

# Ultimate Weekend in Minneapolis

(in the print edition the title is *The Nicest City in America*)

*A long weekend in Minneapolis packed with Swedish sandwiches, oversize art, peaceful lakes, midcentury memorabilia—and a side of the legendary local hospitality*

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Ackerman + Gruber for The Wall Street Journal

WATER VIEW // Explore Lake Harriet at sunset.

This Midwestern city may bring to mind parkas before parks, and Vikings before biking, but Minneapolis is as sweet in summer as it is frigid in winter. The town is bisected by the Mississippi River and studded with lakes, ponds and parks. If basking in the outdoors isn't your thing, there is more than enough culture to fill a long weekend to overflowing: daring architecture, a vital art scene anchored by the contemporary-focused Walker Art Center and restaurants that deftly combine modern technique with heartland comfort. (Here even the chicest boîte is still sure to dish up some "Minnesota nice.") So whatever your sensibility—Prince or prints, lamb tartare or lutefisk—a packed few days in Minneapolis is bound to satisfy, you betcha.

## *Day One: Friday*

**6 p.m.** Arrive at Minneapolis International Airport; pick up a rental car or hop on the light-rail. Either way, you will be downtown in about half an hour.

**7 p.m.** Check into the slick Aloft Minneapolis hotel, ideally located for taking advantage of the city's parks and paths (*from \$99 per night, 900 Washington Ave. S., [aloftminneapolis.com](http://aloftminneapolis.com)*). Ask for a room facing Gold Medal Park.

**Photos: The Ultimate Minne-Escape**

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**8 p.m.** A 10-minute drive takes you to **Burch Steak and Pizza** (1933 Colfax Ave. S., [burchrestaurant.com](http://burchrestaurant.com)), the newest restaurant from local chef Isaac Becker. Globe lamps cast a warm glow over this former pharmacy. Steak is at the heart of the menu; for most cuts, diners are given the choice of grass-fed, prime or the fuzzily defined "natural," as well as smaller or larger portions. (All come sided with béarnaise, pickled beech mushrooms and a silky steak sauce.) The smaller plates are an opportunity to explore other sections of the menu; the one devoted to raw dishes spans everything from oysters to lamb tartare.

**10 p.m.** The impact of hometown band the Replacements is almost as great as that of another favorite son, Prince. One of the tastier tributes to the band can be found in the industrial-chic bar/restaurant/performance venue **Icehouse** (2528 Nicollet Ave. S., [icehousempls.com](http://icehousempls.com)). Named for a lyric in the '80s Replacements anthem "Left of the Dial," the drink Playing Makeup, Wearing a Guitar is a riff on a classic Manhattan, made with carbonated bourbon and cola-cherry bitters. It rocks.

**11 p.m.** For an unusual sweet treat, wander a block down Nicollet Avenue to **Glam Doll Donuts** (2605 Nicollet Ave., [glamdolldonuts.com](http://glamdolldonuts.com)). The Chart Topper (cake doughnut glazed with peanut butter and streaks of sriracha) is good, if desperate for attention. Don't forget to get your picture taken in the photo booth.



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PEDAL PUSHING // Bike around town.

*Day Two: Saturday*

**9:30 a.m.** Walk two blocks down the river and graze for breakfast at the **Mill City Farmers Market** (704 S. 2nd St., [millcityfarmersmarket.org](http://millcityfarmersmarket.org)). Chef Shack turns out French toast and Indian spiced doughnuts; Cafe Palmira and Bolt have good coffee. Watch the river go by from the steps of the nearby Guthrie Theater.

**10:30 a.m.** Before Minneapolis was the City of Lakes, it was the Mill City (Gold Medal Park is a reference to flour, not sports). **Mill City Museum** (704 S. 2nd St., [millcitymuseum.org](http://millcitymuseum.org)) is built around the ruins of the Washburn "A" Mill, which burned in 1991. After riding the freight elevator/theater up the observation tower, watch "Minneapolis in 19 Minutes Flat," a funny history of the town.

**Noon Matt's Bar** (3500 Cedar Ave. S., [mattsbar.com](http://mattsbar.com)) in the Powderhorn neighborhood claims to have originated the classic (if misspelled) Minneapolis burger, the Jucy Lucy—a beef patty with a core of molten cheese. Another burger worth seeking out comes from "Bizarre Foods" host Andrew Zimmern's food truck, **AZ Canteen** ([azcanteen.com](http://azcanteen.com)). The cabrito (young goat) burger with roasted tomatoes, charred onions and pickles is outstanding. Check the website for current location.

