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Grand Rapids Fact Sheet

One of [The New York Times 52 Places to Go in 2016](#). The [#1 U.S. travel destination](#) in 2014. Beer City USA. Home to one of the globe's top five festivals. Grand Rapids, Michigan is all of this and so much more - a city that will constantly surprise and delight you with authentic and unforgettable world-class experiences made easy, affordable and friendly.

Whether you are a meeting planner or a visitor, Grand Rapids exceeds expectations in every way- in the quantity and quality of our activities and attractions, in the warmth of our hospitality and in the power of our innovation. Grand Rapids offers all the big-city excitement with the small-town sense of community pride and closeness which brings all residents together for grand events such as ArtPrize, Restaurant Week, Cool Brews. Hot Eats. and more.

LOCATION:

Grand Rapids is the second largest city in Michigan with a population of about 192,000 in the city and about a million in the Metro Grand Rapids area.

Grand Rapids is located on the banks of the Grand River that winds its way through downtown. Grand Rapids gets its name from the Grand River and the rapids that used to help the local furniture industry with the transport of logs. In the early 1900s flood walls were installed in the river to remove the rapids in order to help manage flooding. The [Grand Rapids WhiteWater](#) Project is now in the works to restore the river and the rapids.

Grand Rapids is only 25 miles east of Lake Michigan and the lakeshore communities of Holland, Muskegon and Grand Haven.

HISTORY:

Originally occupied 2,000 years ago by Hopewell Indians, the Grand River Valley also was inhabited by Ottawa Indians in the early 1700s. Later, Kent County was settled by European immigrants (beginning with fur traders, who set up trading posts along the Grand River) in the 1820s and became self-governing in 1836. The county is named after James Kent, attorney and author of "Commentaries on American Law." Grand Rapids became a village in 1838 and a city in 1850. Grand Rapids was a center for craftsmen, carpenters and woodworkers during the lumber boom of the 1880s, and became known as "America's Furniture Capital." At the height of the lumber boom, Grand Rapids was home to 44 furniture companies.

Gerald R. Ford, 38th president of the United States, was raised in Grand Rapids and [the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum](#) is located here. The burial site for Gerald and Betty Ford is located on the Museum grounds. The Ford Museum was most recently updated in 2016 with the addition of an education center and renovation of the exhibits.

INDUSTRIES:

West Michigan's major employment industries are Retail Trade, Construction, Professional/Scientific/Technical Services, Manufacturing, and Health Care and Social Assistance.

Grand Rapids' top employers include Spectrum Health, Meijer Inc., Mercy Health and Amway Corporation.

HOTELS:

- Total hotel rooms- 7,950
- Downtown total hotel rooms- 1,688

MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS:

Grand Rapids is one of the Midwest's hottest convention cities, hosting groups of all kinds from all areas of the country. Grand Rapids has an infrastructure of a much larger city, offering a convention campus just 20 minutes from Gerald R. Ford International Airport.

The campus includes a state-of-the-art convention center located in the heart of downtown, DeVos Place Convention Center, which offers over 250,000 square feet of space on a 13-acre riverfront site. There is a 162,000 square foot "Class A" exhibition hall, 40,000 square foot ballroom, 35,000 square feet of sub-dividable meeting space and 75-foot high Grand Gallery pre-function space.

Also included in the campus is Van Andel Arena, a \$75 million entertainment venue downtown Grand Rapids which is home to the Grand Rapids Griffins hockey team and seats 12,000 for events, concerts, family shows, ice performances, seminars and conferences.

Between these two facilities lay the Amway Grand Plaza, Curio Collection by Hilton, the JW Marriott Grand Rapids and Downtown Courtyard by Marriott which combined boast 78,000 square feet of meeting space and 1,236 guest rooms. An enclosed, climate-controlled skywalk connects all of the above.

AIRPORT:

Gerald R. Ford International Airport, (616) 233-6000 or www.grr.org, is the second largest airport in Michigan. The airport offers more than 120 nonstop daily flights to and from 23 major market destinations. Destinations include: Atlanta, Baltimore/Washington, Chicago-O'Hare, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale (seasonal), Fort Meyers (seasonal), Houston, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, New York-LaGuardia, New York-Newark, Orlando, Orlando-Sanford, Philadelphia, Phoenix-Mesa, Punta Gorda, Tampa, Tampa/St. Petersburg- Clearwater, Washington-Dulles.

Airlines include: Allegiant, American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and United Airlines.

DINING:

Discover the art of dining in Grand Rapids. Two unique factors attribute to the culinary scene in Grand Rapids: we're located in the middle of one of the world's best growing regions and we're home to one of America's finest culinary schools, the [Secchia Institute for Culinary Education](http://www.secchia.edu) at Grand Rapids Community College.

