



Interpretive Center Ambassadors

Welcome and thank you for joining us today for an information session about the Minnesota and National Great River Road.

Agenda

- Introductions
- Ambassador Goals
- 10-State Great River Road
- Minnesota Great River Road
- Interpretive Center Checklist
- Questions & Conversation



Our agenda for the day includes goals for ambassadors; details about the Minnesota and National Great River Road and information tools that are available. Please feel free to ask questions as we go, or we'll also have some time at the end of our session.

Ambassador Goals

Minnesota Great River Road Ambassadors can help:

- Enrich traveler and neighbor exploration of the Mississippi River
- Promote community businesses and attractions
- Promote and confirm the Byway Traveler Resource Inventory of over 700 Minnesota attractions
- Promote the 10-State Interpretive Center Network

Ambassadors will learn about:

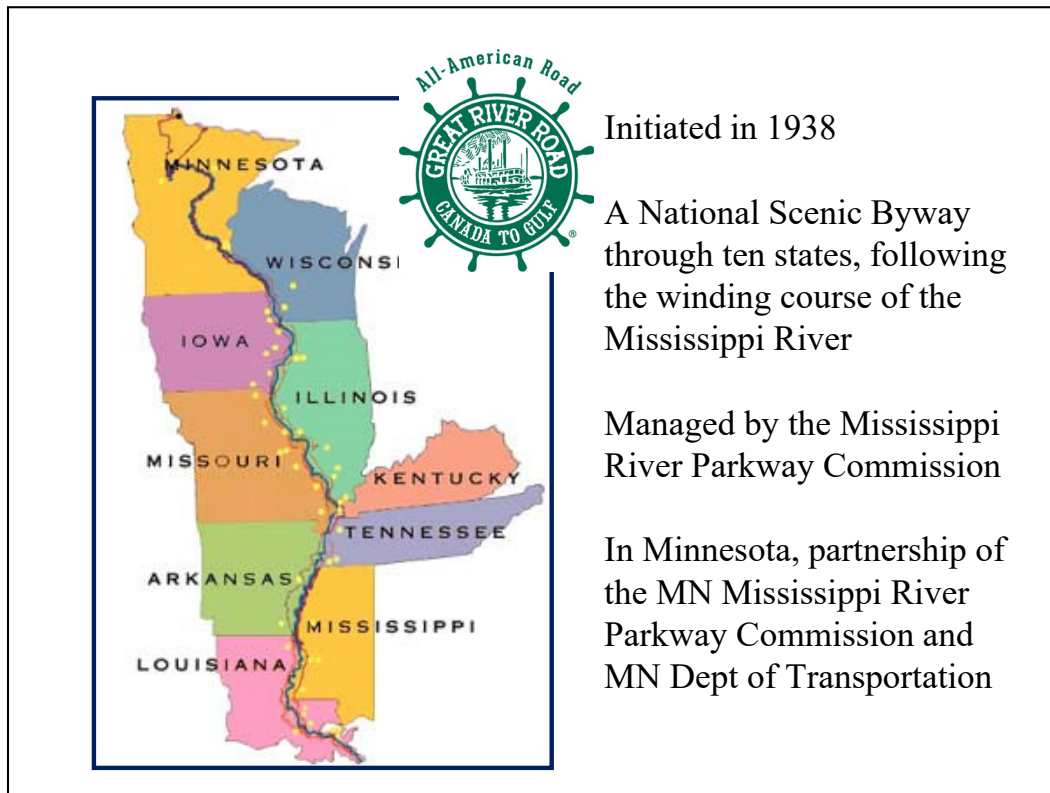
- The Great River Road & Mississippi River
- Byway traveler characteristics and needs
- Website, print map & social media tools
- 700+ places to explore
- 90+ Interpretive Centers
- 10-state and Minnesota promotions



Read the slide.

We need your help so we can promote your site and other communities and attractions along the Minnesota Great River Road. We also need your help telling the stories of the Great River Road to visitors – especially the story of your Interpretive Center and special attractions and spots in your local area. And, we thank you for being a Great River Road Ambassador!

Because we're trying to keep an eye on time today and stay within an hour, there are some terms and topics that we won't be able to talk about in detail. We're developing fact sheets that will be posted at www.mississippiriver.com on the Ambassadors page so you can access information as needed.



