The story of Minneapolis begins at the Falls of St. Anthony, the only major waterfall on the Mississippi River. Owamniyomni (the falls) has been a sacred site and a gathering place for the Dakota people for many centuries. Beginning in the 19th century the falls attracted businessmen who used its waterpower for sawmills and flour mills that built the city and the river into the world’s milling capital of the world from 1880-1930. The riverfront today is home to parks, residences, art and entertainment, museums, and visitor centers. Explore the birthplace of Minneapolis with this self-guided tour along the Mississippi River, with stops at the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Mill City Museum.

1. NICOLLET MALL - HEART OF DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS Meet Minneapolis Visitor Center

Nicollt Avenue has been downtown’s prime shopping and dining street since the 1880s. Threatened by suburban shopping malls, the city hired landscape architect Lawrence Halprin to create a block-stretch into a pedestrian and transit mall completed in 1967. A two-year renovation was recently completed.

2. MINNEAPOLIS CENTRAL LIBRARY

Minneapolis Central Library

This 2006 library designed by Cesar Pelli is the second public library to occupy this site. In the 19th and early 20th centuries this intersection was a publishing center known as “Newspaper Row.”

3. UPPER ST. ANTHONY FALLS LOCK AND DAM

Foot of Portland Avenue

When flour milling began a long decline in the 1920s, Minneapolis leaders dreamed of bringing commercial river navigation to the city. In 1937 the US Congress authorized the extraordinary feat of building a lock and dam above the falls. When completed in 1963, the Upper and Lower Lock at St. Anthony Falls made Minneapolis the head of navigation on the Mississippi River for 50 years. Congress closed the lock in navigation in 2015.

4. MILL CITY MUSEUM

704 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis, MN 55401

1-612-341-7555 • mnhs.org/millcity

A unique blend of raw, powerful, dramatic views, and hand-on fun propels you through this architecturally stunning National Historic Landmark.

Highlights
• Flour Tower 8-story elevator show—so amazing it defies description!
• Hands-on WAter & Baking Labs
• Minneapolis in 19 Minutes Film by humanist Kevin Kling
• Roofop views of the Mississippi River, St. Anthony Falls, and Stone Arch Bridge
• Museum store featuring city history and cooking merchandise

5. NORTHWESTERN NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING

704 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis, MN 55401

612-341-7555 • mnhs.org/millcity

The red brick building at the end of the Third Avenue Bridge (1918) was one of many factories that supplied barrels used for flour. The skilled workers, or cooperers, who made barrels, pioneered a new role for labor in Minneapolis. When their wages were cut in 1874 and a strike was broken, some of them formed a co-op. The idea spread, and by 1886 two-thirds of cooperers at the flour works and the waterworks were managed by workers.

In the 1960s Fuji Ya Japanese restaurant was built atop the ruins of the Bassett Sawmill and the Columbia Flour Mill. The restaurant moved in the 1990s, and the mill ruins will soon be home to the Water Works Pavilion.

6. STONE ARCH BRIDGE

Sidewalk on the Stone Arch Bridge

In 1879 St. Paul real estate magnate James J. Hill opened his “Manitoba line” to the Canadian border. This railroad linked the wheat fields of the Red River Valley to the flour mills of Minneapolis. In 1955 the State of Minnesota leased the mill on Minneapolis, Hill built the 200-foot Stone Arch Bridge. Completed in 1958, it is a masonry arch bridge designed for a 3,000-year curve so that with time the bridge is a unique example of skilled masonry construction. In 1974 it was named a national Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

7. NEW USES FOR OLD BUILDINGS

River Parkway at Water Works

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8. NADINE AMERICANS AND THE RIVER

West River Parkway upstream from the Third Avenue Bridge

Minneapolis is located on Dakota Homeland. The Dakota consider Owamniyomni (St. Anthony Falls) a sacred site. Haha Waaka (Mississippi River) was a highway for food and travel. Oral tradition suggests frequent fishing and maple sugaring in the area. Dakota walking trails later became Hennepin and Hiawatha Avenues. A series of treaties removed the Dakota to reservations, and they were forced from Minnesota after the US-Dakota War of 1862. Over time many Dakota have returned and their relationship to the falls continues.

9. NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE RIVER

West River Parkway upstream from the Third Avenue Bridge

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