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Meet the one city in America where cars have been banned since 1898



Stephen Messenger
 Living / Culture
 June 28, 2013



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When early automobiles first arrived on the scene in the late 19th century, few people could have imagined that they would one day [take over the world](#). In fact, some towns found the noise and exhaust from these novelty 'horseless carriages' so off-putting that early cars were actually outlawed in some places.

In time, of course, restrictions were lifted and the car soon became ubiquitous across the country -- but there is still one place in the United States that has yet to change its mind. Meet Mackinac Island, where cars have been banned since 1898.

Located just offshore of mainland Michigan, in Lake Huron, Mackinac Island [and its namesake city](#) have long been a favorite spot for a relaxing getaway. So, when automobiles first began to arrive, loudly sputtering along the island's once-quiet roadways, startling horses and spitting out smoke, it quickly became apparent to locals that this new invention was not for them.

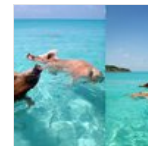


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NATURE BLOWS MY MIND!

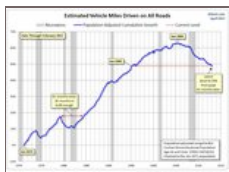


Nature Blows My Mind!
 This small Bahamas island is full of swimming pigs (but no humans)!

Pigs haven't exactly evolved for an aquatic

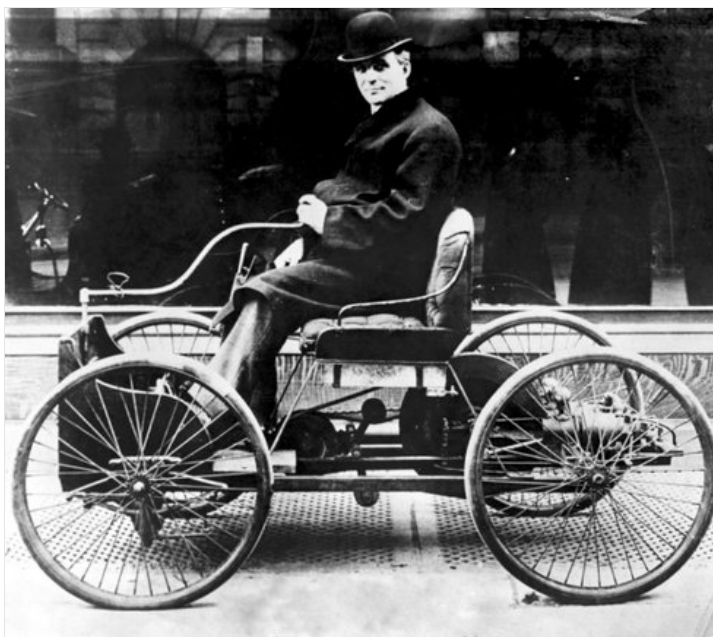


MORE EVIDENCE THAT WE HAVE REACHED "PEAK CAR"



DRIVING IS SO 1995, CHART SHOWS

One resident at the time [was quoted](#) as calling cars "mechanical monsters" -- clearly not a glowing review.



[Wikipedia/CC BY 2.0](#)

Naturally, in 1898, the Mackinac village council [moved to outlaw the automobile](#) before the monsters had a chance to take over:

Resolved: That the running of horseless carriages be prohibited within the limits of the village of Mackinac." — Mackinac Island Village Council, July 6, 1898

Such legislation might seem quaint and old-timey, but in Mackinac, it has yet to be repealed. So what is life like in place where one of the most impactful inventions in history has been outlawed? Well, it's quite nice, actually.

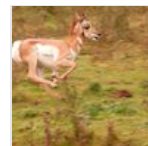
Although the small island is [home to only around 500 people](#), in the summer, that number swells to 15,000 during tourism season; aside from a couple of emergency vehicles, there's nary a car to be seen. Transportation on Mackinac is limited to walking, horse-drawn carriages, and bicycling -- a pleasant departure from the car-centric society that exists beyond its borders.

"The air is cleaner and injuries are fewer," writes Jeff Potter, who [published an article about Mackinac](#). "Island residents are healthier due to the exercise. There's a cherished egalitarianism: everyone gets around the same way. They also save a tremendous amount of money that would normally go to commuting by cars."

lifestyle, but apparently that doesn't stop ...

