

Minneapolis And St. Paul

Contributed by Administrator
Monday, 21 July 2008
Last Updated Monday, 21 July 2008

Commonly known as the Twin Cities, MINNEAPOLIS (a hybrid Sioux/Greek word meaning "water city") and ST PAUL are competitive yet complementary. Fraternal rather than identically twinned, they may be even better places to live than they are to visit, thanks to their good looks, cleanliness, cultural activity, social awareness and relatively low crime rates. About thirty of Fortune Magazine's 500 top corporations are based here; many extend substantial financial support to local arts, community projects and sports. Life for a majority of Twin Citians seems so vibrantly wholesome that the most significant threat would appear to be their own creeping complacency. St Paul has been called "the last city of the east," making Minneapolis across the curving Mississippi "the first city of the west." Only a twenty-minute expressway ride separates their respective downtowns, but each has its own character, style and strengths. St Paul, the state capital - originally called Pig's Eye, after a scurrilous French-Canadian fur trader who sold whisky at a Mississippi River landing in the 1840s - is the staid, slightly older sibling, careful to preserve its buildings and traditions. Its residents are mainly German, Irish and Catholic. The compact but stately downtown is built, like Rome, on seven hills: the Capitol and the Cathedral occupy one each, august monuments that keep the city mindful of its responsibilities. Minneapolis, founded on money generated by the Mississippi's hundreds of flour and saw mills, is livelier, artier and more modern, with skyscraping, up-to-date architecture and an upbeat and even brash attitude that never quite jeopardizes its essential affability. The mostly Slavonic, Nordic and Lutheran residents are spread over wider ground than in St Paul, with dozens of lakes and parks to underscore the city's appeal. The home-grown superstar Prince and the recording company Flyte Tyme cast a global spotlight on the local music scene. St Paul, reached along I-94 (and served by buses #16A, #21A or downtown express route #94BCD), has more wealthy old homes and civic monuments than Minneapolis. Here, too, downtown buildings are linked via skyways. Call in at the jazzy Art Deco lobby of the City Hall and Courthouse, Fourth and Wabasha, to see Swedish sculptor Carl Milles' revolving 36ft Vision of Peace, carved in the 1930s from white Mexican onyx. The castle-like Landmark Center, a couple of blocks away at Fifth and Market, and the glittering Ordway Music Theatre both overlook Rice Park, probably the prettiest little square in either city. Town Square Park is a lush, multilevel indoor garden in a shopping complex. The gorgeous granite and limestone Minnesota History Center, 345 W Kellogg Blvd (Tues, Wed, Fri & Sat 10am-5pm, Thurs 10am-9pm, Sun noon-5pm; free), with its extensive research facilities and some inventive exhibits for the more casual visitor, is the best place to grasp the state's story. An immense steel iguana is the doorkeeper at the exciting hands-on Science Museum of Minnesota, 120 W Kellogg Blvd (Mon-Sat 9.30am-9pm, Sun 10am-9pm; \$10;), which also has a domed Omnitheater (entry included in ticket). Or check out the Minnesota Children's Museum, 10 W Seventh St (summer daily 9am-5pm, Thurs till 8pm; rest of year closed Mon; \$5.95;), where even big kids will be diverted by the five interactive galleries. A well-preserved five-mile Victorian boulevard, Summit Avenue, leads away from downtown. F. Scott Fitzgerald, born close by, finished his first success, This Side of Paradise, in 1918 while living in a modest row house at no. 599. He disparaged the avenue as a "museum of American architectural failures." Look for the coffin atop no. 465, once the home of an undertaker, and visit the James J. Hill House at no. 240, a railroad baron's sumptuous mansion from around 1891 (tours every half-hour Wed-Sat 10am-3.30pm; \$6; reservations recommended; tel 651/297-2555). Territorial governor Alexander Ramsey's house (tours on the hour May-Dec Tues-Sat 10am-3pm, Sun 1pm, 2pm & 3pm; \$6; tel 651/296-8760s), nearby at 265 S Exchange St in the fashionable Irvine Park district, remains a showcase of Victorian high style. The costumed staff does a fine job of interpreting Minnesota's frontier past at Fort Snelling (May-Oct Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun noon-5pm; \$6; tel 612/726-1171), near the airport off highways 5 and 55. Built between 1819 and 1825 on a strategic bluff at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, this was Minnesota's first permanent structure - a successful attempt by the US government to establish an official presence in the wilderness that had recently been won from Great Britain. Another good bet is the venerable and picturesque Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, reached by taking I-94 to the Lexington Ave exit, then continuing north on Lexington for about three miles (summer daily 10am-6pm; rest of year daily 10am-4pm; free). Farther afield, in suburban Apple Valley, off Hwy-775 (take bus #77Z from the Mall of America), is the spacious, highly regarded Minnesota Zoo (May-Sept Mon-Sat 9am-6pm, Sun 9am-8pm; Oct-April daily 9am-4pm; \$8, or \$14 combination ticket; tel 951/431-9500,). The animals reside in reconstructions of their natural habitats; the Komodo dragon exhibit, Imation IMAX Theater and new Discovery Bay aquatic center are outstanding. Annual celebrations in St Paul include a beanfeast called Taste of Minnesota (tons of food, live entertainment, rides and fireworks) running from late June to July 4 and the nation's largest State Fair (end of Aug to early Sept). The Winter Carnival (late Jan to early Feb) is a frosty gala designed to make the most of the seasonal freeze with ice and snow sculpturing, hot-air ballooning, team sports, parades and more. Perhaps, though, the longest-running celebration here is Hockey Season - the non-summer months. The twin cities finally got a pro hockey squad again - the Minnesota Wild - and the new Xcel Energy Center (317 Washington St; tel 651/222-9543,) is testament to the sport's importance round these parts.

