



Minneapolis is synonymous with Prince, but there's plenty more for visitors to do after they've experienced Paisley Park.

NTH AMERICA

WHAT TO DO IN MINNEAPOLIS, THE PRINCE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

SUSAN BUGG, ESCAPE

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As the Beatles are to Liverpool, England, and Elvis Presley to Memphis, Tennessee, the legendary, late Prince is unequivocally tied to Minneapolis, Minnesota.

He was born and lived in the Midwest US state's biggest city all his 57 years before his premature death on April 21, 2016, performing, sitting in corners of bars and clubs, frequenting record stores, riding his bike around his home suburb Chanhassen and watching his beloved pro sports teams. Now, like the Beatles and Elvis, Prince Rogers Nelson is making his home city a destination for anyone who loved his music; and given he's sold 100 million records worldwide, that's a lot of people. And though the Prince factor is what makes Minneapolis unique, along the way visitors are discovering a liberal, progressive city with world-class dining and a proud history as the world's flour milling capital, thanks to its location on the Mississippi River.

THE PURPLE PATH

All Prince roads lead to Paisley Park, the sprawling recording complex and party venue the musician created in a cornfield in the outer suburb of Chanhassen in 1987. Before he died, Prince had been working on turning the white warehouse-styled building into a museum — he had already designed a “History Hallway”. With posthumous help from the ultimate experts in such things, Graceland Holdings, Paisley Park opened for public tours in October 2016, six months after his death.

After we hand over mobile phones (no photos allowed) to be locked in security pouches at the start of an almost two-hour VIP tour, guide Jessica shows my group into a central atrium where a wall-mounted urn shaped like Paisley Park’s simple exterior holds the artist’s ashes. A small kitchen here, sectioned off by purple guide ropes, gives one of the tour’s rare glimpses of Prince’s life beyond music.

“This is where he had meals and watched TV. He loved the Big Bang Theory,” Jessica says.

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MY ‘PINCH ME’ MINNESOTA MOMENT



Prince's Purple Rain motorcycle, on display at Paisley Park.

Unlike at Graceland, Prince's main living quarters aren't part of the tour; but you do see inside three recording studios, and rooms of gold records, guitars, a motorcycle used in the Purple Rain movie and the tiny outfits and stacked heels the 158cm Prince wore on stage.

"He had a 25-inch waist and wore Size 5 shoes," Jessica says.

Studio B holds a table tennis table (Prince was a mean ping-pong player) and a purple piano shell hiding a Yamaha electric keyboard I had seen before: [on the stage of Melbourne's State Theatre on Prince's Piano & A Microphone concert tour, his last, just two months before he died.](#)

[Paisley Park](#) will be the centre of Celebration 2019, a party-cum-fan love-in marking the third anniversary of Prince's death from April 25-28.

In Minneapolis' Downtown precinct take a walk by [First Avenue](#), a live music club that appeared in Purple Rain. Its black exterior is covered in silver stars named for all the acts who have played there.

Nearby is the [Dakota Jazz Club](#), where Prince saw a show two nights before he died.



Fans gathered outside the First Avenue club in Minneapolis after Prince's death three years ago.

DINING OUT

Like Philadelphia's famous cheese steaks elsewhere in the US, the Juicy Lucy — a burger with a molten cheese centre invented in the 1950s — is legend in Minneapolis, and Minnesota's most famous home-style meal is a tater tot topped, can-of-soup casserole concoction called Hot Dish. But two dinners I have in the region create a much more sophisticated impression.

Focused on food from within a 350km or so radius, the menu at [Cedar + Stone Urban Table](#), the in-house restaurant at the JW Marriott Minneapolis Mall of America, lists the farms in Minnesota and nearby Wisconsin from which it draws its heirloom vegetables, beef, chicken and cheeses. The fish of choice in the region is locally caught walleye, a freshwater perch, which here comes topped with filo pastry and roasted tomatoes.

GET YOUR FILL IN PHILLY



Minneapolis is gaining a reputation for fine dining.

In the hip North Loop precinct of Minneapolis, between Downtown and the Mississippi, 19th and 20th-century red-brick warehouses and factories have been transformed into apartments, cool shops and places to eat. An old stable houses Spoon and Stable, run by Gavin Kaysen, declared best Midwest chef by the influential James Beard Foundation last year.

