

**Original Story URL:**

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=425186>

## Sibling Cities

### Lots of personality and no room for rivalry in St. Paul and Minneapolis

By **ELIZABETH ANN HULICK**  
Special to the Journal Sentinel

*Posted: May 19, 2006*

Calling them "twins" might be a bit of a misnomer.

*Advertisement* They're more like siblings: the statuesque, sky-scraping, chic, yet funky elder sister, Minneapolis, and at her elbow, her smaller, civic-minded brother, St. Paul, holder of state government, public museums, the zoo - a little more buttoned up, more your polo shirt and khakis kind of town.

But taken separately or taken together, they have much to offer beyond their well-known downtown skyways or the Mall of America - much to qualify them as both classy and world class.

### The luster of the lakes

Let's start with big sister. Spring hatches from the crystal clear sky, and the pathways around the city's lakes abound with skaters, bikers, walkers, joggers. Mind you, they're out there all winter, too, a tribute to many residents' stalwart Scandinavian hardiness.

The energy of the fitness-prone shrieks for one to get moving. The major lakes in the residential areas include Lake of the Isles, Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet. With their landscaped paths ringed by stately mansions with manicured lawns, the lakes provide a splendid workout setting. Lake Harriet's Victorian-looking band shell hosts free outdoor concerts all summer, and canoe and kayak rentals are available. The magnificent Rose Garden and Peace Garden begin "The Grand Rounds" off Kings Highway, one of the roads that feeds into this scenic drive.

### Uptown cool

Finishing a tour of the lakes and ogling of the mansions, we change from our athletic wear to hip fashions, moving Uptown, an area that spreads north and south along Hennepin Ave. in recent years, well beyond Calhoun Square, its epicenter. It is all a veritable cornucopia of fun boutiques, hip restaurants and bars, as well as home to some standard stores like Gap and Urban Outfitters.

Lucia's Restaurant and Wine Bar, on the corner of Lake and Hennepin, is a coolly classy place that buzzes at lunchtime. Sit out on the sidewalk terrace, watch the passersby and try the trout with watercress butter accompanied by Montmorency cherry juice or wine.

Other options include the Uptown, a grittier place just right for that fuzzy-brained late breakfast. Everyone from wholesome families to the edgy tattooed and extreme hairdoed congregates here, some of the latter crowd no doubt

fresh from a night out, perhaps at Chino-Latino, just a few doors down.

Chino-Latino, with a façade that resembles a waterfall of glittering gold sequins, is the young urban sophisticate's place to party. With a nightclub ambience, an intense happy hour with \$3 Bloody Marys, and an array of "street food" from the world's hot zones, this place is like an experiment that works by catching fire.

Stay on the block. There's the much quieter Magers & Quinn Booksellers, with its well-organized array of used books, and next door, the serene Whitney Annex full of antiquarian maps, prints, and collectible out of print books.

## **Downtown chic**

Moving north on Hennepin to get downtown, still in the mood for all that grooves? Check out, and then check in to, the Graves 601 Hotel on 1st Ave. This sleek, contemporary hotel is a near-future "I'm-not-in-the-Midwest-anymore" kind of place. You are elsewhere - a land of minimalist panache, decked out in gorgeous expanses of blond wood floors, artfully used marble, bold color, glass walls, lines and arcs. Rooms here start at \$239 per night. The hotel's Infinity Lounge is a luxury ultra-modern nightclub complete with DJ and wall-length banquettes.

Across 7th St. just steps away from the Graves is the famed First Avenue and 7th St. Entry (yes, that is the name) club. Native son Prince played here back in the early days, as did a younger U2. A wall of stars outside lists hundreds more.

It was here that I stumbled upon the true highlight of my latest trip to the cities: an annual production of "Jesus Christ Superstar" on Good Friday. Singers and a first-rate band, complete with fiddle and sax, played and sang the entirety of Andrew Lloyd Weber's rock opera. This was a no-frills, no-costumes production, just excellent singers and music pounding out to a very diverse crowd ranging in age from 6 to 60 plus.

