

Twin Cities Highlights—A Deep Dive

- cosmopolitan, dynamic area
- 16th largest Metropolitan Statistical Area in the US—behind Seattle, ahead of San Diego
- large immigrant population: 3rd largest Hmong population in the world, large Somali population, large Hispanic population
- good (though not great) public transportation system; light rail from MSP International Airport to downtown Minneapolis, light rail between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul; easy access to airport (15-20 minutes by car or taxi), good amount of downtown parking
- four distinct seasons—fall is the nicest, with gorgeous fall colors, pleasant temperatures.
- great variety of interesting architecture in downtown Minneapolis
- unless noted otherwise, the following attractions are located within Minneapolis

Architecturally Interesting Buildings

IDS Tower

former Federal Reserve Bank Building

Hennepin County Center

Lutheran Brotherhood

Fairview-University Medical Building

St. Paul Cathedral

former U. of Minn. Bookstore—now offices (underground, lit with skylights)

Engineering Building, U. of Minn. (light tower brings sunlight 5 stories underground)

State Capitol Building

Skyway Systems, downtowns of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Capella Tower

Nicollet Mall (street—lots of dining al fresco)

Voya Financial 2 Washington—architect: Minoru Yamasaki

Weisman Museum, U of M, architect: Frank Gehry

Westminster Presbyterian Church bell tower, architect: Frank Gehry

many others

Museums and Zoos [3rd in the US in number of museums (57), behind only Chicago and D.C.]

Science Museum of Minnesota (St. Paul)

Bell Museum of Natural History (St. Paul)

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (Chaska)

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory (St. Paul)

Minnesota Zoo (Apple Valley)

Minnesota Historical Society (St. Paul):

Minnesota History Center (St. Paul)

Hennepin History Museum

Historic Fort Snelling (historic reenactment)

Historic Murphy's Landing

Alexander Ramsey House (St. Paul)

James J. Hill House (St. Paul)

Minnehaha Depot

Minnesota State Capitol (St. Paul)

Traces Museum Center for History and Culture (St. Paul)

Mill City Museum

Schubert Club Museum of Musical Instruments (St. Paul)

Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA)
Weisman Art Museum
Walker Art Museum [contemporary art]
Minneapolis Sculpture Garden
Minnesota Museum of American Art (St. Paul)
The Museum of Russian Art
The American Swedish Institute
Firefighters Hall and Museum
Children's Museum (St. Paul)
Minnesota Transportation Museum (St. Paul)
Twin City Model Railroad Museum (St. Paul)
The Bakken Museum of Electricity and Magnetism
The Works: A Technology Discovery Center (Edina)
Minnesota State Capitol (St. Paul)
Gibbs Farm (historical reenactment of farm life) (St. Paul)
Goldstein Museum of Design (U. of MN, St. Paul)
Soap Factory (Gallery and Art Museum)

Culture [more theaters seats per capita than anyplace except NYC—approx. 100 theater groups and 30 theater venues, 60 museums, 20 classical music groups, 10 dance companies]

Most prominent:

Guthrie Theater [world-famous]
Theater in the Round
Hennepin Theater District
Ordway Center for the Performing Arts (St. Paul)
Fitzgerald Theater (St. Paul) [home of A Prairie Home Companion]
Mixed Blood Theater
Penumbra Theater
Children's Theatre Company [located within building housing Minneapolis Institute of Arts]
Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
Old Log Theater
Orpheum Theater
State Theater
Pantages Theater
Brave New Workshop [political and cultural satire]
Minnesota Orchestra [world-famous]
St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (Ordway Theater, St. Paul) [world-famous]
Minnesota Opera (Ordway Theater, St. Paul) [second opera of the season around end of October, world-famous visiting soloists]
Vocalescence
University of Minnesota Opera
1st Avenue (Rock Music—home of Prince, alternative, world, and reggae music)
Gay 90's
Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant
Multiple night clubs
The Dubliner Bar (St. Paul) [live Celtic music]
Jonathan Padelford Packet Boat cruises on the Mississippi
Approx. 50 art galleries
Kieran's Irish Pub [live Irish music]

Libraries

University of Minnesota, both campuses—Library of Congress repository
Elmer L. Anderson Library-Archives and Special Collections
Minneapolis-Hennepin Co. Libraries
St. Paul Public libraries
Concordia College Library (St. Paul—includes genealogy collection of the Minnesota
Genealogical Society)
Minnesota History Center Library

Dining

Amazing variety and number of ethnic restaurants, including Mediterranean, Mexican, Italian, Thai, Himalayan, Somali, Ethiopian, Malaysian, German, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, French; fine dining, casual dining, fish, steak, pubs.

