Twin Cities Highlights—A Deep Dive

- cosmopolitan, dynamic area
- 16th largest Metropolitan Statistical Area in the US—behind Seattle, ahead of San Diego
- large immigrant population: 3rd largest Hmong population in the world, large Somali population, large Hispanic population
- good (though not great) public transportation system; light rail from MSP International Airport to downtown Minneapolis, light rail between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul; easy access to airport (15-20 minutes by car or taxi), good amount of downtown parking
- four distinct seasons—fall is the nicest, with gorgeous fall colors, pleasant temperatures.
- great variety of interesting architecture in downtown Minneapolis
- unless noted otherwise, the following attractions are located within Minneapolis

Architecturally Interesting Buildings

IDS Tower
former Federal Reserve Bank Building
Hennepin County Center
Lutheran Brotherhood
Fairview-University Medical Building
St. Paul Cathedral
former U. of Minn. Bookstore—now offices (underground, lit with skylights)
Engineering Building, U. of Minn. (light tower brings sunlight 5 stories underground)
State Capitol Building
Skyway Systems, downtowns of St. Paul and Minneapolis
Capella Tower
Nicollet Mall (street—lots of dining al fresco)
Voya Financial 2 Washington—architect: Minoru Yamasaki
Weisman Museum, U of M, architect: Frank Gehry
Westminster Presbyterian Church bell tower, architect: Frank Gehry
many others

Museums and Zoos [3rd in the US in number of museums (57), behind only Chicago and D.C.]

Science Museum of Minnesota (St. Paul)
Bell Museum of Natural History (St. Paul)
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (Chaska)
Como Park Zoo and Conservatory (St. Paul)
Minnesota Zoo (Apple Valley)
Minnesota Historical Society(St. Paul):
  Minnesota History Center (St. Paul)
  Hennepin History Museum
  Historic Fort Snelling (historic reenactment)
  Historic Murphy’s Landing
  Alexander Ramsey House (St. Paul)
  James J. Hill House (St. Paul)
  Minnehaha Depot
  Minnesota State Capitol (St. Paul)
Traces Museum Center for History and Culture (St. Paul)
Mill City Museum
Schubert Club Museum of Musical Instruments (St. Paul)
Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA)
Weisman Art Museum
Walker Art Museum [contemporary art]
Minneapolis Sculpture Garden
Minnesota Museum of American Art (St. Paul)
The Museum of Russian Art
The American Swedish Institute
Firefighters Hall and Museum
Children’s Museum (St. Paul)
Minnesota Transportation Museum (St. Paul)
Twin City Model Railroad Museum (St. Paul)
The Bakken Museum of Electricity and Magnetism
The Works: A Technology Discovery Center (Edina)
Minnesota State Capitol (St. Paul)
Gibbs Farm (historical reenactment of farm life) (St. Paul)
Goldstein Museum of Design (U. of MN, St. Paul)
Soap Factory (Gallery and Art Museum)

**Culture** [more theaters seats per capita than anyplace except NYC—approx. 100 theater groups and 30 theater venues, 60 museums, 20 classical music groups, 10 dance companies]

Most prominent:
- Guthrie Theater [world-famous]
- Theater in the Round
- Hennepin Theater District
- Ordway Center for the Performing Arts (St. Paul)
- Fitzgerald Theater (St. Paul) [home of A Prairie Home Companion]
- Mixed Blood Theater
- Penumbra Theater
- Children’s Theatre Company [located within building housing Minneapolis Institute of Arts]
- Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
- Old Log Theater
- Orpheum Theater
- State Theater
- Pantages Theater
- Brave New Workshop [political and cultural satire]
- Minnesota Orchestra [world-famous]
- St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (Ordway Theater, St. Paul) [world-famous]
- Minnesota Opera (Ordway Theater, St. Paul) [second opera of the season around end of October, world-famous visiting soloists]
- Vocalessence
- University of Minnesota Opera
- 1st Avenue (Rock Music–home of Prince, alternative, world, and reggae music)
- Gay 90’s
- Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant
- Multiple night clubs
- The Dubliner Bar (St. Paul) [live Celtic music]
- Jonathan Padelford Packet Boat cruises on the Mississippi
- Approx. 50 art galleries
- Kieran’s Irish Pub [live Irish music]
Libraries
University of Minnesota, both campuses—Library of Congress repository
Elmer L. Anderson Library-Archives and Special Collections
Minneapolis-Hennepin Co. Libraries
St. Paul Public libraries
Concordia College Library (St. Paul—includes genealogy collection of the Minnesota
Genealogical Society)
Minnesota History Center Library

Dining
Amazing variety and number of ethnic restaurants, including Mediterranean, Mexican, Italian,
Thai, Himalayan, Somali, Ethiopian, Malaysian, German, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, French;
fine dining, casual dining, fish, steak, pubs.

