

GO with the Flow on the **GREAT RIVER ROAD**

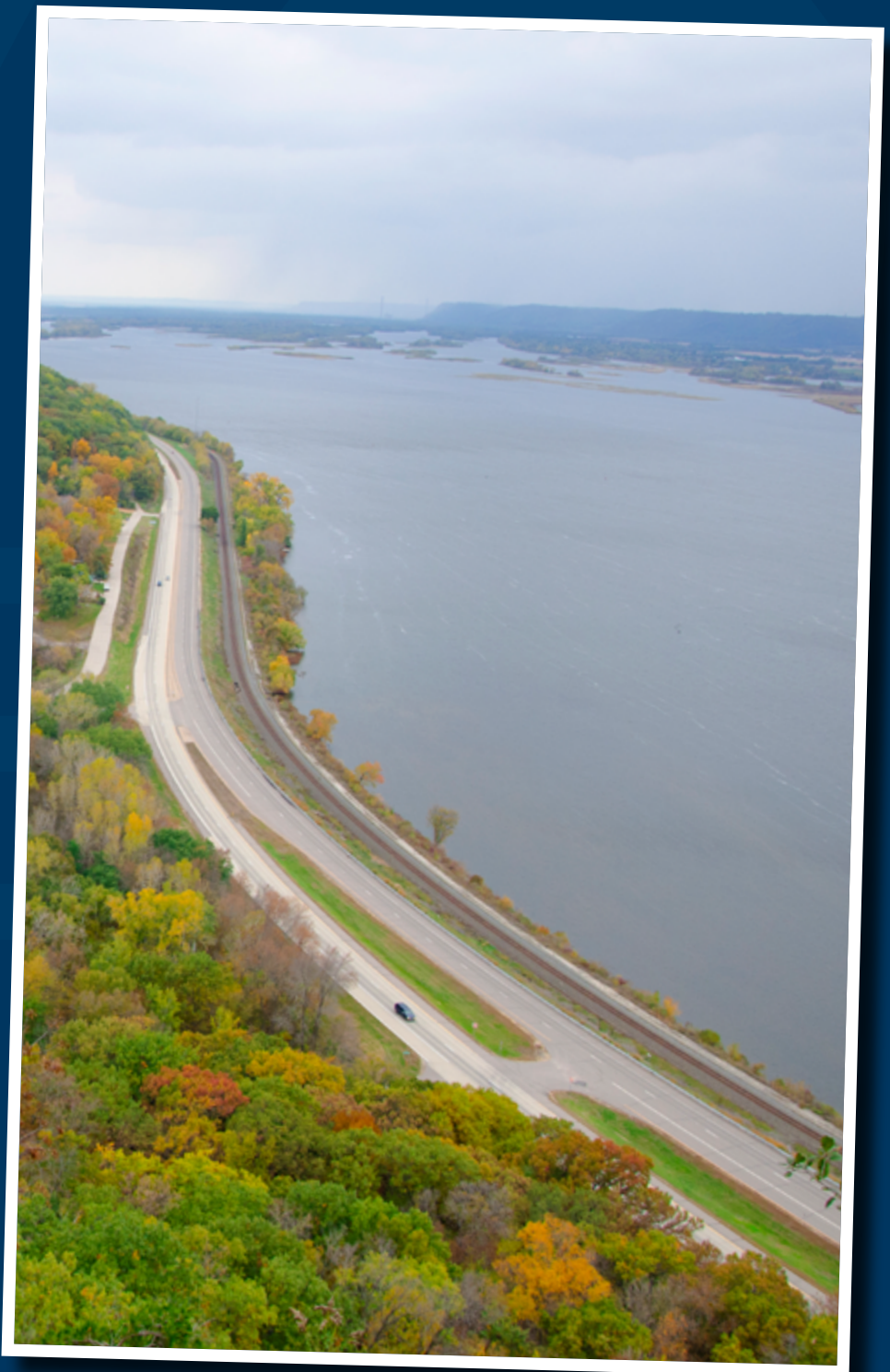
GO stands for “get outdoors,” and there are countless options along the Minnesota Great River Road! The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is partnering with the Great River Road to encourage people to enjoy the outdoors along the mighty Mississippi River. The Minnesota DNR has more than 70 public recreation sites along or near the Great River Road and a wide array of opportunities to choose from. From hiking to paddling, and from bicycling to picnicking, the Great River Road, Minnesota DNR and their partners offer Minnesotans some of the best outdoor opportunities the state has to offer.

