

Explore MINNESOTA

A Regional Guide for Madisonians

If you enjoy these quintessential Madison experiences, we have a good feeling you'll also love these 25 things to go, see and do by region during a trip to Minnesota this winter.

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EXPLORE
MINNESOTA



Lake of the Woods

EAT AT A RETRO DINER

If you're a fan of Mickie's Dairy Bar and Fair Oaks Diner, have breakfast at Twins Corner Cafe in Badger, Minnesota. Enjoy a classic 1950s diner atmosphere in this small, northwestern town (population 426), which might be on your way to the Canadian border. It's the kind of place you could picture on Guy Fieri's "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives." And the town's name is Badger, so it feels fitting for a Badger State resident to visit, no?



◀ **GET TO FISHIN'** If you're an ice fishing enthusiast, set up your shanty in "big water" country. **Lake of the Woods** on the Minnesota-Canada border is the largest inland freshwater lake in the contiguous U.S. and considered the "Walleye Capital of the World." If you really want to go all-in on the experience, there are rentable ice shanties that you can sleep in overnight on the ice.



Heritage Gifts

▲ **SHOP IN WALKER** If you frequent the Madison area's shopping districts, peruse the downtown shops of **Walker**. Unlike some laketowns that have businesses that typically close for the winter season, Walker is a good spot to find a lot of places that are open year-round. You'll find a mix of clothing, gift/specialty shops and sporting goods stores in this Leech Lake-area destination.

▼ **WINTER FUN** If you love the Madison Winter Festival, mark your calendar for **Frostival** in Moorhead. This annual event straddling the North Dakota/Minnesota border packs dozens of opportunities for winter activities into six weeks. The upcoming Frostival will take place Jan. 13 through Feb. 24, 2024. Don't miss the kick-off for the Moorhead events in week two of the festival. frostival.com



Frostival



Fergus Falls State Hospital

◀ YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS PLACE

If the haunted stories of Madison's Sanatorium Hill send a chill down your spine, catch a glimpse of the historic **Fergus Falls State Hospital**. This abandoned former hospital in Minnesota's Fergus Falls looks like a haunted castle. The massive 120-acre property opened in 1890 as a state institution for people with mental illness. There are occasional outdoor walking tours, but you can park and walk the grounds by yourself, too.



NORTHEAST

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Lutsen Mountains

▶ **SHRED THE GNAR** If you're a Tyrol Basin regular, hit the slopes at **Lutsen Mountains**. You really can't go wrong choosing any part of Minnesota for your annual ski trip, but the northeast corridor has downhill skiing resorts and parks with some of the steepest vertical drops and longest runs in the state. Lutsen Mountains comes out on top in both categories with an 825-foot vertical drop and a 6,580-foot run.



Grand Marais

▶ **LOCAL ARTISTS GALORE**

If you shop on Monroe Street, check out **BB & Friends** at 601 N. 56th Ave. W in Duluth. Anna and Nathanael Bailey turned a former funeral home into a storefront that not only showcases their own art, but also the work of 40-plus other local makers. The store is part of a building they call BB Collective that houses the Baileys' offices and workshop, and they plan to open rentable artist studios and an Airbnb space soon.



BB & Friends

▶ **SNOWSHOE IN PARADISE** If you've traversed all the snowshoeing trails in Madison, find a new path on the **Gunflint Trail**. Snowshoeing is all about finding scenic locales, and this trail that starts in Grand Marais and ends in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness might be one of the best in the world. Take in scenic overlooks like the one above that's near the Canadian border. There are many resorts around this area where you can rent snowshoes.

WALK ON WATER If you brave the walk out onto frozen Lake Mendota, do the same on **Lake Vermilion** or **Pokegama Lake**.

Both scenic lakes would be a fun spot to stand in the middle of a lake and take in the views. Head to Pokegama Lake in Itasca County if you're near Grand Rapids, or you could try to catch one of Lake Vermilion's famous sunsets in St. Louis County in the heart of Minnesota's Arrowhead Region.



▶ **SLEEP IN A LIGHTHOUSE** If you like waking up to lakeviews at Mendota Lake House Inn and Bed and Breakfast, spend the night at **Lighthouse Bed & Breakfast**. It's the state's oldest, continuously operating lighthouse on the North Shore, and you could be the keeper for your stay. Wake up and look out over the Agate Bay of Lake Superior, where ships have come into port since 1892.



