



## The Mighty Mississippi

Mezzi-sippi. Great River. The river's Ojibwa name evokes history, grandeur, romance, danger, and awe. Flowing through the heart of America, the Mississippi River is known to people around the world. Today, this dynamic water course continues to inspire visitors, leaving them marked with the river's own poetry.

The Mississippi River's vast drainage basin has been called "the body of the nation." It is a source of drinking water for millions of people, and a complex ecosystem that is essential for maintaining biological diversity.

From the river come human stories. Mounds remind visitors of early American Indian river cultures. Hydropower and river transportation determined the locations of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The river was the original source of economic life for each city, and remains their vital center. For the people of the present metropolitan area, the river is a source of renewed interest and offers a rich sense of place to residents.

Congress added the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) to the National Park System in 1988 to represent the national significance of the Mississippi River. MNRRA's boundary encircles 54,000 acres of river and adjoining land as the river flows 72 miles through the heart of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area in Minnesota. It is a corridor of great change and contrast. A country river becomes a river of commerce. Bald eagles soar above beavers and towboats bustling about their business.

The National Park Service is working with many partners to preserve, protect and enhance the significant historical, cultural, natural, scientific, economic, recreational and scenic resources of MNRRA.

survival of many species of birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, and microscopic organisms. The diverse nature of MNRRA reflects the incredible richness of this complex river.

Millions of birds each year make the Mississippi River valley one of five major flyways in the United States. Great blue herons commute to feeding areas throughout the metropolitan area from large rookeries in the corridor. River loving mammals – muskrat, beaver, mink, otter, and raccoon – are abundant.

Bottom land hardwood forest provides habitat for tree-nesting ducks, such as wood ducks and mergansers, and for raccoons, white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, foxes, songbirds, salamanders, frogs, snakes, and turtles. The mainstream, backwaters, and side channels of the Mississippi River are home to numerous fish species. Fish range in size from tiny darters to the giant shovelnose sturgeon.

## Recreational and Scenic Resources

Boating, fishing, and canoeing offer unique rewards on the river. From Minneapolis downstream, a nine foot deep navigational channel is maintained. Anglers after trophy walleye share this channel with towboats pushing barges. At the Coon Rapids Dam, fishing for carp thrills anglers of all ages, while above the dam is one of the best smallmouth bass fisheries in North America.

Public parks operated by MNRRA's partners provide many other forms of recreation (see chart on the map). Several of these parks also offer environmental and heritage education programs. The metropolitan area has one of the most extensive urban trail systems in the country linking the river, its tributaries, and many lakes. The Minneapolis Aquatennial, Hasting's Rivertown Days, South St. Paul's Kaposia Days, and Champlin's Father Hennepin Days are among the many events that bring people to the river every summer.

If you are looking for scenery, drive the Great River Road or contemplate the river from one of many overlooks. The Stone Arch Bridge offers breathtaking views of St. Anthony Falls, while Spring Lake Park Reserve reveals the big Mississippi described by Mark Twain.

## Economic Resources

The Mississippi has always been a working river. For American Indians the Mississippi was an interstate highway and provided water and food. Today, it provides power, drinking water, water for industrial uses, waste disposal, and a means for moving commodities to international markets. These benefits have affected settlement patterns, industry, and commerce far from the riverbanks and help support agriculture, manufacturing, high-tech business, commodity transportation, recreation and tourism that make up the area's river-related economy.

Visitors can watch towboats push groups of barges, called tows, up and down the river. These barges carry corn, soybeans and other agricultural goods downriver and bring petroleum, sand and gravel, and other commodities upriver. Observation decks at lock and dams throughout the corridor allow visitors to watch towboats maneuver and to experience the power of the river.



