

## Chisago Lakes Water Trail



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Explore 10 lakes with 100+ miles of shoreline and 5,000 acres of water, pristine shorelines, islands, and peninsulas.

Chisago Lakes Water Trail Website  
[www.ChisagoLakesWaterTrail.com](http://www.ChisagoLakesWaterTrail.com)

Chisago Lakes Chamber of Commerce  
<http://www.chisagolakeschamber.com>

Visit us on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/ChisagoLakesWaterTrail/>



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# Welcome to the Chisago Lakes Water Trail

## History of the Lakes

**Chisago Lakes:** Ten lakes spanning ten miles with over 5,000 acres of water, pristine shorelines, islands, and peninsulas. What Swedish settlers discovered in the 1850s still exists today for the enjoyment of both local residents and weekend visitors.

Originally called "Kichisaga" by the Ojibway people, the "fair and lovely waters" of this area were one large lake, which the Swedish settlers called Big Lake, then Swede Lake, and finally Chisago Lake. In the mid-19th century the lakes were used for water, food, ice, transportation, freight, and of course, recreation. The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s gave rise to lakeside resorts where guests enjoyed fishing, sailing, and boating; passenger steamers even carried guests on recreational cruises across the lakes.

The Chisago Lakes area welcomed a variety of events over the next several decades, beginning with an ice carnival in the early 1930s, hosted by local residents Arne and Bernie Swanson. That led to speed and figure skating contests, and the largest event of all in 1935: The Minnesota State Skating Championships, during which Lindström greeted about 1200 visitors. When the railroad was closed in 1948, the channels connecting the bigger bodies of water were filled in to make way for the highway, and the resulting five separate water basins were named for the towns they abutted: North Center Lake and South Center Lake for Center City; North Lindström Lake and South Lindström Lake for Lindström; and Chisago Lake for Chisago City.



Today, these towns are vibrant communities nestled among the lakes. The efforts to re-connect the lakes have been ongoing for nearly 80 years. In the mid-1940s, the channel between North and South Lindström was dredged and a navigable culvert installed, but that culvert didn't remain passable. It wasn't until 2005 that another channel was re-established between North and South Center Lakes, and in 2012 - with the reconstruction of Highway 8 - the North and South Lindström connection was reestablished. Plans are underway to re-create the navigable connection between North Center and North Lindström; that final phase would reestablish the original Kichisago Lake.

The Chisago Lakes System is incorporated into the greater Chisago Lakes Watershed and includes 24 lakes. Various connections between the lakes and a weir system control the water levels on the chain. The Chisago Lakes Lake Improvement District, established in 1976, is responsible for maintaining the channel and weir system.

## Lakes on the Water Trail

The water trail extends 10 miles, through 5,000 acres, over 10 lakes connected by small channels or short portages.

Trip ideas and loops are identified on the individual lake maps and the Chisago Lakes Water Trail website: [www.chisagolakeswatertrail.com](http://www.chisagolakeswatertrail.com)

The Chisago Lakes area is only 35 minutes north-east of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. From the south, follow I-35 north to Forest Lake and exit on Highway 8 to Chisago Lakes. From the north, follow I-35 south to the Stacy exit and head east, left, on CSAH 19 (Stacy Trail) to the Chisago Lakes area.

The Chisago Lakes Water Trail offers two trailheads, one on the east end of the lake system, and the other on the west. The east trailhead is located at Kichisaga Park on South Center Lake, south of Lindström. From Lindström, go south on CSAH 25 (Olinda Trail) to Glader Blvd., then go east to Kichisaga Park. The west trailhead is at the Green Lake DNR boat landing in Chisago City. From Highway 8 west of Chisago City, take CSAH 23 (Green Lake Trail) to Green Lake.

## Directions & Access to Trail

**South Center Lake**, 1,003 acres and the deepest lake in the chain at a maximum of 109 ft. and an average depth of 16 ft., has a navigable connection with North Center Lake.

**North Center Lake**, 868 acres with a maximum depth of 46 ft., and an average depth of 10 ft. Downtown Center City is accessible from the city's lakeshore property on the south end of the lake.