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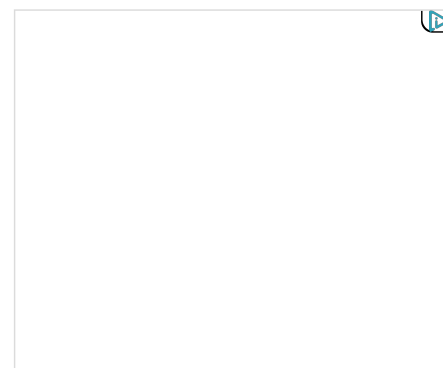
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Like fitting a camel through the eye of a needle...

by Michael Graham Richard in Natural Sciences





[marada/CC BY 2.0](#)



[tvanhoosear/CC BY 2.0](#)

Still, getting around on the island is a breeze. Mackinac is home to the [nation's only carless highway](#), the M-185, offering easy access to its 8.3 miles of coastline, uncluttered by parking lots or gas stations.

Visitors to the island have described the experience as like [going back in time to a bygone era](#), one before the constant din of traffic and vehicle exhaust became a part of daily life in America.

But more than just being a remnant of the past, perhaps Mackinac Island offers instead a glimpse of an alternate history, diverted from our own more than a century ago -- before the mechanical monsters had us so thoroughly tamed.

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© [Mackinac Island State Park Commission](#)

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Wastrel Way · a month ago

Where cars are outlawed, only outlaws own cars.

54 ^ | 1 v Reply Share



Matthew Fleisher → Wastrel Way · a month ago



And firemen.

11 ^ | v Reply Share >



AaronD12 → Matthew Fleisher · 11 days ago

Outlaws own firemen? ;)

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



Matthew Fleisher → AaronD12 · 10 days ago

Firemen will own trucks

^ | v Reply Share >



abby725 → Matthew Fleisher · 6 days ago

what Marvin responded I didn't even know that any body can get paid \$6552 in four weeks on the internet. did you look at this page www.KEP2.com

^ | 1 v Reply Share >



parisda · a month ago

Nobody goes there anymore, it's too crowded!

37 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >



Mike Irwin → parisda · a month ago

Do you see the inherent contradiction in your statement?

41 ^ | 3 v Reply Share >



Robert Eckerson → Mike Irwin · a month ago

It's a Yogi Berra quote

27 ^ | v Reply Share >



Umlud → Robert Eckerson · a month ago

When it comes to Yogi Berra quotes, it's almost like *the future ain't what it used to be*.

It's almost getting to the point of explaining Yogi Berra quotes where *I wish I had an answer to that because I'm tired of answering that question*.

;-)

24 ^ | v Reply Share >



parisda → Robert Eckerson · a month ago

Robert, thanks for the help :)

4 ^ | v Reply Share >



wiredforstereo → Mike Irwin · a month ago

Like.

1 ^ | v Reply Share >



Nelson6666 → parisda · a month ago

It is a little bit of an oxymoron to say nobody goes there because too many people go there.

3 ^ | v Reply Share >



mercurydan → parisda · a month ago

"There are alot of people who don't want to go there anymore because it is too crowded" is what you meant to say im sure

2 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >

**Mark Frisk** → mercurydan · a month ago

No, I'm pretty sure he meant to use the FAMOUS Yogi Berra quote.

19 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >

**parisda** → Mark Frisk · a month ago

Yet, apparently, not famous enough ;)

13 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >

**bbdvr** → parisda · a month ago

Not your fault. It was funny when he said it and it should still be funny now even if people don't get the reference. Sadly, the internet is full of people so intent on finding opportunities to enlighten and correct their fellow human beings (whom they deem to be idiots) that they don't even recognize humor when they see it.

28 ^ | v Reply Share >

**Tyler Robinson** → parisda · a month ago

In the english language, if you're quoting someone we use these little quote/end quote symbols ("Dummy"). Then we acknowledge the individual by writing their name after ("Dummy" Tyler Robinson). Failure to do this is disrespectful to the person you are stealing (at that point not borrowing. some might even say plagiarizing) from. Not to mention you could look stupid like you did in this post. So contrary to bbdvr's comment below yes it is your fault. Maybe you should stop making smiley faces and start learning what those symbols really mean.

8 ^ | 6 v Reply Share >

**Estes_Kefauver** → Tyler Robinson · a month ago

Maybe it would be a little bit nicer a place to be if we didn't have so many internet grammar police.

23 ^ | v Reply Share >

**Magginkat** → Estes_Kefauver · 24 days ago

True- Estes Kefauver & might I point out that the only smiley face I have seen is one where someone says "Thanks" & then added the smiley face. Can't imagine what Mr Robinson found wrong about that. I guess he will get me for not putting a . after Mr. in this post..... TOUGH!

