



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Known as Furniture City, Beer City, and home of the medical mile, Grand Rapids is one of the fastest growing cities in Michigan. It boasts plenty of outdoor recreation opportunities, spectacular natural beauty, as well as affordable city life, and multiple cultural attractions including ArtPrize and free outdoor concerts during the summer. Grand Rapids has been named one of CNN's best beer cities around the world, and TripAdvisor named Grand Rapids as one of "7 Midwest Cities that are absolutely worth exploring." The iconic Blue Bridge and the Grand River lend scenic views to downtown Grand Rapids.



Overview

- [Official website](#)
- [Visitor's website](#)
- [State of Michigan Website](#)
- [Parks and Recreation](#)
- [Area hospitals](#)
- [Grand Rapids Public Library](#)
- Population 200,000 (2018); Grand Rapids Metro Area: 1.03 million
- Grand Rapids climate celebrates four seasons with cold, snowy winters; hot and humid summers; stellar fall colors; gorgeous spring blossoms
- Comprehensive data base of all things relating to Grand Rapids [including events, restaurants, general information](#), online maps tailored to specific interests

Transportation

By Car

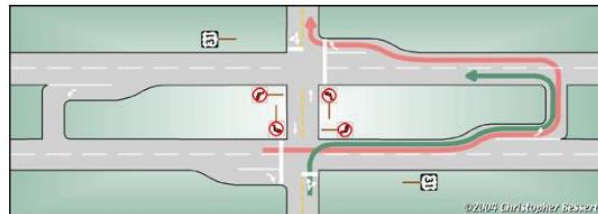
Car travel is most residents preferred mode of travel. The Michigan highway system is composed of interstate highways (I-96 in Grand Rapids), US highways (131 in GR), state highways (M-6, M-21, and M-37), and intercounty, county and forest highways. There are many [scenic routes](#) in Michigan, including [M-22](#) along the northern shore of Lake Michigan.

The Michigan Left (or the Michigan U-turn) is an interesting traffic engineering construction on certain busy intersections whereby the driver cannot turn left directly, but must pass through the intersection and then loop around a specified crossover to travel in the desired direction.

Median U-Turn



- Median U-Turn (MUT)
 - Also called “Michigan Left”. Left turns at the intersection are not allowed. Instead, to turn left, drivers must drive straight or turn right, then make a U-turn at a median crossover, guided by sign like the one at right. Michigan Lefts have been part of Michigan roadways since at least the late 1960s.



- Red Line - divided highway traffic turning left onto crossover.
Green Line - crossover traffic turning left onto divided highway.

Public Transportation

Grand Rapids has a public [bus system](#) known as “The Rapid”. For bus trips out of the city, try [Greyhound](#), online or in person at 250 Grandville Ave SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

For train trips, check out [Amtrak](#), though you may want to look into the train to Chicago from either Michigan City or Kalamazoo (there is a special on the website where kids ride free between GR and Chicago).

By Bike

Many [biking trails](#) link communities around West Michigan and the Grand Rapids area, and bike lanes are becoming more and more common as Grand Rapids institutes its [Bicycle Action Plan](#).

By Air

[Gerald R. Ford International Airport](#) (GRR) serves the Greater Grand Rapids area.

Schools

Grade level in the public school system is determined by the age of the child. Typically, the child must be 5 years old by September 1st to enter kindergarten. School districts may be very strict about the age requirement, but inquire with the school district you are interested in to determine if there are any exemptions for foreign students who are ahead in grade level. Some school districts have an early entrance waiver for students who turn 5 after September 1 and before December 1. You may also want to ask about any gifted or advanced programs or English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs. You may inquire at the school districts for availability.

Public Schools

Michigan law guarantees that all children of school age are entitled to enroll in the school district in which they are residents. These documents will be required: certified birth certificate, immunization documentation and proof of residency. Several districts in the Greater Grand Rapids area participate in Kent County's [Schools of Choice](#) which allow selected students to attend schools outside of their resident district via a lottery system. This program requires an application submitted usually during April/May. Please always confirm requirements with the school you are interested in before assuming that your child will be able to attend that school.

Many families choose to live outside of Grand Rapids so their children can attend a school in a specific school district. For a complete look at all Grand Rapids Metro school districts with links for each district, look at this [map](#) from Kent Intermediate School District (Kent ISD).

Private Schools in the Area

Private schools in the area are primarily religious based. Here are a few:

- [Catholic Central High School](#)
- [Grand Rapids Christian High School](#)
- [Northpointe Christian School](#)
- [West Catholic High School](#)
- [West Michigan Lutheran High School](#)

Additional Resources

- www.greatschools.org
- www.eschoolprofile.com
- www.schooltree.org
- [GRKids School Guide](#)

Area Recreation

Culture and Museums

- [ArtPrize](#)—For 19 days every other fall, Art from around the world pops up in every inch of downtown, and it's all free and open to the public.
- [Grand Rapids Art Museum](#)—the world's first LEED Gold certified art museum with an extensive art collection
- [Meijer Gardens](#), a horticultural display garden and sculpture park, which also has a historic farm garden, a Japanese garden, a children's garden and several indoor gardens and art exhibits.



Area Sports

- [YMCA](#)—indoor pool and fitness center
- [Grand Rapids Griffins](#) - AHL primary affiliate of the National Hockey League's Detroit Red Wings; playing in Van Andel Arena.
- [West Michigan Whitecaps](#) - Class A affiliate of the Detroit Tigers; playing at Fifth Third Baseball park.
- [Grand Rapids Drive](#)-NBA D-League minor basketball league affiliate of the Detroit Pistons; playing at Deltaplex Arena.

Entertainment venues

- [Van Andel Arena](#)
- [DeVos Place](#)
- [Rosa Parks Circle](#) has several free concert/movie events in the summer and ice skating in the winter

The Great Outdoors

- Lake Michigan—natural beauty, beaches within a 30- to 40-minute drive ([Holland](#) or [Grand Haven](#))
- Interactive Grand Rapids [maps and events calendar](#), including trails and parks maps, Lake Michigan



Registration

Obtaining a Driver's License

In the US, a driver's license or ID card is issued by each individual state and not by the federal government. Since there is no national identity card in the USA, and many Americans don't have a passport or carry around a birth certificate, a driver's license issued by your state is often the only official piece of identification for many citizens. Since 9/11, you will need to show a valid driver's license or State ID card to enter many big office buildings.

If you have an out-of-state or out-of-country license, you may use it for as long as you maintain your residency in the state where it was issued. An International Driving Permit is strongly suggested because it acts as a translation for your information, but these documents are not required. If you become a Michigan resident, you must obtain a Michigan driver's license immediately upon moving to the state or obtaining employment with the intent of remaining in the state.

For general information and instructions on how to obtain a driver's license or state ID card, visit the website of the [Michigan Secretary of State](#). Some countries' residents are eligible for the [Foreign Driver Reciprocity](#) agreement.

Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will also assist you with the proper procedure.