ARRIVAL Twin Cities International Airport lies about ten miles south of either city in suburban Bloomington. Airport Express (tel 612/827-7777 or 1-800/333-1532) shuttles travelers between the airport and major hotels for around \$10, and some lodgings lay on their own transportation. Taxis to Minneapolis will set you back close to \$25, to St Paul \$15. Bus #7 goes to Minneapolis; #54 to St Paul (6am-midnight: \$1-1.50). Amtrak is midway between the cities at 730 Transfer Rd, off University Avenue. The Greyhound terminals, both in convenient downtown locations, are at 950 Hawthorne St (tel 612/371-3325) in Minneapolis and, less used, 166 W University Ave (tel 651/222-0507) in St Paul. Metropolitan Council Transit Operations buses (tel 612/349-7000 or 612/373-3333) make both cities relatively easy to explore without a car. Money-saving multiple-ride tickets can be bought at 719 Marquette Ave in Minneapolis or

numerous locations in either city. Old-style trolleys run through both downtowns; St Paul's is a bargain 50¢ per ride, but in Minneapolis it costs \$5 for a two-hour pass or \$6 all day. In Minneapolis, the visitor center is at 4000 Multifoods Tower, 33 S Sixth St (tel 612/661-4700 or 1-800/445-7412), with an additional location on the second level of the City Center shopping complex (tel 612/335-5827). In St Paul it's at 102 Norwest Center, 55 E Fifth St (tel 612/297-6985 or 1-800/627-6101). The main Minneapolis post office is on First and Marquette (zip code 55401); St Paul's at 180 E Kellogg Blvd (zip code 55101). The state-run website () has loads of practical travel information. The same is true for the Minnesota Historical Society site ().

