

Introduction

Minneapolis & St. Paul, known collectively as the “Twin Cities”, are strategically situated at the northern most shipping point on the Mississippi river. Minneapolis, the largest city in Minnesota, sits on the western banks and St. Paul sits on the east side.

Welcome to the northernmost state of the contiguous 48! If you were hoping to find a section on the Mall of America you’ve bought the wrong book. The Twin Cities has so much to offer, exceptional museums, amazing live theater, a thriving and diverse restaurant scene, not to mention the parks!

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul both rank in the top 10 fittest cities in America. 99% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park and 15 percent of each city is made up of Parkland. There are 100 miles of bike lanes in Minneapolis and St. Paul has 180 miles of bike friendly paths and roadways

Whether you’re planning a vacation or you’re here doing business with one the Twin Cities 17 Fortune 500 companies this book will help you make the most of what Minneapolis and St. Paul have to offer. Coming to the land of Sky-Blue Waters is always a good decision and with this handy guide in your pocket you will know just where to go and what to see to make it seem as though you have been living here for years!

6. Houses On The Ice

If you find yourself in Minnesota, be prepared for cold, cold weather but do not be deterred. Minnesotans make the most of the long winters in all sorts of ways. One of those ways is trying to stay warm while enjoying the popular activity of ice fishing but, sitting on a bucket on a frozen lake is pretty miserable so they have taken to building temporary houses on the lakes. These “Fish Houses” range from being very spartan, just four walls to block the wind, or they can have every modern convenience you can imagine, TV, bathroom, stove, etc. Whatever your desire there is a fish house that contains it. Ice fishing is not exactly an action-packed sporting event and doesn’t draw everyone’s interest.

In an effort to show off the versatility of fish houses the Art Shanty Project takes place every February on Lake Harriet in Minneapolis. The project was sparked by an idea by a group of friends over 20 years ago who decided to model a fish house off of a children’s tree house. After that initial art shanty gained intrigue, more and more people decided to put an artistic spin on fish houses. The result is the non-profit Art Shanty Projects, an artist’s collective. More than 20 houses are built and displayed each year, all with different themes. In the past there have been art shanties that have hosted yoga sessions, live music performances, a disco club, a pirate ship, and many others. Each shanty is designed and built by a team of local artists. If you find yourself in town in early February this is a truly one of kind event.

7. Minnesota State Capitol

The seat of government in Minnesota is the city of St. Paul and the capitol building is prominently situated on a hill overlooking downtown St. Paul. Consistently ranked as one of the most beautiful state capitol buildings, the Minnesota state capitol was constructed over a period of 9 years and opened in 1905. It was designed by renowned architect Cass Gilbert in the American Renaissance style. Gilbert gained inspiration while at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and from the Rhode Island State House.

The Dome of the Capitol is the second largest marble dome in the world and is 220ft high. It's design was based on the first largest, the dome at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. It was constructed with marble from Georgia. The lantern that is hanging from the middle of the dome is supported by a hidden steel cone.

Gilbert was heavily criticized for choosing Georgian marble to construct the Capitol over Granite from Minnesota. The main reason for this criticism was that even though the civil war had ended over 30 years prior, people still had an animosity towards the southern states. To help appease the masses the columns in the rotunda were made from Granite.

The Capitol Mall is located on the south side of the building and sprawls over 18-acres. In this space there are 18 monuments and memorials. There are dedications to war veterans, former Minnesota politicians, an aviation memorial for Charles Lindbergh and other noteworthy people and events that helped shape Minnesota.

8. A Little Church Music

When I have traveled to Europe over the years one of the attractions, I am always drawn to are the great churches with rich histories. I will admit that for some reason that same thought doesn't cross my mind, and I don't make it a point when I travel in the states. It turns out that though, that Minneapolis and St. Paul each have a church that is well worth a visit.

The first Catholic church in Minneapolis was built in 1868 but by the turn of the century the parish was needed more room inside and out. The neighborhood of the original church had become home to factories and industrial developments.

The location for the new church was overlooking Loring Park and was located on Hennepin Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the city. Construction started in 1907, and the new building was opened and dedicated in 1914. In 1925 it was given the status of Basilica by Pope Pius XI, and the name officially became the Basilica of St. Mary. It was the first Catholic church in the United States to be deemed a Basilica.

It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 due to its Basilica status and it's architecture, built in classical revival style with baroque influence.