^ | v Reply Share >

**parisda** → Tyler Robinson · a month ago

"I Stand Accused"

-Isaac Hayes

16 ^ | v Reply Share >



Matthew Fleisher → Tyler Robinson
• 6 days ago

Ok, that was actually funnier than just saying the comment was a contradiction. You almost made me switch sides....I'll get back to you later with a final decision.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Jason Santosuosso • a month ago

Any chance we could expand the story and get some info on others cities outside of the US that don't use cars? Hydra in Greece would be a good start. I would love to know more so I can visit them or move there :).

12 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Eletruk → Jason Santosuosso • a month ago

Venice has no cars, since they have no streets.

3 ^ | v Reply Share ›



NoCoFoCo → Jason Santosuosso • a month ago

I went to Büyükkada a few years back. It was awesome.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B...>

^ | v Reply Share ›



Ron04 • a month ago

FOR THE BENEFIT of those of you not from " around here " - Macinac Island is one of Michigan's tourism hot spots. Several ferry lines serve the island running boats every half hour from sun up to well after dark. It's CRAWLING with tourists from May-September and its VERY expensive to actually stay on the island. The only way to get a real feel for it is to go before or after the "fudgies" (tourists who buy fudge) go back home and down state. There is so much demand for service workers in season that its much like a cruise ship - many come year after year from the Caribbean and central america.

So don't be thinking its some "quaint" little town full of bikes and horses. The thriving downtown area, while only a few blocks long, is enough to give a agoraphobic nightmares for months. The smell of horse manure on the streets is annoying. bike theft is common and you can easily drop \$100 a day just to get here and eat. But everyone should go at least once.

PS - the movie "Somewhere in Time" with Christopher Reeves and Jane Seymour was filmed here. Lots of good scenery shots of the Grand Hotel, lake, straights, lighthouses etc.

9 ^ | v Reply Share ›



idic5 • a month ago

this is such a great concept and as a result M Island is one of my favorite places to visit. Since this concept is so popular and desirable, one wd expect more places to try this concept , especially as biking as a healthy activity is getting more widespread throughout the USA and beyond.

unlike the very difficult and expensive thing of safely segregating bikes from cars as Indianapolis is doing (lots of infrastructure changes), cancelling all cars wd be a simpler proposition - no cars; and let the bikes have the roads and other amenities that have been built up already.

if there are any such places around, this wd be a good survey - article, treehugger. I 'd go to such places as desitnations in a, ahem, heartbeat.

11 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >

**tt_tiara** · a month ago

I live in a neighborhood that was built-out around 1890, before the mass production of cars. The building lots are smaller and the houses closer together so public transportation is workable. The zoning allows small shops and restaurants so people can walk to buy groceries, coffee, a hot lunch, post a letter, etc. I have not owned a motor vehicle for six years.

5 ^ | v Reply Share >

**MarkB** · a month ago

I was there as a child (8-y-o or so) with family; my one vivid memory of it was seeing the horse-drawn carriages, and hearing the CLOP-CLOP-CLOP!

I want to go back next year; can't afford the trip this year.

5 ^ | v Reply Share >

**Guy Smiley** · a month ago

Wow, thanks to this article the tourism numbers will break 15k.

11 ^ | 3 v Reply Share >

**Umlud** → **Guy Smiley** · a month ago

Break 15k per day? Because ~15k/day is the summer tourism rate currently, but that's not bad for an island town of <500.

9 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >

**ReidGuy** → **Umlud** · a month ago

The article doesn't say anything about 15,000 a day. It says 15,000 in a tourism season. Guy Smiley is referring that these articles are great advertising and will likely increase that number..

Bungo.. who's the dummy now?

5 ^ | 7 v Reply Share >

**Umlud** → **ReidGuy** · a month ago

ReidGuy, I actually did something that Guy Smiley didn't do: I looked for corroborating information. I found evidence (with links) on the "Mackinac Island" page on Wikipedia:

According to the 2010 census, the island has a year-round population of 492.[9]

The population grows considerably during the summer as hotels, restaurants, bars and retail shops, open only during the summer season, hire short-term employees to accommodate as many as 15,000 visitors per day.[10][11]

So... who's the dummy now? I'd say it's still Guy Smiley, and perhaps you, too. :)

16 ^ | v Reply Share >

**ReidGuy** → **Umlud** · a month ago

no, it's not about us looking it up... don't care so much to investigate something like that when the person who wrote the article should have done that themselves and put the proper information in there so we don't

have too.