But my dinner is around the corner at [Bachelor Farmer](#). Around 32 per cent of Minnesota's population can trace their origins back to Scandinavia, and the region's Nordic influences are keenly felt in this dining room, with its light Scandi woodwork and wallpapered walls. The restaurant's pedigree is as Minneapolis as it gets; not only is it serious about using local produce in its daily-changing menu but it was started by brothers Andrew and Eric Dayton, sons of Mark Dayton, state governor from 2011 till early this year (2019), and great, great grandsons of the founder of the company that became Target. It's a name literally writ large in Minneapolis corporate and sporting life. Target Field, in [North Loop](#), is home to the Minnesota Twins major league baseball team, and the Target Center in the heart of downtown Minneapolis, is where you can catch the Minnesota Timberwolves in the NBA and WNBA team Lynx.

AND THEN

There's the [Mall of America](#), a destination in itself in [Bloomington](#), about 15km from Minneapolis Downtown. The biggest mall by total floor space in America sprawls 39ha over four floors. That's big enough to have its own postcode, along with a Nickelodeon Universe theme park that fills its central atrium, a SEALife Aquarium and wedding chapel. If you want to shop (there's no sales tax on clothes or shoes in Minnesota), there are around 520 — including Macys, Nordstrom and Sears department stores — to max the plastic. Seriously, you could come to Minneapolis for a week and never walk out the door of Mall of America, and with Minneapolis-St Paul Airport only a 10-minute Metro Light Rail connection away, I suspect that actually happens, especially in winter when temperatures can drop to -15C.



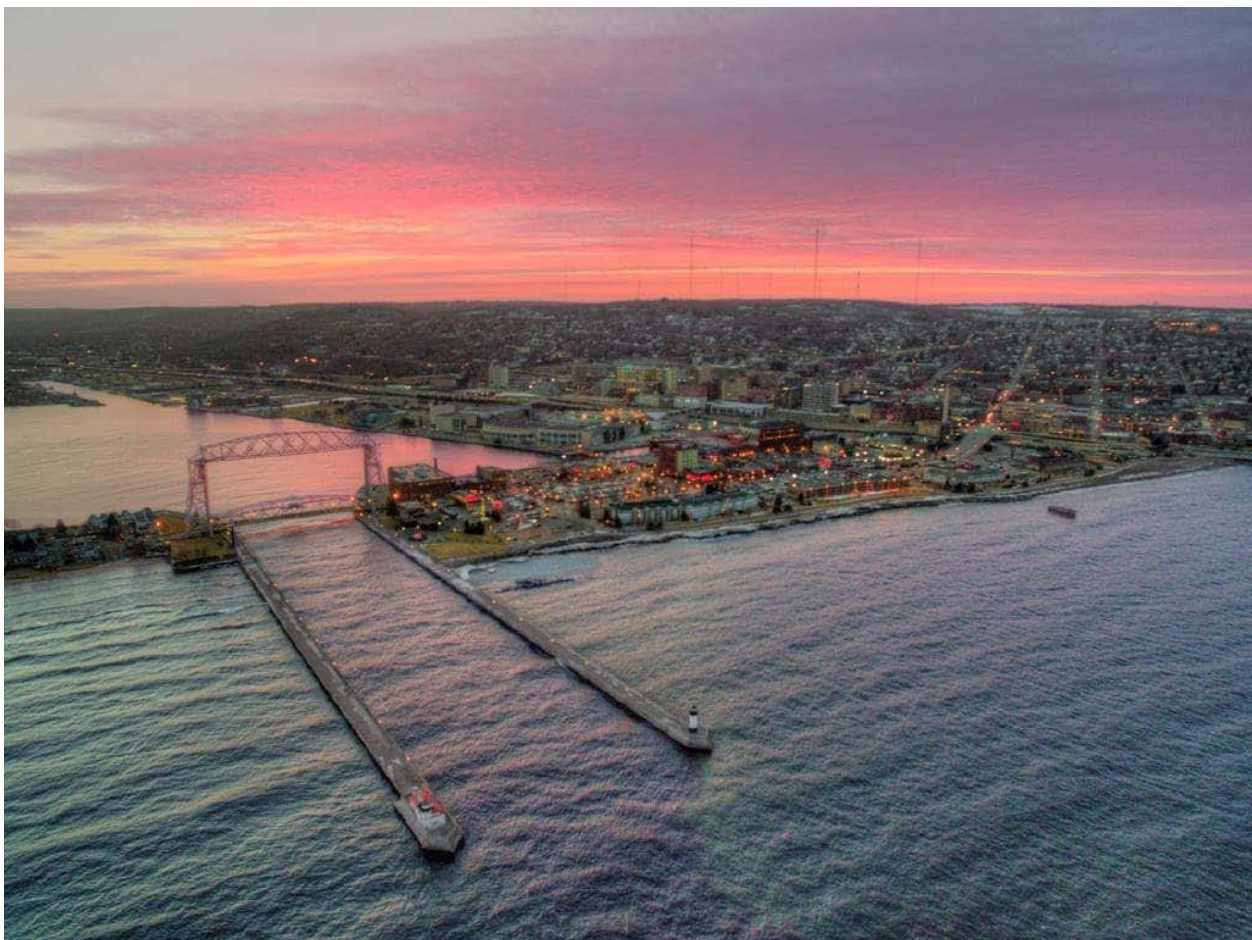
The Mall of America is the biggest in the US, and a destination in itself. Picture: Getty **OUT OF TOWN**

