

Beth Clausen and Preeti Gupton

# Things to Do in Minneapolis and St. Paul

## Explorations and Experiences

If you are a new visitor to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, or if you have spent time here, you will recognize many landmarks and iconic symbols of “the Metro” or “the Cities” as you may hear the area called. We encourage you to visit, explore, and experience as much as you can as you enjoy the conference and your time in Minneapolis; or perhaps you will be enticed to stay longer (or come back!) and see some of our notable sights that take more time to visit and experience everything the area offers.

### Downtown Minneapolis

Foshay Tower (<https://www.exploreminnesota.com/profile/foshay-museum-observation-deck/3510>) was built in 1929 as a tribute to the Washington Monument, and this recognizable landmark features an observation deck. You can also learn more about the building and its interesting creator in its museum.

The Mary Tyler Moore sculpture (<https://www.minneapolis.org/honoring-mary-tyler-moore/>) is found at 700 Nicollet Avenue and captures the opening credits moment when character Mary Richards throws her hat in the air. It’s a great photo opportunity!

The Basilica of St. Mary (<https://mary.org/>) is a classical revival marvel that was built 1907–14 and takes up its own city block on Hennepin Avenue between 16th and 17th streets. It was the first Basilica established in the United States.

Minneapolis Central Library (<https://www.hclib.org/about/locations/minneapolis-central>) is the largest public library in the Hennepin County Library System and was designed by world-renowned architect Cesar Pelli. It is a great place to visit, relax, and, of course, it is totally free!

Nicollet, formerly Nicollet Mall, (<https://www.minneapolis.org/neighborhoods/downtown/nicollet/>) is a downtown Minneapolis mile long pedestrian-friendly (buses and taxis are the only allowed motor traffic) area that is a great place to explore, people watch, find



Mary Tyler Moore Statue, Downtown Minneapolis.  
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good food, experience entertainment, do some shopping, and enjoy art. Don't forget to look up and note the renowned skyway system which has several access points along Nicollet making it even easier and more comfortable to explore downtown.

Loring Park ([https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/parks-destinations/parks-lakes/loring\\_park/](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/parks-destinations/parks-lakes/loring_park/)) is one of Minneapolis' easily accessible parks. It contains gardens, walking paths, and is connected to the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden via the Hixon Whitney Footbridge.

For the sports fans among us, a tour of Target Field (<https://www.mlb.com/twins/ballpark/tours/public>) or US Bank Stadium (<https://www.usbankstadium.com/tour>) might be just the ticket for exploration. Target Field, home of the Minnesota Twins, and US Bank Stadium, home of the Minnesota Vikings, both offer public tours. Wheelchair accessibility available on request, but make sure to purchase tickets in advance and wear comfortable shoes!

## A Short Jaunt from Downtown Minneapolis

Minnehaha Regional Park ([https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/parks-destinations/parks-lakes/minnehaha\\_regional\\_park/](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/parks-destinations/parks-lakes/minnehaha_regional_park/)) includes Minnehaha Falls, a stunning 53-foot waterfall in an urban setting and one of Minneapolis' most popular parks. In addition to the natural beauty and gardens, paths, and more, there are a few historical sites including the Princess Depot, which was part of the first railroad line from Minneapolis.

George Floyd Square (<https://www.minneapolis.org/support-black-lives/38th-and-chicago/>) is located at the site of George Floyd's murder at 38th St. and Chicago Ave. This intersection now has several permanent art installations. It is a powerful space to memorialize George Floyd and discuss police brutality, racial disparities, and the BLM movement. There is nearby parking or take public transit.

Located on Lake St. you'll find three great places to get a sense of Minneapolis, all within a short distance from one another and all easily accessible by public transit. The



George Floyd Square. © ruthdaniel3444, CC BY 2.0.

