

5. Grand Portage Loop Route



View from the west end of the parking area, photo spot #1

Highlights: The **two river view spots** are among my all-time favorites for photographing fall colors in the park. Also, the trail along the river is great for wildflowers and waterfowl. Finally, the ridge views at the top offer super views of pristine wooded valleys. This is a great fall loop.

Parking and Directions:

Park at the **Grand Portage** parking lot. I have hiked this loop in both directions and I think I prefer the clockwise direction that heads west along the Old Grand Portage River Trail. Head to the west end of the parking lot and find the path leading down to the river. Here you will find the **west river view** spot, with beautiful views of the **Old Grand Portage River bank and the bank straight across. (check out the panoramic photo, my new favorite).** Head back up to **210** to start the route.

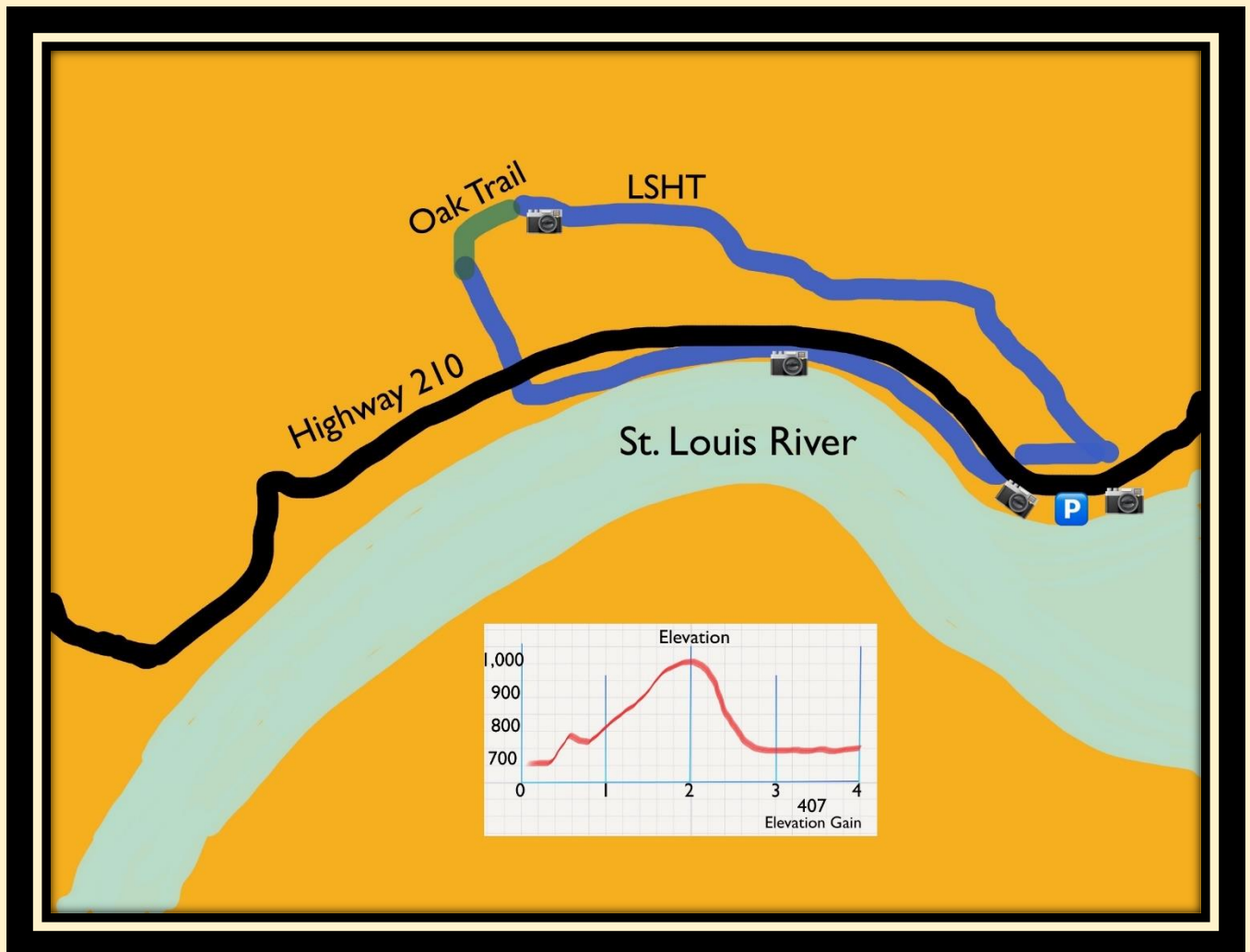


Grand Portage Loop Parking Sign

Distance: Full loop 3.5 miles

Difficulty: moderate

Recommended for: most hikers



The Route:

Mile 1: The first mile heading clockwise on the loop, leads you first along highway 210 and then down to river level where you start the historic **Old Grand Portage**. This portage was used for many years by the Ojibway people, who were bringing beaver pelts to Fond Du Lac (fort on the lake). This trail is covered in maples and in fall it is truly spectacular. It will be hard to pick a spot for photo spot # 2. Follow the trail until it leads up the hill to highway 210. Cross 210 and look for Grand Portage Trail signs. Also, it is part of the **LSHT** so you will see the familiar blue

markings. This is a steep up with several switchbacks. But it is also the only hard part of the route.

