

Traveling with Jewish Taste[®] The “Twin Cities”

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



I love the “Twin Cities.”

Nicknamed for the two largest cities in the area bounded by the Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix Rivers, Minneapolis-St. Paul is a beautiful place to visit.

The word “Minneapolis” actually means “City of Lakes” and the moniker is apt. Over twenty lakes dot the area, providing both beauty and ample recreational opportunity. In addition to the lakes are one-hundred and eighty parks. The Grand Rounds Scenic Byway is a series of parks (including the Chain of Lakes) running through Minneapolis.

About fifty miles of roadway link them, including pedestrian and bicycle paths, and the city’s residents really use them. Nothing soothes a winter-ravaged soul more than a stroll around Lake Calhoun on a warm, sunny

day. While walking, it’s great fun to gawk at the stately, lushly landscaped homes that surround the lake. I like to imagine taking afternoon tea on the terrace of one of them, looking out at the sailboats tacking across the water.

In the interest of full disclosure, I only travel to Minnesota in spring and summer, although our ancestors must surely have felt right at home after leaving the steppes of Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Winter can be brutal.

And, many of our co-religionists did arrive. Today, nine synagogues, two day schools, an active Federation, three kosher restaurants, and two Jewish book and gift shops serve a Jewish population of about 30,000.

To learn about the history of the region over the past 150 years, make sure to visit the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest. The Society provides programming, publications, exhibits, as well as reference and reproduction services. The collection is particularly strong in the areas of Jewish homesteading in the Jewish communities of the Upper Midwest, including Minneapolis and St. Paul synagogue records and Jewish women’s organization records.

Archives are divided between two sites, both open to the public by appointment only. They include family and personal histories, oral histories, photographic and film collections, genealogy materials, synagogue and Jewish institutional records, as well as historical materials from rural Midwest communities.

The arts and sciences are a very important part of life in the “Twin Cities,” attested to by the five major art museums, seven history museums, and several science museums, as well as dozens of galleries that are found throughout the metropolitan area.

The Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, houses more than 100,000 objects from around the world and across millennia, and produces special exhibits on a regular basis. As I write this column, the current MIA exhibition is “Beauty and Power: Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes” – an added bonus is that the museum offers



Sailing on Lake Calhoun



Cannon drill at Fort Snelling



“Tropical sun scene” as seen at the Kokomos Island Café at the Mall of America

free admission.

The Walker Art Center is one of the five most visited modern art museums in the United States. There you will find everything from paintings, installation, photography, and design art to dance, film, music, and theater as well as lectures and workshops.

While there, don’t miss the adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, it’s a beautiful and peaceful eleven-acre oasis in which to wander or meditate after viewing the art indoors.

The Jewish community also supports the arts. “Rimon,” an initiative of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, provides grants to artists who explore Jewish themes in a variety of media, but especially through performance. “Rimon” also stages an annual artist salon.

This year, its fourth, features a work by composer Tiffany Skidmore and theater artist Dylan Fresco, “exploring the unexpected interplay of Judaism and other faith traditions.” Also, currently, “Rimon” and the Historical Society are presenting the juried exhibit, “The Northside Today: Memory, Place, Home, Community.”

The Science Museum of Minnesota, in St. Paul, is the most popular museum in the Upper Midwest. It is not only lots of fun, it is the cleanest science museum I have ever visited.

Current exhibits are “Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs,” and “Wonder Years,” an interactive exhibit allowing visitors to experience how young children learn about the world around them. The museum’s Omni Theater is also showing “Secrets of the Pharaohs” to add to the King Tut exhibit’s power.

