

## Captiva Island, Florida

Recommended by Aliisa and Chris Holland of Hanover, Pennsylvania, and their kids, Kyle, 13, and Sydney, 5

Gentle waters and superb shell-seeking make this small Gulf Coast island, just over the bridge from neighboring Sanibel, a sure bet for families in search of a low-key beach scene. The area is more than postcard-pretty, though. "We saw an octopus and a stingray on our visit to the Sanibel lighthouse and bald eagles at the nearby nature refuge," Aliisa says. "We were amazed by all the cool wildlife around us."

**Where to stay:** The Hollands found their vacation rental with a pool, just steps from the beach, through **American Realty of Captiva**. 800-547-0127; [captiva-island.com](http://captiva-island.com)

**For local flavor:** Grab an outdoor table at the **Island Cow** on Sanibel for ice cream treats or heartier fare. "It's super kid-friendly, and the food is great," Aliisa says. 239-472-

Captiva's crystal surf; inset, an enchanted path at Sanibel's J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge

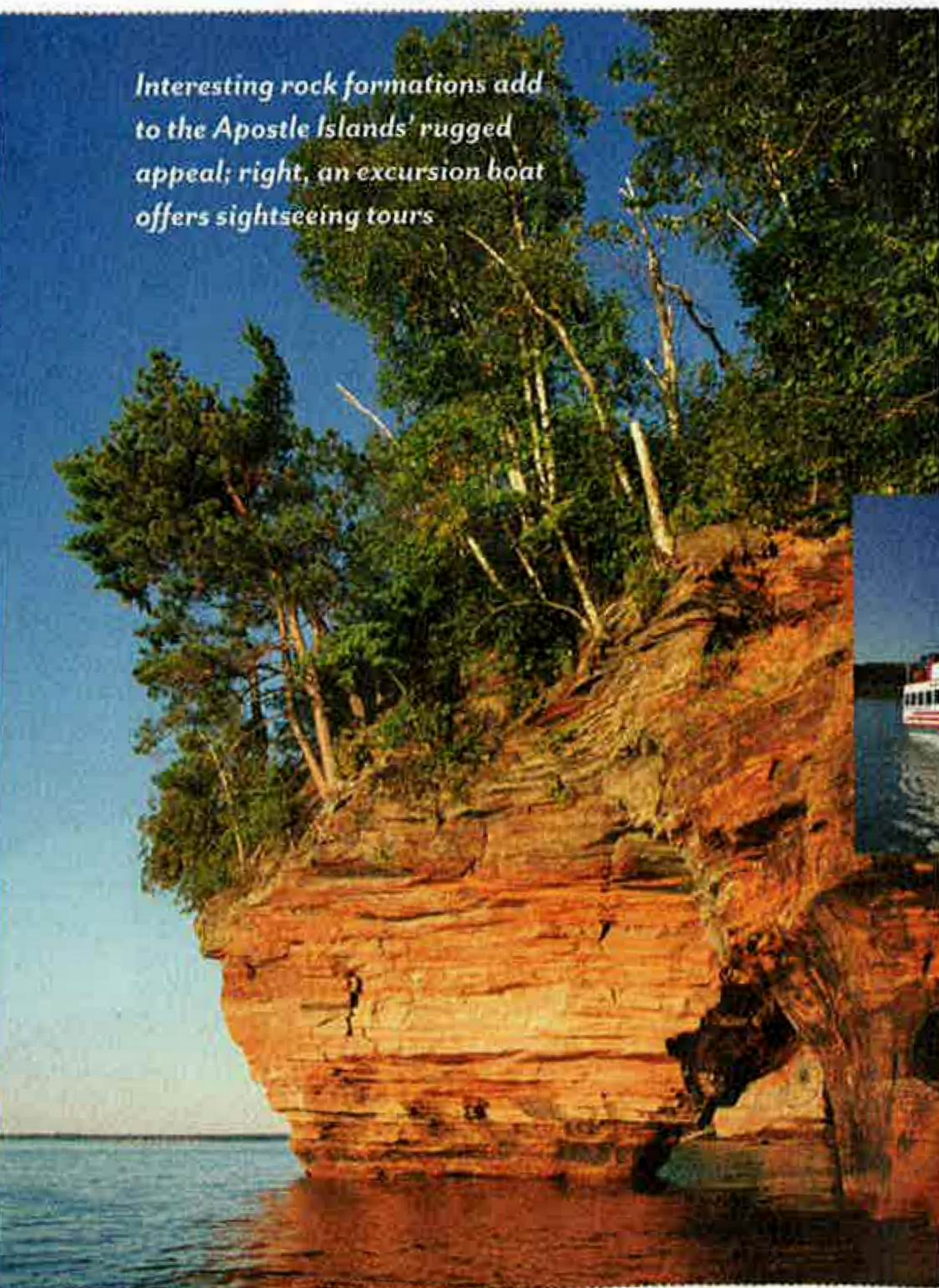


0606; [sanibelislandcow.com](http://sanibelislandcow.com)

**Worth doing:** Sanibel's J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge is a must-see, Aliisa reports. 239-472-1100; [fws.gov/dingdarling](http://fws.gov/dingdarling)

If you love sea shells, be sure to make time for the **Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum**, also located on Sanibel. 888-679-6450; [shellmuseum.org](http://shellmuseum.org)

Interesting rock formations add to the Apostle Islands' rugged appeal; right, an excursion boat offers sightseeing tours



## Apostle Islands, Wisconsin

Recommended by Rick and Anna Dabill of Baxter, Minnesota, and their kids, Ailiana, age 14, Eva, 11, and Brant, 10

Comprising 21 islands and 12 miles of mainland along Lake Superior, the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is home to many natural wonders, including towering forests, sandstone cliffs, and eerie sea caves. The Dabills set up camp on Madeline Island, the largest, which is accessible via ferry

from nearby Bayfield. There, they spent a week hiking, swimming, and kayaking. Says Anna, "You can rent a kayak on the island if you don't have your own."

**Where to stay:** The Dabills camped at **Big Bay State Park**, where sites start at \$15 per night. 715-747-6425;

[dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/specific/bigbay](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/specific/bigbay)

**For local flavor:** Sample the rock candy at the **Sugar Shack**, located on Middle Road in nearby La Pointe.

**Worth doing:** The Dabills highly recommend booking a local **sailboat cruise**. "On ours, the kids got to help raise the sails and steer the boat," Anna says. "It turned out to be one of the highlights of our trip." To find charters, visit [madelineisland.com](http://madelineisland.com).

BEFORE YOU GO