More information on food in Grand Rapids can be found at: <http://www.experiencegr.com/restaurants/>

ATTRACTIONS:

- [ArtPrize](#): For 19 days each fall, three square miles of downtown Grand Rapids become an open canvas. Art from around the world pops up in every inch of downtown, and it's all free and open to the public.
- [LaughFest](#): 10-day festival of stand-up comedy, improv, live shows, films, authors, community showcases and a variety of other seriously funny stuff. All proceeds will benefit the cancer, grief and support programs offered through [Gilda's Club Grand Rapids](#).
- [Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum](#): Gerald Ford, the 38th President of the United States wasn't born in Grand Rapids - but he was raised here and represented the city in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1949-1973. The President and Mrs. Ford are buried on the grounds of the Museum.
- [Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park](#): Michigan's second most popular tourist attraction ... one of the world's 100 most visited art museums ... one of the Top 30 Must-See Museums on the planet. Combination of a sculpture park and botanical garden.
- [Grand Rapids Art Museum \(GRAM\)](#): Collections range from Renaissance to Modern Art, with a special focus on 19th and 20th century European and American art.
- [Grand Rapids Public Museum](#): Founded in 1845, the Grand Rapids Public Museum is among the oldest history museums in the United States.
- [Heritage Hill Historic District](#): One of the nation's top old-house neighborhoods is just a five-minute walk from downtown Grand Rapids. Heritage Hill boasts Michigan's largest and finest collection of 19th and early 20th century houses. Nearly every style of American architecture, from Greek Revival to Prairie, is represented in the 1,300 buildings that date back to 1844.
- [Frank Lloyd Wright Meyer May House](#): Presented by Steelcase, as a meticulous restoration complete with original furnishings and faithfully executed reproductions, the Meyer May House provides the rare opportunity to experience a Prairie house exactly as Frank Lloyd Wright intended.
- [Grand Rapids Children's Museum](#): The Children's Museum is located in downtown Grand Rapids, just a short walk from hotels. Eighteen permanent exhibits include Aunt Daisy's Farm, Mom & Pop Store, Treehouse, Giant Lite Brite, Wee Discover, Wee Bank, Puppet Stage, Buzzy Buzzy Bees and Bubbles, Bubbles, Bubbles!
- [Urban Institute of Contemporary Art \(UICA\)](#): UICA features gallery exhibitions of work from regional, national and international artists throughout the year. UICA also hosts a range of dynamic events including concerts, performance art, artist receptions, gallery talks, and movies screenings.
- [John Ball Zoo](#): This classic urban zoo is located two miles west of downtown Grand Rapids. John Ball Zoo is home to more than 1,100 animals from five continents.
- [Robinette's Apple Haus](#): Century-old family farm offers apples and other fresh fruits in season, plus a cider mill, [wine tasting](#), bakery, lunch counter, dining area, hayrides, mountain bike trails and more.
- [Blandford Nature Center](#): Your premier nature getaway! 143 acres of woods, streams and meadows, 4 miles of trails open dawn to dusk daily.
- [Downtown Market Grand Rapids](#): With 24 retail shops and 25,000 sq. ft. of market space, Downtown Market offers something to satisfy every appetite. It's the first LEED-certified market in the country.

PERFORMING ARTS:

- [Grand Rapids Symphony](#)
- [Circle Theatre](#)
- [Grand Rapids Ballet Company](#)
- [Grand Rapids Civic Theatre](#)
- [Broadway Grand Rapids](#)
- [Opera Grand Rapids](#)
- [Wealthy Theatre](#)

SPORT TEAMS:

- [Grand Rapids Griffins](#) - AHL primary affiliate of the National Hockey League's Detroit Red Wings; playing in Van Andel Arena.
- [West Michigan Whitecaps](#) - Class A affiliate of the Detroit Tigers; playing at Fifth Third Ballpark.
- [Grand Rapids Drive](#)-NBA D-League minor league affiliate of the Detroit Pistons; playing at Deltaplex Arena.

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES:

- 15 colleges and affiliate colleges located in Grand Rapids:
 1. [Aquinas College](#)
 2. [Calvin College](#)
 3. [Central Michigan University](#)
 4. [Cooley Law School](#)
 5. [Cornerstone University](#)
 6. [Davenport University](#)
 7. [Ferris State University](#)
 8. [Grace Bible College](#)
 9. [Grand Rapids Community College](#)
 10. [Grand Valley State University](#)
 11. [Kendall College of Art & Design](#)
 12. [Kuyper College](#)
 13. [Michigan State University College of Human Medicine](#)
 14. [Secchia Institute for Culinary Education](#)
 15. [Western Michigan University](#)