Endless reasons to visit the
Minneapolis Riverfront District

History
- Track the founding and growth of Minneapolis and its glory days as the flour milling capital of the world while visiting the Mill City Museum, Mill Ruins Park, First Bridge Park, Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam visitor center, Federal Reserve Bank Plaza, Whitney Plaza, Milwaukee Depot and Water Power Park.
- Explore the beautiful St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail on a self-guided walking tour.
- Visit the restored Ard Godfrey house, the oldest home in Minneapolis.
- Experience the power of St. Anthony Falls from the magnificent Stone Arch Bridge. Minneapolis grew up around the power of the falls.

Culture and entertainment
- Take in performances at two Tony Award-winning Minneapolis theaters — the Guthrie and Theatre de la Jeune Lune.
- See cutting-edge art at the Soap Factory.
- Revel in the literary arts at the Open Book.
- Enjoy a movie, live music or some comedy.

Food and shopping
- Savor the cuisine at an outstanding restaurant.
- Sip a cocktail on an outdoor patio.
- Explore the fascinating shops in Northeast and the North Loop.

Parks and recreation
- Walk, bike or blade miles of trails.
- Find out why this special area is a national park and earn your Junior Ranger badge.
- Take in the sights on the Minneapolis Queen excursion boat, a Twin Cities Trolley ride or a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride.
- Explore the district on a Segway tour.
- Ice skate at the historic Depot Ice Rink.
- Relax and admire scenic views of the river, the downtown skyline and the historic district from the Riverfront parks.
- Celebrate with one of the many festivals, events or fireworks displays.

Information
- For things to do in the Minneapolis Riverfront District, visit [www.minneapolisriverfrontdistrict.com](http://www.minneapolisriverfrontdistrict.com).
- Information hotline: (612) 673-5123

To learn more about the birthplace of Minneapolis, visit [www.stanthonyfalls.org](http://www.stanthonyfalls.org).

To learn more about Minneapolis’ 150th anniversary, visit [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/150](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/150).
Nicollet Island & the River

Nicollet Island first served as a stepping stone for crossing the river. Today, it is a charming neighborhood of rehabilitated historic homes and historic industrial buildings that have been preserved for new uses. The island is a treasury of residential architectural styles that were popular in the late 19th century.

The Stone Arch Bridge is the first and only stone arch bridge to cross the Mississippi River. It was an engineering achievement when completed as a railroad bridge in 1883 (another 125th anniversary!). For more information about the Stone Arch Bridge and the many other fascinating bridges across the Mississippi in Minneapolis, visit www.mrdbridges.com.

The waterfall now known as St. Anthony Falls held spiritual power for American Indians who lived in this area for millennia. It was the hydropower potential of those falls that attracted white settlers to this point on the Mississippi River in the mid-19th century. Learn how water can create power at Water Power Park. Where you can get a close-up view of the falls.

The horseshoe dam you can see in the river today is the successor to the rock-filled, timber-crib dam that was completed in 1858. This cooperative effort of the milling companies on both sides of the river was the first man-made dam across the Mississippi. It channeled the water into millponds on each side of the river.
The Minneapolis Riverfront District is the birthplace of Minneapolis and a powerful place of many firsts that affected the state, nation and world. Tour the district to learn more about these significant births and firsts and see some of the sites that tell these stories. The heart of the tour is the 1.8-mile St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail, which guides you through the heart of the city’s birthplace with markers explaining how Minneapolis was born and grew around the waterpower of St. Anthony Falls.

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How is a city born?
The birth of Minneapolis cannot be traced to any single event. American Indians have inhabited the area long before Europeans arrived. White settlement around St. Anthony Falls began on the east side of the river with the founding of St. Anthony in 1849. The west side was not opened to settlement by the federal government until a few years later. The name “Minneapolis” was chosen in 1852, and the community of Minneapolis was incorporated as a town in 1856. The Minneapolis town government was formally organized on July 20, 1858, 150 years ago. In 1872, the communities that shared St. Anthony Falls merged into a combined city under the Minneapolis name.

The West Side
Explore the North Loop’s wide variety of shops, restaurants and galleries. The Theatre de la Jeune Lune offers a year-round season of plays known for their visual uniqueness.

The first permanent span across the Mississippi River opened in Minneapolis in 1855. A wooden suspension bridge crossing from Nicollet Island to the downtown side of the river supplemented an earlier bridge from Main Street to the island to complete the full span. Today you can visit 1 First Bridge Park (under the current Hennepin Avenue Bridge) to see the foundations of the first two suspension bridges and learn more about these crossings that made Minneapolis a gateway to the west. The area that grew up around this important first bridge became known as Bridge Square and was the location of the 2 first town council meeting in 1858. In the 3 Federal Reserve Bank Plaza, five bronze models illustrate how the Bridge Square area has evolved from pre-settlement days to today.

The first white settler’s house built on the Minneapolis side of the river was the 4 John H. Stevens House, built by ferry operator Stevens in 1849 near Hennepin Avenue. Today the house resides in Minnehaha Park and you can visit it on summer weekends and holidays to learn about the important role the house and the Stevens family played in the birth of the community.