Lighthouse Bed & Breakfast

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE: COURTESY OF EXPLORE MINNESOTA; GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES; (ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES); COURTESY OF BB + FRIENDS

THERE'S MAGIC TO BE FOUND HERE



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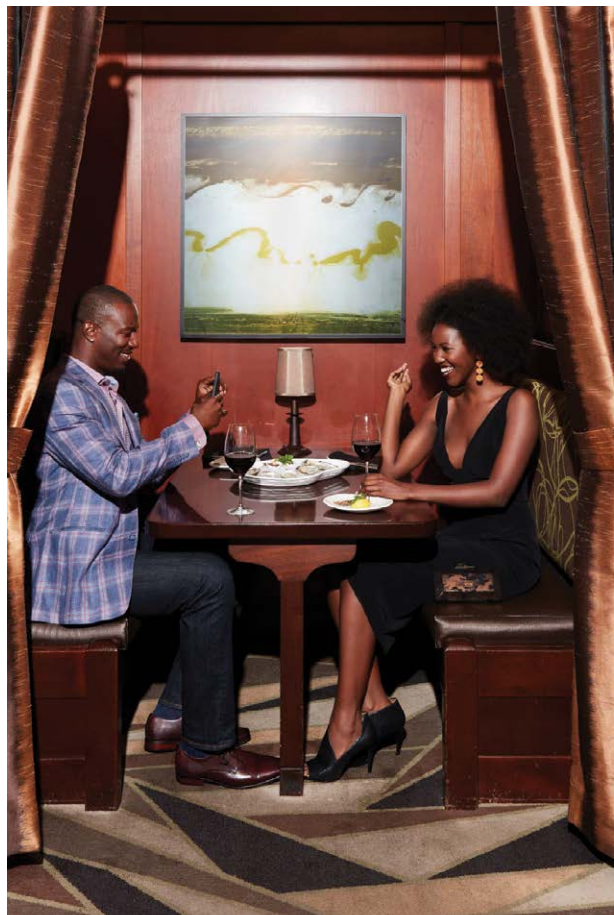
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TWIN CITIES

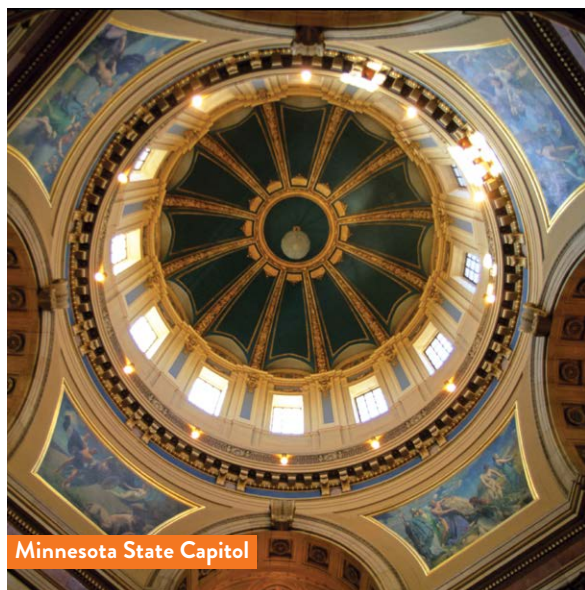
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European Christmas Market

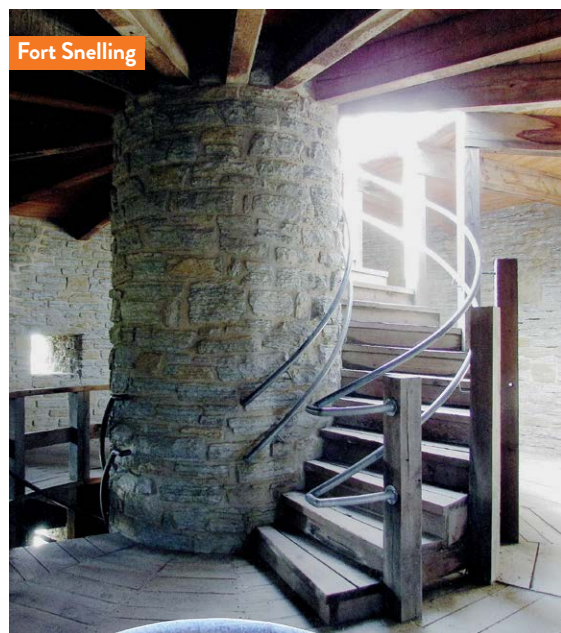
▲ **A CHRISTKINDL MARKET TO MARK DOWN** If you try to hit as many Madison winter pop-up markets as you can, add the **European Christmas Market** to your list of holiday shopping destinations this year. Set up in Union Depot, which is a gorgeous train station/event venue, the European Christmas Market is on its 10th year of bringing holiday vendors together for an open-air Christkindl market. It's free to enter and takes place over four weekends from Nov. 24 to Dec. 17, 2023.

▼ **STEP INSIDE THE DOME** If you enjoy milling around the Wisconsin State Capitol, take a guided walk around the **Minnesota State Capitol** and compare notes. Architect Cass Gilbert oversaw all decisions related to about 60 total works of commissioned art created by the hand-selected artists who were known to be the greatest painters and sculptors of the time. Step inside and take a guided tour of the 1905 Saint Paul structure.

