

Cruise Travelers to the Great Lakes Could Soon have a New U.S. National Marine Sanctuary to Visit

Cruises in the Great Lakes are spiking in popularity, and a proposed new National Marine Sanctuary adds to the many attractions of a Great Lakes cruise.

The Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary isn't a done deal just yet.

In April of 2019, following a New York state community nomination, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) subsequently announced its intention to designate a national marine sanctuary in eastern Lake Ontario.

You'll recognize some other beloved maritime destinations [NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary System](#). Many can be visited on cruises in U.S. waters or from land trips to coastal areas. From Washington State to the Florida Keys, from Lake Huron to American Samoa, the network encompasses over 620,000 square miles of underwater parks. It includes 15 current national marine sanctuaries, like Wisconsin's Great Lake "Shipwreck Coast," the Pacific Northwest's "Olympic Coast," and Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale sanctuaries, as well as the Papahānaumokuākea and American Samoa's Rose Atoll marine national monuments.

The proposed [Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary](#) designation area includes the waters offshore of New York State's Wayne, Cayuga, Oswego and Jefferson counties. It could also extend into the legendary Thousand Islands playground region that spans the American and Canadian waters of the St. Lawrence River.

The waters of the proposed national marine sanctuary are a scuba diver's dream – especially wreck divers. Their stand out their rich collection of shipwrecks, which NOAA says are "among the best preserved in the world" in the cold, freshwater atmosphere of the depths of Lake Ontario. The designated area includes 43 known shipwrecks, dating as far back as the 1700's, and one submerged aircraft.

Some are already underwater landmarks and registered heritage sites. They include New York State's first Submerged Cultural Preserve and Dive Site in Great Lakes, the David W. Mills shipwreck, as well as the St. Peter shipwreck, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

And, according to NOAA and the communities around the proposed sanctuary, there could be more "underwater treasures" yet to be revealed.

As a national marine sanctuary, NOAA would manage, research, preserve and provide ways for visitors to explore and learn more about this "nationally significant collection" of local maritime heritage and the landscape above and below the waters of Lake Ontario. That would include interpretive sites on nearby shores as well as mooring infrastructure on shipwreck sites to facilitate wreck dives that are safe and easy for divers, and still preserve the historic shipwrecks.

Watch the [local PBS](#) video above to learn more about the environmental, recreational, and maritime cultural value of the proposed new Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary.

And ask your trusted travel advisor about how you can take a cruise in the U.S. and Canadian regions of the Great Lakes.

Start your Great Lakes Cruise!

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