Find fantastic opportunities close to home, at state and local parks, historic sites, and more.

Head to mnmississippiriver.com and click “Plan Your Trip” to find your new favorite stop along the Great River Road.

Visit the DNR’s Recreation Compass website to find numerous public spaces for recreation, including state parks and trails, public water accesses, scientific and natural areas, and much more. mndnr.gov/maps/compass.html

The Minnesota Great River Road is home to 13 National Great River Road Interpretive Centers—and many of them offer outdoor opportunities. Find out more at mnmississippiriver.com/interpretive-centers



STATEWIDE OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Paddle the Mississippi River State Water Trail

The Mississippi's first 650 miles flow through Minnesota from its headwaters at Lake Itasca to the Iowa border. Ten different mapped segments of the river offer paddlers a variety of different environments to explore from hardwood forests and meandering oxbows to river bluffs and urban scenery.

More info: mndnr.gov/watertrails/mississippiriver



Photo Credit: National Park Service

Bike the Mississippi River Trail

The Mississippi River Trail, or U.S. Bicycle Route 45, follows the river for some 600 miles through Minnesota. Bikers can explore a variety of scenic state, regional and local trails while taking in the beauty of the river.

More info: dot.state.mn.us/bike/mrt.html

MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS REGION

Lake Itasca to Bemidji

Mississippi's Headwaters at Itasca State Park

At Minnesota's oldest state park, the Mississippi starts as a quiet 18-foot, knee-deep river at Lake Itasca. Walk across the river's headwaters then stay for the park's 32,000 acres of wilderness, including old growth pine forest, 49 miles of hiking trails, and more than 100 lakes.

Nearest town: Park Rapids

More info: mndnr.gov/itasca



La Salle Lake State Recreation Area

Whether you like to camp, hike, or fish in Minnesota's deepest inland lake, this state recreation area offers a variety of options. Visitors can also explore La Salle Lake Scientific and Natural Area, which protects important pine forest, white cedar and sedge meadows and has diverse wildlife, including warblers, wolves and trumpeter swans.

Nearest town: Park Rapids

More info: mndnr.gov/lasallelake

Mississippi Headwaters State Forest

After leaving Itasca State Park, the Mississippi River flows through this state forest, which offers pristine, remote conditions, perfect for paddling the river. The forest also offers a variety of trails for everything from snowmobiling, hiking, trail riding, and off-highway vehicles.

Nearest town: Bemidji

More info: mndnr.gov/mississippi-headwaters-state-forest



MISSISSIPPI NORTHWOODS REGION

Bemidji to Grand Rapids

Chippewa National Forest

Covering more than 1.5 million acres, this national forest has something for everyone. Enjoy North Woods activities, like camping, fishing and hiking at their finest, including hiking to the Joyce Estate, a former private resort on 4,500 acres on Trout Lake.

Nearest towns: Deer River, Blackduck, Walker, Cass Lake, Remer

More info: fs.usda.gov/chippewa



Photo Credit: U.S. Forest Service



Fall Colors Galore Around Bemidji

Experience the magic of autumn this September at some of Visit Bemidji's favorite stops to admire fall color: Paul Bunyan State Forest, Cass Lake and Lake Plantagenet. Plus, keep an eye on DNR's Fall Color Finder to find the best leaf peeping at area state parks, like Lake Bemidji State Park and Schoolcraft State Park.