EATING Preconceptions of Midwestern blandness are swiftly put to rest by an almost bewildering array of restaurants in the Twin Cities. In Minneapolis, head for the downtown warehouse district, the southerly Nicollet neighborhood, the funky Uptown and Lyn-Lake areas, or the university's Dinkytown. In St Paul, try Galtier Plaza downtown, the Asian restaurants on University Avenue, or the horde of ethnic options all along Grand Avenue. Of local chains, Lotus serves budget Vietnamese meals, LeeAnn Chin has adequate Chinese cuisine, while Keys offers great breakfasts and fresh lunches. Be sure to sample wild rice, a Minnesota specialty. Minneapolis Broder's Cucina Italiana 2308 W 50th St, tel 612/925-3113. Terrific deli for eat-in or takeout. There's a full-service restaurant across the street. Buc 1204 Harmon Place tel 612/638-2225. This irresistibly festive Italian restaurant dishes out massive portions. There's another branch in St Paul. Café Brenda 300 1st Ave N tel 612/342-9230. Excellent, moderately priced nouvelle vegetarian cuisine in arty downtown warehouse district. Chez Bananas 129 N 4th St tel 612/340-0032. Spicy, Caribbean-influenced food, and toys on the tables. Café Havana 1119 N Washington Ave tel 612/338-8484. A Cuban newcomer in the trendy warehouse district offers classy decor, music, and excellent - though pricey - food. Emily's Lebanese Deli 641 University Ave NE tel 612/379-4069. Warm, low-cost local place. Goodfellows 40 S 7th St tel 612/332-4800. Award-winning and expensive American cuisine comes in a posh setting. Modern Café 337 13th Ave NE tel 612/378-9882. Check out the eclectic, cheap, flavorsome food in a former neighborhood diner gone hip. Monte Carlo 219 N 3rd Ave tel 612/333-5900. Locals swear by this century-old steakhouse. Pricey. Odaa 408 Cedar Ave S tel 612/338-4459. Tasty all-you-can-eat Ethiopian finger food for \$10 or less. Palomino 825 Hennepin Ave tel 612/339-3800. The stylish, popular downtown Euro-bistro specializes in Mediterranean fare. Pizza Luce 119 N 4th Street tel 612/333-7359. No frills decor, hip urban staff, and excellent pizza. Peter's Grill 114 S 8th St tel 612/333-1981. This downtown lunch/early dinner institution is old-style, uncomplicated and quintessentially American. Past diners include President Clinton. Sawatdee 607 Washington Ave S tel 612/338-6451. The toothsome Thai food is always well prepared; main courses are \$8-15. There are several branches in the Twin Cities, and a new Sawatdee sushi restaurant next door. They have excellent late-night discounts on all sushi. St Paul Café DaVinci 400 Sibley St tel 612/222-4050. Exceptional northern Italian cuisine is served in a Leonardoesque setting. Caravan Serai 2175 Ford Parkway tel 612/690-1935. Afghani food, tent-like space, pillow seats. Mickey's Diner 36 W 7th St tel 612/222-5633. Landmark 24hr diner in 1930s dining car. Moscow on the Hill 371 Selby Ave tel 612/291-1236. Exquisite Russo-European food, modest ambience. St Paul Grill 350 Market St tel 612/292-9292. Traditional but inventive food in classic downtown hotel. Taste of Scandinavia 75 W 5th St tel 612/222-1100. Delicious, authentic lunches and daytime snacks are served cafeteria-style in Landmark Center, - the most central of three locations. W A Frost Selby and Western aves tel 612/224-5715. A former pharmacy and F. Scott Fitzgerald hangout has been converted into a plush restaurant with garden patio.

NIGHTLIFE AND ENTERTAINMENT The Greater Twin Cities have been dubbed a "cultural Eden on the prairie," where 2.5 million people support upwards of one hundred theater companies, more than forty dance troupes, twenty classical music ensembles, and more than a hundred art galleries. Sir Tyrone Guthrie began the theatrical boom back in 1963, enrolling large-scale local assistance to establish the classical repertory company (tel 612/377-2224 or 1-800/848-4912) named after him. The Guthrie Theater is at 725 Vineland Place, Minneapolis (tel 612/377-2224 or 1-877/44STAGE,). The cities now have more theaters per capita than anywhere in the US apart from New York City. Unusually, nightlife in Minneapolis (and, to a lesser extent, St Paul) hasn't been siphoned off by suburbia - one hundred thousand students ensure a vibrant club scene. Before the Seattle music explosion, Minneapolis natives Bob Mould and Paul Westerberg pioneered the grunge sound with their seminal bands Husker Du and The Replacements. The city still churns out great guitar bands like Soul Asylum, while erstwhile Prince Rogers Nelson continues to meddle around in his multimedia Paisley Park studio in suburban Chanhassen. For complete entertainment information and listings, check out the ubiquitous free weekly City Pages. Lavender and focus POINT provide a similar service from a lesbian and gay perspective.

THEATERS Bryant-Lake Bowl Theatre 810 W Lake St, Minneapolis tel 612/825-3737. Performances, bowling, café and bar all under one funky roof. Chanhassen Dinner Theater 521 W 78th St, Minneapolis tel 612/934-1525 or 1-800/362-3515. Mainstream musicals, popular comedies and drama on four stages, plus meals. Thirty minutes from downtown. Dudley Riggs' Brave New Workshop 2605 Hennepin Ave S, Minneapolis tel 612/332-6620. The grandparent of local satirical comedy troupes. Fitzgerald Theater 10 E Exchange St, St Paul tel 651/290-1221. Best known as the venue for Garrison Keillor's weekly A Prairie Home Companion performance, it also hosts other concerts and lectures. Great American History Theater 30 E 10th St, St Paul tel 612/292-4323. Original plays deal with events and personalities from the region's past. Jungle Theater 709 W Lake St, Minneapolis tel 612/822-7063. Hole-in-the-wall theater/cabaret. Park Square 408 St Peter St, St Paul tel 651/291-7005. Well-executed classic and contemporary plays. Penumbra 270 N Kent St, St Paul tel 651/224-3180. Professional African-American company. Red Eye Collaboration 15 W 14th St, Minneapolis tel 612/870-0309. Challenging experimental theater. Theatre de la Jeune Lune 1st St and 1st Ave, Minneapolis tel 612/332-3986. A unique ensemble of Parisians and Minneapolitans offer dynamic, highly physical productions from a commedia base.