**The Mississippi River, Basin and Principal Tributaries**  
The Mississippi River (shown in deep blue highlight) flows approximately 2,350 miles from its origin at Lake Itasca, Minnesota, to the Gulf of Mexico. With its 250 tributaries and branches, the Mississippi River forms the third largest drainage basin (light green highlighted area) in the world. Red circle indicates location of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

**Boating and Canoeing** All watercraft operated within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area must be licensed; Minnesota boating regulations apply. Conditions for boating and canoeing vary considerably throughout the corridor. Downstream from mile 857.6, a nine foot deep navigational channel is maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers and recreational boaters share the river with towboats pushing barges. These "tows" turn very slowly and throw large wakes. Stay clear and pass on the inside of bends. Tows have the right of way on the river. Contact the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for a Minnesota Boating Guide, a Metro Rivers Guide, or Mississippi River Canoe Route maps. Contact the Army Corps to purchase a copy of Upper Mississippi River Navigational Charts.

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**  
612-296-6157 • 1-800-766-6000  
TDD (Telecommunications Device for Deaf) 612-296-548 or  
TDD (Telecommunications Device for Deaf) 1-800-657-3929  
Email: [www.info@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:www.info@dnr.state.mn.us)  
Internet: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us>

**Army Corps of Engineers**  
612-290-5680  
Internet: <http://www.ncs.usace.army.mil>

**Locks and Dams** The Army Corps of Engineers operates four locks and dams within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Recreational boats and canoes may lock through without charge. Contact the Army Corps for a copy of a brochure about using the lock and dam system.

**Fishing** Fishing within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area requires a license; Minnesota fishing regulations apply. The river from Lock and Dam #1 to Lock and Dam #2 has special catch and release regulations. Some of the fish in the river have concentrations of PCBs and mercury that exceed health limits. For a copy of the Minnesota Fishing Regulations, call the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. For a copy of the Minnesota Fish Consumption Advisory, call the Minnesota Department of Health.

**Minnesota Department of Health**  
612-215-0700 • 1-800-657-3908

**Camping and Accommodations** There are no campgrounds within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Camping within the corridor that is accessible from the water is extremely limited. Campgrounds and other overnight accommodations are available throughout the metropolitan area. Contact the Minnesota Office of Tourism for more information.

**Minnesota Office of Tourism**  
612-296-5029 • 1-800-657-3700  
Internet: <http://www.explore.state.mn.us>

**Great River Road** Scenic views of the river are provided throughout the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Contact the Mississippi River Parkway Commission for information and a map.

**Mississippi River Parkway Commission**  
612-449-2560  
Email: [mrpc@mississippi-river.com](mailto:mrpc@mississippi-river.com)  
Internet: <http://mississippi-river.com/mrpc>

**Fees** Some parks within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area charge entrance and other fees. See chart on the map.

**Land Ownership** Of the 54,000 acres within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area's boundaries, less than 50 are owned by the National Park Service. Much of the land within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and along the shoreline of the river is privately owned. Please respect the rights of landowners and do not disturb them or their property.

**Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Headquarters**  
Located in St. Paul, this is the only facility operated by the National Park Service at this time. Golden Eagle, Age, and Access pass-ports are available at headquarters.

**Mississippi National River and Recreation Area**  
175 East 5th Street, Suite 418, Box 41,  
St. Paul, MN 55101-2901  
612-290-4160  
Fax: 612-290-3214  
Internet: <http://www.nps.gov/miss>

**National Park System**  
Internet: <http://www.nps.gov>

## Historic and Cultural Resources

The stories of human life along the Mississippi River that have unfolded over 12,000 years range from the routine to the extraordinary. The daily lives of people living along the river have been intertwined directly with the river as a source of food, transportation, and livelihood.

American Indians along the Mississippi created a legacy of cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs, place names, legends, and sites. Sites include burial mounds at Mounds Park and the site of the Dakota village of Kaposia. Of special importance to the Dakota is the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, which they called, Mdo-te. The Schilling Archeological District serves as an important connection to the cultures that lived in the area before settlement by European peoples.