If the day is nice, plan to head over to historic Fort Snelling, an 1820s military

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Minnesota Hot Dish

Minnesota is not known for its haute cuisine, its most famous foods being deep fried cheese curds and anything on a stick – real state fair food. However, fans of the radio show “Prairie Home Companion” are familiar with “hot dish,” a variety of baked casserole that residents of Lake Wobegon routinely bring to events as varied as family reunions, funerals, and potluck dinners. Every hot dish includes a starch, a protein, a vegetable, and canned soup. Not at all elegant, but easily prepared and definitely a “comfort food,” this tuna noodle hot dish satisfies – especially on a cold winter’s night. As we well know, Minnesota certainly doesn’t have an exclusive hold on those.



Ingredients:

12 ounces uncooked egg noodles
2 cans condensed cream of mushroom soup
1 cup sour cream
1/3 cup milk
2 cans tuna, drained and flaked
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

1 medium onion, chopped
1 two-ounce jar pimientos, drained and diced
1 small can ripe olives, drained and sliced
1 cup crushed potato chips
Paprika

Directions:

Cook noodles according to package directions; drain. In a large bowl, combine the soup, sour cream, and milk. Stir in the noodles, tuna, cheese, onion, pimientos, and olives.
Pour into a greased three quart baking dish. Sprinkle with potato chips and paprika. Bake, uncovered, at three-hundred seventy-five degrees for thirty to thirty-five minutes or until heated through.

Serves 6 to 8

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outpost situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. The fort offers a full living history program with costumed guides during the summer, and on weekends in May, September, and October.

The guides and exhibits will help you explore the lives of the soldiers and civilians who lived at the fort, as you learn about the history of the settlement of the west. The guides also demonstrate historic crafts; perform period musket and cannon firings; cook foods of the time period; and share stories of Minnesota's history.

When you have had enough of culture, you will find a "jumping" nightlife in Minneapolis. Many nightclubs attract crowds of young people on weekends, and the Target Center downtown offers shows running the gamut from Usher to Glee, and American Idol Live to World Wide Wrestling Entertainment.

While we Berkshire folks get to see Garrison Keillor and his "A Prairie Home Companion" every summer at Tanglewood, his home base is actually in St. Paul.

Since so much of Keillor's humor is based on poking fun at his Minnesota roots, you may find it entertaining to attend a Saturday evening taping in his native habitat, at National Public Radio's Fitzgerald Theater.

A trip to Minneapolis is not complete without a visit to the iconic Mall of America, located close to the airport in nearby Bloomington.

No longer the largest mall in the world (twelve other malls, mostly Asian, now surpass it), it is still a major attraction in itself.

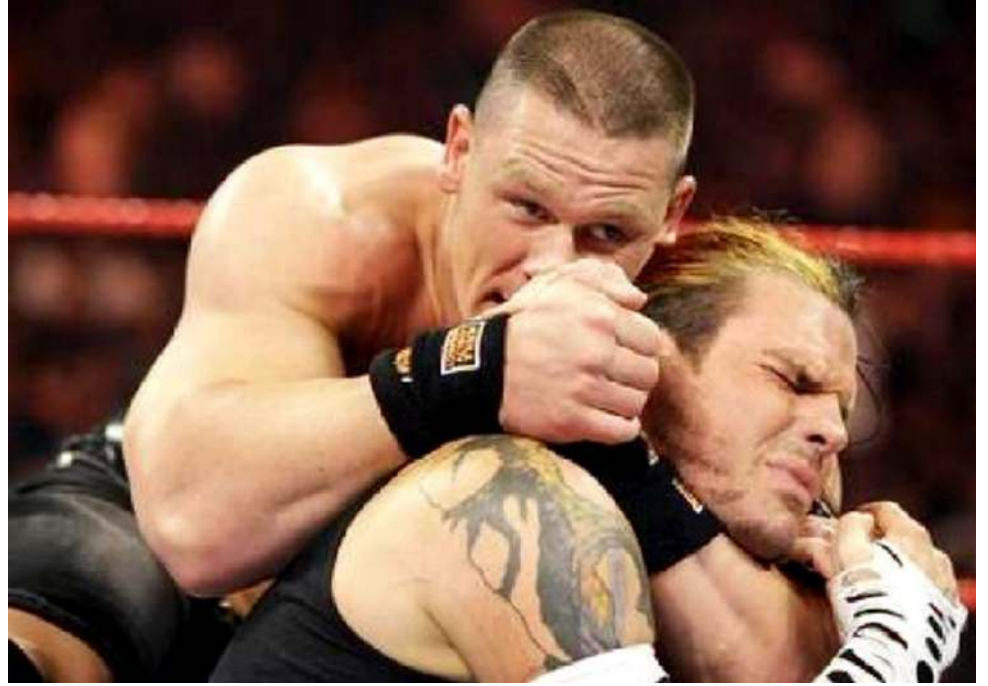
Along with the ubiquitous chain stores and fifty restaurants (one of which, Kokomos Island Café, features a waterfall), the MOA has unique boutiques selling everything from Russian lacquer art to garlic – really, just garlic and garlic-related products.

