

## “It’s Ledge-ndary”

You’ve seen the scenic rock formations that make High Cliff State Park and other natural areas in Wisconsin special.

But did you know that these rock ledges belong to a 1,000+ mile-long international geologic feature that connects Eastern Wisconsin with the grandly iconic Niagara Falls?

This is the Niagara Escarpment—also known as The Ledge—a globally unique feature that claims its beginnings in Wisconsin and connects us regionally and internationally to fascinating history, culture, and ecology, creating opportunities for tourism and learning.

Over 400 million years in the making, it’s a landscape feature like no other. The Niagara Escarpment forms a connecting “Great Arc” that extends through the tip of Door County and into Upper Michigan; across Ontario, Canada; and cascades down Niagara Falls, ending farther east in New York State.



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## WI Ledge Geotourism

The Niagara Escarpment's distinct geology – a 1,000+ mile-long exposed cliff face – influences the landscape surrounding it, thereby creating its own microcosm of natural splendor and ecological wonder. A treasure trove of destinations and experiences await residents and visitors alike.

The WI Ledge Geotourism Program of the Niagara Escarpment Resource Network (NERN) promotes events and experiences touching the natural and cultural features of The Ledge to help visitors and participants find something wonderful and develop their own *sense of place* at variety of destinations.

The program aims to boost local and regional economies by working in partnership with responsible businesses and organizations that promote community, culture and the environment. Visitors can connect with the natural beauty of this unique geologic feature by enjoying the abundant cultural, educational, and recreational resources the corridor has to offer.

What you can expect from the program:

- A comprehensive, interactive online map-guide to points of interest, local museums, nature centers and businesses that share in the Niagara Escarpment experience. Learn about day-trip routes, bicycle and scenic byways.
- Printed versions of some resources at local businesses and visitors' bureaus.
- Interpretive signage pointing out essential places and things you need to know.
- Calendar containing Escarpment-related events in each county.



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## WI Ledge Tours

As residents and visitors make direct connections with the Escarpment's powerful presence, vistas, and defining features, they may develop a powerful and richer *sense of place*. Our Ledge Tours offer captivating, one-of-a-kind excursions that expose the secrets of The Ledge, combining outdoor activities with memorable educational and exploratory experiences.

Our tours enlist conservationists, biologists, geologists, historians and other experts to lead tours and point out the defining natural and cultural characteristics of the Escarpment corridor. Visitors will discover how The Ledge has shaped and influenced the region's biodiversity, history and culture. Our tours offer special opportunities at reasonable costs to encourage the participation of local residents.

Past tours have included:

- Fonferek's Glen County Park in Brown County featuring the bedrock and glacial geology of the Escarpment and led by UW-Green Bay's Professor of Geoscience, Dr. John Luczaj;
- A day-long exploration of the Death's Door channel islands by boat including nautical and lighthouse history, shipwreck site, Indian cliff paintings, and a visit to the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge nesting site, normally off-limits to the public;
- A historic survey reenactment and hike along the face of the Escarpment at Door County's Bayshore Blufflands State Natural Area trails;
- Killsnake River and Marsh canoe/kayak trip led by retired Calumet County Conservationist Rock Anderson; and
- A day-long boat tour around St. Martin, Poverty, Plum & Pilot Islands viewing lighthouses and stepping off on Rock Island with presentations by Jim Dion from National Geographic Map's Geotourism program.



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## WI Ledge Learning

What is the Niagara Escarpment? Where can it be found? How vital is it to the economic, social and environmental resources of Northeast Wisconsin?

Our aim is to share the beauty and importance of the Escarpment community-wide, helping to acquaint local residents with the particular needs and issues related to the Escarpment landscape. That's why we intend to create educational brochures, maps, curricula and other informational materials to help both students and adults understand the Escarpment's connections to the economy, ecology and identity of the region.

Escarpment fun facts:

- The first outcropping of the Niagara Escarpment can be seen in Southern Waukesha County at "Brady's Rocks" along the Ice Age Trail in Southern Kettle Moraine State Park.
- The Escarpment extends 230 miles in Wisconsin.
- The Escarpment corridor hosts more than 241 rare species including the Dwarf Lake Iris, Hines Emerald dragonfly, and cedar trees more than 1,000 years old.
- It houses archeological assets in the form of American Indian petroglyphs, pictographs and effigy mounds.
- The 'Wisconsin Ledge' American Viticultural Area (AVA) owes its ability to grow grapes to the Escarpment's special geology, soils and climate.



## WI Ledge Events

Special events help to showcase “The Ledge” and its many rich facets, engaging the community by learning about its unique features and building a sense of connection with the Niagara Escarpment.

The Niagara Escarpment Resource Network (NERN) has sponsored events including wine and food from within the specially designated viticultural area, one-of-a-kind guided group tours of the natural and historic features of the region, art and music, and important issues related to the health and preservation of the Escarpment.

Join us for one of these events and learn more about your own connection to Wisconsin’s Niagara Escarpment.

Past events include:

- Wisconsin Ledge American Viticultural Area (AVA) celebration at Trout Springs Winery. The Wisconsin Ledge corridor is recognized as a major wine-growing region.
- The Ledge-ndary Student Chef Challenge. Gourmet meal & wine fundraiser for conservation-minded foodies with Fox Valley Technical College’s Culinary Arts & Hospitality program. Student chefs are challenged to source local ingredients from the region’s rich agricultural resources.



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## WI Ledge Conservation

The Ledge is a fragile resource and one deserving of our attention and respect. The value of its individual resources provides cumulative ecological and economic benefits to its landowners, residents and communities.

The public and private conservation of the Escarpment corridor's land and water resources are the collective responsibility of our Northeastern Wisconsin community.

There are many methods by which to conserve and protect this landscape, whether you are a landowner or represent an entire community. The Niagara Escarpment Resource Network (NERN) exists in part to share information on common planning, land development, land management and conservation/stewardship best practices.

Learn about green infrastructure, habitat improvement, agricultural buffer strips, purchase-of-development rights, land trusts and grant programs. An extensive listing of examples, resources, and contacts will be provided soon on NERN's updated website.

