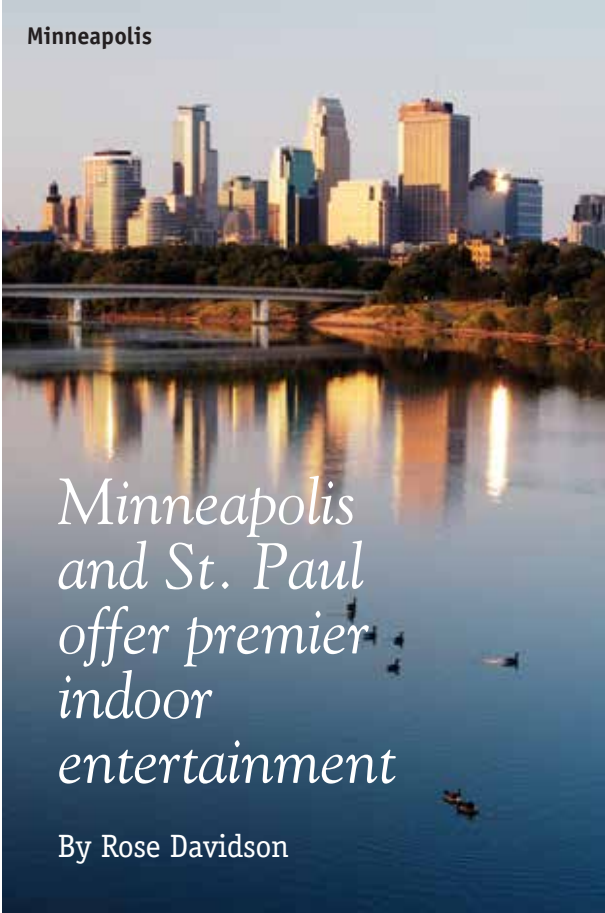


Minneapolis



*Minneapolis and St. Paul offer premier indoor entertainment*

By Rose Davidson



St. Paul



# A Tale of Twin Cities

**M**inneapolis and St. Paul have been embroiled in a contentious sibling rivalry for decades – just ask the locals. But while the two may clash at times, their fierce pursuit to outdo each other has fomented healthy competition, leading to the creation of some top-notch entertainment destinations.

There's no shortage of sights to see in Minnesota's Twin Cities and, in the chilly months, there are still plenty of places to go to enjoy the area while escaping its unforgiving winter weather.

## **Mall of America**

As the season of giving draws near, there's really no better place to do some holiday shopping than in the Mecca of malls.

The holidays are a magical time at Mall of America, with elaborate decorations adorning every corner – including two 44-foot Christmas trees positioned in the mall's main rotunda. The mall also hosts its annual Holiday Music Festival, this year from Nov. 30-Dec. 23, during which singing groups and musicians from all walks of life share their talents with free performances.

# {travel}

Located just south of Minneapolis in Bloomington, the mall boasts roughly 520 stores, including specialty retail destinations such as the LEGO Store and an American Girl shop. It also offers 60 on-site eateries, ranging from “white linen restaurants down to fast casual,” says Dan Jasper, vice president of public relations for the mall.

But while most malls contain restaurants and shops, that’s only the tip of the iceberg at Mall of America. Aside from the more than 400 events hosted at the mall each year – including tons of celebrity appearances – there are attractions such as Nickelodeon Universe, the nation’s largest indoor amusement park.

During the holiday season, the mall conducts a special rewards program in which each shopper who spends \$250 in any combination of stores and restaurants receives two free wristbands to the park. And another perk for shoppers, no matter the season: Mall of America doesn’t impose any sales taxes on clothing or shoe purchases.

Children and adults alike can revel in the underwater oasis of the mall’s SEA LIFE Minnesota Aquarium, a 1.2 million-gallon attraction with more than



Above: A high view of the Mall of America

Left: Nickelodeon Universe, the biggest indoor amusement park in the U.S., at Mall of America





10,000 sea creatures. Visitors' favorite exhibition, says aquarium Marketing Communications Manager John Sullwood, is the Ocean Tunnel – a 300-foot-long tunnel with four tanks housing sea turtles, sharks, stingrays and a variety of other underwater species.

To escape the kids, the Theatres at Mall of America can be an ideal retreat. There are 14 theaters in total, including a D-Box theater featuring moving seats and the VIP Theatre for guests 21 and up. The VIP Theatre is the perfect place for a little pampering, featuring uber-comfortable seats and beer and wine menu from which guests can order without ever hitting the concession stand.

"If you're out on a date or out with your girlfriends and don't want kids running around, it's a great option for you," Jasper says. "You have your own mini-table at your chair and they have their own wait staff."

Mall parking can be a nightmare during the holidays, but Mall of America tries to

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alleviate some of the stress by using Twitter to post parking updates and offering a texting program to help visitors remember where they've parked. For those staying in one of the roughly 40 hotels nearby, free shuttle services are convenient transportation alternatives.

To really minimize the commute, though, there's the Radisson Blu. The new hotel, which opened in March, is physically connected to the mall so guests can access the shops without ever venturing outside.

### Minneapolis Arts Venues

While visiting the Twin Cities, it's also worthwhile to check out some of the area's arts attractions.

The theater scene is exceptional – Minneapolis tops the list for theaters per capita in the U.S., second only to New York City. The Guthrie Theater is one of the more renowned in the area and unique in its membership to the League of Resident Theatres, an organization of professional theater companies that produce their own seasons.

The Guthrie has three performance spaces that collectively seat about 2,000 people, including its newest space: the Dowling Studio. This “black box” performance space “is designed to host smaller, more experimental or avant-garde productions,” says Seena



Hodges, communications manager for the theater.

The Walker Art Center is another high-class arts destination in Minneapolis. It covers a broad range of artistic media, hosting arts exhibitions, lectures, performances and film screenings. The

center often tries to combine these media into series of events to reach across disciplines and bring a more cohesive feel to its exhibits.

The center's outdoor Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, a partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, is an iconic staple of the Twin Cities. But when it's too cold to take a leisurely stroll through the garden, the art center offers an innovative solution.

“The Walker's New Media and Design department created large touch-screens housed in the public area of the building where visitors can interact with the collection,” says Meredith Kessler, assistant director of public relations at the center. The screens celebrate the 25th anniversary of the sculpture garden and feature zoomable images with information about the pieces.

Left: The Guthrie Theater

Top: The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden at the Walker Art Center

