



Hartwick Pines State Park is home to the last remaining old growth white pine forest in Michigan.

Photo courtesy of Michigan DNR

## Grayling Bicycle Turnpike

One of Michigan's great recreation destinations, Grayling is renowned for its paddle sports and fly fishing on the Au Sable River, hiking, mountain biking, skiing, snowmobiling, and of course, Hartwick Pines State Park, home to 49 acres of the last remaining old growth white pine forest in Michigan. On top of all that, here's another great reason to visit Grayling...

Built in 2004, the 10.2-mile Grayling Bicycle Turnpike (a.k.a. Wayne C. Koppa Trail) begins (or ends) at the entrance to Hartwick Pines State Park, taking you on a scenic tour on its way to downtown Grayling and across the Au Sable River to Hanson Hills Recreation Area. The Turnpike lives up to its name. The 10-foot-wide paved non-motorized multiuse trail runs parallel to roads along its route, but is relatively curvy for most of its length as it follows the contours of the rolling hills near the state park and zigzags through groves of pines near the airfield.

There are many good access points to begin your ride on the Turnpike. We began our ride at the entrance to Hartwick Pines State Park. The state park is one of Michigan's largest with a whopping 9,672 acres of natural area to explore, including a huge logging camp museum, several scenic hiking trails and a nice campground. As the trail travels west toward Grayling, you pass by a parking and picnic area with access to Bright and Glory lakes, named after a pair of logging oxen. The two lakes offer viewing and fishing platforms and some of the most scenic views along the trail.

As the trail crosses Old 27 highway, and a Michigan Army National Guard "Tank Crossing," a short extension of the trail



travels north to connect with Grayling High School, while the main trail weaves south along the Grayling Army Airfield. At North Down River Road the trail becomes a designated bike lane on both sides of McClellan Street as it heads south about a half mile into downtown Grayling.

At the traffic light and intersection of M-72, the off-road paved trail resumes on the south side of M-72 and continues west to Ole Dam Road/M-93, passing over the Au Sable River and past Northbound Outfitters and Grayling Township Hall along the way. At this point you have traveled about 8 miles. If you would like to continue on the 2.2-mile loop past Hanson Hills Recreation Area, head south on the designated bike lane on M-93 and then turn left and ride Old Lake Road to reconnect with the paved trail near Northbound Outfitters.

Hanson Hills Recreation Area is a good place to begin your journey from the south or explore other recreational opportunities. It offers over 20 miles of mountain biking trails, two disc golf courses, downhill skiing, snowboarding and tubing, snow shoe trails, and over 35 kilometers of hiking and groomed Nordic ski trails.



Bright Lake offers some of the most scenic views along the Turnpike.

Photo courtesy of Michigan DNR