Early contact between Europeans and American Indians was focused on the fur trade. Within the Fort Snelling Historic District is told the story of this trade and the treaties that opened the river valley to settlement. The rush of settlers in the mid-1800's and their lives and industry left many monuments. Sawmills and flour mills driven by waterpower built the city of Minneapolis and are commemorated in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. More than 60 sites, structures, and districts within the MNRRA boundary are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

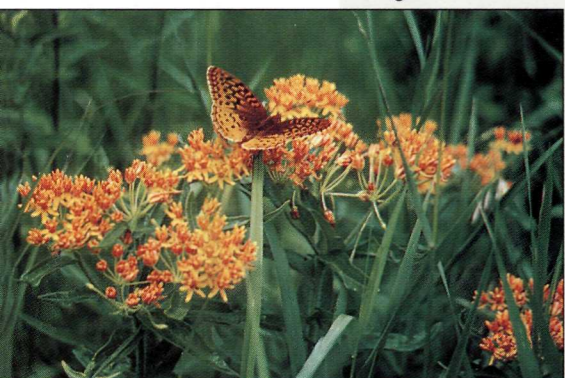
During the 20th century, people from all over the world chose the region for their homes. The stories of immigration, cultural adaptation, and individual relationships to the Mississippi are many and varied and provide a rich tapestry of diversity.

## Natural and Scientific Resources

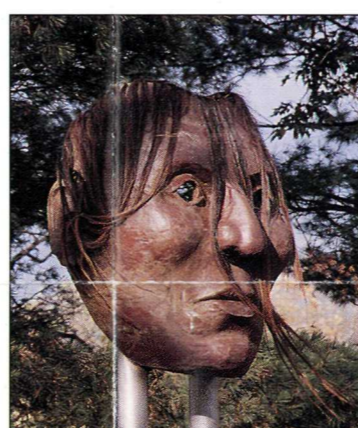
The Mississippi River flows approximately 2,350 miles from its origin in northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. With its tributaries, the Mississippi drains 1,244,000 square miles, the third largest drainage basin in the world! The river, its floodplain, and the adjacent corridor are essential to the



*Wingdams Below Nininger, Minn., 1891, by Henry Bosse, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Through his cyanotype photographs, Bosse captured the early reshaping of the river's natural landscape by the Corps of Engineers. (Photo courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)*



Courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Arts



*Through the Eyes of Little Crow, a bronze mask sculpture by Ed Archie NoiseCat, celebrates the courage and resilience of American Indians of the northern plains. The work is a representation of Mdwakantun Dakota leader Tawoyateduta, also known as Little Crow. It is set in an overlook beside Minnehaha Falls.*

*The Falls of St. Anthony, 1848, by Henry Lewis. The only waterfall on the entire Mississippi River, this dramatic cataract has long held spiritual significance to American Indians. By the 1850's the falls were to be forever changed by their harnessing to power mills.*

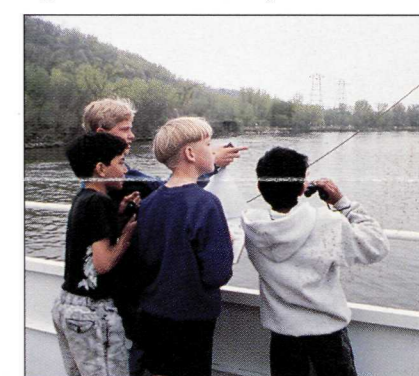
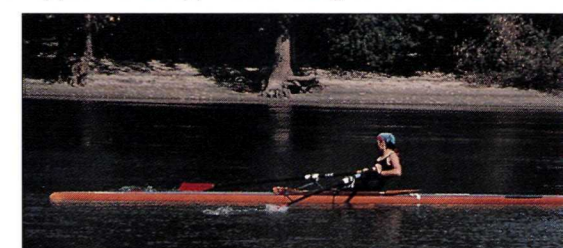


