



MICHIGAN'S PREMIER MOTORCOACH CONNECTION
BETWEEN EAST LANSING, ANN ARBOR,
BRIGHTON & DETROIT METRO AIRPORT



e-news

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Our New Coaches Will Give You an Even Sweeter Ride

Indian Trails is investing more than \$4 million to upgrade the Michigan Flyer fleet with seven brand new Prevost H3-45 luxury motorcoaches. Three of the new buses began serving passengers in December. Four more will roll out over the next two months.

"We invest in new coaches with the latest safety, comfort, and eco-friendly features because of our commitment to our customers, our communities, and our environment," says Indian Trails President Chad Cushman. "One of our guiding principles for 109 years has been to pour profits into new equipment so our fleet remains among the newest and largest in Michigan."

The new motorcoaches have features comparable to a commercial airline's comfort class—reclining seats covered in leather-like upholstery, premium contoured headrests, footrests, individual overhead climate controls and reading lamps, outlets for charging mobile devices, free WiFi internet access, on-board lavatory, overhead storage racks, and ample storage for luggage below deck. Free bottled water is located in a small refrigerator opposite the driver's seat, along with a recycling bin.

Safety features include antilock brakes, automatic traction control to aid drivers and protect passengers in poor weather conditions, GPS tracking, three-point seatbelts for each passenger, an engine fire-suppression system, and a front-kneeling suspension that lowers the coach to help passengers get on or off.

In addition, the deluxe vehicles exceed EPA standards with engine technology that reduces exhaust pollutants to near zero while achieving 240 passenger miles per gallon.



Passengers in East Lansing board one of the new coaches



VP Ody Norkin checks the overhead storage bins on one of the new 2020 coaches



Chris Ellis

Meet Driver Chris Ellis

The first time Chris Ellis started his shift as a regular Michigan Flyer driver, he says he felt like he'd found his perfect job.

"I love having a regular schedule and being home at night, but most of all I love working with the people here and serving our passengers," he says.

Chris started with us in 2018 after a stint driving for our parent company, Indian Trails, which is headquartered in Owosso, Mich. There, he served as a charter and fill-

in driver for routes that occasionally included the Flyer.

Among his favorite charters was taking a group of elementary school students across Michigan's Mackinac Bridge to St. Ignace on a multi-day trip, and a group excursion to Shipshewana, Ind., to attend an auction and shop the flea market there.

Previously, Chris had worked for an automotive supplier for more than 20 years, and after that as a bus driver for the Shiawassee Area Transportation Agency. A friend told him about driver openings at Indian Trails and he applied. "I was looking for a change," he says.

Although he'd been a transit bus driver, Chris still had to complete Indian Trails' intensive, five-week drivers' training program. "I had experience and my commercial driver's license, but there was still much to learn,

including how to properly operate the wheelchair lifts,” he said. “Plus, I had to learn how to pilot much bigger buses than I had been accustomed to.”

It's the People

For Chris—who was born in Durand, Mich., and lives in Owosso—it's the people he works with and the passengers with whom he interacts every day that make his job ideal.

“This is my dream job,” he says. “I’ve always loved driving, and the way we’re treated by the staff here makes it feel like family.”

Working at the Flyer fulfills a value his parents instilled in Chris as he was growing up. “They told me if I worked hard each and every day, it would pay off—and it has,” he says. “Now, when I help train new drivers, I tell them they should expect to work hard here, but it’ll be worth it because they’ll be appreciated for what they do.”

Chris also likes the level of autonomy he’s earned as a driver for Michigan Flyer. “If I’m out on the road and see something that will hold us up, like a traffic back-up, I can change direction to help ensure that our passengers get to where they need to be,” he says. “Everyone at the Flyer is always looking out for what’s best for them.”

Chris also welcomes the opportunity to meet new passengers and to interact with his regulars. “In my experience, it’s rare to come across Flyer passengers who are in a bad mood, and if someone is, I just try to kill them with kindness,” he says. “The point is to treat everyone with respect and not take it personally.”

Chris is clearly one of those fortunate folks who really love what they do for a living.

“In some of my other jobs, I felt like I was just a number,” he says. “But not here where they treat you like family and are happy to see you when you start your shift. I’m very humbled and grateful to be here, driving a luxury coach, serving an awesome clientele, and working with people who always try to do right for you. This is my spot.”



Travel Alerts



Where to Find Us at the Brighton Meijer

Livingston County residents who are thinking about riding with us for the first time should know that our buses stop at the south side of the Meijer parking lot near Cross St. Just look for the sign. Nearby, you may also see a van with the Michigan Flyer

logo. That's where we have a customer service agent on duty Monday through Friday to help with your luggage or other needs. It's also the same area in which you can park your car for \$2.50 a day, if paid in advance when you buy tickets online.

Michigan Flyer-AirRide Schedule Reduced on Holidays

We will be operating fewer runs on December 24, 25 and January 1. Please use the "Book a trip" feature on our website to see our operating schedule for these days.

Book Soon to Travel with Us in Early January

With Michigan State University and University of Michigan students returning from winter break, the first two

weeks of January will be a peak demand period for us. MSU students resume classes on Jan. 6, U-M students on Jan. 8.



More Bargain Fares to Warm Places

If you're flexible about travel dates, you can still find *roundtrip* flights for just \$207 per person between Detroit Metro Airport (DTW) and Cancun (CUN), Mexico, in January and February 2020. As an example, for a jaunt that would let you escape winter with your sweetie for Valentine's Day, we selected Sunday, Feb. 9, for the outgoing flight, with a return on Thursday, Feb. 20. Find bargains like this at [Spirit.com](https://www.spirit.com).

