

TRAVEL · NORTHERN MICHIGAN

Fernside: Unplugging at an A-Frame on the Sturgeon River

A guest-favorite cabin in Indian River, Michigan, where a wall of windows, a riverside sauna, and no television add up to the most restful weekend up north.

By Nikki Snyder

[HERO PHOTO — the A-frame from the river, or the deck overlooking the Sturgeon]

There's a moment somewhere down the last stretch of dirt road when your shoulders finally drop. No streetlights, no traffic — just tall trees, the crunch of gravel, and then Fernside: a cheerful A-frame tucked into the woods on the banks of the Sturgeon River in Indian River, Michigan. We came up north for a quiet weekend and left already planning the next one.

The cabin

Step inside and the whole place opens up to a wall of windows that pulls the river and the forest right into the room. The A-frame's open floor plan keeps everything light and easy — a main-floor bedroom, a second bed tucked into the loft, a full kitchen, and enough thoughtful touches to tell you the owners genuinely care about the space. It comfortably sleeps four, though it feels tailor-made for two.

[PHOTO — the interior / wall of windows, or the loft]

The river is the whole point

This is the heart of the stay. We spent the best hours of the trip doing almost nothing: a book, a chair on the deck, and the steady sound of the Sturgeon sliding past. Ducks drift by. Every so often a fish breaks the surface. When we wanted a little more, there were tubes waiting for a lazy float downstream and a fire pit for the evening. And the detail guests rave about — we understand why now — is the private sauna looking out over the water. Reading by the river, with that view, was worth the whole trip on its own.

[PHOTO — the riverside sauna, or your reading spot on the deck]

Unplugged by design

There's no television, and that's the point. Evenings belong to the fire pit and a sky full of stars you simply don't get at home — the dark, streetlight-free road makes

for genuinely good stargazing. There's fast-enough wifi if you truly need to stream or sneak in a little work, but our honest advice is to leave the laptop closed.

Close to everything, far from it all

For all its seclusion, Fernside isn't far from anything. Burt Lake State Park is about a ten-minute walk, and you're minutes from the Inland Waterway that strings together Burt and Mullett lakes — kayaking, fishing, and easy days on the water in every direction. The town of Indian River has enough to keep you fed and stocked, and the surrounding stretch of northern Michigan is exactly the postcard you're hoping for.

The hosts

Fernside is run by Stephanie, a northern-Michigan art teacher who has been hosting since 2020, with co-hosts Holly and Kathy. It shows. The cabin is a designated Guest Favorite, rated 4.97 out of 5 across more than 500 reviews, and sits in the top 10% of homes on Airbnb — the kind of consistency that's rare, and that makes complete sense after a single stay.

Would we go back?

In a heartbeat. If your idea of a perfect weekend is a good book, a river, a sauna, and absolutely nowhere to be, Fernside is about as good as it gets up north.

Good to know

Where: On the Sturgeon River in Indian River, Michigan (Tuscarora Township, Cheboygan County)

The place: Entire A-frame cabin · 2 bedrooms (2 queen beds) · 1 bath · sleeps 4

Standouts: Private riverside sauna · wall of windows · deck & fire pit · river tubes provided

Rating: Guest Favorite · 4.97/5 from 523 reviews · top 10% of homes on Airbnb

Nearby: ~10-minute walk to Burt Lake State Park; minutes to the Inland Waterway (Burt & Mullett lakes)

Note: No TV, by design · wifi ~43 Mbps · best for adults/older kids (fast river, loft stairs) · 4-guest max

Book it: Airbnb listing — “Sauna, Aframe Riverside Cabin on Sturgeon River”

Editor's note

Details from the Airbnb listing (Sept. 2026); rates and availability change — confirm on Airbnb before publishing. Drop in your own photos from the trip (ideal for a personal travel piece), or use the host's listing images only with permission. The cabin sits on the Sturgeon River; the town is Indian River, Michigan.