

# Michigan's Bridges

Let's start with a little quiz! What is the largest bridge in Michigan? Take a minute to talk with your classmates and come up with your answer. These pictures might help...



The Mackinac Bridge, that connects Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas, is the state's most iconic bridge and without question the longest, but it's not the largest. The Mackinac Bridge is nearly 5 miles long, has 4 lanes and is the longest suspension bridge in the Western Hemisphere, but there is a bridge in Michigan that's larger! It's exactly 300 miles south of the Mackinac Bridge and in Detroit. The bridge over the River Rouge is officially the largest bridge in Michigan despite its short 1.63 miles in length. It's the largest because of its 8 lanes, the total area of the River Rouge bridge is bigger than that of the Mighty Mac.

Let's go back to those six bridges you were looking at. How many of them are familiar? How many of them have you crossed?

**#6**  
Mackinac Bridge is the longest suspension bridge in the Western Hemisphere, at five miles long, that connects the Upper and Lower Peninsulas.

**#4**  
Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge connects the twin cities of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

**#1**  
Blue Water Bridge is an international bridge from Port Huron to Point Edward, Ontario.

**#3**  
Zilwaukee Bridge opened in 1987 and is an eight lane, segmented bridge that crosses the Saginaw River.

**#5**  
Telegraph Road Bridge is a bridge along I-94, over Telegraph Road, that you might have crossed if you have gone to Detroit Metro Airport

**#2**  
Ambassador Bridge is an international bridge from Detroit to Windsor, Ontario

**#7**  
Rouge River Bridge is currently undergoing a two year reconstruction project.

# The Mackinac Bridge

You can't learn about bridges in Michigan without spending a little extra time learning about the Mackinac Bridge, our most iconic bridge. If its picture is going on our license plates, it must be pretty important. The videos on the web site will provide plenty of information, but here are some facts you might not learn....

The total length of steel wire spun together to form the two main cables is 42,000 miles -- enough to circle the globe one and one-half times!

Five men lost their lives during the construction of the bridge: one fell from a tower, one diver surfaced too quickly and did not recover, and 3 iron workers fell from a catwalk collapse.

Opening day for the Mackinac Bridge was Nov. 1, 1957, although the official grand opening celebration was postponed until June 26-28, 1958, because the organizers anticipated poor weather. Ironically, the June celebration was marred by fog and rain anyway.

To help pay the operating costs, fares are collected for crossing the Mackinac Bridge. The current fare for a passenger car is \$4.00.

Some people are afraid to drive across the Mackinac Bridge, because of a fear of heights. Their timidity has earned them the nickname "timbies" by the bridge workers. In extreme circumstances, "timbies" will be driven across the bridge by bridge workers or the local authorities.

The original bridge architects and designers say that, if properly maintained, the bridge will probably last for 1,000 years! The bridge is currently being totally stripped and repainted, an \$80-million project that will take more than 20 years to complete! A total resurfacing of the bridge roadway will be a \$189 million project, expected to begin in 2016.