Some of my favorites:

Al's Breakfast (very popular breakfast [omelets, especially] counter, people line up several deep for seats) (Minneapolis "Dinkytown" (University area))
Hell's Kitchen (Minneapolis Downtown)
Everest on Grand (Nepalese) (St. Paul)
The Himalayan on Lake Street (Nepalese) (Minneapolis)
The Bavarian Hunter (reasonably authentic Bavarian food, ambiance (near Stillwater)
Café Latté (St. Paul Grand Ave.)
Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant (Minneapolis Downtown)
Birchwood Café (Organic, eclectic, some veggie) (Minneapolis)

Recommended:

112 Eatery (International) (Minneapolis)
D'Amico and Sons (Minneapolis)
Cosmos (Eclectic, International) (Minneapolis)
Origami (Asian, Japanese—Sushi) (Minneapolis)
Barbette (French) (Minneapolis)
Manny's Steakhouse (American) (Minneapolis Downtown)
Restaurant Alma (American, New American) (Minneapolis—Dinkytown)
Gardens of Salonica New Greek Café & Deli (European, Greek) (NE Minneapolis, near Downtown)
Ted Cook's 19th Hole BBQ (American—BBQ) (South Minneapolis)
Zelo (European, Italian) (Minneapolis Downtown)
Nicollet Island Inn (American) (Minneapolis Downtown)
It's Greek to Me Taverna e Parea (European, Greek, Mediterranean) (Minneapolis, Lyn-Lake District)
Sawatdee (Asian, Thai) (Minneapolis Downtown)
Kindee Thai restaurant (Minneapolis Downtown)

Shopping

[no sales tax on clothing and shoes (and food—but entertainment tax in Mpls)]
Mall of America (Bloomington) [2nd largest mall in North America]
IKEA (Bloomington)
Southdale Center mall (Edina) [first mall in America]
Galleria (Edina)
Minneapolis Downtown:

[Skyway System—in Minneapolis, 8 miles of skyways link almost 80 blocks—largest climate-controlled system in the world; St. Paul skyway system links 43 blocks]
Nicollet Mall—shopping and restaurants, street level, further south on Nicollet Ave is “Eat Street”—many restaurants in a few blocks
Midtown Global Market
St. Paul Downtown [Skyway System]
Grand Ave (St. Paul)
Victoria Crossing (St. Paul—Grand and Victoria)
many other shopping malls surrounding the central core cities

Parks and Lakes

Very extensive hiking and bicycling routes throughout the Twin Cities, which are rated among the most bike-friendly in the country
Grand Rounds Parkway System in Minneapolis
Lake Calhoun (sailing, canoeing, swimming)
Lake of the Isles (sailing, canoeing)
Cedar Lake (sailing, canoeing, swimming)
Lake Harriet [rose garden, Japanese garden, peace garden] (sailing, canoeing, swimming)
Minnehaha Park (picnicking, hiking)
Wirth Park picnicking, hiking, skiing in winter
Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden
St. Croix River (canoeing) [National Scenic and Wild River]
Como Park (St. Paul—picnicking, walking, boating, children’s amusement park, conservatory, zoo)
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum [Chanhassen, west of Minneapolis]
Crosby Lake Park (St. Paul—hiking, picnicking)
Phalen Park (St. Paul—picnicking, boating)
Fort Snelling State Park (hiking, picnicking)
Many neighborhood parks
Many regional parks

Sports

U.S. Bank Stadium [Minnesota Vikings]
Target Center [Timberwolves basketball (men), Lynx (women), entertainment events, incl. ice skating]
Target Field [Minnesota Twins baseball]
Allianz Field [Minnesota United soccer stadium “the Loons”]
Xcel Energy Center [Minnesota Wild (NHL Hockey), entertainment events]
Multiple venues on University of Minnesota campus—women’s and men’s basketball, football (TCF Bank Stadium), baseball, men’s and women’s ice hockey, swimming (Olympic festival and trials held in the Natatorium)
National Sports Center (Blaine) [52 soccer fields for amateur events]
Golf: 13 golf courses (NPGA tournament held here)

Educational Institutions

[the high density and number of colleges and universities in the Twin Cities area contribute to the intellectual and cultural life of the region]

University of Minnesota—2 campuses in Twin Cities, with 40,00 and 15,000 students

Augsburg College

St. Catherine University

Hamline University

Macalester College

University of St. Thomas

Bethel University

Concordia University

Dunwoody College of Technology

Luther Seminary

Minneapolis College of Art and Design

North Central University

Northwestern College

William Mitchell College of Law

Metropolitan State University (Minneapolis and St. Paul Campuses)

Anoka Technical College

Anoka-Ramsey Community College

Century College

Hennepin Technical College

Minneapolis Community and Technical College

Normandale Community College

North Hennepin Community College

St. Paul College

Brown College

Capella University

Minnesota School of Business & Globe College

National American University

Rasmussen College

Walden University

Other

Minnesota State Fair (one of largest in country)--9-day period ending on Labor Day

Minnesota Zoological Gardens

Butler Square—restored warehouse: restaurants, general store in downtown Minneapolis

Canoeing on St. Croix River, Cannon River, many other rivers, Boundary Waters Canoe

Area Wilderness

North Shore of Lake Superior

Madeline Island, Wisconsin

Lake Itasca (headwaters of Mississippi)

Iron Range (Hull-Rust Mine, underground mining tour)

Badlands, South and North Dakota

Missouri River, North Dakota

Black Hills, South Dakota