

WHERE IT ALL HAPPENED

From behind-the-scenes glimpses of Minnesota's great houses to grand views of geologic time, MNHS's 26 historic sites have something for every summer road-tripper

With topics to cover ranging from railroad expansion to Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in the course of 75 minutes, not every corner of the James J. Hill House's 36,000 square feet can be included in the daily tour that MNHS interpreters give to visitors. But beginning in June, history lovers who've been longing to explore what's been left out—the Summit Avenue mansion's back staircases, silver vault, and upstairs-downstairs social dynamics—now have their chance.

"The extra daylight hours during the summer give us the opportunity to take visitors places we can't really go during the rest of the year," says historic site manager Christine Herbal. "So we created a special tour for serious fans who want to go behind the velvet ropes and see nearly everything." The Nooks and Crannies tour on Tuesday nights at the James J. Hill House this summer is an ideal destination for Downton Abbey types curious about the inner workings of the Empire Builder's grandest home. But this tour offers just one of the historic adventures Minnesota's summer road-trippers will find at the 26 historic sites operated by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Since 1958, when MNHS first began acquiring sites that were threatened by demolition or neglect, says David Kelliher, director of public policy and community relations, the collection has grown to include compass points across the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota that help MNHS "tell the story of the geography of the state and the broad history of the state," covering themes from indigenous cultures, to new immigration, to made-in-Minnesota industries like logging, flour milling, and others.

With destinations that range from the state capitol to Lake Superior's iconic Split Rock Lighthouse, and from the sacred 7,000-year-old rock carvings of the Jeffers Petroglyphs to small-town treasures like New Ulm's Harkin Store, there's an MNHS site to appeal to nearly every taste.

"Picking your favorite site is like picking a favorite child," Kelliher says. "But what they do all have in common is that human connection that reminds us that someone else lived here a long time ago, and here we are today in the same place learning about their lives. That's what makes these historic places so powerful."

—Laura Billings Coleman

MILLE LACS INDIAN MUSEUM AND TRADING POST

If you're planning a road trip this summer, Travis Zimmerman, site manager of the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, recommends checking the MNHS events calendar for the Minnesota historic sites on your route, in order to take advantage of seasonal programs and special events, including the birch bark basket workshops his site will host in July. The Mille Lacs museum is also hosting an exhibit called *Ziibaaska' iganagooday*, exploring the 100-year history of the Mille Lacs Ojibwe jingle dress tradition.

Learn more about all 26 of MNHS's historic sites at mnhs.org/visit.



2018 Memorial Day Powwow dancers.



Ziibaaska' iganagooday: The Jingle Dress at 100 exhibit.



2018 Birch Bark Basket Workshop, led by artist Pat Kruse.



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