The Great River Road has a long and rich history – it was initiated in 1938 and is a series of roadways offering the most up-close river experiences possible. This map shows you the ten Great River Road states. These states all work together as part of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission. Each state has its own Commission. In Minnesota, the MN-MRPC works in partnership with MnDOT. MnDOT is responsible for management of the route/roadways.

All-American Road and National Scenic Byway



Most of the Great River Road is designated as a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration and is promoted nationally and internationally as one of America's greatest drives.

In addition, 8 of the 10 states - including Minnesota - have received All-American Road status for the Great River Road.

The Great River Road holds special status – as both a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road. Both of these designations are part of the Federal Highway Administration's "Americas Byways" program. The logo is shown on this sign. All-American Road is the highest level of designation a byway can receive, defining it as a destination unto itself. Minnesota and seven other states were given this honor in 2021. There is a page on our website with more details about what it means to be an All-American Road.

Ten-State Great River Road Tools

www.experiencemississippiriver.com



The Ten-State, National Great River Road provides a variety of information and outreach to travelers - and promotes Interpretive Centers as “must see” stops. Here are a few examples -

The Ten-State Great River Road website, experiencemississippiriver.com, is a one stop shop for information on the route and attractions in all the states.

There’s a print map, showing all ten states and all Great River Road Interpretive Centers. The map is for promotional purposes rather than navigation – it gives a glimpse of what the full route is like. Travelers can order a copy from the National or Minnesota Great River Road website, and Interpretive Centers periodically receive a supply to distribute to visitors.

The Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers is managed and promoted by the National MRPC. Signs like this one (with “Treasures” at the top) are found at the centers to identify them as part of this special network.

The Great River Road’s All-American Road status is shared and promoted – this logo is used to show the designation for the National group, and each of the eight states that received the designation has a logo showing the state name.

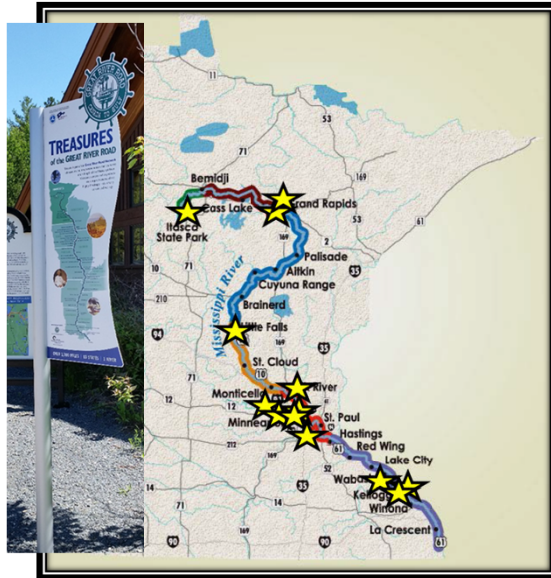
The experiencemississippiriver.com website has a free downloadable app available. The app provides navigation for the route through all ten states, and also information on scenic overlooks, historic sites and more.

The National MRPC/Great River Road has an active social media presence – check them out on Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram.

Drive the Great River Road Month is celebrated in all ten states each September. Promotion includes a national sweepstakes, news releases, and social media efforts. In Minnesota, a theme is chosen each year for the promotion. Minnesota Grown sponsored the 2022 campaign, with a theme of Fall Harvest on the Great River Road.

MN Great River Road Interpretive Centers

- Itasca State Park/Jacob Brower Visitor Center
- Forest History Center
- Itasca County History Museum
- Charles Lindbergh House & Museum
- Oliver Kelley Farm
- Mill City Museum
- Historic Fort Snelling
- Minnesota History Center
- NPS Mississippi River Visitor Center
- Science Museum of Minnesota
- National Eagle Center
- Minnesota Marine Art Museum
- Winona County History Center



The National MRPC currently has 91 Great River Road Interpretive Centers in its network. Centers are designated for their remarkable telling of Mississippi River stories. The process includes completion of a nomination form including details about the site and background on the site's connections to the Great River Road Interpretive Themes. The National MRPC's Culture and Heritage Committee reviews nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors. Minnesota is pleased to be home to 13 Great River Road Interpretive Centers. The stars on this map show the general locations. The specific sites are listed on the slide as well.

