 25 lbs of fossils per person per year. The quarry is easily accessed via the trail from the parking lot. Trail is rugged; sturdy shoes recommended.

Sinkholes

A dozen sinkholes dot the Rockport property and make for an exciting adventure into the forest in search of these unique geologic features. While most of the Rockport sinks are dry you can find one that is nearly 100 ft. deep and filled with water and fish! While it is not recommended that you climb into them for safety reasons, you can hike up to the edge and see the karst topography before your very eyes. Sinkholes are located throughout the forest and can be found by hiking out beyond the quarry. Trails are rugged but are also passable via mountain bike.

Bat Hibernaculum

Two conveyor tunnels from the old mining operation have become home to, and a hibernation site for three species of bats; big and little brown bats, and the tri-colored bat. The third being less common in the state, especially in the lower peninsula. The number of bats hibernating at Rockport is significant and it is important to protect these populations. A group of high school welding students from Alpena constructed grates for the tunnels. The group is part of the only 4-H welding group in the state. The grates cover openings in the conveyor tunnels to keep people out but allow the bats easy access. Look for interpretive signage near the tunnels behind the large rock hill adjacent to the pier.

Rugged Trails

Few places remain that offer a true outdoor trail adventure. Flat, smooth trails are nice but where do you go when you want a good back-to-nature challenge? Rockport is perfect for long hikes or mountain bike trail rides. Rugged trails transverse the 4,000+ acres of the Rockport property. Some parts of the trails are smooth, some are rocky, and some are delightfully interrupted by wandering tree roots. Enjoy the wilds of the wilderness with a map and a compass and your sense of exploration. Trails fan out from the parking lot.

Deepwater Port & Pier

In the mining days freighters pulled into port to load their bellies with freshly mined stone. All that remains of this era today is the pier platform. A walk out onto the pier surrounds you with the breeze of the big lake and stunning views of her sparkling waters. You can spot the ancient dock pilings peeking out near the edges of the pier as turquoise water laps against the cement walls. The pier is located just off the parking area.

Besser Natural Area & Bell Village

Just north of the Rockport property is a stunning beach, nature trail, and remnants of an historic village. Besser Natural Area is home to one of Michigan's last remaining stands of virgin pine. Hike through an easy trail in the soft woods to view the timber and what remains of the old village of Bell, including the community's primitive cemetery. When your forest adventure is complete, relax along one of Michigan's most beautiful sandy beaches, near Bell Bay. Just off shore lies a shipwreck in mere feet of water and a ship's mast rests in a lagoon along the shoreline.

Stargazing

Rural isolation has its benefits. Being miles away from any major metropolitan area gives northeast Michigan an unique advantage for those who enjoy the mysteries revealed in the night sky. Our lack of concentrated light pollution makes the cosmos appear crisp and clear. Dark lands can be found at Rockport State Park Recreation Area where light emissions are among the lowest in the Great Lakes. Stars, meteors, planets and moons await your discovery.

Fishing

Access to the big lake is easy with the boat launch located at the Rockport harbor. There is plenty of parking for trucks with trailers. Fish for Brown Trout, Chinook, King, Salmon, Lake Trout and Walleye. Fishing off the pier is also a fun way to spend the day.