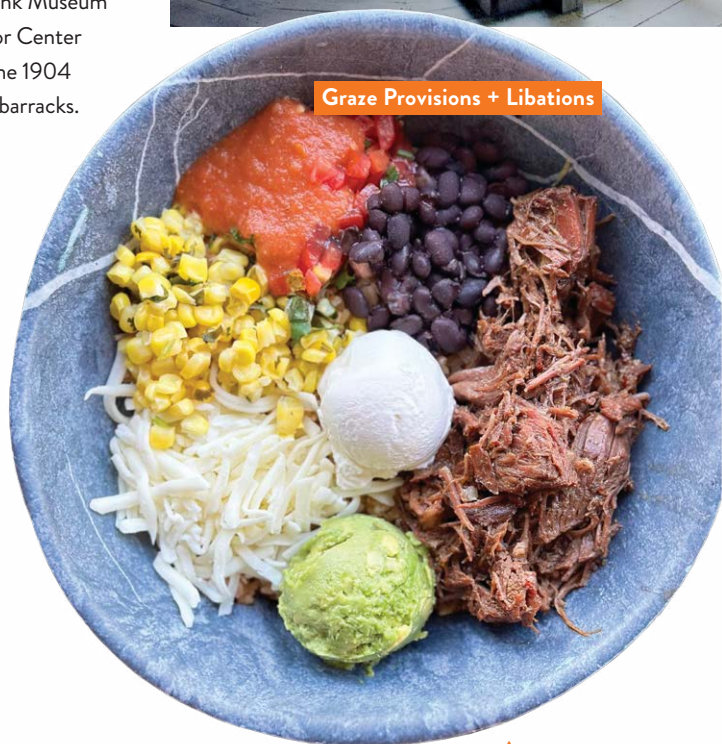


Minnesota State Capitol

► **TAKE IN HISTORY** If you appreciate the history behind Camp Randall, tour **Fort Snelling** in Saint Paul. Both historical landmarks served as training grounds for soldiers during the Civil War, and both occupy ancestral Native American land. You'll likely get a history lesson with a visit to Fort Snelling, which has a new Plank Museum & Visitor Center inside the 1904 cavalry barracks.



Fort Snelling



Graze Provisions + Libations

EAT TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT AT THIS FOOD HALL

If you think Garver Feed Mill is cool, **Graze Provisions + Libations** is a must-stop. It's a food hall in Minneapolis' North Loop neighborhood that has a mouthwatering list of vendors. You can fuel up on tacos, Hmong fare, barbecue, ice cream and more, so come hungry to this foodie's haven in an industrial space.

DINNER AND A SHOW If Banzo's falafel is your jam, you'll drool over the fare from **Ansari's Mediterranean Grill**. You'll find a lot of flavor on the menu in dishes like roasted za'atar cauliflower, fire-roasted shish kabobs and a gyro dinner. Located just outside of Minneapolis, this eatery also doubles as an event venue for belly dancing performances on Fridays and Saturdays.





Panther Distillery



▲ **EAT, DRINK AND EXPLORE IN ALEXANDRIA** If you enjoy road tripping to one of Madison's many charming suburbs, you'll likely enjoy spending time in Alexandria. There are several wineries, a couple distilleries, bountiful shopping opportunities and a maritime museum among other historical destinations.

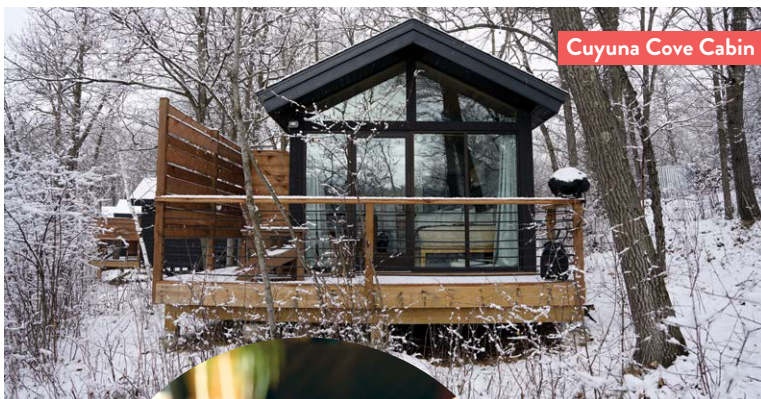
◀ **LOOK UP AT THE NIGHT SKY** If you've gazed at the stars through the telescope at Washburn Observatory, see the sky from a different viewpoint at **MAS Eagle Lake Observatory.** Located in Baylor Regional Park overlooking Eagle Lake in central Minnesota, this stargazing spot offers four observation platforms and dozens of telescopes. Watch for open-to-the-public star parties.

