

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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FACT SHEET

NAME: Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau

LOCATION: Grand Rapids is the county seat of **Kent County, Michigan** and is located along the Grand River in Michigan's West Coast, 30 miles east of Lake Michigan and the lakeshore communities of Holland, Muskegon and Grand Haven. Kent County coordinates are latitude 43.24 and longitude 85.73, elevation 800 feet. Grand Rapids is easily accessible from the east and west via Interstate Highway 96, and from the north and south via Interstate Highway 196 and U.S. Highway 131.

**MICHIGAN'S
WEST COAST:**

Grand Rapids is the grand city of Michigan's West Coast, and is located just 30 minutes from the following Michigan's West Coast lakeshore communities:

Holland – Historic Dutch heritage community with attractions including Dutch Village Theme Park and Windmill Island and a National Register downtown walking and shopping district

Muskegon – Home of the Lake Express High-Speed Ferry to Milwaukee; arts and historic attractions including Hackley-Hume Historic Site, Muskegon Museum of Art and USS Silversides WWII-era submarine; family attractions include Michigan's Adventure amusement and water park and a nationally award-winning beach.

Grand Haven – Lake Michigan maritime heritage includes the Lake Michigan Pier, Grand Haven Lighthouse, large expanses of sandy beaches and Tri-Cities Historical Museum.

DESCRIPTION: Kent County encompasses 856 square miles. Topography is characterized by rolling foothills, agricultural valleys and the Grand River (the largest river in Michigan), in addition to 180 lakes and 54 streams. Grand Rapids is the second largest city in Michigan.

HISTORY: Originally occupied 2,000 years ago by Hopewell Indians, the Grand River Valley also was inhabited by Ottawa Indians in the early 1700s. Later, Kent County was settled by European immigrants (beginning with fur traders, who set up trading posts along the Grand River) in the 1820s and became self-governing in 1836. The county is named after James Kent, attorney and author of “Commentaries on American Law.” Grand Rapids became a village in 1838 and a city in 1850. Grand Rapids was a center for craftsmen, carpenters and woodworkers during the lumber boom of the 1880s, and became known as “America’s Furniture Capital.” At the height of the lumber boom, Grand Rapids was home to 44 furniture companies. Gerald R. Ford, 38th president of the United States, was raised in Grand Rapids and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum is located here.

TIME ZONE: Eastern

POPULATION: Metropolitan Statistical Area – 1.1 million
Kent County – 591,402 Grand Rapids – 200,237

LODGING: Kent County offers 6,600 hotel rooms; 1,071 of which are located in downtown Grand Rapids, with the remainder primarily in southeast Grand Rapids in close proximity to Gerald R. Ford International Airport (and a 15-minute drive from downtown Grand Rapids). Additional hotel rooms are located in northeast, northwest and southwest Grand Rapids, within five-to-10 minutes of the downtown convention campus. Lodging options include chain hotels, quaint bed-and-breakfasts and the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, a Four-Star, Four-Diamond historic hotel. Detailed accommodations information is available at www.visitgrandrapids.org.

DINING: Grand Rapids’ dining scene offers something for everyone, with some 60 restaurants in downtown Grand Rapids alone. Visitors may choose from Michigan’s only AAA-Five Diamond Restaurant (The 1913 Room at Amway Grand Plaza Hotel) to tapas bistros, contemporary seafood houses, ethnic specialty restaurants, specialty bakeries and more. A complete listing of restaurants can be viewed at www.visitgrandrapids.org.

MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS: Grand Rapids is an ideal second-tier city convention base, offering a downtown convention campus conveniently located just 20 minutes from Gerald R. Ford International Airport. The convention campus includes DeVos Place Convention Center, an additional 58,000 square feet of hotel meeting space at Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and Courtyard by Marriott Downtown, 1,600 hotel rooms (an additional 5,000 hotel rooms are located within five-to-15 minutes of downtown) and Van Andel Arena. All are connected via a five-block, enclosed and climate-controlled Skywalk. Downtown delegate amenities include 60 restaurants, a thriving entertainment district, four museums, and numerous theatres, galleries and shops.

DeVos Place is the brand new, state-of-the-art convention center located in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids on the Grand River. The multilevel DeVos Place provides flexible and functional space with one million square feet of new and renovated space on a 13-acre riverfront site. It is ideally equipped for meetings, conventions and trade shows as well as performing arts and touring events, and has the capability of hosting a variety of events simultaneously.