**1:30 p.m.** **The American Swedish Institute**, on the way back downtown (2600 Park Ave., [asimn.org](http://asimn.org)), is a model for how a small institution can draw visitors with exciting programming. Wander the opulent Turnblad Mansion, then check out "Pull, Twist, Blow—Transforming the Kingdom of Crystal," a show featuring the vanguard in Swedish glass art (through Oct. 13).

**3 p.m.** It is worth making a 10-minute detour to **Forage Modern Workshop** (4023 E. Lake St., [foragemodernworkshop.com](http://foragemodernworkshop.com)), which opened last year. The store specializes in Midwest modern furniture and housewares, like chairs by the late architect Ralph Rapson. Some were created for Knoll in the 1940s; others are only now in production. A more portable purchase: the striped Backseat Blanket, designed by Minneapolis-based Pierrepont Hicks and made at nearby Faribault Woolen Mill Co. Hit the attached cafe, Parka, for cookies and a flight of local milks—two whole and one chocolate.

**4 p.m.** For something stiffer than milk, grab a refreshment at **Butcher & the Boar** restaurant, on the edge of downtown (1121 Hennepin Ave., [butcherandtheboar.com](http://butcherandtheboar.com)). The beer garden has almost 30 brews on tap, but the smart money goes to the spectacular selection of bourbons, some from the restaurant's own bottling. Or, head back to the hotel for a breather. Either way, pause in front of the Macy's on Nicollet Mall, where a statue commemorates "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," which was set in Minneapolis. The bronze Mary is tossing her tam into the air, just like in the program's credits (700 Nicollet Mall).

**6 p.m.** Casually elegant **Piccolo** has only two dozen seats; reservations are advised even for an early dinner (4300 Bryant Ave. S., [piccolompls.com](http://piccolompls.com)). A destination restaurant hidden in leafy southwest Minneapolis, it has a menu that changes seasonally but almost always includes scrambled eggs with pickled pig's trotters, truffle butter and Parmigiano.

**7:30 p.m.** Walk four tree-lined blocks to **Lake Harriet** and follow the path around its northern shore to the gabled bandshell ([mplsmusicandmovies.com](http://mplsmusicandmovies.com)). There is a concert there every Saturday evening in summer. (July is given over to the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra.) Grab a bench or spread that Backseat Blanket on the grass. If you are feeling restless, hop a ride on the restored Como-Harriet trolley. It runs between Lake Harriet and larger Lake Calhoun to the north, taking about 15 minutes to complete the round trip.

**10 p.m.** Head back into the big city. Beneath bustling restaurant Borough, you'll find **Parlour**, with wingback chairs and a cocktail list that leans toward the adventurous (730 N. Washington Ave., [boroughmpls.com](http://boroughmpls.com)). The Pickle in the Middle is an easy sipping cocktail made with Gamle Ode, a locally produced dill aquavit.



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MILL CITY MOJO // Weisman Art Museum

*Day Three: Sunday*

**10:15 a.m.** You would be hard pressed to find a better place to start Sunday than the **Bachelor Farmer** (50 N. 2nd Ave., [thebachelorfarmer.com](http://thebachelorfarmer.com)). Brunch finds the room packed to the wood rafters with families, fashionistas and everyone in between. Begin with a coffee flip: sweetened espresso and bourbon shaken with egg and served in a coupe. Flag down the red trolley offering pastries and sparkling wine. Order a few Scandinavian open-face sandwiches, called smørrebrød, and maybe French toast. For a really substantial bite, get the rye spaetzle pyttipanna with pork-shoulder pastrami—topped with poached egg, savoy cabbage and caraway hollandaise. If there is a wait, browse the clothing, books and housewares (and play a game of bubble hockey) in the attached shop, Askov Finlayson.

**Noon** The **Walker Art Center** is a 15-minute drive away (1750 Hennepin Ave., [walkerart.org](http://walkerart.org)). One of the nation's leading venues for contemporary art, the Walker isn't all about indoors action—the sculpture garden is home to works by more than 40 artists, including Richard Serra, Louise Nevelson and Claes Oldenburg, whose "Spoonbridge and Cherry" has become a city icon. This summer sees the addition of 16 holes of miniature golf designed by local artists, architects and others.