MAS Eagle Lake Observatory



▼ **ESCAPE TO A MODERN CABIN** If you're a city dweller who enjoys weekends in the woods, book a Cuyuna Cove Cabin. There are five custom, year-round cabins on stilts (and five seasonal bungalows coming spring 2024) waiting to become the backdrop for your two-person secluded getaway on the edge of Historic Main Street in Crosby, Minnesota, with direct access to Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. Thoughtful amenities (including a sauna) will have you breathing in deeply during your stay.

Cuyuna Cove Cabin



Redhead Creamery

◀ **REMAIN A CHEESEHEAD IN MINNESOTA** If you're a certified cheeselover, give Redhead Creamery a chance to wow you. This farmstead and artisan cheese maker offers farm tours, tastings and other events, and the creamery has a cool backstory — when next-generation Alise Sjostrom was looking to join the family dairy farm business, she diversified into cheese making and built a dream cheese facility in her home state.

WINE AND SHOPPING IN ST. CLOUD

If you're a Hilldale fan, check out the dual-shop Grande Depot in St. Cloud. One shop, called Accentric & European, is a home decor, furniture and culinary gadget boutique. The other, called Cork & Cask, is a premium wine shop. So if you're a fan of sipping vino and indulging in a bit of retail therapy, Grande Depot has both, and you'll likely make a dent in your holiday shopping list.

PLUS: MINNESOTA HAS STAR POWER

OK, yeah, Madison has Chris Farley. But Prince? Judy Garland? Bob Dylan? Minnesota's hometown hero list blows Wisconsin's out of the water. Paisley Park, known as Prince's home and studio, is now a place for art, concerts and events just 20 minutes from Minneapolis. You can also visit the **Judy Garland Museum** in Grand Rapids, or tour **Bob Dylan's childhood home** in Hibbing.



SOUTHERN

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Blue Mounds State Park

▲ **YOU MIGHT SEE A BUFFALO!** If you're familiar with Blue Mound State Park in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, go sightseeing at **Blue Mounds State Park** (the Minnesota one). You'll want to visit not just for the novelty — this state park is home to a bison range, Sioux quartzite quarries and a lookout point (Eagle Rock) that allows you to see Iowa and South Dakota at the same time. Note: You'll need a vehicle permit for any Minnesota state park (\$7/day).

GIVE THESE BREWERIES A TRY If you're a Wisconsin brewery die-hard, travel the **Southern Minnesota Beer Trail**. The Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild has charted a map of stops along the state's southern region. While this won't take you to some of the big-name Minnesota breweries like Surly, Schell or Summit, you will get a taste of some under-the-radar spots. bit.ly/3QujPQz



Winona Ice Park

► **FREE AND FUN** If you could spend hours in Middleton's **National Mustard Museum**, spare a few minutes for the **Spam Museum** in Austin, Minnesota. Come on, don't pretend like you aren't even the slightest bit curious what you might find in this museum dedicated to canned, precooked meat. (And you know what tastes good on a Spam sandwich? Mustard.)



Spam Museum

▼ **A LOVELY LITTLE SPOT** If you browse the aisles at **A Room of One's Own**, peruse the shelves at **Garden Party Books**. This used book store in Rochester is a charming spot to stop and pick up a new-to-you title. There's also a connected pottery studio, Comradery Pottery. Just like at A Room of One's Own, you can feel the love and acceptance radiating from this book shop.



Garden Party Books

◀ **ICE CLIMBING** If you like climbing at Devil's Lake State Park, ascend the stone walls of a former quarry at **Winona Ice Park** within the Sugar Loaf Park. This activity (which requires an application) will take some preplanning, gear and a little bravery, but you can also hike or snowshoe the park and watch other ice climbers in action.



Grand View Lodge Spa & Golf Resort

A Few Out-of-Season Outliers

We'll continue to be covered in snow for the next few months, but if you're planning a warm weather trip to Minnesota, keep these five ideas in mind. ► If going to the Wisconsin State Fair is a yearly tradition, switch things up and head to the **MINNESOTA STATE FAIR**. ► If you're a regular at the Madison Mallards Duck Blind, catch a game at **TARGET FIELD** or **CHS FIELD**. ► If you've made the trip to Sand Valley, check out **GRAND VIEW LODGE SPA & GOLF RESORT** (pictured) for your next golf weekend. ► If you're a proud member of the LGBTQIA community in Madison, celebrate at **TWIN CITIES PRIDE** next June. ► If you like escaping to Wisconsin's northwoods, book a floating sauna in Grand Marais called **SISU + LÖYLY**.

COOL URBANITY



OLD-WORLD CHARM



LEGENDARY BEAUTY

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the **MIAMI** of Minnesota

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cool festivals, live music,
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P.S. The fun is real. The alligator park isn't.



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