

Long weekend in Minneapolis: Where to eat, stay and play in Minnesota's largest city



The Endless Bridge, a cantilevered walkway, extends 178 feet from the face of the Guthrie Theater. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

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By Katherine Rodeghier

Itching for a road trip, I pulled out a map of the Midwest. When my finger landed on Minneapolis I knew I had my destination. Except for a couple of weddings, I had not visited the Twin Cities and was eager to plan a weekend getaway.

I hopped on the internet and mapped out an itinerary to sample the city's art, culture, green space, hotel and restaurant scene. Two factors quickly became apparent. A two-night stay would not be enough to do justice to the destination. And even over three nights, I'd need to focus my exploration on Minneapolis proper, not its suburbs nor its twin city, the state capital St. Paul.

So last July, my husband and I packed up our car and set off for the 400-mile drive from the western suburbs on a Thursday to get a jump-start on our long weekend getaway.

Thursday

We checked into the Hewing Hotel (hewinghotel.com/) in midafternoon and headed to its rooftop for a drink at the bar, a look at the pool and our first view of the Minneapolis skyline.

The boutique hotel's décor is rustic chic in keeping with its location in the North Loop neighborhood. Also called the Warehouse District for the late 19th- and early 20th-century warehouses repurposed here, it's one of the city's most desirable neighborhoods with trendy restaurants, boutiques, breweries, wineries and distilleries.

We passed the Hewing's cozy fireplace lounge, pool table and lively bar as we made our way to Tullibee (hewinghotel.com/tullibee/), the hotel's farm-to-table restaurant. The exposed brick walls, big windows and worn wood floors recalled its warehouse past. We shared a kale and date salad before I moved on to bison steak, which our attentive waiter told us is a long-standing favorite. Tullibee also offers a "leave it to the chef" meal with selections curated by the culinary team and served family-style.



Bison steak is a longtime favorite of diners at Tullibee, the Hewing Hotel's farm-to-table restaurant. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

Friday

The 11-acre Minneapolis Sculpture Garden (walkerart.org/visit/garden/) has about 60 artworks, including its first commission, “Spoonbridge and Cherry.” Created by husband-and-wife artists Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, the iconic sculpture/fountain stretches more than 50 feet in length. While eye-catching, I also got a kick out of German artist Katharina Fritsch’s tongue-in-cheek “Hahn/Cock,” an otherworldly 25-foot-tall rooster in electric blue.

The sculptures are from the contemporary and modern art collections of the Walker Art Center (walkerart.org/) next door. We went inside to explore its long-term installations and galleries of changing exhibits before heading to the roof terrace for a game of Skyline Mini Golf. The 10-hole course is open from late spring into fall.

We’d been warned to choose an off hour to eat at Matt’s Bar and Grill, (mattsbar.com/) an agreeably seedy, cash-only dive bar drawing crowds since 1954. The big attraction? Its signature sandwich, the purposely misspelled Jucy Lucy: two beef patties filled with molten hot cheese. Drippy and delicious. I was miffed by the 20-minute wait to be seated in this tiny taproom at 11:30 a.m. until we left and saw the line to enter stretching down the block.



Minneapolis was once known as the “Flour Milling Capital of the World” for its two dozen 18th- and 19th-century mills. The Mill City Museum tells the story of the flour industry and the rise of Minneapolis as the state’s largest city. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

At the Mill City Museum (mnhs.org/millcity) we learned how Minneapolis became the “Flour Milling Capital of the World.” Built on the ruins of the largest of two dozen 18th- and 19th-century flour mills, the museum shows the humorous film “Minneapolis in 19 Minutes Flat” about the history of the city and the flour industry. A multimedia show during a ride up the eight-story Flour Tower filled in more of the backstory. We saw it with our own eyes from the rooftop observation deck overlooking the Mississippi River cutting through the city. St. Anthony Falls, the only natural waterfall on the Mississippi, roared just below. Here was the source of power for those mills and one reason Minneapolis grew to become the state’s largest city. The noteworthy Guthrie Theater (guthrietheater.org/) is just next door, so we went inside for a peek. The common areas of this acclaimed three-stage complex are open to the public periodically. We strolled down its Endless Bridge, a 178-foot-long cantilevered walkway perched 55 feet above the ground and leading to an outdoor plaza overlooking the river and falls. Upstairs, we had another view inside the Amber Box, a yellow-hued observation lounge protruding 15 feet from the face of the building.

Minneapolis is blessed with abundant green space: 185 parks with 22 lakes. We drove around its Chain of Lakes, five lakes connected by trails and walking paths, and settled in at Lake Harriet (minneapolisparcs.org/parks-destinations/parks-lakes/lake_harriet_park/), which has a concession stand and band shell with music or movies on Friday and Saturday nights in summer. From the lakefront walking path we watched boats bobbing in the blue water and encountered dog walkers, senior citizens and kids on bikes all enjoying a summer evening.

Returning to the North Loop, we topped off our evening at Edwards Dessert Kitchen (edwardsdessertkitchen.com/) for a sweet treat. Mine, a slice of rhubarb and custard ice cream pie. This award-winning restaurant also offers a selection of small plates, an ice cream counter, select wines and coffees and a bar with a menu of creative cocktails.



Lake Harriet is one of five interconnected lakes in the city's Chain of Lakes. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

Saturday

Back outside the Guthrie, we checked out the art, produce, baked goods and other foods at the Mill City Farmers Market (millcityfarmersmarket.org/) before meeting up with Jessica Schugel, owner and guide at MPLS City & Skyway Tours (minneapolisacitytours.com/).