BARS AND CLUBS Backstage at BRAVO ! 900 Hennepin Ave tel 612/338-0062. Newish three-story restaurant/piano bar with theatrical leanings. Figlio Calhoun Square, 3001 Hennepin Ave tel 612/822-1688. Top late-night dining and people-watching. Fine Line 318 1st Ave tel 612/338-8100. Sleek, small and musically eclectic downtown club. First Avenue and 7th St Entry 701 1st Ave tel 612/338-8388 or 612/332-1775. The landmark rock venue where TAFKAP's Purple Rain was shot still packs 'em in with top bands and dance music. Gay 90s

408 Hennepin Ave S tel 612/333-7755. This sprawling, predominantly gay club has two dance floors, a piano lounge, dining, and polished weekend drag shows. Ground Zero 15 NE 4th St tel 612/378-5115. The mixed clientele savors the great space, varied themes, gothic influences and occasional fetish nights. Kieran's Irish Pub 330 2nd Ave S tel 612/339-4499. Friendly atmosphere built round good food, grog, music and poetry. Downtown location. Loon Café 500 1st Ave N tel 612/332-8342. Try the chilis at this noisy, likeable sports bar offering great grub. Loring Bohemian Bar and Café 1624 Harmon Place tel 612/338-6258 or 612/332-1617. Beautiful people with attitude drink, dine or drift upstairs to the dance/theater Playhouse. New French Café & Bar 128 N 4th St tel 612/338-3790. Cozy warehouse district mainstay. Nye's Polonaise Room 112 E Hennepin Ave tel 612/379-2021. Experience old-time atmosphere at the piano and polka bars and the Polish-American restaurant. Quest 110 N 5th St tel 612/338-3383, . State-of-the-art dance club, with live acts. Dress flash. The Dakota Bar and Grill 1021 Bandana Blvd tel 651/642-1442, . Gourmet Midwestern food and great local and national jazz in converted shopping mall locale. Gallivan's 354 Wabasha St tel 651/227-6688. This downtown white-collar pub, one of St Paul's oldest bars, has a neighborhood feel. McGovern's 225 W 7th St tel 651/224-5821. At a quintessential Irish pub, you're likely to strike up some decent conversation. O'Gara's Bar and Grill 164 N Snelling Ave tel 651/644-3333. The mixed clientele is drawn by grub, grog and live bands in the adjoining Garage . Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub 258 W 7th St tel 651/292-9916. At a pre- and post-game hangout, Minnesotans gather to honor their favorite sport. Town House 1415 University Ave tel 651/646-7087. Gay/lesbian bar with dance, drag and C&W evenings, plus piano lounge. DOWNTOWN Downtown Minneapolis is laid out on a simple grid. The riverfront, dubbed the Mississippi Mile , continues to be developed as a place for strolling, dining and entertainment. Each city has its own landing site for narrated summertime paddleboat cruises (\$14; tel 1-800/543-3908). The vast Third Avenue bridge makes an ideal vantage point for viewing St Anthony Falls , a controlled torrent in a wide stretch of the river. The missionary Father Hennepin discovered the Falls in 1680. The first permanent settlement of present-day Minneapolis was begun nearby in the early nineteenth century. Downtown's major stores line up along the pedestrianized Nicollet Mall . Hennepin Avenue , the other main drag, is a block west. It has been revitalized as an entertainment district in recent years thanks, in part, to the beautifully restored Orpheum and State theaters , twin hosts to top-quality Broadway shows and concerts. The IDS Center , on the Mall, is the tallest building in either city; its indoor glass atrium, the Crystal Court, is essentially modern Minneapolis's town square. Citizens escape weather extremes via a skyway system of elevated, climate-controlled glass walkways, connecting more than forty buildings. Culturally, Minneapolis would be poorer without the Walker Art Center , Vineland Place (Tues, Wed, Fri & Sat 10am-5pm, Thurs 10am-9pm, Sun 11am-5pm; \$6, free Thurs and 1st Sat of month; tel 612/375-7622,), on the edge of downtown. This multipurpose contemporary art and performance space balances its permanent collection of sculpture and paintings (such as German Expressionist Franz Marc's Blue Horses) with exciting temporary exhibitions. The seven-acre outdoor Sculpture Garden is a work of genius. Its most popular piece is the gigantic whimsical Spoonbridge and Cherry (not exactly a bridge, more like a fountain) by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. One