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Come closer. Experience the Great Lakes on the Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail. This newly-designated national scenic byway travels along the Lake Erie shoreline and connects to national scenic byways in Pennsylvania and New York. Designated an America's Byway® by the Federal Highway Administration in late-2005, the 293-mile Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail connects natural areas, communities, historical sites and the stories of Lake Erie. Get to know our Great Lake a little better with these interesting facts and figures.



That's a Lot of H2O

The Great Lakes contain about one-fifth of all the freshwater on the planet. They contain 95% of the nation's supply of fresh water.

If all the water within the Great Lakes was spread evenly across the United States, the country would be covered with 9.5 feet of water.

Sizing up the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes extend 575 miles from the northern tip of Lake Superior to the southern shore of Lake Erie, a spread of eight degrees in latitude.

From east to west, the Great Lakes extend more than 800 miles.

The U.S. shoreline of the Great Lakes is longer than our east, west, or Gulf coasts.

In the Beginning

At least four ancient lakes preceded our present-day Lake Erie. Before Niagara Falls became the lake's new outlet, the remaining dunes, such as those seen at Oak Openings

and North Kingsville, were once the lake's shoreline.

Lake Erie was the first Great Lake to appear from beneath the glaciers and it was the last to be discovered by European explorers.

The Great Lakes have yet to rebound to a permanent elevation after the glaciers compressed the land. The lakes are still so young they have yet to develop permanent drainage. They rise ever so slightly each year, a process called isostatic rebound.

Lake Erie – Our Great Lake

Lake Erie is the 12th largest freshwater lake in the world.

Lake Erie has 871 miles of shoreline. There are 262 miles of shoreline in Ohio and at least 26 islands in the western basin of Lake Erie. The exact number varies depending on water levels.

Lake Erie is the shallowest, warmest, most southern and most biologically productive of all the Great Lakes.

Lake Erie often supplies more fish for hu-



man consumption than the other four Great Lakes combined. The Lake Erie walleye sport fishery is widely considered the best in the world.

Lake Erie's deepest point is 210 feet. It has three basins:

the western basin includes the islands area; the central basin extends from Cedar Point and Pelee Point, Canada to Erie, Pennsylvania, and Long Point, Canada; and the eastern basin extends from Erie, Pennsylvania, to the east end of the lake. The western basin averages 24 feet in depth, the central basin averages 60 feet and the eastern basin averages 80 feet.

Lake Erie is 241 miles long with a widest point at 57 miles and the narrowest point at 28 miles. It covers 9,910 square miles and drains 30,140 square miles.

Wind setups (wind pushing the water from one end of the lake toward the other) have produced large short-term differences in water levels between the eastern and western ends of the lake, the record being more than 16 feet (4.88 meters).

The Ins and Outs

Eighty percent of Lake Erie's water comes from the upper Great Lakes via the Detroit River; 10 percent comes from other tributaries, and 10 percent comes from precipitation.

The outlets for Lake Erie are the Welland Canal and the Niagara River. Thus, Lake Erie water flows over Niagara Falls.

A drop of water entering Lake Erie from the Detroit River will take only 2.6 years to reach Niagara Falls. Compare this short time to Lake Superior where a drop of water will take 191 years to move out of the lake.

Living on Lake Erie

Explorers discovered the Great Lakes seeking a shortcut to Asia. They came later for the wealth of resources.

More than 14 million people live in the Lake Erie basin and 11 million get their drinking water from Lake Erie.

Eleven major ports serve the nation and the world from Lake Erie's shores.

The water provided by Lake Erie for waterborne commerce, navigation, manufacturing, and power production has led to intensive industrial development along its shore, but the basin's moderate temperatures have also encouraged recreation and agriculture.



“This lake without sails, this shore which does not yet show any trace of the passage of man, this eternal forest which borders it; all that, I assure you, is not grand in poetry only; it’s the most extraordinary spectacle that I have seen in my life.”

—Alexis de Tocqueville, 1831 speaking of Lake Erie.
