

# Midwestern Travels in 10 days

Well it's been a week since our return from our fall adventure in the midwest. Davin bought a 92' GTI in Ohio, we drove to Michigan, went to Hillsdale County Fair and scored some great bee balm products and beeswax from a local bee farmer, spent time with family at a wedding and while perusing the deep fried food selection we were utterly disgusted to find the answer to our question, "is your handmade corndog made with 100% beef?" All of the booths with the exception of one that had turkey dogs instead replied, "they are all meat." What is that exactly, all meat, 3 meats they said, "all meat" with pride; a little scary so we surpassed the craving and dove into Fiske fries with vinegar and Elephant Ears from the Red Barn. Yum! I was even lucky enough to get a bite of my aunts caramel michigan apple with nuts, delicious! This fair boasts that it's the Worlds Most Popular Fair On Earth! Not sure if that's true however I

enjoy going back to Hillsdale County to experience a few moments of it and see what old class mates and townies I can run into.

The family wedding was beautiful, classic and rustic yet elegant. The red barns, black fences, and green pastures at the Watson Farm; the sunshine, cool breeze, and quaint wedding set. The coordination of family and friends to make the most lovely 45 minute ceremony every. My cousin Charlie and I performed a rendition of "Overwhelmed" by Tim McMorris. The crowd cried blissfully. It was an epic wedding for sure. They gave out blue spruce pine trees to guests to plant on their own and we lit Sky Lanterns at Uncle Tony's at the after reception gathering. I almost beat my Uncle Kevin in a game of table shuffleboard in a basement and then lost by 1! Grrr... good to see everyone. Can you believe it, that 10 of my 12 aunts and uncles on my Grandpa Vear side were at the wedding? Pretty impressive. Our

reunions are festivals and real in a couple hundred at least. You should see the massive amount of grandchildren!

After our time in Happydale we drove to Ann Arbor to join our friend Nathan and see what he's been brewing. We were able to enjoy a glass of his Strutter from his Bitter Old Fecker Rustic Ale line, Nelter Small Batch Rustic Ales and get a quick tour of the quaint and efficient one man brewery! We even got to sign the Bourbon barrels from Kentucky! What a creative way for guests to sign in! We went to Jolly Pumpkin and enjoyed some brews over dinner downtown Ann Arbor. Apparently they are known for their sours, I had a chocolate stout that was pretty good. We have some classic holiday beers from Bitter Old Fecker Rustic Ales waiting to be capped during the holiday season! Looking forward to new tastes! Thanks for spoiling us! ☐

Monday night we drove to Pentwater, Michigan to spend time with my grandparents who live in their home that

my grandfather built before his retirement with Exxon. I grew up going to oil fields with him as a child and learning about all of the trees in the woods by making prints of them between wax paper and ironing the name next to them. I also learned a lot of geology from my father who was always teaching me about the layers of dirt, the earth's core, fossilization, and science in general. I think these days spent along Lake Michigan propelled my passion for the great outdoors. My grandmother Cora, taught me valuable sewing skills, baking, and several different preservation methods. She gets excited when I share some of my recipes with her; like my Grape Cherry Pecan Compote, Blueberry Mustard, and Blueberry Maple Pecan Compote. She was thrilled to hear of my Blueberry Vinegar Recipe. That evening my father, Davin and I went out mushroom hunting on their back 40 acres. They had much more at one time but have sold acreage over the years. We found at least 20 species including several varieties of

boletes and were able to forage some coral mushrooms for later. The day after we left my grandmother called to tell me that a baby black bear cub was rolling around the bottom of the trees where Davin picked the mushrooms on their front lot! My father brought home sweet dumpling, butternut, baking pumpkins, acorn, and other squash for us to cook and brew with. We are thinking of a Pumpkin Porter brew for the fall. My grandparents have taught me a lot about being self sufficient since they built their retirement home on a plot of land that they had sufficient wood to cut and burn every winter. They had everything paid off before they relocated to it from southern Michigan.

Tuesday night we sorrowfully bid our adieu and headed to Chicago after strolling through downtown Pentwater. I caught up on a few things at the local coffeehouse, took advantage of the free wifi overlooking the bay, and Davin went on a hunt to find out the value of some

of his finds with his Auction picks in Hillsdale County (He and Patrick went on the great auction hunts Saturday before the wedding). Among his favorite finds were a 1890 pistol, several old hand made knives one of which was made in Ireland with spoon and fork attached, and a wooden sailor that reminded him of the Oregon coast. We headed south along 31 to Chicago so Davin could experience it more first hand.

Once in the windy city we linked up with our friends in Edgewater, Chicago. We rented a cute condo for the night, \$83 a night, split with taxes, \$46, can't get better then that. Super cute neighborhood near great foods and ethnic areas. We hung out walking the blocks surrounding Allendale and Edgewater, went to a dive bar, walked out the pier and looked at the city at night off the Lake Michigan Beach, climbed on some strange art, enjoyed local beers, visited Thor's glamorous urban mural, caught up on laughs and had a good time with the

**Goodlives. We ate delicious deep dish pizza and a lavish Swedish breakfast before heading out to Chicago Midway to pick up my Godmother and head to Princeton on Wed.**

**Two hours outside of Chicago we find ourselves staying in a historical home eating a fine steak dinner and conversing over late night cocktails while sharing stories of young and old with our friends in Illinois. The following morning I head to the stalls to prepare the horses for a ride. We brushed, sprayed, and saddled them up for our next adventure. Davin headed to the Bonucci Farm to change his oil, a commercial farm that produces large quantities of corn, most of which is feed for livestock. Afterwards we hit the trails. Some of the land was protected under the Wildlife protection act, there were natural prairie habitats and lots herbs blooming in the wild.**

**Thursday evening we hit the road again driving along the pretty Ozark trail through Missouri and Oklahoma and back**

into Texas by route of McKinney. We rested up for the night at Fort Lenardwood, what an amazing gem of a base that was! They had everything there. Their own little town of success on a military base. Pretty cool. By this time I was extremely ill and wishing to be home. On Saturday we finally were.

This trip home to Michigan combined childhood memories of Chicago, and time with old friends in different cities. Best photographic memories of the Midwest are the classic old barns that I've got my husband to become a fan of. One day I will have to take tons of quality pictures of them because they are my favorite building to look at along the countryside and they remind me so much of home.