The Midtown Global Market (<https://midtownglobalmarket.org/>) is a global themed market with hundreds of vendors in South Minneapolis. With many different cultures represented, this is a great place to grab a bite and pick up a souvenir. A few blocks away is Quatrefoil Library (<https://qlibrary.org/>), the second oldest circulating LGBTQIA+ library in the United States and a cornerstone for the queer community in the Twin Cities. Finally, a short jaunt from Quatrefoil you'll find the Somali Museum of Minnesota (<http://www.somalimuseum.org/>), showing the history, arts, and culture of one of the newest immigrant communities in Minnesota.

If you are looking for a museum, the Twin Cities has you covered, with a wide range of educational museum experiences. Choose from the Mill City Museum (<https://www.mnhs.org/millcity>), which celebrates the city's heritage as the Flour Milling Capital of the World; the

Bakken Museum (<https://thebakken.org/>), a smaller STEM museum also in the city; or the American Swedish Institute (<https://asimn.org/>), a historic cultural center and mansion about the Swedish presence in Minnesota. All are easily accessible by public transit. If you are looking for bigger museums, check out the Minnesota History Center (<https://www.mnhs.org/historycenter>); the Science Museum of Minnesota (<https://new.smm.org/>), which contains 8.5 acres of science exhibits and activities; or the Bell Museum (<https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/>), Minnesota's official natural history museum and planetarium. All are located in St. Paul, and you could easily spend all day at any of these locations.



Mill City Museum. © quaziefoto, CC BY 2.0.

## Visit St. Paul: The Twin to Minneapolis

St. Paul, the smaller population wise of the Twin Cities, serves as the state capital of Minnesota. It is easily accessible by bus, the Green Line train, and ride shares.

The Hmong Museum (<https://hmongmuseummn.org/>) is the first museum dedicated to the preservation and education of Hmong culture, history, experiences, and arts. This small museum is volunteer run and open only by appointment, so please plan ahead for a visit.



Minnesota State Capitol at night. © McGhievers, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Minnesota State Capitol Building and Grounds (<https://mn.gov/admin/government/buildings-grounds/building-management/buildings/statecapitol.jsp>), designed by celebrated architect Cass Gilbert, is a masterpiece of a capitol building, where the state's two legislative bodies are officed and conduct their primary work. It also houses the offices of the governor and attorney general and is open every day but Sunday. Guided tours are available, and visitors are also welcome to wander and explore on their own.

At Como Park Zoo and Conservatory (<https://comozooconservatory.org/>), you'll find animals, gardens (indoors and outside), and an expansive park to keep visitors busy, entertained, and learning. If bonsai art, orchids, zebras, giraffes, and thousands of other living things are your thing, you will find this worth a visit.

## **A Little Further from Downtown Minneapolis**

These iconic or emblematic sites will take more planning and time to experience during the conference (or if you are getting here early or staying an extra day or two) but are well worth it.

Paisley Park (<https://www.paisleypark.com/>) is the studio and home to Prince Rogers Nelson, one of the two most famous musicians from Minnesota (the other being Bob Dylan). The experience at this studio, home, and concert venue allows visitors to become immersed in his life—onstage and offstage. A true celebration of his legacy of creative vision and innovation. Plan to purchase tickets in advance.

University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (<https://arb.umn.edu/>) is a 1,200-acre public garden known for its beautiful display gardens and protected natural areas. The Arb is easy to explore via foot or car but is further out and is easily a half-day visit.

Hocokata Ti (<https://hocokatati.org/>) is a beautiful museum about the Dakota people and their history, which contains moving and interactive exhibits. Walk-ins welcome.

Fort Snelling (<https://www.mnhs.org/fortsnelling>), where the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers meet, is a place of significance to all people who have lived in the area. It is on Dakota land and the site of one of their main creation places. In the 1820s, the US federal government built a fort on the unceded land. A visit to the site today is an opportunity to learn about the varied and complicated history of the area.

The Mall of America (<https://www.mallofamerica.com/>) is a famous megamall featuring a Nickelodeon-themed amusement park and other entertainment attractions as well as extensive food options. Yes, there are also shopping opportunities. And remember that shoes and clothing are not taxed in Minnesota! 🍷