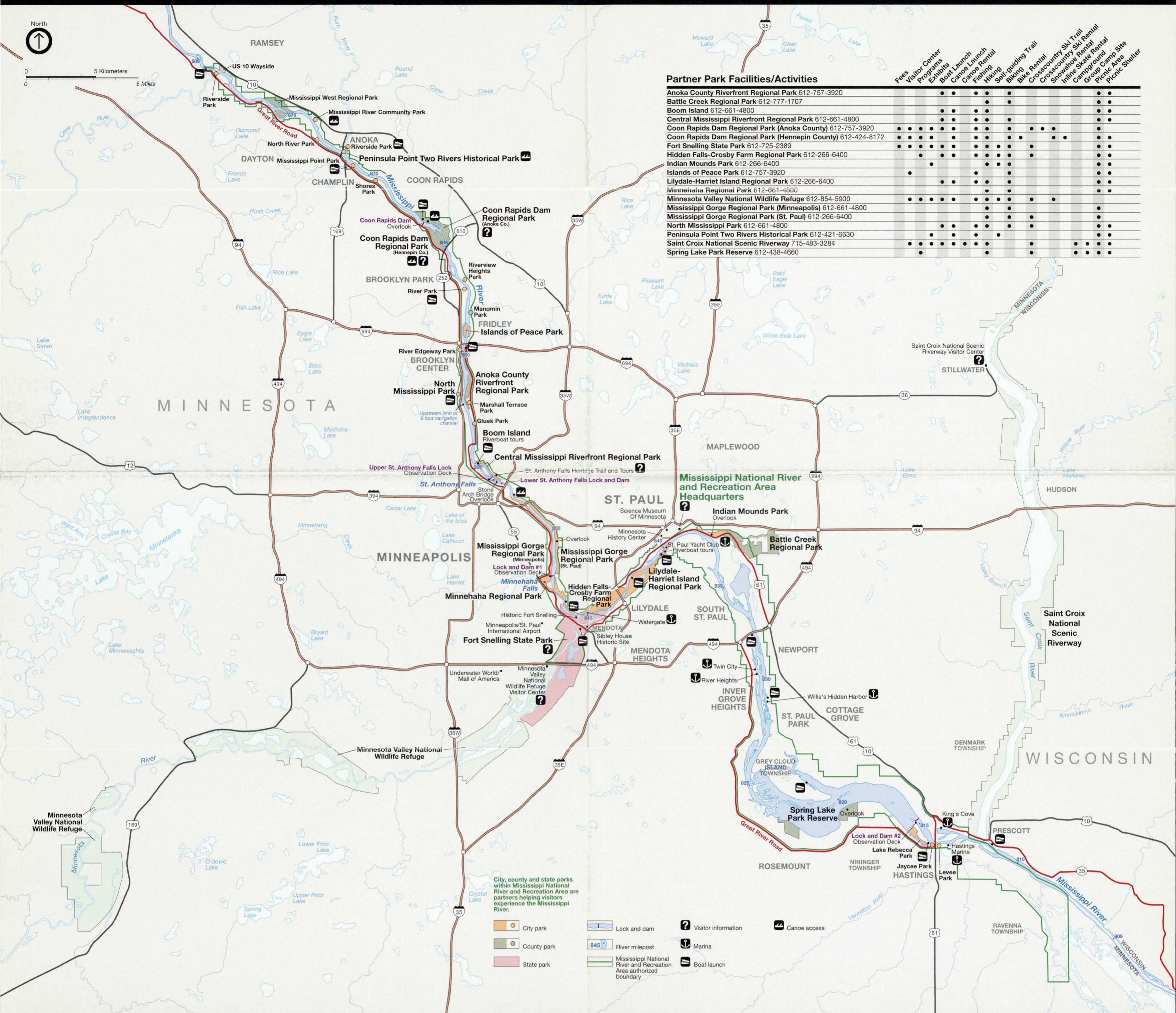
Photo courtesy Metropolitan Council Environmental Services



# Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

# National Park Service Department of the Interior Map and Guide



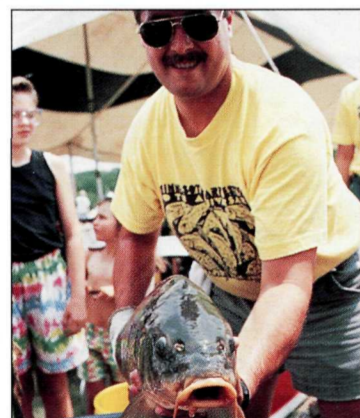
### Partner Park Facilities/Activities

Partner Park	Fees	Visitor Center	Programs	Exhibits	Boats	Canoe Launch	Canoe Launch	Fishing	Hiking	Biking	Bike Guiding Trail	Bike Rental	Cross-country Ski Trail	Snowcountry Ski Rental	Inline Skate Rental	Campground	Picnic Area	Picnic Shelter
Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park 612-757-3920																		
Battle Creek Regional Park 612-777-1707																		
Boom Island 612-661-4800																		
Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park 612-661-4800																		
Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park (Anoka County) 612-757-3920																		
Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park (Hennepin County) 612-424-8172																		
Fort Snelling State Park 612-725-2389																		
Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park 612-266-6400																		
Indian Mounds Park 612-266-6400																		
Islands of Peace Park 612-757-3920																		
Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park 612-266-6400																		
Minnehaha Regional Park 612-661-4800																		
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge 612-854-5900																		
Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (Minneapolis) 612-661-4800																		
Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (St. Paul) 612-266-6400																		
North Mississippi Park 612-661-4800																		
Peninsula Point Two Rivers Historical Park 612-421-6630																		
Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway 715-483-3284																		
Spring Lake Park Reserve 612-438-4660																		

### Partner Parks and Attractions



**Boom Island Park**  
Enjoy spectacular views of the Minneapolis skyline from paved pedestrian and bicycle paths or from an excursion paddleboat. The boat launch and paths connecting to other parks provide additional opportunities for river experiences.  
612-661-4800



**Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park**  
People of all ages enjoy fishing for carp at the dam, or trout in Cernaiko Lake. A pedestrian and bicycle bridge connects trails on both sides of the river. Visitor center exhibits and educational programs focus on the river, wildlife, and history.  
612-757-3920 (Anoka County); 612-559-9000 (Hennepin County)



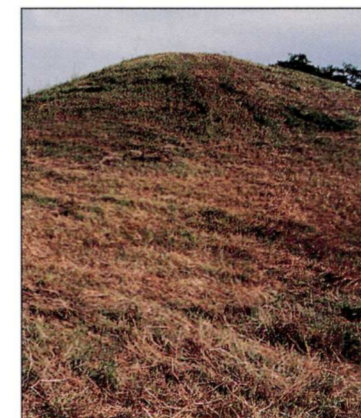
**Fort Snelling State Park**  
Skiers, bikers, and hikers enjoy the park's forested river bottoms, marshes and meadows that are inhabited by numerous species of wildlife. A new visitor center offers programs and exhibits focused on geology and other park resources, and the relationship between American Indians and the river. 612-725-2389  
Internet: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/comparks/parks/fortsnell/fortsnell.htm>



**Great River Road**  
The Great River Road stretches along the Mississippi River from its source at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. Within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the route crosses and recrosses the river, providing access to many scenic, recreational and historic points.  
612-449-2560  
Internet: <http://mississippi-river.com/mrpc>



**Historic Fort Snelling**  
Guides dressed as soldiers, traders, residents, and American Indians help visitors experience what life in a frontier fort was like in 1827. Restored Fort Snelling stands on the bluff high above the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. 612-726-1171  
Internet: <http://www.mnhs.org/sites/snelling>



**Indian Mounds Park**  
Six prehistoric burial mounds sit on the bluff high above the Mississippi River. Plaques describe the culture that built the mounds 2,000 years ago. Paved trails follow the bluff line and provide panoramic views of the river and downtown St. Paul.  
612-266-6400