More info: visitbemidji.com/things-to-do/activities/fall-color-tours

Schoolcraft ATV/OHM Trail

Traversing 29 miles through Paul Bunyan State Forest, this rugged ATV/OHM route brings riders through diverse landscapes, including forests, bogs and ponds. Test your skills on one of Minnesota's top-rated trails and immerse yourself in nature's beauty.

Nearest town: Bemidji

More info: visitbemidji.com/things-to-do/activities/atv-ohv



MISSISSIPPI

NORTHWOODS REGION

Bemidji to Grand Rapids



Bike Bemidji

Explore Bemidji's extensive network of biking trails, ranging from leisurely city routes around downtown to challenging trails in scenic parks. Whether you're biking along the 115-mile Paul Bunyan State Trail or mountain bike loops at Lake Bemidji State Park, there's a route for every skill level. Bemidji, recognized as a bronze-level "Bicycle Friendly Community" by the League of American Bicyclists, offers bike rentals and shuttle services to enhance your biking experience.

More info: visitbemidji.com/things-to-do/activities/bike

400 Fishing Lakes around Bemidji

Discover year-round fishing adventures within 25 miles of the Bemidji area, which is known for its abundant walleye, bass, muskie, perch, crappies, panfish, and trout. The Bemidji "Deadly Dozen" includes top-producing lakes like Lake Andrusia, Irving, Kitchi, Big Wolf, Cass, Big Turtle, Turtle River, Big Lake, Lake Plantangenet, Winnibigoshish, Three Island Lake, and of course, Lake Bemidji itself.

More info: visitbemidji.com/things-to-do/on-the-water/fish



MISSISSIPPI CROSSINGS REGION

Grand Rapids to Little Falls

Tioga Recreation Area

Find 25 miles of world-class mountain bike trails through wooded forest and scenic vista overlooks. Tioga Recreation Area also offers amazing paddling opportunities, including the turquoise blue waters of Tioga Mine Pit and paddling Lake Pokegama to the Mississippi River.

Nearest towns: Cohasset, Grand Rapids

More info: tiogarecreation.com



Mesabi Trail

Grand Rapids is the start of this 150+ mile long paved bike trail that runs from the Mississippi River to the Boundary Waters. Bikers can travel through 28 unique Iron Range communities in Northeast Minnesota.

More info: mesabitrail.com

Nordic Ridge Trail

Head to the trailhead at Crosslake Community Center for nearly 14 miles of wooded multi-use trails. Once snow falls, the trails are perfect for cross-country skiers and snowshoers to enjoy winter outdoors.

Nearest town: Crosslake

More info: crowwing.gov/740/Cross-Country-Ski-Trails



MISSISSIPPI

CROSSINGS REGION

Grand Rapids to Little Falls



Forest History Center

Explore Minnesota's forests of yesterday and today through a recreated 1900 logging camp, horse-drawn trolley tours, exhibits and more. Plus, trek 5+ miles of nature trails through forests, wetlands and grassland.

Nearest town: Grand Rapids

More info: mnhs.org/foresthstory

Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area

Abandoned mining sites are now home to some of Minnesota's best mountain biking with more than 50 miles of singletrack trails. After an exhilarating ride, visitors can paddle, fish and even scuba dive in 15 crystal-clear mine lakes.

Nearest towns: Ironton, Crosby

More info: mndnr.gov/cuyuna



MISSISSIPPI SCENIC REGION

Little Falls to Elk River

Charles A. Lindbergh State Park

Located on the Mississippi River, visitors can enjoy a wooded campground and seven miles of scenic hiking and cross-country skiing trails. Travelers can also visit Charles Lindbergh House and Museum to tour the famed aviator's boyhood home.