Interpretive Center Benefits

- Promoted on:
 - www.experiencemississippiriver.com
 - www.mnmississippiriver.com
- Featured on ten statewide MN Great River Road print, online and mobile app maps
- Free maps and byway promotional items for Interpretive Center visitors
- Promoted by Minnesota and National MRPC
- Network with 90 premier river story-tellers

Great River Road Interpretive Centers are can't miss sites promoted by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and MN Mississippi River Parkway Commission. They are listed on websites and featured on maps and also receive maps for distribution along with special event promotional items (past examples include key chains and rack cards). Membership in this group links you to 90 of the best stories and locations along the full length of the Mississippi River through ten states. Ideas and experiences can be shared through participation in MRPC meetings and online events.

Minnesota's Great River Road



- 565-Mile Route
- 43 Communities
- 20 Counties
- 6 Destination Areas
- 3 Tribal Communities

This map provides a general overview of the Minnesota Great River Road. As you can see, it spans 565 miles, 43 incorporated communities, 20 counties and 3 tribal nations. The route is divided into six unique destination areas (regions) to help travelers break down the route into shorter sections. The destination areas are color coded on this map – Headwaters (Lake Itasca to Bemidji); Northwoods (Bemidji to Grand Rapids); Crossings (Grand Rapids to Brainerd); Scenic (Brainerd to Elk River); Metro (Elk River to Hastings) and Bluffs (Hastings to Iowa Border). There truly is something for everyone! Hopefully sites will cross promote within destination areas, and also promote the full route – knit together as a Mississippi River community.

Wayfinding Signage

2018: All Minnesota GRR signs replaced (565 Miles)

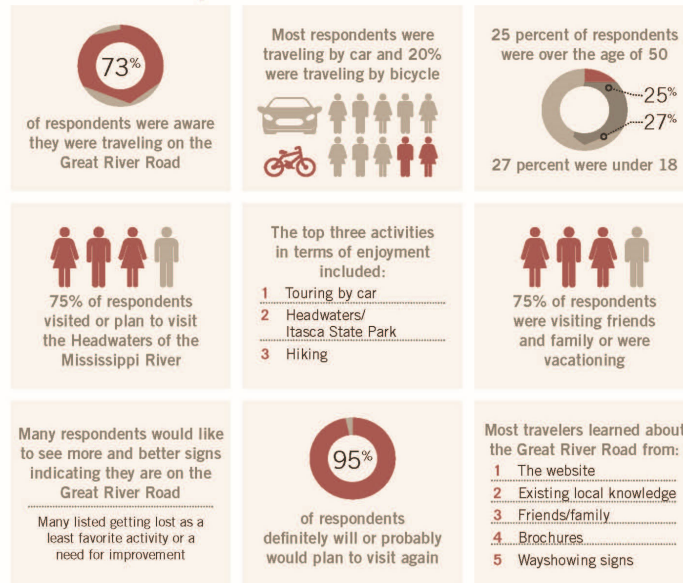
Look for the green and white Pilot's Wheel signs!



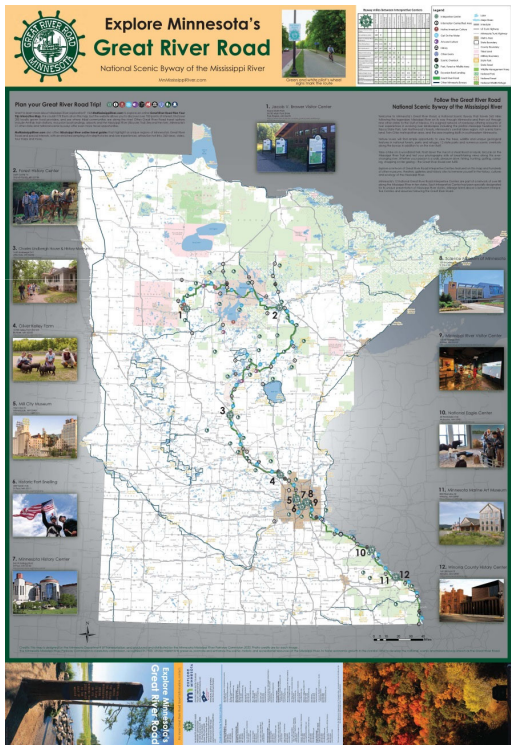
Wayfinding signage is one of the most recognizable tools available to promote the Great River Road and your location along it. The route was completely re-signed in 2018, after it was determined that a significant portion of the signs were missing or no longer functional (22 % of the wayfinding signs were missing and 32% needed repair or were incomplete). The route is generally only signed where you need to turn so any missing signs can really impact the travel experience. MnDOT works with local road authorities on route details and signage. Roughly 40% of the route is on MnDOT roadways with the rest being under jurisdiction of cities, counties, etc. Downloadable turn by turn driving directions are available at mnmississippiriver.com on the order maps page.