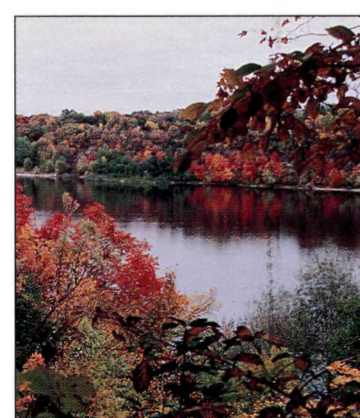
**Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park**  
This lively meeting place in St. Paul's West Side neighborhood hosts many summertime events. The public dock is perfect for river watching, boat launching, and dock fishing. Excursion boats depart from Harriet Island spring through fall.  
612-266-6400



**Minnehaha Regional Park**  
Immortalized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "The Song of Hiawatha," Minnehaha Falls attracts thousands of visitors each year. Photograph the 53-foot natural falls, walk or bike the trail along Minnehaha Creek to the Mississippi River, or picnic under majestic oaks.  
612-661-4800



**Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge**  
One of only a few urban wildlife refuges in the nation, this 34-mile corridor of marsh, grassland and forest provides habitat for many species of wildlife. Learn about these unique ecosystems at the visitor center, and then explore the refuge on your own.  
612-854-5900  
Internet: [http://www.fws.gov/~r3pao/mn\\_val/](http://www.fws.gov/~r3pao/mn_val/)



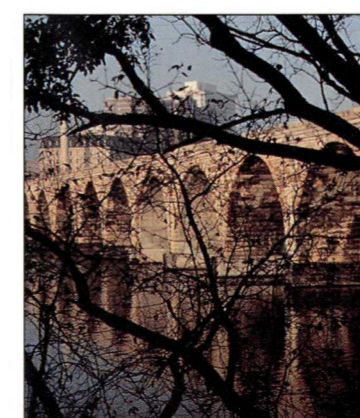
**Mississippi Gorge Regional Park**  
Parkways and trails provide opportunities for sightseeing and recreation along this deep, beautiful Mississippi River gorge. Overlooks and picnic areas allow you to enjoy the river at a slower pace. Hiking trails connect the bluff to the water's edge.  
612-661-4800 (Minneapolis)



**Peninsula Point Two Rivers Historical Park**  
Nestled where the Rum River meets the Mississippi, this park continues to be a gathering point as it has for hundreds of years. Visitors can follow an accessible trail along the rivers and through the park and learn its history from exhibits.  
612-421-6630



**Riverboat Tours**  
Departing from Boom Island in Minneapolis and Harriet Island in St. Paul on a scheduled basis, paddleboat river tours offer an exciting way to experience the river up close. Paddelford Packet Boat Company: 612-227-1100



**St. Anthony Falls Heritage Trail and Tours**  
Follow this trail around St. Anthony Falls and learn about historic structures and archaeological sites from exhibits, or join a Minnesota Historical Society tour. The trail offers a spectacular view of the river from the historic Stone Arch Bridge. Minnesota Historical Society: 612-627-5433  
Internet: <http://www.mnhs.org/sites/safhd.html>



**St. Croix National Scenic Riverway**  
The St. Croix and its major tributary, the Namekagon, combine to offer over 200 miles of river recreation opportunities. The St. Croix starts as a narrow, fast river but becomes an expansive, slow river where it meets the Mississippi.  
715-483-3284 or 612-430-1938 (summer)  
Internet: <http://www.nps.gov/sacr>



**Sibley House Historic Site**  
Explore two limestone houses in Minnesota's oldest Euro-American settlement, home to famous and colorful residents in the 1840s. Hear about the vast fur trade industry strategically located at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. 612-452-1596



**Spring Lake Park Reserve**  
High river bluffs offer panoramic vistas of the big Mississippi. A wooded state-of-the-art archery trail with handicap accessible targets provides unique challenges for archers. Young campers will enjoy the natural beauty of the modern youth camp facilities. 612-437-6608