Mile 2: Once you reach the top, you are on a ridge overlooking deep valleys on both sides. Again, it will be hard to pick a spot for **photo spot #3**, with great views on both sides. The ridge is covered with maples and is a great fall hike. On the ridge, you will come to the **Oak trail** which merges with the Grand Portage Trail, make sure to look for the Grand Portage sign. Eventually the trail leads down a very steep and winding trail back down the hill. This section is covered with towering pine and birch trees. You will need to do **two creek crossings**; they are usually quite shallow and there are rocks and branches to help you. But you might get a foot wet. (I did).

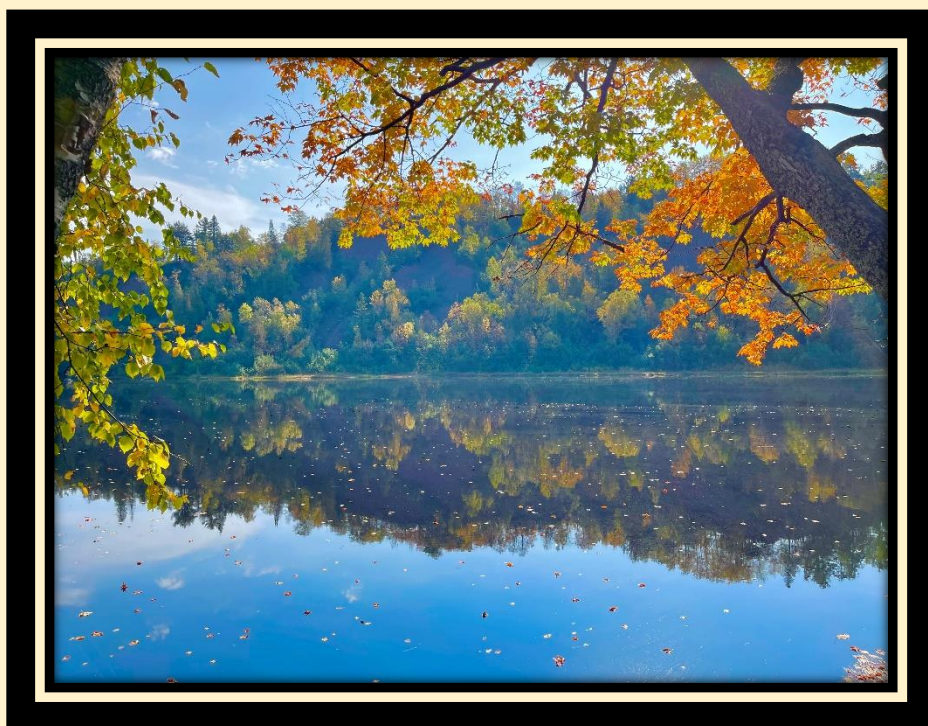
Mile:3 The last mile is not as steep and like the rest of this route, quite beautiful. There is one more shallow creek crossing towards the bottom. Finally, you reach highway 210 again. Cross 210 and head down the hill. At the bottom of the hill, you will see a **Grand Portage River sign**. Take this trail for more great views of the river and **photo spot#4**. Head back to the main trail and turn left to head back to the parking lot.



Grand Portage and Oak Trail sign



Grand portage to river sign



View of river from Old Grand Portage Trail, Photo spot #2



View from ridge looking down towards river, Photo spot #3



View from ridge looking towards north valley, Photo spot #3



View from west river view, photo spot #4

Extended Route: Add the **Jay Cooke Oak Trail Loop** make it a **five-mile loop**.

Family Friendly Route: Hike on the **Old Grand Portage Trail only**. Out and back is about 2 miles. Also make sure to take the two trails to the river views. **Head down 210 to Chambers Groove Park for playground and picnic tables.**

After the hike:

This is a great hike on a nice day for just about anyone. Although the hikes up and down the ridge require careful footing and a bit of energy. After the hike head down to the bar at the **Wabegon** (end of trail) just across the highway 23 bridge in Wisconsin. One of the few bars I have found with **Spotted Cow** and **Castle Danger Cream Ale** on tap. A good conversation bar.

[Wabegon Bar & Grill | Superior, WI | Duluth, MN | Daily Specials](#)

For trail maps and current trail conditions, head to the [Jay Cooke State Park web](#)

Strava Link [JLGrand Portage Loop \(clockwise\) Route | 3.1 mi Hiking Trail on Strava](#)