Travelers of Every Age and Many Interests

Great River Road Visitor Survey Results Overview



From the 2016 Corridor Management Plan visitor surveys we confirmed that Great River Road travelers include every age and they share a common goal of Mississippi River exploration that satisfies a wide range of interests. Discuss selections from the slide and note that this graphic and others are available at mnmississippiriver.com under “About Us.”

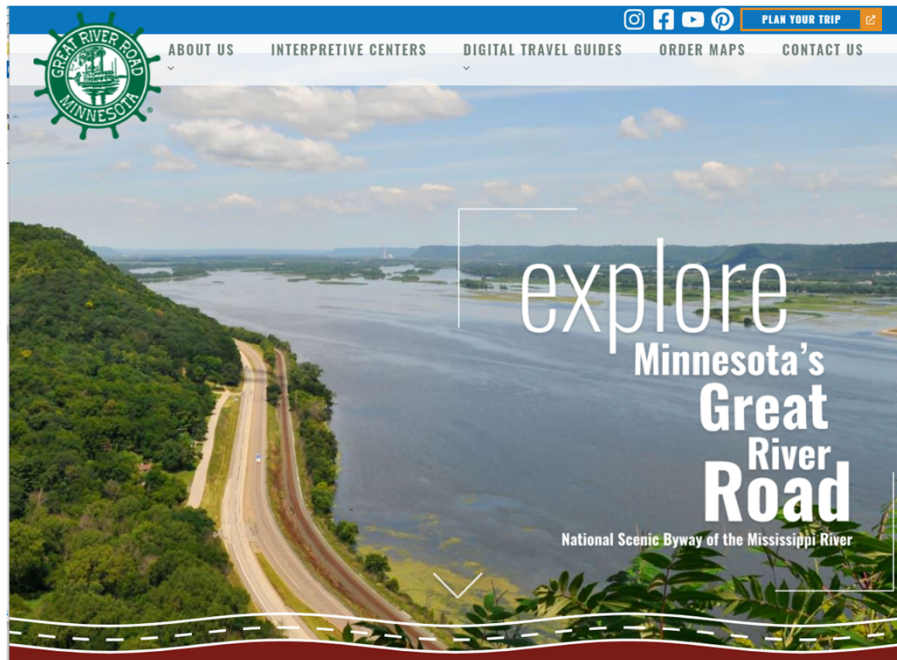


Print Map

- Similar in design to MN State Highway Map
- Features MN GRR Interpretive Centers
- Samples from 700+ byway attractions
- Full state map of Great River Road Route (Side 1)
- Community maps (Side 2)
- Community contact information

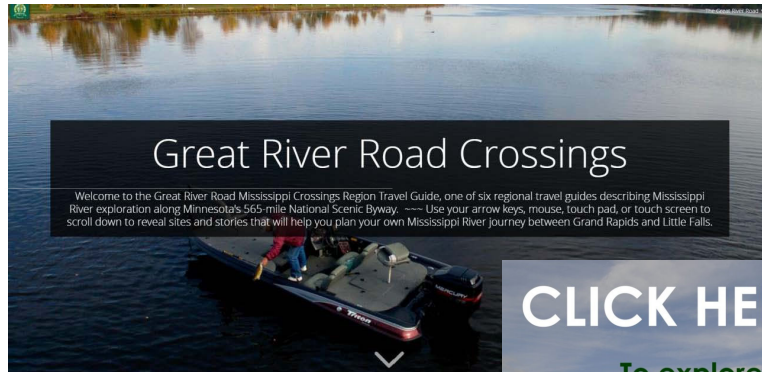
A new Minnesota Great River Road map was printed in 2020 and is currently available upon request. Just contact the MN-MRPC office. The print map is a great “in-hand” guide and souvenir. Minnesota Great River Road Interpretive Centers are highlighted to the left and right sides of the state map, as seen on this slide. We also have reflective stickers and bandanas available for Ambassadors and will send you some of each. Let us know how they work out.

www.mnmississippiriver.com



The MN Great River Road website, mnmississippiriver.com, is one of the primary information sources available for partners, residents and travelers. It includes a variety of tools and resources we'll talk more about as we move ahead.