mile from downtown, at 2400 Third Ave S (bus #9), the huge Minneapolis Institute of Arts hosts a thoroughly comprehensive collection of art from 2000 BC to the present (Tues, Wed, Fri & Sat 10am-5pm, Thurs 10am-9pm, Sun noon-5pm; free;). Antiques, crafts and artifacts fill the exquisite c.1900 mansion setting of the nearby American Swedish Institute , 2600 Park Ave S (Tues, Thurs, Fri & Sat noon-4pm, Wed noon-8pm, Sun 1-5pm; \$5). In stark contrast, changing exhibitions and the University of Minnesota's permanent art collection share space in the controversial Frederick R. Weisman Museum , on campus at 333 E River Rd (Tues, Wed & Fri 10am-5pm, Thurs 10am-8pm, Sat & Sun 11am-5pm; free). Architect Frank O. Gehry's airy structure, with its boldly irregular stainless steel west facade overlooking the Mississippi, is the most startling love-it-or-hate-it design in the cities. Arctic winters apart, hordes of Minneapolitans flock to the shores of lakes Calhoun and Harriet and Lake of the Isles , all in residential areas within two miles south of downtown. The Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome , 900 S Fifth St (tel 612/332-0386), squats on the eastern edge of downtown like a giant white pincushion; the dome is home to the state's pro baseball and football teams, the Twins and the Vikings. Each July the Minneapolis Aquatennial celebrates the lifestyle fostered by the lakes with two huge downtown parades and water-based events such as milk-carton boat races. Illuminated floats with storybook themes dominate the evening Holidayz parades, on Nicollet Mall in the run-up to Christmas. Minnehaha Falls , south of downtown on bus #7, was featured in Longfellow's 1855 poem Song of Hiawatha without his ever having laid eyes on it. The adjacent park is a favorite haunt for hikes and picnics. MALL OF AMERICA Shopping addicts make the pilgrimage to the Mall of America from all over the Midwest - and far beyond, including parties from Japan and the regular Shop 'Til You Drop packages run by British operator Major Travel (£300; tel 020/7485-7017). Opened in 1992, this mind-boggling 4.2-million-square-foot, four-story monument to squeaky-clean consumerism has fast become the country's most-visited destination, tallying 42 million visits in a recent year. The futuristic superstructure contains twice as much steel as the Eiffel Tower, and there's enough room to play a week's NFL games side by side. It incorporates more than five hundred stores, with a seven-acre theme park (the pay-per-ride Camp Snoopy). Featured rides include UnderWater World (\$13.95), with 1.2 million gallons of water and amazing Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean tanks; and NASCAR Silicon Motor Speedway (\$9.50), which offers simulated stock-car racing. There's also a comedy club, several dance and music bars, a multiscreen cinema, a bowling alley and a vast array of eateries. Hotel Discovery , the latest in 'diner-tainment,' serves international foods in simulated global and mythological settings. The science and educational store Brainstorms , the custom-made Basic Brown Bear Factory (where you can custom-design a cuddly ursine companion), Lake Wobegon USA (an eclectic giftstore inspired by folksy Minnesota humorist Garrison Keillor's fictional community) and the hands-on demonstrations at Oshman's Super Sports USA are the highlights of a tour. Evidence of the Mall's all-under-one-roof convenience is provided by the Chapel of Love retail store, where more than 1500 couples have legitimately tied the knot. The mall is open Mon-Sat 10am-9:30pm, Sun 11am-7pm. The Mall is twenty minutes south of the cities on I-494 at 24th Avenue, Bloomington. Take bus #54M from St Paul's West Sixth Street (between Jackson and Kellogg) or #80AB, #5E, #7DEF or #19EFG from various locations in

downtown Minneapolis. For the #80 bus, head to Nicollet Mall between Third and Twelfth streets; it runs every twenty minutes. All buses and taxis drop off at the Transit station on the lower level of the East parking ramp. Buses also run between the mall and the airport every 30 minutes. Taxis between the mall and the cities range from \$20-25. Some high-end hotels run shuttles to and from the mall. Check with them directly; their service changes often