Over the last 30 years a new tradition at the church has taken root. In the early 1990s the church needed \$10 million for structural restoration so it hosted the first ever Basilica Block Party, a music festival that featured some of the biggest recording artists of the day. This turned quite a few heads as people questioned the catholic church promoting rock music and alcohol. The ire was quickly thwarted as the first festival drew 15,000 fans and over \$100,000. In subsequent years the festival was extended to two days and is still going strong almost 30 years later.

9. The Cathedral Of St. Paul

Before there was a city called St. Paul there was chapel on the Mississippi River near Fort Snelling built that bore that name. The missionary who built the chapel to honor St. Paul decided that the town upriver from his church should also be named St. Paul. So, he gathered the settlers of Pig's Eye and informed them that from then on, their settlement would be known as St. Paul. 8 years later, in 1849, St. Paul was chosen as the capital of the Minnesota Territory.

And just like the city on the other side of the Mississippi River St. Paul was growing. A small log chapel served as the first Cathedral of St. Paul. It was really only a place holder until an adequate cathedral was built. The log chapel held its first service in June of 1851 and its last in December of that same year. The second Cathedral of St. Paul was large enough for a chapel and school. Poor planning seemed to doom this building as well. It could seat 500 parishioners, which as it turns out was not nearly enough and by 1853, they were already raising money for a new cathedral.

Construction on the third Cathedral of St. Paul started in 1854 and open its doors to congregants in 1858. This structure was considerably larger than the first two and would serve as the cathedral for fifty-six years. As the city of St. Paul continued to grow so too did the number of Catholics. Around the turn of the century, it became clear that a larger space was needed. The diocese hired the chief architect of the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Emmanuel Louis Masqueray to design the new cathedral. The location would be on hill overlooking downtown St. Paul on land that had been donated to the diocese. Construction on what is today the third largest catholic cathedral in the United States began in 1906 and was completed in 1915.

The design was based in the Beaux-Arts style and was inspired by the Perigueux Cathedral and Sacre-Coeur. The Cathedral of St. Paul is made from Minnesota stone, Granite from St. Cloud and Travertine from Mankato. The open design allows parishioners clear views of the altar and pulpit. The interior is lit by twenty-four stain glass windows. The copper dome atop the cathedral rises 186ft above the ground and contains five bronze bells from France. While in downtown St. Paul the domed State Capitol on top of one hill and the domed Cathedral of St. Paul on the other creates a striking and prominent presence.

The cathedral features chapels dedicated to the patron saints representing the homelands of prominent groups of settlers in Minnesota; St. Anthony representing Italy, St. John the Baptist for French Canadians, St. Patrick for Ireland, St. Boniface for Germany, and St. Cyril and Methodius for the Slavic countries. The cathedral was declared the National Shrine of the Apostle Paul by the Catholic Church in 2009.

10. Como Park

When my fiancé and I started looking for a location to hold our wedding one of the first spots that came to mind was the Como Park Conservatory. Its beautiful and fragrant indoor gardens can provide a lovely respite from the gray and cold of a winter's day.

The conservatory features nine unique gardens including the Japanese Garden, the Fern Room, The Orchid House, and the Palm Dome. The most striking garden, and I might be biased as it is where my wife and I shared our nuptials, is the Sunken Garden. In this glass domed space with a reflection pool running the length of it, five different seasonal flower shows are held throughout the year.

The conservatory was built in 1915 and acted as the winter home for the animals from the adjacent Como Zoo. The zoo had been established in 1897 when the city of St. Paul was gifted three deer and fenced them in a pasture. It took a few years for the zoo to really get going but by 1902 the zoo was expanded to include Elk, Moose, and Foxes, all species that were native to Minnesota. In subsequent years the zoo was donated parrots, a monkey, and Mexican red birds.

In 1936 the art deco style zoological building was constructed. At the same time the zoo expanded to feature exotic animals and Monkey Island, and the Bear Grotto was built. Beginning in the 1980s, the zoo underwent a number of renovations. Today the zoo houses a wide range of animals including big cats, lowland gorillas, polar bears, orangutangs and many more. The zoo along with the conservatory serve as the centerpiece of Como Park.

Aside from the zoo and conservatory, the 800-acre Como Park also features a par-70 championship golf course, a children's amusement park, a community pool, and a 70-acre lake. The park is also home to the Submariner's Memorial, a monument dedicated to the crew of the USS Swordfish.