Switching gears now to more classic entertainment, the theater district along downtown Hennepin Ave. is crowned by the luscious State Theatre. It first opened in 1921 and received an \$8.8 million facelift in 1991. It has been hosting touring Broadway shows and major events since. The ambience itself is theatrical: gold leaf decoration, red velvet seats and sumptuous murals. Upcoming shows for June and July include "La Cage Aux Folles" and "Wicked."

For refined sleeping arrangements, check out the Grand Hotel. A unique "boutique" hotel in the heart of downtown, it boasts simple elegance in its lobby and rooms. The décor here leans toward the masculine - wood paneled walls in the lobby, marble floors and muted upholstery.

The hotel has a very swank and spacious fitness room, with handball courts and overlooking lounge, a full menu spa, a restaurant, and a sushi bar with, unfortunately, way too many flat screen TVs.

Dining experiences abound in downtown Minneapolis, and they run the gamut from traditional to more experimental, and everything in between. We indulged at Bellanotte. This is essentially a high-end Italian restaurant with some mod twists - subtle orange lighting, backlit panels cloistering off seating areas and a happening martini-sipping crowd around the big rectangular bar in the front. The menu is extensive, the service extremely attentive, and the food rich and lovely. We shared a rarefied spinach salad, a mouth-watering butternut squash ravioli, and a pollo Marsala with wild mushrooms, all topped by a lemon sorbet served in a carved-out lemon.

Also on the downtown eating roster are Murray's, famed home of the Silver Butter Knife Steak (a steak for two: \$85).

A trip to Minneapolis would not be complete without a walk through either the Walker Art Center or the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. If possible, see them both. The Walker houses contemporary art featuring ongoing exhibitions of its vast and comprehensive permanent collection. Universally delightful is the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, best known for the giant Spoonbridge and Cherry by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen.

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts houses another world-class collection of everything from priceless Chinese art to modern photography. Its permanent collections include 100,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of history. The recently expanded Chinese art collections occupy the entire east wing of the second floor of the museum. Think again if you want to detour past this. Many of these sumptuous treasures will stop you in your tracks. Upcoming is a ticketed

show, "The Surreal Calder," running June 11 through Sept. 10 in the Target Gallery.

## 'Cross the wide Mississippi

Slip on over to the east bank of the mighty river that runs through these two partners. St. Paul sets a more relaxed pace. Take a stroll through Rice Park, gorgeous when the cherry trees are blooming. A stone's throw away is the beautifully restored St. Paul Hotel, a local fixture since 1910, with old world charm and new world amenities for the discriminating guest. The St. Paul Grill in the hotel is a great place to lunch, rubbing elbows with people who seem to be running things - and who are.

The Ordway Center for the Performing Arts is a relatively new theater (1985) that hosts everything from educational and multidisciplinary programs and Broadway musicals to dance, theater and music. The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Minnesota Opera are based here. The 2006-'07 schedule includes, among many other shows: "Rent," "Spamalot" and a production of "Camelot" featuring Michael York. The lovely glass-enclosed foyer rises two stories.

The Fitzgerald Theater is home to many folks' favorite Minnesota export, Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion." The oldest theater in St. Paul, it was built in 1910 and named after famous son F. Scott Fitzgerald. Minnesota Public Radio is the current owner and runs a full roster of stage productions here in a theater with excellent acoustics and sight lines.

Grand Avenue, a long stretch from the river to downtown, provides shady trees along the way and a happy mix of charm and cosmopolitanism with its boutiques, quality franchise stores (think Restoration Hardware), coffee shops and bistros. This is where to shop while in St. Paul.

The state museums here offer highly interactive fun. Find out how much blood you have and peer into microscopes at the Science Museum of Minnesota. Don't forget to see favorite exhibits "Emily, the two-headed turtle" and "The Egyptian mummy."

This is a museum you can go into for hours and hours, even on a sunny day, and never become bored. You can go into the sound lab, design a weather system, learn how electricity is generated and watch a tornado form at your feet from a rolling cloud.

