Endless reasons to visit the Minneapolis Riverfront District

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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, Milwaukee Depot, First Street Bridge Park, Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam visitor center, Federal Reserve Bank Plaza, Whitney Plaza 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 house in Minneapolis.

• Experience the power of St. Anthony Falls from the magnificent Stone Arch Bridge.

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 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.

Culture and entertainment
• Take in performances at the Tony Award-winning Guthrie Theater.

• Revel in the literary arts at the Open Book.

• See cutting-edge art at the Soap Factory.

• 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, the North Loop and Mills District.

Information
• For things to do in the Minneapolis Riverfront District, visit www.minneapolisriverfrontdistrict.com.

• Information Line: (612) 673-5123.
The Minneapolis Riverfront District is the birthplace of Minneapolis, and transportation helped to shape its early history. You can still see evidence today of these early transportation systems. Tour the district to learn more about this special aspect of its history and enjoy all the district has to offer! The heart of the tour is the 1.8-mile St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail, which guides you through the riverfront with markers explaining how Minneapolis was born and grew around the powerhouse of St. Anthony Falls.

**Did you know?**
- Minneapolis’ first ferry was operated by a Dakota woman in a canoe at Boom Island.
- Main Street has been a portage path, a dirt road, a railroad, and a street.
- The squeaky axles of oxcarts were so loud that caravans could be heard from several miles away.
- Steamboat captains received large bonuses for attempting the dangerous route between St. Paul and St. Anthony.
- Twin Cities’ streetcars got much of their power from hydroelectric plants at St. Anthony Falls.
- The Northwestern Pacific’s dining cars were known for fine cuisine, including the famous “Big Potato.”

The magnificent **Stone Arch Bridge** was considered an engineering achievement when completed in 1883. It was renovated in 1994 to serve bicyclists and pedestrians.

The waterfall now known as St. Anthony Falls held spiritual power for American Indians who have lived in this area for millennia and used the river for transportation, portaging around the barrier created by the falls. It was the powerhouse potential of those falls that attracted white settlers in the mid-19th century. Learn how falling water was harnessed for industry at Water Power Park, where you can get a close-up view of the falls and the headrace to the last operating hydroelectric plant at the falls, built in 1908 to power streetcars and now operated by Xcel Energy.

**The East Side**

A trail on the east side of Nicollet Island leads to Boom Island, once site of a ferry crossing and a landing for steamboats bound to Sault Rapids. The island was later covered with a rail yard and roundhouse. Today, the island offers a public boat launch and the landing for the Minneapolis Queen and Paradise Lady excursion boats.

A commercial area for the early community, the Northeast and Southeast areas once again busied with shops, restaurants and galleries. The historic 3rd Avenue Bridge is the oldest frame house remaining in the city and is open for tours on summer weekends. Look for the piano that was carefully shipped from the east via steamboat and horse carriage of hear stories of how oxcarts sawed through the area and the family they made.

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, built in 1857, is the oldest continuously operating church in Minneapolis.

The former **Brown Ryan Livery Stable** is a tangible reminder of the role of horses in early transportation and is now part of the Riverplace complex after being relocated in the 1960s to save it. Re-live a bit of that history today with a Hitching Company carriage ride, available from the Nicollet Island Inn or St. Anthony Main.

The power of St. Anthony Falls first was harnessed for sawmilling, and for many years the combined east and west bank milling operations made Minneapolis the lumber milling capital of the nation. Flour mills later replaced the saw mills and made Minneapolis the flour milling capital of the world from 1880 to 1930. The landmark Pillsbury Mill, the nation’s first two-story mill, is one site of two National Historic Landmarks on the Minneapolis riverfront, recognized for its significance as the birthplace of the Pillsbury Company. You can still see evidence of the rail line through the middle of the complex that served the mill and its elevators. The nearby Soap Factory, an art gallery specializing in cutting-edge visual arts, is housed in the historic National Purity Soap Factory building.

Father Hennepin Bluffs Park was once a portaging route for American Indians, explorers and fur traders. The park’s brick shell features summer music and movies.

The brick structure that now houses the University of Minnesota’s **Southeast Boom Plant** was originally built to generate power for the Twin Cities streetcar system.

The dramatic **Mill City Museum** was built with the fire-damaged walls of the 1880 Washburn Crosby 'A' Mill, 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. An 1879 boxcar sits on railroad tracks that came right into the mill. Follow the tracks to the plaza area between the museum and Guthrie Theater, where interpretive ballasts tell the story of the area’s rail history.

**RAPIDS, REINS & RAILS**

An extensive network of railroad facilities once served the downtown side of the riverfront. These included main lines for several railroad companies, rail yards, depots dedicated to specific commodities, and switching yards that served specific buildings, depots for passengers, freight and mail and a variety of support facilities including roundhouses and maintenance shops. Much of the land that has been developed with new buildings in the last two decades once was comprised of these railroad yards.

The North Loop area includes several massive **warehouses**, evidence of Minneapolis’ role as a warehouse- and distribution center served by the area’s rail network. Today you can explore the area’s wide variety of shops, restaurants and galleries. Look for the former **Omaha Line Freight Depot** that is now part of the RiverWalk Apartments.

The permanent span across the Mississippi River opened in Minneapolis in 1855 at what is now **Hennepin Avenue**. Hennepin follows the basic route of a trail used by American Indians and early settlers to reach the Lake Calhoun area. Today you can visit First Bridge Park (under the current Hennepin Avenue Bridge) to see the foundations of the first two suspension bridges at the location and learn more about these crossings that made Minneapolis a gateway to the west. The area on the downtown end of the bridge became known as Bridge Square because it was the location for the **Union Depot on the Riverfront**.

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In the city’s early years, **Main Street** was part of the Red River oxcart trail that brought furs and other trade goods from northern Minnesota to Saint Paul in exchange for manufactured goods. The restaurants along Main Street in Riverplace and St. Anthony Main occupy historic commercial and industrial buildings.

**Rapid’s Reins & Rails**

The Mill District is a growing neighborhood with delights for all. The renovated historic **Milwaukee** Depot includes the 1888 depot, its train shed and part of one of the complex’s freight houses. Today the Depot houses the In the Park, historical displays, a winter indoor skating rink and a coffee shop. Explore the complex to find a role in the development of Mill City Museum as well as interpretive ballasts that tell the story of the area’s rail history. The depot was originally built to serve the rail line to the west side.

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