**2:30 p.m.** Minneapolis has always punched above its weight in the architecture department. Head back toward the river, stopping at the corner of Washington and Hennepin Avenues. If the **ING Reliastar** building's colonnade of elongated gothic arches looks familiar, it is because they were designed by Minoru Yamasaki, who used similar forms in the original World Trade Center in New York. Work your way back down the river, stopping at Jean Nouvel's replacement for Ralph Rapson's **Guthrie Theater** (818 S. 2nd St., [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org)). The midnight-blue building's most compelling feature is the cantilevered

"Endless Bridge" that juts out over Mill Ruins Park toward the Mississippi. Continue up to the ninth floor, to the Amber Box, walled in yellow glass, for more views (and a vertigo-inducing peek through a window in the floor). Afterward, cross the river to the University of Minnesota and the Frank Gehry-designed **Weisman Art Museum** (333 E. River Rd., [weisman.umn.edu](http://weisman.umn.edu)). It is an antecedent to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and Mr. Gehry's other sculptured-metal facades. Some of his sketches hang in a second-floor seminar room.

**5 p.m.** Cross back over the river and duck into **Palmer's**, one of the city's great dive bars (500 Cedar Ave., [palmersbar.net](http://palmersbar.net)). While the bartender pulls you a Grain Belt Nordeast, read over the Hall of Shame—a board cataloging the offenses of dozens of now-banned patrons. Admire the art (for sale) and the taxidermy fish (not for sale).

**7 p.m. Pig Ate My Pizza** (4154 W. Broadway Ave., Robbinsdale, [pigatemypizza.com](http://pigatemypizza.com)) doesn't look out of place in the suburb of Robbinsdale, about a 20-minute drive from downtown. There is a television over the bar, a cartoony mascot and communal tables. So it may come as a surprise when your server asks if you would be interested in the tasting menu (\$60 for two). Pig Ate My Pizza is from the modernist chefs behind the lauded restaurant Travail. The Piggy Pie—charcuterie on a brioche crust served beneath a smoke-filled cloche—is popular. Dessert is a must.

**9:30 p.m.** If you have seen the 1984 film "Purple Rain" you know how integral **First Avenue** (701 1st Ave. N., [first-avenue.com](http://first-avenue.com)) is to the local music scene. The club's main room features national acts; the smaller 7th St. Entry hosts up-and-comers. Alternatively, just six blocks away, the **Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant** (1010 Nicollet Mall, [dakotacooks.com](http://dakotacooks.com)) presents jazz and world-music artists.



Illustration by James Gulliver Hancock

*Day Four: Monday*

**11 a.m.** After breakfast, check out of the hotel and head to Lake Street, which runs east-west through the city. This is where Minneapolis's remarkable ethnic diversity can be found. Take the intersection of East Lake Street and 16th Avenue South. On the southeast corner is the shop **Ingebretsen's** (1601 E. Lake St., [ingebretsens.com](http://ingebretsens.com)), part of local Scandinavian life for more than 90 years. If you have ever had lutefisk—lye-cured salt fish eaten around Christmas—it likely came from here. At the **Dur Dur Bakery and Grocery**, which serves the Middle Eastern and African communities, you can buy halal camel meat (1552 E. Lake St., 612-721-9449). Next door, **El Porto** is a Mexican shop specializing in Western wear (1542 E. Lake St., 612-721-9200). Eight blocks west is the **Midtown Global Market** (920 E. Lake St., [midtownglobalmarket.org](http://midtownglobalmarket.org)), an indoor bazaar with stalls representing cultures from Italy to Tibet. Try the decadent cream-filled brioche at Michelle Gayer's Salty Tart.

**12:30 p.m.** To dine at Steven Brown and Jörg Pierach's Linden Hills restaurant **Tilia** (2726 W. 43rd St., [tiliampls.com](http://tiliampls.com)) without having to wait for a table, go for Monday lunch. Roast chicken thighs are described on the menu as "sorta jerk style," and the haystack shoestring fries with pepper aioli are the frites of your dreams.

**2 p.m.** Get lost in antiques emporium **Hunt & Gather** (4944 Xerxes Ave. S., [huntandgatherantiques.com](http://huntandgatherantiques.com)), a seemingly endless series of rooms containing the treasures of a million Midwestern basements.

**3 p.m.** Almost adjacent to the airport is sprawling **Minnehaha Park** (4801 S. Minnehaha Park Dr., [minneapolisparcs.org](http://minneapolisparcs.org)). Take an easy hike to the bottom of the ravine where, as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow describes in "The Song of Hiawatha," "the Falls of Minnehaha/Flash and gleam among the oak-trees/Laugh and leap into the valley."

**4:30 p.m.** Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport has good food—and not just for an airport. **Surdyk's** ([surdyks.com](http://surdyks.com)), a liquor store and gourmet market, has an outpost in Terminal 1, with sandwiches and local foods and drinks (grab a bittersweet chocolate cookie by Rustica Bakery). Concourse G has spots from Andrew Zimmern and Piccolo's Doug Flicker. It is almost enough to make you long for a flight delay.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323309404578614041918038574.html?KEYWORDS=off+duty+section+minneapolis>