**Bull Lake**, 11 acres with a depth of 30 ft. or more. Sits within the City of Lindström's Allemansrätt Park. It is accessible by portage from North Center and North Lindström Lakes.

**North Lindström Lake**, 225 acres with a maximum depth of 29 ft., and an average depth of 16 ft. A bridge-covered channel large enough for a pontoon to travel through connects North Lindström with South Lindström Lake.

**South Lindström Lake**, 450 acres and 34 ft. average depth. South Lindström has access to Lindström's downtown from the Lindström Beach.

**Lake Martha**, 21 acres and accessible by portage from Green and Chisago Lakes; the portage requires crossing Hwy. 8 at the Old Towne Road signalized intersection.

**Chisago Lake**, 873 acres of water and a maximum depth of 32 ft., connected to South Lindström Lake.

**Green Lake**, 1,714 acres and **Little Green Lake**, 224 acres, were not part of what the Swedes called Big Lake, but they are considered part of the Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes. Ojiketa Regional Park sits on the east shore of Green Lake.

**Linn Lake**, 116 acres and an average depth of 9 ft., is at the top of the watershed. Its outlet flows into South Center Lake and is accessible by a tough portage through Kichisago Park.

The water trail can also be accessed through local Minnesota DNR boat ramps, city and county parks, city beaches, lakeshore restaurants, and motels. The trail is well marked with lake, portage, and campsite signage.



The "fair and lovely" Chisago Lakes area makes a spectacular year-round getaway on the northeast side of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area.

## Future Connections

**Pioneer Lake**, a small 77-acre lake accessible by a very short portage through the Chisago County Government Center property. This lake offers access to the historic Chisago Lake Lutheran Church. There is no public access to this lake.

**School Lake**, 106 acres, currently has no access from Lake Martha, but the lake is accessible from Chisago City's Rotary Park.

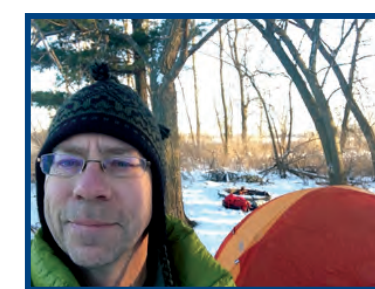
**Lake Mattson**, 24 acres, connected to School Lake.

**Kroon Lake**, a 181-acre lake, currently not accessible by water trail.

**Wallmark Lake**, 150 acres averaging 9 ft. deep, and boasts two explorable half-acre islands. Currently no public access on this lake.

## Year-Around Activities

The water trail provides opportunities to canoe, kayak, and paddle board in summer, and to experience the best of winter.



Summer activities include swimming, fishing, bird watching, hiking the local trails or wilderness parks. The lakes are prime winter ice fishing and snowmobiling venues. The water trail offers a unique route for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, or fat-tire biking, or a winter picnic at one of the adjacent parks.

All of the lakes are considered excellent for fishing (species include black crappie, bluegill, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleyed pike and pumpkinseed - a variety of sunfish). The DNR periodically stocks the lakes with walleye and other fish. Bass and carp fishing tournaments are held each summer and ice fishing contests in the winter. Some of the smaller lakes are undeveloped, giving visitors a sense of being in the wilderness; however, many homes surround the larger lakes, and weekends and holidays can lend themselves to heavy boat traffic.

The communities offer a year-round wide variety of dining options, locally roasted coffee, fresh sweets and bakery goods, eclectic shopping and antique stores, lodging, and other recreation options.

## For Your Safety

The Chisago Lakes Water Trail was created to be shared by local residents and visitors to this suburban area. While on the trail, watch for boats in summer (and snowmobiles in winter). Paddlers need to be prepared mentally and physically to deal with unexpected weather conditions, and should possess the paddling skills necessary to assure their own safety and that of others. Lake winds - especially on the larger lakes - can pick up unexpectedly and create large waves, the power of which should not be underestimated. Always monitor local weather conditions before setting out on the water. The following rules and guidelines will keep everyone safe on the water trail.