The mall also houses an actual amusement park within its walls, complete with Ferris wheel. Don't worry about finding a parking space; there are 20,000 of them.

We stop at the mall after landing at the airport because Nordstrom's Rack sells high-end extra tall men's clothing, so Joel stocks up on ties.

Carol Goodman Kaufman, an organizational psychologist and writer, is the author of Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence (Westview Press, 2003). She serves on the National Board of Hadassah and chairs the Jewish Community Relations Council of Central Massachusetts. Kaufman divides her time between Worcester, West Stockbridge, and the world.

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Professional wrestling is a hit in Minneapolis



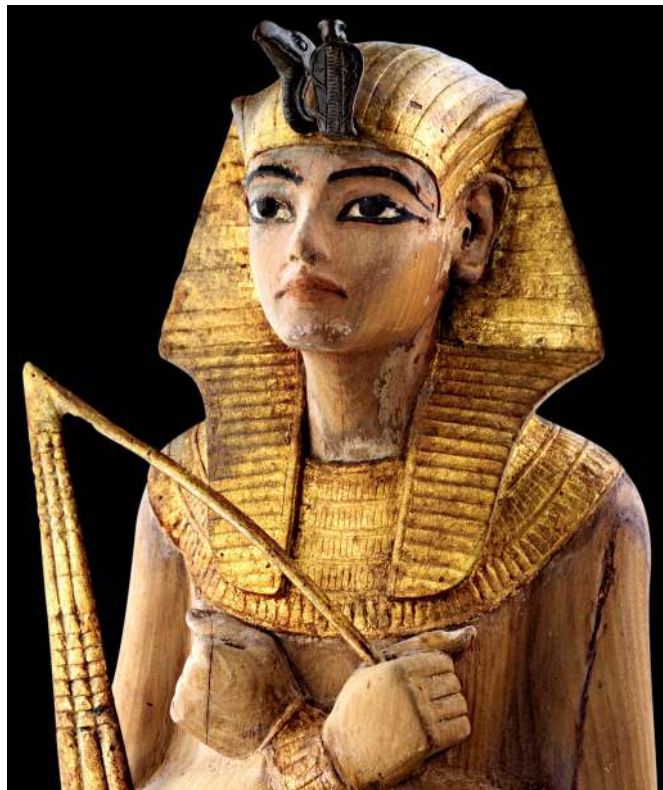
'Trixie on the Cot' from Nan Goldin's photography exhibition "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency" at The Walker Art Center



'Spoonbridge and Cherry,' 1985-1988, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden



Publicity photo for the Saint Paul B'nai B'rith Young Women's Organization, 1948, from the collection of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest



From the exhibition "Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs," at the Science Museum of Minnesota, in St. Paul, this "shabti," or funerary figure, of King Tut was found in the antechamber of his tomb. Made of wood and painted gold, it was meant to perform labor in the afterlife so that the king himself could rest.



'Bacchus and Ariadne' (detail), circa 1703, by Corneille van Clève, from the exhibition "Beauty and Power: Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes" at the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts