



Fox River Pathway

Ernest Hemingway's Secret Fishing Spot

Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Christine Hall

Seney, Michigan - Great trout fishers, like great magicians, never reveal their secrets – to do so would render them useless. Secrets pass like currency over the multitude of great trout streams in the eastern Upper Peninsula. Ernest Hemingway spent the summers of his youth here, and it was along the banks of the Two Hearted River that he based much of *The Nick Adams Stories*, a collection of short stories published after his death. It is, however, a poorly kept secret that Hemingway set his stories on the Two Hearted River to divert attention from his own secret trout fishing spot. It is there, outside of Seney and along the banks of the Fox River, that I try to pick up the writer's trail.

The Fox River Pathway is a 27.5-mile point-to-point trail that begins just outside the town of Seney and ends at the Kingston Lake State Forest Campground. Hemingway begins his popular short story "Big Two Hearted River" in the town of Seney, after a recent forest fire had burned down many of the buildings. I begin my own adventure at the Fox River State Forest Campground, several miles north of Seney along Fox River Road. From the campground the trail descends steeply, but it empties out almost immediately alongside the Fox River. Already I spot potential trout fishing spots peppered beneath fallen trees and underbrush that clog the wistfully flowing river.

“Walking along the Fox River, it’s easy to see how Hemingway fell in love with the wilderness.”

Though it was likely the focal point for some of Hemingway's stories, the Fox River Pathway is still very much a hidden gem. A few miles past the campsite, it's clear that the trail is not often trodden upon by human feet. Hikers should take care to follow the blue blazes that are clearly painted on trees alongside the trail rather than false signs of foot traffic. The path here often appears out of the corner of your field of vision, like a

hidden picture puzzle that you have to cross your eyes to truly see. Regardless, it's best to follow the blue blazes and periodically wade through underbrush than to mistakenly get lost on an unmarked deer-path.

The trail twists in between the road and Fox River before it ventures through the Stanley Lake Campground. Adventurers looking to pick up the Fox River Pathway near its center can access Stanley Lake by dirt roads instead of walking the entire trail. Off Fox River Road, veer right onto Mahoney Lake Road. Keep going straight along Mahoney Lake Road until you reach Stanley Lake Road and take a right.



Volunteers mark the trail with blue paint.
Photo Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy/Tina Hall

From Stanley Lake, the trail continues along the river until it crosses Adam's Trail, thus entering the eerie landscape of the Kingston Pine Plains. It is not uncommon to see fields filled with stumps – the logging industry is tightly weaved into the history of the Upper Peninsula. But, unlike other logged sites, the trees here never grew back. They spread out across the horizon like twisted, gnarled headstones. Outside of the shores of Lake Superior, there are few places in the UP where you can see so far in any one direction.

After disappearing again into the forest, the trail crosses two private tracks, weaving in and around small ponds and creeks. Similar to the earlier trail, it's important here to keep an eye out for blue trail markers; the graded two tracks may entice hikers off of their intended pathway. The trail ends at Kingston Lake and the Kingston Lake State Forest Campground, just off H-58.

Walking along the Fox River, it's easy to see how a young Hemingway fell in love with the wilderness. The solitude of the untamed and untouched Fox River, the ethereal and rarely trodden forest trails, and the sprawling skeletons of the Kingston Pine Plains create metaphors that could have been pulled directly from Hemingway's prose. The Fox River Pathway harnesses this spirit, shedding light on the youthful beginnings of one of the most quintessential American writers of our time.

Directions to the Fox River Pathway

The trail begins north of Seney, MI at the Pathway trailhead on the east side of the road just north of the Seney Township Campground. To get there, turn northeast at the blinking yellow light in Seney, MI onto 1st Street. At the intersection of 1st Street and School Street, (first intersection) turn left onto School Street. School Street becomes County Road 450 (also known as Fox River Road) and heads north. The campground is east of the road, approximately one-tenth of mile from Seney.