The nation’s first 5 central hydroelectric station was built in Minneapolis in 1882. In 1883, the installation of a 257-foot-high electric light mast in Bridge Square demonstrated the value of lighting city streets with this new technology.

The Mill District is a growing neighborhood with delights for visitors. The historic Milwaukee Depot complex has hotels, a water park, historical displays and a winter indoor skating rink. The MacPhail Center for Music offers classes and performances. The renowned Guthrie Theater’s founding 45 years ago was the birth of the regional theater movement, and its architecturally stunning three-theater complex (including the views from its “endless bridge”) is open to both ticket-holders and the general public.

Open Book is the first facility in the nation devoted to the literary arts and offers classes and special events at the Loft Literary Center and Minnesota Center for Book Arts.

If you’d like to learn more about the birth of the City of Minneapolis at St. Anthony Falls on the Mississippi River, visit www.stanthonyfalls.org.

The dramatic Mill City Museum was built within the fire-damaged walls of the 1880 Washburn Crosby “A” Mill, which is the birthplace of General Mills and one of two National Historic Landmarks on the Riverfront. The museum offers year-round adventures, including performances by costumed History Players. General Mills was an innovator in both milling technology and marketing. At Mill Ruins Park, you can still see – and learn more about – some of the foundations remaining from the row of mills that once stood between the plank-covered west side 8 waterpower canal (built in 1857) and the river.
**Solstice River XII: Bridging the Cycles of Life**  
**Saturday, June 21, 8 p.m.**  
**Stone Arch Bridge**  
[wwwglobalsiteperformance.org](http://wwwglobalsiteperformance.org) | (612) 788-2349

Celebrate the Mississippi River on the longest day of the year. Come to the historic Stone Arch Bridge and watch as it comes alive with colorful dancers. This year’s event acknowledges the life cycles of bridges and people, recognizing the 125th birthday of the Stone Arch Bridge and the tragedy of the I-35W Bridge collapse. We will pay tribute to the 13 individuals who died and their families. The performance begins at 8 p.m. and concludes as the sun sets. This is an excellent family event. Wheelchair accessible. FREE.

**House to House and Falls to Falls Bike Tour**

**Saturday, June 28, 11 a.m.**

**Meet at the Ard Godfrey House located in Chute Square**  
[www.minneapolisparks.org](http://www.minneapolisparks.org) | (612) 313-7793

Visit the historic 1848 Ard Godfrey House on the east bank and then bike south along the Mississippi River to visit the first home built on the west bank, the 1849 John Stevens House, now located in Minnehaha Park. Both homes played important roles in the early history of St. Anthony and Minneapolis. Bring or buy lunch at Minnehaha Falls.  
Cost $10. Reservations required.

**Happy Birthday! Celebration**

**Saturday, July 19, 10 a.m.**  
**Mill City Farmers Market, Chicago Avenue Mall at Second Street South**  
[www.millcityfarmersmarket.org](http://www.millcityfarmersmarket.org) | (612) 341-7580

In the birthplace of the Minneapolis milling industry, another first was born: the first farmers market in the Twin Cities to focus on local, organic and sustainable foods. Come celebrate the intersection of the city’s past and the future of local food in the heart of the Mill District. Visit the market for breakfast and groceries, take in the birthday-themed cooking demo, then tour the Mill City Museum for a taste of the past!

**Target Aquatennial Fireworks**

**Saturday, July 26, 10 p.m.**  
[www.aquatennial.com](http://www.aquatennial.com)  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/150](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/150)

Fireworks have been a riverfront tradition since July 4, 1856. Watch the skies over the riverfront come alive with the Aquatennial’s spectacular annual Target Fireworks Show, which this year will celebrate the 150th birthday of the City of Minneapolis!

**Founders’ Fest**

**Monday, September 1, noon to 4 p.m.**  
**John Stevens House, Minnehaha Park, 4801 Minnehaha Ave.**  
[www.johnstevensonhouse.org](http://www.johnstevensonhouse.org) | (612) 722-2220

The Stevens House will celebrate the founding of Minneapolis with live music by Amador Hill, vintage games and toys, storytelling, a vintage general store and more! Expect a visit from Gideon Pond, early missionary to the Dakota Indians, who will be greeted by John H. Stevens himself (as re-enacted by Jay Ludwird and Rick Hagen). Admission is FREE. Refreshments available for purchase.

**River Quest**

**Saturday, July 26, 10 a.m.**  
[www.minneapolisparks.org](http://www.minneapolisparks.org) | (612) 313-7793

Explore the birthplace of Minneapolis and help create a river-focused treasure map. Pick a theme, determine a route and create clues to lead your friends and family on a journey to reveal the gems of the riverfront. For adults or families with children ages 9 and up. Reservations required.

**Little House on the Prairie – World Premier Musical**

**July 26 to October 5**  
**Guthrie Theater, 818 Second Street South**  
[www.guthrietheater.org](http://www.guthrietheater.org) | (612) 377-2224

The Guthrie Theater, started in 1963 by Sr. Tyroce Guthrie as the birthplace of the regional theater movement, continues its tradition as a birthplace/first place with its debut of the new musical Little House on the Prairie. Check the Guthrie Web site for ticket prices and performance dates.