Some of my favorites:
Al’s Breakfast (very popular breakfast [omelets, especially] counter, people line up
several deep for seats) (Minneapolis “Dinkytown” (University area))
Hell’s Kitchen (Minneapolis Downtown)
Everest on Grand (Nepalese) (St. Paul)
The Himalayan on Lake Street (Nepalese) (Minneapolis)
The Bavarian Hunter (reasonably authentic Bavarian food, ambiance (near Stillwater)
Café Latté (St. Paul Grand Ave.)
Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant (Minneapolis Downtown)
Birchwood Café (Organic, eclectic, some veggie) (Minneapolis)

Recommended:
112 Eatery (International) (Minneapolis)
D’Amico and Sons (Minneapolis)
Cosmos (Eclectic, International) (Minneapolis)
Origami (Asian, Japanese—Sushi) (Minneapolis)
Barbette (French) (Minneapolis)
Manny’s Steakhouse (American) (Minneapolis Downtown)
Restaurant Alma (American, New American) (Minneapolis—Dinkytown)
Gardens of Salonica New Greek Café & Deli (European, Greek) (NE Minneapolis, near
Downtown)
Ted Cook’s 19th Hole BBQ (American—BBQ) (South Minneapolis)
Zelo (European, Italian) (Minneapolis Downtown)
Nicollet Island Inn (American) (Minneapolis Downtown)
It’s Greek to Me Taverna e Parea (European, Greek, Mediterranean) (Minneapolis, Lyn-
Lake District)
Sawatdee (Asian, Thai) (Minneapolis Downtown)
Kindee Thai restaurant (Minneapolis Downtown)

Shopping
[no sales tax on clothing and shoes (and food—but entertainment tax in Mpls)]
Mall of America (Bloomington) [2
nd largest mall in North America]
IKEA (Bloomington)
Southdale Center mall (Edina) [first mall in America]
Galleria (Edina)
Minneapolis Downtown:
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[Skyway System—in Minneapolis, 8 miles of skyways link almost 80 blocks—largest climate-controlled system in the world; St. Paul skyway system links 43 blocks]
Nicollet Mall—shopping and restaurants, street level, further south on Nicollet Ave is “Eat Street”—many restaurants in a few blocks
Midtown Global Market
St. Paul Downtown [Skyway System]
Grand Ave (St. Paul)
Victoria Crossing (St. Paul—Grand and Victoria)
many other shopping malls surrounding the central core cities

Parks and Lakes

Very extensive hiking and bicycling routes throughout the Twin Cities, which are rated among the most bike-friendly in the country
Grand Rounds Parkway System in Minneapolis
Lake Calhoun (sailing, canoeing, swimming)
Lake of the Isles (sailing, canoeing)
Cedar Lake (sailing, canoeing, swimming)
Lake Harriet [rose garden, Japanese garden, peace garden] (sailing, canoeing, swimming)
Minnehaha Park (picnicking, hiking)
Wirth Park picnicking, hiking, skiing in winter
Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden
St. Croix River (canoeing) [National Scenic and Wild River]
Como Park (St. Paul—picnicking, walking, boating, children’s amusement park, conservatory, zoo)
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum [Chanhassen, west of Minneapolis]
Crosby Lake Park (St. Paul—hiking, picnicking)
Phalen Park (St. Paul—picnicking, boating)
Fort Snelling State Park (hiking, picnicking)
Many neighborhood parks
Many regional parks

Sports

U.S. Bank Stadium [Minnesota Vikings]
Target Center [Timberwolves basketball (men), Lynx (women), entertainment events, incl. ice skating]
Target Field [Minnesota Twins baseball]
Allianz Field [Minnesota United soccer stadium "the Loons"]
Xcel Energy Center [Minnesota Wild (NHL Hockey), entertainment events]
Multiple venues on University of Minnesota campus—women’s and men’s basketball, football (TCF Bank Stadium), baseball, men’s and women’s ice hockey, swimming (Olympic festival and trials held in the Natatorium)
National Sports Center (Blaine) [52 soccer fields for amateur events]
Golf: 13 golf courses (NPGA tournament held here)
Educational Institutions
[the high density and number of colleges and universities in the Twin Cities area contribute to
the intellectual and cultural life of the region]
  University of Minnesota–2 campuses in Twin Cities, with 40,000 and 15,000 students
  Augsburg College
  St. Catherine University
  Hamline University
  Macalester College
  University of St. Thomas
  Bethel University
  Concordia University
  Dunwoody College of Technology
  Luther Seminary
  Minneapolis College of Art and Design
  North Central University
  Northwestern College
  William Mitchell College of Law
  Metropolitan State University (Minneapolis and St. Paul Campuses)
  Anoka Technical College
  Anoka-Ramsey Community College
  Century College
  Hennepin Technical College
  Minneapolis Community and Technical College
  Normandale Community College
  North Hennepin Community College
  St. Paul College
  Brown College
  Capella University
  Minnesota School of Business & Globe College
  National American University
  Rasmussen College
  Walden University

Other
  Minnesota State Fair (one of largest in country)--9-day period ending on Labor Day
  Minnesota Zoological Gardens
  Butler Square—restored warehouse: restaurants, general store in downtown Minneapolis
  Canoeing on St. Croix River, Cannon River, many other rivers, Boundary Waters Canoe
    Area Wilderness
  North Shore of Lake Superior
  Madeline Island, Wisconsin
  Lake Itasca (headwaters of Mississippi)
  Iron Range (Hull-Rust Mine, underground mining tour)
  Badlands, South and North Dakota
  Missouri River, North Dakota
  Black Hills, South Dakota