Schugel's walking tour took us along the Mississippi River for another perspective of the striking architecture of the Guthrie. At Mill Ruins Park we stopped to stroll the 2,100-foot-long James J. Hill Stone Arch Bridge opened for rail traffic in 1883. Now a pedestrian walkway, it's the only arched bridge made of stone on the Mississippi and offers a close-up view of St. Anthony Falls. Pedestrians can walk only halfway across because the downtown side of the bridge is closed for repairs. It is expected to reopen in fall 2025.

We continued to follow the river along the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (nps.gov/miss/index.htm), a national park on a 72-mile corridor through the Twin Cities. We took a break at the Water Works Park and Pavilion with a plaza and playground and a building housing Owamni by The Sioux Chef (owamni.com/). Schugel said the James Beard Award-winning restaurant specializes in Indigenous cuisine using "decolonized ingredients": no farm animals, wheat flour, cane sugar or dairy. I wished we had snagged a hard-to-get reservation.

We left the river behind and followed Schugel deeper into downtown Minneapolis for a look at the art and architecture of Government Center and City Hall, then on to "Crown our Prince Initiative," a 100-foot-tall mural portraying scenes from the life of the popular musician, a Minneapolis native.

Our tour ended at Nicollet (formerly Nicollet Mall), a 12-block pedestrian and transit mall with shops, restaurants and entrances to the Skyway. This second-level network of enclosed walkways connects about 80 city blocks and includes the IDS Center, the state's tallest building. The skyscraper and its Chrystal Court appear in the opening credits of the 1970s-era "Mary Tyler Moore Show." A bronze statue nearby depicts the title character tossing her hat into the air.



The 100-foot-tall “Crown our Prince Initiative” is one of several murals in Minneapolis dedicated to the musician and Minnesota native, Prince. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

For another perspective of Minneapolis, we boarded the Mississippi Queen (twincitiescruises.com/), a 125-passenger replica of a grand old Mississippi River paddlewheeler. Our narrated cruise took us past the University of Minnesota campus, the Grand Rounds Scenic Byway and Heritage Trail and the bluffs of the Mississippi Gorge Regional Park where we spotted a bald eagle perched on its nest. We had the closest view yet of the Stone Arch Bridge and St. Anthony Falls, which our guide explained is also called Owamniyomni, a sacred site of peace for the Dakota and Anishinaabe people.

We spent our final night at the Hotel Ivy, A Luxury Collection Hotel by Marriott connected to the Skyway (marriott.com/en-us/hotels/msplc-hotel-ivy-a-luxury-collection-hotel-minneapolis/overview/) The 136-room property is in Ivy Tower built in 1930 in Ziggurat style with a terraced pyramid of successively receding stories. It’s the only Moorish architecture in Minnesota and appears on the National Register of Historic Places. Hidden below the hotel stairs is Masa & Agave (masaandagavemn.com/), a cantina with the vibe of a speakeasy. It was difficult to choose a cocktail from its 300 agave spirits, but I had no

trouble selecting my starter of guacamole, one of the best I've ever had. Among its Mexico City-style tacos, I was happy with two beef birria tacos made with braised beef, consume and queso chihuahua.

Sunday

Meat was on the menu for brunch at Butcher & the Boar (butcherandtheboarmpls.com/). The original beloved eatery had closed due to the pandemic and other setbacks. A local hospitality group bought the rights to the restaurant and opened it in a new location in the North Loop last year. Smoked meats, craft brews and bourbons are stars of the dinner and brunch menus. Our server said my choice, chicken and waffles, is a brunch favorite.

We decided to walk off our big brunch at Minnehaha Regional Park (minneapolisparcs.org/parks-destinations/parks-lakes/minnehaha_regional_park/) founded in 1889 and one of the oldest in the city's massive park system. It draws 850,000 visitors a year and it seemed plenty of them were present when we arrived. While it has disc golf, a bandstand for music and movies, bike and surrey rentals, gardens and a seasonal seafood snack bar, the main attraction is Minnehaha Falls. We followed the sound of rushing water to an observation point above the 53-foot cascade named for the words "water" and "waterfall" in the Dakota language. We watched as Minnehaha Creek poured over a limestone ledge and rushed downstream to join the Mississippi River as it traveled — as we were about to — toward Wisconsin and Illinois.

Next time

During the ride home, I realized we had only scratched the surface of what the Twin Cities has to offer. Next time I'll book tickets for a play at the Guthrie, have cocktails at Parlour Bar (parlourbar.com/locations-minneapolis) and dinner at Owamni. I'd also like to browse Birchbark Books & Native Arts (birchbarkbooks.com/) owned by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Native American Louise Erdrich.

And, of course, there's more to explore in St. Paul, including the Gilded Age mansion James J. Hill House (mnhs.org/hillhouse), and in the suburbs, including Paisley Park, the estate of Prince, in Chanhassen (paisleypark.com/) and the shops, attractions and restaurants of the massive Mall of America (mallofamerica.com/) in Bloomington.

If you go

Visitor information: Meet Minneapolis (minneapolis.org/)

Getting there: We chose to drive the 400 miles to Minneapolis, but nonstop flights of about 90 minutes are available on several airlines from O'Hare and Midway.

Getting around: While Minneapolis has METRO light rail transportation (metrotransit.org/metro), we found it easier to drive and park using the convenient and affordable MPLS Parking App (mplsparking.com/). Beware: Traffic can be a nightmare when games end at downtown venues for pro baseball, basketball and football teams. Plan accordingly.

- *Information for this article was gathered during a research trip sponsored by Meet Minneapolis.*

<https://www.dailyherald.com/20250627/travel/long-weekend-in-minneapolis-where-to-eat-stay-and-play-in-minnesotas-largest-city/>