As we [reported](#) last month, there are great deals for U.S. destinations, too—including roundtrips for under \$200 to cities in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas.

This time around, we used [Kayak.com](https://www.kayak.com) to search for additional bargains using the sample trip dates of Friday, Feb. 7, to Saturday, Feb. 15. Again, as part of our criteria, both the departing and return flights had to be nonstop. Also, the return flight had to arrive in time for you to catch our last daily Michigan Flyer-AirRide run from the airport to Ann Arbor, Brighton, and East Lansing. We found the following basic economy fares, which include taxes but not necessarily baggage or other “extras”:

- **New Orleans** (MSY) out on Spirit, back on Delta \$185
- **Las Vegas** (LAS) Spirit \$203
- **Los Angeles** (LAX) out on Spirit, back on Delta \$257

Also, if you don't mind a short layover to change planes in one direction or both, chances are very good that you can find even cheaper fares.



Customer Comments

“I live in New York City but am from Michigan originally, so I go home often but can't drive. I am so glad that the Michigan Flyer exists now. Before, my poor mother had to make two two-hour trips to pick me up and drop me off at the DTW airport (and risk her life driving in the Michigan snow). Now, all mom has to do is drive to the Brighton Meijer 15 minutes from her house.

Michigan Flyer is clean, gives you a free bottle of water, has free WiFi, and professional drivers. I was so pleasantly surprised! Plus, it's much safer to be a passenger in a big bus in the wintertime than in my mother's Honda Accord (thanks again, mom, for braving the elements for your daughter). I hope more folks use Michigan Flyer and it leads to more great public transportation that Michigan so desperately needs.

Oh, and now as a bonus I can make trips to Ann Arbor and East Lansing without spending \$80 on a cab or begging my friends to make a two-hour roundtrip to come get me. Thanks a million Michigan Flyer!”

Top Coming Events—We Can Get You There

Brighton



 **Lantern Hikes** at Island Lake Recreation Area. From 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Dec. 21, hike, snowshoe or ski for a mile along the Hickory Ridge trail, following the lanterns to a warming station complete with a campfire and hot chocolate. Near Kent Lake, it's at 6301 Kensington Rd., Brighton.

Brighton, along with the other communities of Livingston County, offers events for visitors of all ages. Explore them with the Livingston County Convention & Visitors Bureau events calendar:

<https://visitlivingstoncounty.com/events/>.

Ann Arbor



 **50 First Jokes.** The tradition that started in New York more than a decade ago is now much-anticipated in Los Angeles and other cities, including Ann Arbor! Fifty of the area's up-and-coming and veteran comics get together to tell the first jokes they've written for the new year. It's fast, fresh, and funny—at 8 p.m. on Jan. 2 at The Ark, 316 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. Admission: \$10.

 **Ann Arbor Restaurant Week,** Jan. 12-Jan. 17, is a biannual opportunity to try as many downtown Ann

Arbor restaurants as your schedule allows for one fixed price—\$15 for lunch or \$28 for a three-course dinner. Plus, 25 of the 61 participating restaurants offer 2-for-1 pricing. Once you decide on your restaurants, reservations are highly encouraged.

Check the Ann Arbor Area Convention & Visitors Bureau calendar for more local events:

<https://www.visitannarbor.org/splash/events>.

Lansing

 **Lansing Boat Show "H2O-20"** Get an up-close look at all kinds of boats—pontoons, cabin cruisers, sun decks, fishing boats, speed boats, kayaks, and canoes—and start planning your summer fun on one of Michigan's 11,000 inland lakes. Dealers typically offer deep, pre-season discounts. The show also features

mini-workshops, games, and hundreds of boating-related accessories, such as life vests, scuba gear, trailers, docks and lifts. It runs from Friday, Jan. 3, through Sunday, Jan. 5, at the Lansing Center, 333 E. Michigan Ave., downtown Lansing. Times varying by day. [Admission](#): \$5 for adults, free for kids 17 and under.



[Family Day: Chance](#) First Saturday of the month means Family Day at the MSU Broad! Bring your family between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Jan 4. to make creative connections through hands-on art activities inspired by monthly themes. Then tour the museum's current exhibits until 7 p.m. All ages are welcome and admission is free. It's at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, 547 E. Circle Dr., East Lansing.

Find more local coming events with the Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau calendar: <http://www.lansing.org/events>.



Stress-Reducing Travel Tips

[Know How to Find us at DTW's McNamara Terminal.](#)

[Download Our Free Smartphone App to Track Your Bus in Real Time.](#)

[Change Your Own Reservations Online. Sometimes.](#)

[Buy an Affordable Travel Insurance Policy.](#)

Help Others by Reviewing Us Online

Please visit the review sites below to let others know about your Michigan Flyer-AirRide experience and help them to understand how our service might improve their travels.



Wouldn't You Rather Have a Corner Window View?

You can have that and more as a Michigan Flyer driver. Our full-time drivers earn an average of \$47,000 a year. They also receive:

Nine paid holidays
401K with employer contribution



- Medical, dental and other benefits
- Paid time off starting in the first year

No professional driving experience is required. Indian Trails provides a comprehensive 4-5 week PAID training program, plus help in getting a Commercial Driver's License. [More details and an online application can be found here](#) and [here](#).

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa and ...



Why Drive?

Booking is easy, [click here](#) to view schedules on



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