Nearest town: Little Falls

More info: mndnr.gov/charleslinbergh



Golf (and Disc Golf!) in Little Falls

The Little Falls Golf Course is an 18-hole course that winds along the majestic Mississippi River, offering breathtaking scenery with every swing. Little Falls also has three disc golf courses, Windy Pines Disc Golf Course, Le Bourget Park, and Belle Prairie Park, which offer a variety of challenges for players of all skill levels

More info: littlefallsmn.com/listings/little-falls-golf-course



Photo Credit: Pexels

Hunt for Cross Rocks at Blanchard Dam

Cross rocks, also known as "fairy stones," are rare twinned staurolite crystals that can be found at Blanchard Dam. These highly sought-after crystals are often used as good luck charms or made into jewelry.

Nearest town: Royalton

More info: littlefallsmn.com/listings/cross-rocks-fairy-crosses



Photo Credit: Fairy Stones 2, Virginia State Parks

MISSISSIPPI SCENIC REGION

Little Falls to Elk River



Photo Credit: Granite Reflections. Quarry Park, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Lawrence Cosslett

Quarry Park and Nature Preserve

Once several granite quarries, this Stearns County park now features swimming, rock climbing, and trails through woodlands, prairie, wetlands and unquarried bedrock areas. It also contains Quarry Park Scientific and Natural Area, which protects habitat for important Minnesota species like brittle prickly pear cacti, red-shouldered hawks and tubercled rein orchids.

Nearest town: Waite Park

More info: stearnscountymn.gov/396/Quarry-Park-Nature-Preserve

Lake Maria State Park

Experience secluded hiking, backpack camping and more in some of the last remaining stands of the “Big Woods” that once spanned south-central Minnesota. The park is also an incredible spot for birders with more than 220 species recorded there throughout the year.

Nearest town: Monticello

More info: mndnr.gov/lakemaria



MISSISSIPPI METRO REGION

Elk River to Hastings

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

The Twin Cities area has its own national park, a 72-mile-long river park focused on all things Mississippi River with endless activities to do on and near the river. Visit 30+ parks and nature areas, museums, fishing spots and much more starting in Ramsey and Dayton downstream to Hastings.

More info: nps.gov/miss



Photo Credit: Visit Saint Paul



Photo Credit: Visit Saint Paul

Bike St. Paul

St. Paul makes getting outdoors easy with over 200 miles of bike-friendly paths and its vast park system, which was ranked #2 in the nation by the Trust for Public Land. St. Paul is also home to 26 miles of Mississippi riverfront, more than any other city along the river.

More info: visitsaintpaul.com/things-to-do/outdoors/biking

History Tours of Minneapolis and St. Paul

Head to Mill City Museum to take a variety of guided walking tours to learn about the history of the Minneapolis riverfront, LGBTQ+ spaces and more. In St. Paul, tour Summit Avenue, the longest stretch of Victorian homes in the country, discover neighborhood history, or learn about the 10,000 years of history at Historic Fort Snelling by bike.

