

## Pups Vacation

This story (and accompanying photo) come to us from Amy, who is from Haslett, MI. Here is her story:

**We came up the term “pups vacation” during spring break in the year 2000.** See, camping and canoeing on the Lake Michigan shoreline in 40-degree weather was hardly a spring break for us, yet, we guessed, the stuff of Dusty’s and Little Dipper’s dreams.

At the time of our first pups vacation, Little Dipper was a five-pound Ihasa apso-bichon frise puppy and Dusty her 6-month-old male counterpart. For their first vacation we paddled a short stretch of the Lower Platte River in northwestern Michigan, during which time Dusty leaped overboard no less than three times. Little Dipper, meanwhile, sat bundled up inside my coat trying to keep warm. Ten minutes before we reached the mouth of the river, the sky opened up, and with the rain, the temperature fell as well. The canoe trip ended with Dusty happily wedged in the back of my Cavalier between Arthur, 12, and Holly, 10, Little Dipper shivering in Holly’s coat, and my husband, Mark and I tying up our canoe and mumbling under our visible breaths. To add to our misery, we hadn’t yet set up our camp at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Park campground.



In the summer, we returned to the Sleeping Bear Dunes area for another pups vacation, hoping for a bit more fun, if not warmer weather. We found a dirt road leading to Lake Michigan where dogs could run the beach. It was there the dogs discovered the joy of swimming in the big lake, riding the gentle waves on a rubber raft or kayak, and—their personal favorite—rolling in dead fish. On the way back to a campground on the Platte River, we discovered an ice cream shop with doggie sized servings.

When we returned in November, it was 35 degrees, and nobody else was at the beach. I pulled on my wetsuit and kayak and headed to the beach with my bundled up family in tow. Dusty and Little Dipper both jumped in the water; Little Dipper jumped on the kayak and played with me in the waves. Back at the campground along the Platte River, the dogs enjoyed their first s’mores.

In the winter, the pups were fuzzy like snow lions, their fur about 3 inches thick. Ice cycles had formed where Lake Michigan met the shore, sculpted and sand-blown and hanging out over the water like tiny stalactites. Dusty ran and skidded across the ice sheet and into the water. Little Dipper found a dead salmon frozen in the sand, and tugged so hard her back feet lifted into the air. Later, at the Sleeping Bear Dunes campground, they wiggled their wet, fishy selves into our sleeping bags to keep warm.

For seven years, we’ve used the pups as a reason to head to our now-favorite Great Lakes stomping ground. Every visit is beautiful, every time a lot of fun for us, too. But don’t tell our dogs—it is their vacation after all.

Thanks for sharing your story and photo with us, Amy. The dogs are adorable!

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Posted by [Jordan Lubetkin](#) on August 20th, 2007