They omitted "per day" in the article, so to the average reader, it could mean per season, which when first reading it, you get the impression it is per season. A quick google would tell you that it's per day, but that should have been implied in the article itself.

"Although the small island is home to only around 500 people, in the summer, that number swells to 15,000 during tourism season"

4 ^ | 5 v Reply Share >



Larry Parker → ReidGuy · a month ago

It WAS implied in the article. "The POPULATION SWELLS TO 15,000" Population is the number of people there. He doesn't say there are 15k that visit in a summer, he says it swells to 15k.

5 ^ | v Reply Share >



ReidGuy → LarryParker · a month ago

fair enough

^ | 2 v Reply Share >



Umlud → ReidGuy · a month ago

Seriously, you're peeved enough at me to write a response because you were too lazy to look up something for yourself?

Yeah, sure, the author could have done a bit more due diligence, but seriously, to get annoyed that I went and did a very simple search on the internet to clarify the writer's poor syntax instead of recognizing that you (and Guy Smiley) could have done that small bit of research on your own?

That's simultaneously pathetic and hilarious. :D

And why do you think that it was "per season"? Do you really think that tourists all stay for the entire four or five months of tourism season? Really? Sheesh, this doesn't take a deep level of understanding here.

5 ^ | 1 v Reply Share >



ReidGuy → Umlud · a month ago

Hmmm, who said I was peeved? Like i said, don't care enough to really research it, I'm gonna go with the info that was presented. You're an idiot, get over yourself.

^ | 3 v Reply Share >



Umlud → ReidGuy · a month ago

ReidGuy, you crack me up. :D

2 ^ | v Reply Share >



Matthew Fleisher → ReidGuy · a month ago

If the glove don't fit, you must acquit.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Tyler Robinson → ReidGuy · a month ago

guy smiley thanks for the joke about free advertising. reidguy thanks for clarifying that it was a joke about free advertising. umlud the fact it was per day or per season? no one cares shut up and go back to your job as a bureaucratic number counter.

1 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Bung0 → ReidGuy · a month ago

Wow, they really growing them teh stupidz these days. I'm rendered speechless by the epicness of it. #facepalm :-/

^ | 3 v Reply Share ›



God_This_Guy_Is_Stupid → Bung0 · a month ago

You tell'm Bung Hole! What a fuk-wit.

^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



Bung0 → Guy Smiley · a month ago

Blahahaha! Umlud made you look seriously the stupidz! I thought Canadians were supposed to be a wee bit brighter than that? #laughingatthedummy

5 ^ | 4 v Reply Share ›



Mike Kennedy → Bung0 · a month ago

Every country has some unintelligent people.

2 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Derek Joel · a month ago

The place - extraordinarily progressive, yet oldschool. the article - well written and with lots of links. thanks for writing, I really enjoyed this :)

4 ^ | v Reply Share ›



betty barcode · a month ago

A car-lite runner-up community is the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua County in southwestern NY state. During the summer season, cars may be brought in to unload but cannot be parked on the grounds. The speed limit is 12 mph.

Tour buses and shuttles operate, since the grounds are hilly and the bulk of the population is aged. If only the buses were electric instead of gas.

4 ^ | v Reply Share ›



Ron04 → betty barcode · a month ago

right - because the unicorns and ferries produce the electricity to charge the electric bus.....

SMH.

^ | 1 v Reply Share ›



betty barcode → Ron04 · a month ago

Definitely not the same unicorns & ferries who

power the electric lights, refrigerators, computers, and smartphones at Mackanac. I am sure yours are way more adorable.

Around here, the electricity comes from the more prosaic unicorns and ferries at the Niagara Falls power plant.

5 ^ | v Reply Share >



Ron04 → betty barcode · a month ago

and for that you should be grateful, but know this - the war on coal will increase YOUR electricity costs, even if not a KwH of YOUR electricity is produced by it.

^ | 1 v Reply Share >



freedomev → Ron04 · 18 days ago

You mean when PV is now cheaper than any utility power to homes, buildings than their own solar?

sunelec has whole grid-tie sytems for under \$1.60/wt among others . Then just hire an electrician for \$300-500 to install it making total costs under \$2/wt. And in many places beat utility rates now and getting cheaper.

But coal needs to pay it's full cost including it's pollution. 10k deaths and 100k hospitalizations from coal pollution are just the start of the long list and land, water and air destruction that YOU pay about 7% of your taxes to clean up, deal with.

[see more](#)

1 ^ | v Reply Share >

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