What is the Niagara Escarpment?

In Wisconsin, the Niagara Escarpment is a distinct geological feature that extends about 250 miles from Winnebago County north to Rock Island at the tip of Door County. It is highest along the western edge of Door County, where it reaches a height of about 250 feet above Green Bay. This term “escarpment” refers to the steep side of a plateau, which is formed from slightly tilted layers of rock. The steep cliff face forms when crumbly rocks, such as shale, are eroded from beneath harder rocks like limestone or dolomite, which then breaks off to make the cliff face. The Niagara Escarpment is globally significant and is home to many unique plants and animals, and it is an important source of groundwater and natural resources. For centuries, Native Americans considered the Escarpment a sacred place where they held local rituals. The Escarpment is a much beloved part of the landscape in Wisconsin, allowing spectacular vistas, looting scenery, and opportunities for reflection and recreation. If we protect and preserve it, future generations will be able to enjoy the Niagara Escarpment for years to come.

The Great Arc

The Great Arc is a term coined by Dr. Gordon Nelson, of University of Waterloo, Ontario and refers to the shape of the Niagara Escarpment at an international scale. While most people in Wisconsin are familiar with the cliffs that make up Door County, few people realize that the escarpment is a prominent landscape feature that spans nearly 1,000 miles or so across the Great Lakes region. This escarpment is referred to by some as the ancient “backbone” of North America. It runs from eastern Wisconsin to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, across Wisconsin Island and the Great Lakes, then southward to the southern Ontario-New York state, where Niagara Falls cascades over it, giving the escarpment its name.

General Bike Rules of the Road

- Ride at least three feet from the curb or parked vehicles or objects in curb area and in a straight line. Don’t swerve in and out around parked vehicles.
- Always ride in the same direction as traffic.
- Sidewalks, riding the bicycles past the learning stage, and being closely supervised by adults can be more dangerous than on the road, obeying traffic laws. It is also illegal unless the community has passed an ordinance specifically permitting sidewalk riding.
- Use a helmet.
- Be predictable! Let other users know where you intend to go and maintain an under control pace.
- Consider wearing a helmet and take proper steps to ensure safety while taking this route.

Disclaimer

This Great Arc Bike Route is designed to be a general grouping of roads and trails, put together to enjoy the scenery that is the Niagara Escarpment in Wisconsin. Being prepared for the possibility of equipment failure, finding lodging, parking, maintenance, and traffic is left up to the individual bike rider. The creators of this map take no responsibility for the possibility of injury, loss or property or any other negative factor while riding this route. This route may change over time.