

Shop, Eat, and Shop Some More!

by Donna Trimble

You've had a preview of the Twin Cities' natural beauty and literary heritage. Now it's time to get down to business and answer those really important questions. Where is a good place to grab a quick lunch or dinner with friends? Where can I find that special souvenir? And perhaps most important, how do I get to the Mall of America? All of your food and shopping desires can easily be met here in the Twin Cities.

Start your excursion in downtown Minneapolis with a stroll along Nicollet Mall, a pedestrian mall and the heart of the downtown shopping district. Enjoy its wide sidewalks, lovely fountains, planters filled with flowers, and numerous places to sit. Several shopping complexes as well as individual shops and department stores line Nicollet Mall; all are connected by a skyway system.

Marshall Field's (formerly Dayton's) flagship store is in the 700 block of the Mall. Visit its Market Place on the lower level for lunch and find a seat on the Mall to people-watch while you eat. If you prefer to stay inside, try the Sky Room, an upscale cafeteria with a nice view of downtown, or the more traditional Oak Room, noted for its popovers.

Just across from Dayton's, the IDS Center with its Crystal Court features several quick-stop shops, including the Au Bon Pain restaurant, Sola Squeeze fruit smoothie bar, and Godiva Chocolatier. The IDS center is also home to apparel, jewelry, and gift shops. Basil's Restaurant, overlooking the Crystal Court, was a favorite haunt of Mary Tyler Moore. You can even ask for her table.

Gaviidae Common, next on our tour of the Mall, offers Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and an array of shops and boutiques. The fourth floor houses a food court with several options, including Chinese, Mexican, and Italian selections; pasta salads, burgers, and sub sandwiches. Nicol's Deli, home to a fabulous lunch box collection, has both take out and sit down dining options. D'Amico & Sons Italian Café and Deli is a popular place for lunch. Morton's of Chicago markets itself as "The Steakhouse."

The last stop is City Center, which has more than one hundred stores, including Bath and Body Works, Marshalls, and Fanny Farmer's Candy shop. Dining options include a food court, casual dining at T.G.I. Fridays and Italianni's, and formal dining at the elegant Goodfellow's Restaurant.

Dining adventures close to the Convention Center include Brit's Pub and Eating Establishment for casual dining with rooftop lawn-bowling green and Ichiban Japanese steak house. Meander through the Loring Park neighborhood and find the enchanting Loring Cafe with its back alley patio, the fun Ruby's Cafe, and Joe's Garage with its limitless variety of burgers and lovely view from its rooftop patio. Venture across Siah Armajani's pedestrian bridge to the Walker Art Center and adjoining Guthrie Theater for delightful gift shops. Take a break in the Walker's restaurant and its outdoor patio with spectacular views of the Sculpture Garden, Loring Park, and the downtown skyline.

An abundance of eateries affectionately known as "Eat Street" is just south of downtown. You will find a wonderful sampling of global cuisine: Vietnamese, Mexican, Thai, Ethiopian, Greek, and more. The Black Forest, one of the oldest and finest German restaurants in the Twin Cities, offers a shaded patio area for dining. Try the fish at the Seafood Palace Chinese Restaurant or fresh spring rolls at the Quang Pastry and Deli. Visit the award-winning Christo's Greek Restaurant.

The "Uptown" neighborhood has many shopping and eating opportunities in every price range. Unique shopping opportunities abound in Calhoun Square, a bustling mall, and the eclectic shops nearby. Dining choices vary from Chino Latino's sprawling two-story glamour eatery to fast food Baja Grill. Stop at Minnesota's gourmet market, Lunds Food Store, for a picnic lunch and enjoy your meal at Lake Calhoun.

Minneapolis has Eat Street; St. Paul has Grand Avenue. Grand's twenty-five blocks stretch from the Mississippi River to downtown St. Paul, with a unique blend of the historic and hip, the small-town and

the urbane. It offers a "Grand" variety of gift shops, bakeries, bookstores, art galleries, and more than forty-six eating establishments. Favorites include Dixie's Bar and Grill (Southern), The Acropol Inn (Greek), Ciatti's (Italian), Saji-Ya (Japanese), and The Lotus and The White Lily (both Vietnamese). The Tavern on Grand serves the best walleye pike. For sweets, be sure to check out Bread and Chocolate, Cafe Latte, or Grand Ole Creamery.

Downtown St. Paul features excellent dining choices. The historic St. Paul Hotel's St. Paul Grill attracts the local politicians and dealmakers. Nearby are Pazzaluna, a dazzling Italian showpiece; Kincaid's Fish, Chop and Steak House; and Sakura, offering great sushi and other Japanese specialties. You can find both the perfect Minnesota souvenir and the best cafeteria in the Twin Cities at the Minnesota History Center.

Another historic area a little further out is Stillwater, known for its antique shops, used bookstores, and scenic view of the St. Croix River. In addition to individual antique shops, The Midtown Antique Mall displays the wares of seventy-five dealers, including road signs, holiday decorations, jewelry, folk art, and furniture. Two bookstores worth visiting are Brick Alley Books and St. Croix Antiquarian Books. Restaurants of all types abound in Stillwater, with many of them right on the water or offering picturesque views of the river and the historic lift bridge connecting Minnesota and Wisconsin.

No visit to the Twin Cities would be complete without a trip to the Mall of America and its 520 stores, 60 restaurants and nightclubs, 14-screen General Cinema, UnderWater World aquarium, and Knott's Camp Snoopy, a 7-acre theme park. The Mall of America is in Bloomington, just 20 minutes south of downtown and easily accessible by car, bus, taxi, and some hotel shuttles. Anchor stores are Macy's Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, and Sears. Stores with a regional theme as well as the Mall of America gift shops make this the perfect place to pick up souvenirs. Theme restaurants in the Mall include Planet Hollywood, Rainforest Cafe, and Cafe Odyssey.

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