For your budding scientist or naturalist, there's a Collector's Gallery. Visitors can bring their own artifacts to trade.

## Pint-sized fun

If you're bringing the kids, don't miss the Children's Museum of Minnesota. There are kids' museums and then there's this. A big, new, light and bright building, the fun here goes on and on. Everything is accessible, and size-appropriate, to smaller visitors. There are plenty of hands-on experiences - the whole point of a children's museum after all.

Starting on the roof, there is the Rooftop Artpark with a Shadow Dome, Tree Fort, and Stream Bed (with real water) to play in, on and around. In the Water Works area, I had perhaps the most fun I've ever had with my little ones, in a complete reverting to my childhood self. The kids suit up in rain gear, steer boats through locks and channels of their own creation, pump water, and race through watery obstacle courses. In addition, youngsters can make paper, mix different colored lights, crawl through the giant anthill, become a beaver, balance along the boulder wall and explore under the 500-gallon aquarium.

For tots, there is the Habitot, where the littlest can wander through four habitats.

You might be tired, but everything available hasn't even taken you out of downtown St. Paul. And there are still the St. Paul Cathedral and the State Capitol to see. Tomorrow? Yes, after you put your feet up and order some room service at the St. Paul Hotel.

And, by the way, there'll be no time for that hulk of a mall lurking somewhere on the edge of town. Not this time. It's just too pretty here in the cities.

## If You Go

### Hotels

Graves 601 Hotel, (612) 677-1100, [www.graves601hotel.com](http://www.graves601hotel.com).

The Grand Hotel, (612) 288-8888 or 866-THE GRAND (843-4726); [www.grandhotelminneapolis.com](http://www.grandhotelminneapolis.com).

First Avenue and 7th St. Entry, (612) 338-8388.

The Saint Paul Hotel, (651) 292-9292 or (800) 292-9292, [www.saintpaulhotel.com](http://www.saintpaulhotel.com).

### Restaurants

Bellanotte, 612) 339-7200, [www.bellanotempls.com](http://www.bellanotempls.com).

Murray's, (612) 339-0909, [Murraysrestaurant.com](http://Murraysrestaurant.com).

Lucia's Restaurant and Wine Bar, (612) 825-1572, [www.lucias.com](http://www.lucias.com).

Forepaugh's, (651) 224-5606, [www.forepaughs.com](http://www.forepaughs.com).

### Theaters

The Fitzgerald Theater, (651) 290-1221, [fitzgeraldtheater.publicradio.org](http://fitzgeraldtheater.publicradio.org).

Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, (651) 282-3000, [www.ordway.org](http://www.ordway.org).

State Theatre, (612) 339-7007, [www.hennepintheatredistrict.org](http://www.hennepintheatredistrict.org).

### Nightlife

First Avenue & 7th Street Entry (bar & live music), (612) 338-8388, [www.first-avenue.com](http://www.first-avenue.com).

Chino-Latino (bar & restaurant), (612) 824-PUPU (824-7878), [www.chinolatino.com](http://www.chinolatino.com).

Infinity Lounge (bar & DJ; not restaurant), (612) 312-1168.

### Museums

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, (612) 870-3131 or (888) MIA-ARTS (642-2787), [www.artsmia.org](http://www.artsmia.org).

Walker Art Center, (612) 375-7600, [www.walkerart.org](http://www.walkerart.org).

The Science Museum of Minnesota, (651) 221-9444, [www.smm.org](http://www.smm.org).

Minnesota Children's Museum, (651) 225-6000, [www.mcm.org](http://www.mcm.org).

From the May 21, 2006 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
Have an opinion on this story? [Write a letter to the editor](#) or start an [online forum](#).

Subscribe today and receive 4 weeks free! [Sign up now](#).

© 2006, Journal Sentinel Inc. All rights reserved. | Produced by [Journal Interactive](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)  
Journal Sentinel Inc. is a subsidiary of [Journal Communications](#).