Located just 20 minutes from Gerald R. Ford International Airport, DeVos Place offers a 162,000 square foot “Class A” exhibition hall; 40,000 square-foot, flexible-use ballroom with 2,500-seat banquet facility; 35,000 square feet of sub-dividable meeting space; 12 enclosed loading docks; underground parking garage and heated skywalk to two hotels; and a 75-foot-high Grand Gallery pre-function space.

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Van Andel Arena is a \$75 million entertainment venue located in downtown Grand Rapids. Seating 12,000, the Arena is home to the Grand Rapids Griffins hockey team and the Grand Rapids Rampage arena football team and hosts concerts, family shows, ice shows and special events throughout the year. In addition, the Arena is a state-of-the-art venue for seminars and conferences.

ATTRACTIONS--

Arts & Cultural:

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
Grand Rapids Art Museum
Van Andel Museum Center of the Public Museum of Grand Rapids
Voigt House Victorian Museum
Heritage Hill Historic District
Frank Lloyd Wright Meyer May House
Fish Ladder Sculpture
La Grande Vitesse by Alexander Calder
Rosa Parks Circle by Maya Lin

Family:

Grand Rapids Children's Museum
Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium
John Ball Zoo
Robinette's Apple Haus & Gift Barn
IMAX® Theatre at Celebration! Cinema

RECREATION--

Performing Arts:

Van Andel Arena
DeVos Performance Hall
Grand Rapids Symphony
Community Circle Theatre
Grand Rapids Ballet Company
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre
Master Arts Theatre
Jewish Theatre Grand Rapids
Broadway Theatre Guild
Actors' at Spectrum Theatre
Opera Grand Rapids

Nightlife:

Entertainment District (includes the 12,000-seat Van Andel Arena and numerous restaurants, comedy clubs and pubs in the downtown Grand Rapids entertainment district, within easy walking distance of hotels)

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Outdoor:

Golf – Public courses within a 60-minute drive:

Boulder Creek Golf Club

Lynx Golf Club

Pilgrim's Run Golf Club

Scott Lake Country Club

Saskatoon Golf Club

St. Ives Golf Club

The Golf Club at Thornapple Point

The Meadows Golf Club

Thoroughbred Golf Club

Thousand Oaks Golf Club

Tullymore Golf Club

Millennium Park – Planned to become one of the nation's largest urban parks, with 1,500 acres of publicly owned, urban green space. Recreational activities include a sandy swimming beach, beach house, picnic facilities, play areas, as well as paved trails for cycling, walking, running and inline skating.

Berlin Raceway – Half-mile asphalt short track featuring Saturday night auto racing.

Sports Teams:

West Michigan Whitecaps – Class A affiliate of the Detroit Tigers; playing April through September at Fifth Third Ballpark.

Grand Rapids Rampage – Football; plays in Van Andel arena.

Grand Rapids Griffins – AHL primary affiliate of the National Hockey League's Detroit Red Wings; playing in Van Andel Arena.

AIRPORT:

Gerald R. Ford International Airport (616/233-6000 or www.flygrandrapids.org) serves two million passengers annually and is the second-busiest commercial airport in Michigan, with non-stop flights to Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Memphis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York/Newark and Pittsburgh (seasonally to Orlando and Tampa) and is served by the following passenger airlines:

ATA Connection	Midwest Connect/Skyway Airlines
American Eagle	Northwest/Northwest AirlinK
Continental Express	United Airlines
Delta Connection	US Airways Express

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Airport ground transportation options include taxis, limousine service and car rental companies: Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Hertz Local Edition

MILEAGE FROM SELECTED CITIES: Lansing – 63
Traverse City – 139
Detroit – 160
Chicago – 184
Toledo – 185
Milwaukee – 279
Indianapolis – 296
Cleveland – 301
Columbus – 331
Cincinnati – 352
Toronto – 379
Pittsburgh – 426

CLIMATE: Average temperatures (F): Spring 46°
Summer 69°
Fall 50°
Winter 26°
Annual precipitation: 37.13 inches of rain
71.9 inches of snow

INDUSTRIES: West Michigan’s major employment industries are manufacturing, educational, health, social services and retail trade. Grand Rapids’ top employers are Spectrum Health, Meijer Inc., Steelcase Inc., Herman Miller Inc. and Alticor Inc.

CONSUMER INFORMATION: **Grand Rapids/ Kent County CVB**
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MEDIA INQUIRIES:

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**MEETING/CONVENTION
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