▶ **Always wear an appropriately sized and fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device.**

▶ **Be familiar with dangers of hypothermia and dress appropriately for possible cold water and weather.**

▶ **Seek instruction and practice kayak, canoe, and paddle board skills, including rescues, before paddling on the Chisago Lakes.**

▶ **Always let someone know where you are going and when you are expected to return.**

▶ **Know the skill level of other paddlers in your group. Discuss safety issues before leaving shore.**

▶ **Pay attention to motorized boat traffic (and winter snowmobile traffic) while on the lakes.**

▶ **To prevent a collision, there must be a bright white light on board each kayak, canoe, or paddle board after sunset. Carry a light, especially if using the lakes after dark in winter.**

▶ **Learn how to use maps and a compass for navigation before setting out on the lake.**

▶ **Anticipate changes in weather, wind, waves and snow by monitoring a weather or marine VHF radio, staying aware, and using common sense.**

▶ **The trail map is not adequate for sole use as a navigational aid. USGS topographic maps and NOAA charts of the Chisago Lakes Area can be obtained from a variety of sources, including kayaking or camping gear retailers.**

▶ **All watercraft (including non-motorized canoes and kayaks longer than 9 ft.) must be registered in Minnesota or the state of residence.**

▶ **Plan each trip and daily travel distances in relation to experience, fitness, and an average kayaking/canoeing/skiing speed of 2-3 mph.**

▶ **Bring kayak/canoe wheels for portages and be observant of road and traffic safety as you portage and/or visit the urban attractions along the route. For more information about our communities visit [www.chisagolakeschamber.com](http://www.chisagolakeschamber.com)**

## Drinking Water

Drinking water is not provided at the campsites. Be prepared to treat all water from the lakes. You can also bring your own water or buy water in any of the downtown areas along the way

## Camping & Lodging

Please take breaks and camp only in designated public areas. Public restroom facilities are available at the area parks. Camping is permitted at designated sites only.

The following options are available:

**Ojiketa Regional Park** - Chisago City  
Campsites and cabins for rent, 651-257-4162. [lsinger@ci.chisago.mn.us](mailto:lsinger@ci.chisago.mn.us)

**Allemansrätt Park's Anderson Peninsula** - Lindström  
Primitive sites accessible from the lake only. Available on a first-come, first-served basis. Self-registration fee charged at the campsite: 651-257-0620, or email: [ContactUs@CityofLindstrom.us](mailto:ContactUs@CityofLindstrom.us)

**Whispering Bay Resort** - Center City  
612-860-3234  
[www.whisperingbayresort.com](http://www.whisperingbayresort.com)

**GrandStay Hotel & Suites** - Chisago City  
651-213-3400  
[www.grandstayhospitality.com](http://www.grandstayhospitality.com)

**Rodeway Inn** - Chisago City  
651-257-8088

**Lakeview Motel** - Lindström  
651-257-6291

**Välkommen Inn** - Lindström  
651-257-4888 or 612-810-3070  
[www.valkommeninn.com](http://www.valkommeninn.com)

**Go Boat Motel** - Center City  
651-213-6119 [www.goboatmotel.com](http://www.goboatmotel.com)

**Summit Inn Bed & Breakfast** - Center City  
651-257-4987 [www.summitinnbb.com](http://www.summitinnbb.com)

## Return Trip Options

The Chisago Lakes Water Trail is unique in Minnesota outside of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Because the trail is on lakes, not a river, it is possible to loop back to any starting point. If you choose to canoe the length of the trail, there are several options to get back to your launch point:

▶ Leave a car or bike at either end of the trail.

▶ Walk/run back to the starting point; the trail's two ends are less than 5 miles apart.

## Portages and Transport



Bring wheels for your canoe and kayak, it will help with the portages. Please look for the **Chisago Lakes Water Trail** signs directing you to lakes and portages.

## Respect Private Property

This is a suburban Water Trail; please respect private homes and property along the shore! Please take your breaks and camp only in designated public areas.