Minnesota is known as the Land of 10,000 Lakes, though the actual count is 11,842. Many are small, not much bigger than the 4ha surface area that defines a lake. But the state's northeast shores stretch along Lake Superior, the largest of North America's Great Lakes, and the ships that come from as far away as the Atlantic Ocean wind up in the inland port city Duluth, 250km north of Minneapolis.

So vast that it holds 10 per cent of the world's fresh water, Lake Superior is pretty impressive but [Duluth](#) has another claim to fame — music legend Bob Dylan was born Robert Zimmerman there in 1941 and stayed till age six when his family moved north to the town of Hibbing.

Fans can drive or walk down [Bob Dylan Way](#), 1.8 miles through Duluth's Downtown, see his childhood home, or pay homage at the annual Dylan Fest timed each year for his birthday (this year from May 19-26). Buddy Holly played in Duluth in 1959, three nights before his tragic plane crash death (Dylan was in the audience and name-checked the experience when he delivered his Nobel prize acceptance prize in 2017).

Duluth is also the home town of an outdoor adventuring icon, [Duluth Pack](#). America's oldest canvas and leather bag manufacturer's original 1880s pack designed for fur trappers and timbermen is still sold in its Canal Park store today, along with the daypacks that take American kids from grade school through college. They're about \$US145 but you'll pay around \$US400 for an Original No. 4, as toted by actor Kevin Hart in the most recent Jumanji movie.



For some maritime trainspotting find a spot in Canal Park and watch Duluth's Aerial Lift Bridge at work.

If there's a maritime version of trainspotting, Canal Park is a prime spot to watch the city's historic Aerial Lift Bridge in action. Built in 1905, it rises on the half-hour, admitting into Duluth Port ships ranging from 1000-foot "lakers", bulk freight carriers that ply the Great Lakes of North America, and "salties" foreign vessels that travel along the St Lawrence Passage to load grains, iron ore and coal, to recreational craft. Be prepared to cover your ears as ships sound their horn to signal, a courtesy returned by the lift bridge operators.

Need a break from ship-watching, maybe a little pick-me-up? [Vikre Distillery](#), close to the bridge, makes gins flavoured with northern Minnesota botanicals spruce, cedar and juniper, along with a vodka named after Lake Superior right next door.

The writer was a guest of Marriott Hotels and Brand USA.

ESCAPE ROUTE

MINNESOTA

GETTING THERE

[American Airlines](#) flies to Los Angeles from Sydney and Melbourne, with connections to Minneapolis through hubs including Phoenix. It was the first US carrier to launch Premium Economy, which has a wider seat, more legroom, an amenity kit, and enhanced meal choices on international flights.

Duluth is a two and a half-hour drive from Minneapolis.

STAYING

You'll be in star company at the [JW Marriott Minneapolis Mall of America](#), NFL team the New England Patriots stayed when Superbowl LII was played at US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis last year. The [Sheraton Duluth](#) is close to lakeside restaurants and Canal Park.

TOURING

Seventy-minute Paisley Park tours are priced from US\$38.50, with 100-minute VIP tours at US\$100. [Exploreminnesota.com](#) lists sites associated with Prince to visit on a self-guided tour of Minneapolis.

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