

Small Historic Towns Across America,

as presented by the students of FreedomProject Education's 2014 Fall/Winter U.S. History classes, taught by Mr. Stadt. Want to learn more about FPE? Take a look at their website: fpeusa.org



A brief history of South Haven, Michigan

In 1833, the land that would become South Haven was sold to Jay R. Monroe by the U.S. government, even before Michigan officially became a state in 1837. The first settlers arrived there in the 1850's. Those settlers included the town's first merchant, physician, lawyer, and minister, as well as a schoolhouse. The first bank appeared in 1867. In 1902 the town became an official U.S. city. Both farming (namely blueberries) and timber were large industries in the early days of the town.

In more recent times the city has become very popular as a tourist attraction with the residents of the surrounding counties (including myself!), primarily for it's beautiful beaches on the shore of Lake Michigan, and the annual Blueberry Festival that started in 1969. Other popular events including the launching of 4th of July fireworks over the lake, Harborfest, and many art shows.

Driving directions from the closest U.S. airport

If you arrive in the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek airport (AZO), you should take I-94 west, then US-131 north, and then MI-43 west. Get off on US-196 north, then you can take Water Street all the way to South Beach, the most popular beach in South Haven.



Light Up The Lake occurs every July 3rd

President and political environment during the founding of the town

The town's early times occurred during the presidencies of Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, and the great Abraham Lincoln. Much of this time ran parallel to the American Civil War, and the following reconstruction. In the mid-1850's there were 31 states, and they had this flag:



Oldest/Largest businesses today

While most South Haven's visitors are primarily there for the beaches, U-Pick blueberry farming is probably one of the oldest industries in the area. Blueberry Festival attracts thousands of people each year with it's live music, variety of food, and other attractions.

City Government

The city has a Mayor-Council-Manager government. There are six council members, three of which are re-elected every odd year. The Mayor serves two years, and the City Manager is chosen by the council and remains as long as the council wants them to.

Historic attractions and festivals

In addition to the famous Blueberry Festival, there are many events in South Haven throughout the summer months. While some, such as Blueberry Festival, are date-specific events, many attractions are open all summer! To list just a few:

- The 34-mile Kal-Haven trail that runs from South Haven to Kalamazoo was built on an old railroad track, and provides a flat, smooth path for hikers, cyclists, and equestrian traffic. Enjoy the beautiful landscape and get your exercise at the same time!
- Several top-rated golf courses are available for all skill levels, designed by renowned golf course designers. Whether you're looking for a challenging championship level course, or a shorter family friendly course, South Haven has something for everybody.
- Horseback riding, paintball games, and even skateboarding are all possible in South Haven. So are motor sports at Gingerman Raceway, or personal fitness at any one of many fitness centers overlooking the landscape.





The ice-crust lighthouse © National Geographic

Don't want to wait until summer? You're in luck, South Haven is a sight to see in the middle of winter, with it's sparkling landscape, tubing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ice skating, and even speed skiing at one of the area ski resorts.

Where can we stay when we visit?

There are a healthy number of Hotels, Inns, Resorts, and B&B's to choose from in South Haven. Looking to stay longer than a couple weeks? Rent a vacation home! From budget to five-star, South Haven has something for everyone. Beach overlook? Check! Jacuzzi? Check! The possibilities are endless. Looking for something historic? If you're on a budget, Hotel Nichols is a quaint hotel in the middle of South Haven; within walking distance of the beach, events, theaters, restaurants, and even some cute cafes. [Website](#)

If you want to spend a bit more, the Sun 'n Sand Resort dates back to the 1920's when it was the last of the historic farm resorts. Throughout the mid-1900's it underwent a series of renovations that transformed it into a top-class facility with private decks and baths for all the rooms, three Kosher meals a day, and nightly entertainment. It closed in 2000, but reopened in 2011 after having undergone even more renovations. During its opening season, it was listed as the #1 place to stay in South Haven by [TripAdvisor](#).

[Visit their website](#)

Why would I want to visit this historic town?

If you're too far from the ocean, but you still want a beach trip, South Haven is the place to go! With it's silky smooth sand, ideal summer temperatures, and variety of other activities, South Haven will make for a memorable visit no matter when you visit, guaranteed! I personally love going to South Haven for all these reasons.

Links to visit: [Official City Website](#) [Wikipedia Article](#) [Visitors Bureau – Lots of listings](#)