More info: mnhs.org/tours

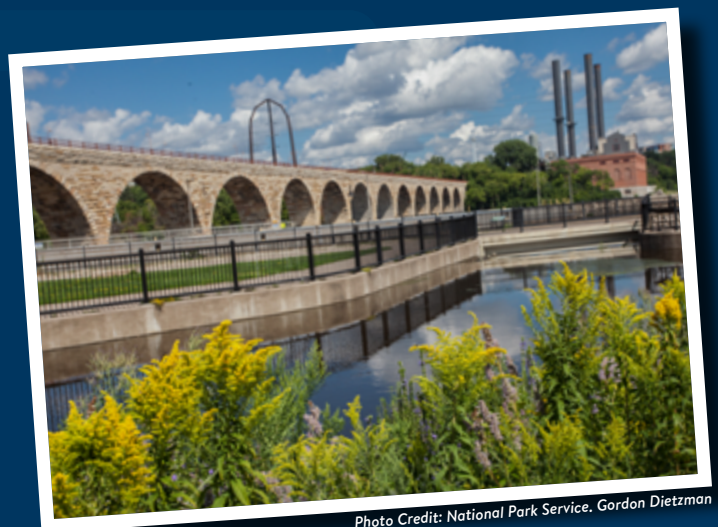


Photo Credit: National Park Service, Gordon Dietzman

MISSISSIPPI METRO REGION

Elk River to Hastings



Fort Snelling State Park

Located in the heart of the Twin Cities at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, this state park is a hotspot for wildlife viewing, including bald eagles, white-tailed deer, turkey, turtles, and red-tailed hawks. Visit 18 miles of hiking trails and enjoy connections to regional bike trails and opportunities for winter activities from fat biking to cross-country skiing.

Nearest towns: St. Paul, Minneapolis, Bloomington

More info: mndnr.gov/fortsnelling

Grey Cloud Dunes Scientific and Natural Area

Grey Cloud Dunes SNA protects a rare dry prairie of rolling dunes, home to rare plants and animals—like sea beach needle grass and the blue racer snake—and offers beautiful views of the Mississippi River valley. Plus, head to nearby Pine Bend Bluffs SNA to check out 200-foot river bluffs, rare plants and migrating bird viewing.

Nearest towns: Cottage Grove, Inver Grove Heights, Hastings

More info: mndnr.gov/snas/sna01101



MISSISSIPPI BLUFFS REGION

Hastings to Iowa border

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

The Refuge turned 100 in 2024! The Refuge stretches from Wabasha, Minnesota to Rock Island, Illinois, protecting over 240,000 acres of Mississippi River floodplain. Nestled in the Driftless Area and bordered by steep wooded bluffs, the refuge offers scenic beauty and recreational opportunities for paddlers, anglers, wildlife watchers, photographers, hunters, and overall outdoor enthusiasts.

More info: fws.gov/refuge/upper-mississippi-river



Photo Credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Region



Lake Pepin

Known as the birthplace of water skiing, Lake Pepin provides world-class sailing opportunities, beautiful and expansive sandy beaches, and endless water sport activities. The lake is one of Minnesota's most prolific fisheries, boasting over 85 different species.

Nearest towns: Lake City, Red Wing

More info: visitlakecity.org/lake-pepin

Flyway Trail Winona Connector

This trail is perfect for walking and bicycling along the riverfront and includes the Highway 54 Interstate Bridge, John A. Latsch Historical Wagon Bridge, and new 842-foot bridge over the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe railroad. Along the trail, trek Aghaming Park, view train traffic from above, and cross the river to Wisconsin.

Nearest towns: Winona, Buffalo City, Wisconsin

More info: flywaytrail.com



MISSISSIPPI BLUFFS REGION

Hastings to Iowa border



Photo Credit: Morning view, bjorn1101

Sugar Loaf

Rock-climbing enthusiasts love scaling Sugar Loaf bluff, which rises 500 feet above the Mississippi River Valley to provide an unmatched view. Schedule a guided adventure with Big River Climbing Guides or watch for special climbing events throughout the year hosted by Winona State University's Outdoor Education & Recreation Department or the Winona Outdoor Collaborative.

Nearest town: Winona

More info: visitwinona.com/things-to-do/outdoor-recreation/climb-winona

Native Gardens at Minnesota Marine Art Museum

Sometimes called the Minnesota Marine Art Museum's "seventh gallery," its American Prairie-style gardens measure 3.5 acres and contain more than 60,000 plants, shrubs, grasses and trees, many native to the Winona region. The birds and bees that love this garden add an entirely extra layer of fun.

Nearest town: Winona

More info: mmam.org



Great River Bluffs State Park

Experience the scenic river bluffs of this park with sheer rock cliffs, steep valleys and rolling uplands. Enjoy glowing fall colors during autumn and bring your binoculars; the river valley is a major flyway for waterfowl, eagles, and hawks.

Nearest town: La Crescent, Winona

More info: mndnr.gov/greatriverbluffs



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