Digital Travel Guides





















[Bluffs Travel Guide](#)

Six regional travel guides are available on the website– telling the stories and highlighting special places, of the six unique Minnesota Great River Road regions and featuring the Interpretive Centers, A travel guide to state parks along the Minnesota Great River was also developed. Other specialized guides may be created over time and would also be located under the Digital Travel Guides tab at the top of the website homepage. Are there topics you would suggest for new Digital Travel Guides?



Plan Your Trip interactive mapping can be accessed from the website homepage. This is what the landing page looks like after you click on “Plan Your Trip.” The tool includes route navigation and information on over 700 things to see and do in a variety of categories. You can zoom into specific locations on the route to help answer traveler questions or for your own reference. A series of videos show how to use the features available within the interactive map, and can be accessed from the landing page or directly from YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0rmHaSsN3scC9f6_qeeh01dXwkn d1Vbr

Plan Your Trip Resource Categories

-  **10-State Interpretive Center:** 12 Minnesota interpretive centers that are part of a ten-state network of places to learn specifically about the Mississippi River's landscape, history and art
-  **Information Center/Rest Area:** state and local traveler information centers, rest areas
-  **Native American Culture:** sites featuring Native American historical and contemporary culture
-  **Get On The Water:** boat landings, river bridges, fishing piers
-  **History:** history museums, historic sites, interpretive markers
-  **Arts and Culture:** outdoor art, art museums and performance art
-  **Scenic Overlook:** places to enjoy Mississippi River views
-  **Other Gems:** Other places to see and do
-  **Park Forest Wildlife Area:** local, state and Federal parks, forests, wildlife refuges/areas
-  **MN Grown Members:** farmers markets, CSA farms, garden centers, wineries, fruit & vegetable growers, pick-your-own farms, livestock producers, meat processors, Christmas tree growers, and producers gourmet products like honey, wild rice, and cheese – within ten miles of the Great River Road
-  **Electric Vehicle Charging Stations:** To improve travel confidence, electric vehicle charging station maps, such as [Alternative Fuels Data Center](#), can identify charging stations to, from and along the Great River Road.
-  **Amtrak Stations:** Amtrak stations in Minnesota
-  **Excursion Boat Landings:** overnight Mississippi River excursion boat landings
-  **MN Public Airports:** commercial service, general aviation, and seaplane base airports
-  **Great River Road:** 565 miles of Minnesota Mississippi River exploration! Follow the green and white "Pilot's Wheel" guide signs at each turn.
-  **Mississippi River Trail:** Bicycle route, often on the Great River Road shoulder, sometimes trails or local roads.
-  **Other Minnesota Byways:** alignments of Minnesota's 20 other state and National scenic byways, each offering its own special sense of place. Click on a byway alignment to see its unique byway guide sign and a link to its website.
-  **Tribal Reservation/Trust Lands:** Minnesota is home to 11 reservations and 12 federally recognized sovereign tribal nations. Each tribe is a separate sovereign nation — unique unto itself and distinct from all other federally recognized tribes.

These are the resource categories included in the Plan Your Trip online tool. The help videos provide details on how to use these categories to find what you're looking for. You can sort by one or multiple categories and zoom into specific locations. Click on the icon and you'll find a pop-up box on each specific attraction. Please take a look at your listing and check out some of the others in your region.

Plan Your Trip Updates

- The more than 700 sites in the online resource inventory need to be confirmed and updated.
- Our Commission Agencies (DNR, MNHS, MnDOT) account for about a third and we are working individually with those agencies.
- We will need Ambassador help to update site information, improve photos, and suggest new sites.
- The process for ongoing updates is in development.

We need your help to make sure the Plan Your Trip listing for your site includes accurate information and the photograph(s) you'd like used. A system to gather updates is being developed and a link will be emailed to resource managers of each site. We'll let you know when that system is ready to go. For now, feel free to reach out to any of us with requested updates or photographs. We appreciate it!

Questions & Conversation

- Tell us how things are going at your site...
- What was most useful/what should we take out?
- How can the MN-MRPC help you?
- Who else could be a Great River Road Ambassador?



Read slide and allow time for discussion.

Please feel free to send your feedback or requests anytime...

Thank You!

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Thank you for your time! We look forward to our next Annual Visit! Please keep in touch with any questions, suggestions or information we can help share...