

The beauty of the Twin Cities – Minneapolis and Saint Paul

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Saint Paul - one half of the "fraternal" Twin Cities

I think I chose the best time of year for my first Twin Cities visit – early October when the fall colors--canary, deep carrot, crimson and chocolate--had just begun to burst forth.

Despite the eminent change of seasons, the late summer, unseasonably warm weather--according to the locals--was a welcome introduction as well; a mid-40's cool in the a.m. followed by warm-ups into the low-70's during the day.



Separated by the Mississippi River, the Twin Cities can best be described as fraternal siblings: Saint Paul laid back with a small town feel, Minneapolis a bustling urban metropolis, yet both encompass a fusion of global cultures in many ways.

Saint Paul

On this first foray, we're going to begin to explore Saint Paul.

Originally established as the "The Town of St. Paul" in 1849, it remained so named until 1854 when it became the "City of Saint Paul, Minnesota Territory," only to change names again a few years later when Minnesota became a state to "City of Saint Paul, State of Minnesota."

Situated in the southeast region of the state, Saint Paul is within a few hours drive time of several out-of-state cities including Des Moines (3 hours), Omaha and Chicago (both 6 hours), while close in-state locales include Madison, Green Bay and Milwaukee (all within about 4-1/2 to 5 hours).

Saint Paul and Minneapolis boast a reputation as the 14th largest metropolitan area in the nation and as one of the most accessible areas in the country given that they are home to the fifth largest airline (Northwest) and the sixth busiest airport (Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport).

No matter how one arrives, visitors will find a wealth of diverse and fascinating general sites and attractions, performing art venues, museums, family adventures, culinary options, outdoor recreational opportunities and a great deal more, all reflecting the multifarious denizens – just shy of 300,000 in Saint Paul and approximately 3 million in the entire metropolitan area.

Accommodations in Saint Paul run the gamut with everything from quaint bed and breakfast inns to lodges, small motels, hotel chains and luxury hotel properties.

Even if you don't stay there, don't miss taking a stroll through the historic Saint Paul Hotel. Located downtown and consistently ranked among the country's top hotels, it is a true Minnesota landmark, conveying old-world charm and European sophistication at every turn. A real treat here is a meal at the M St. Café, offering unique twists to classic breakfast and lunch fare.

Also downtown is the newly renovated Embassy Suites, an all-suite, full-service hotel providing the all of the customary comforts and conveniences that business and leisure travelers desire, but within an environment that feels more like that of an intimate, boutique accommodation.

Some of the more well-known, eye-catching landmarks in town include the stunning state capitol building, magnificent Cathedral of Saint Paul, numerous historic hotels and residences, Minnesota History Center, Science Museum of Minnesota, Como Park and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts and of course the five-foot statues dotted around the area in tribute to their late native son Charles M. Schulz, creator of the Peanuts comic strip.

In our next Twin Cities adventure, we'll delve head first into some of these exciting Saint Paul attractions, neighborhoods and more in this beautiful city on the banks of the Mississippi River.