

# Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

The Minnesota River Valley is rich with stories of American Indian lifestyle changes entangled with the struggles of Euro-American immigrants making a home in this unfamiliar land. The establishment of agricultural cooperatives, railroad and river transportation, and land stewardship practices make this one of the most productive agricultural civilizations anywhere.



## Local Information

### New Ulm Chamber of Commerce & CVB

1 North Minnesota Street  
New Ulm, MN 56073-1727  
888-463-9856  
[info@mnrivervalley.com](mailto:info@mnrivervalley.com)

Length: 287 miles / 459.2 km

Time Three to seven days  
to depending on number and  
Allow: length of stay at individual  
sites

## Visitor Services

### Fees



There are no toll fees.

### Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities



Winding through the countryside between Mankato and Faribault is the 39-mile, newly paved Sakatah Singing Hills Bike Trail. The trail passes through a state park of the same name and through the village of Elysian, where a train depot serves as a wayside rest for the trail. The lakes in this area around Waterville are popular for fishing, and there are several lakeside resorts and campgrounds. The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota feels that the byway's roadways are not conducive for quality bicycle travel because of the variety of surface types, widths, shoulder characteristics, and high commercial vehicle use in certain areas. The roadways are, however, generally low-volume roadways and many of the local roads would be quite peaceful if a traveler had a bicycle that could handle both gravel and paved surfaces. The Minnesota Department of Transportation recently released state bike maps which provide roadway suitability ratings for bicycle travel; it classifies all but a very small portion of the byway's roadways as low or medium volume roads (see brochures titled Minnesota Bike Map East and West). In addition, many communities have off-road bicycle trails and many other cities are developing

trails. In 2001 the Minnesota Legislature designated a Minnesota River Valley State Trail, which will assist in the development of the long range plan to have a network of trails along the entire Minnesota River. Pedestrian walkways are located within communities, at wayside rest areas, at many of the points of interest, and in conjunction with many of the bicycle trails along the byway.

### **Camping**



Camping is available at the six Minnesota State Parks, numerous city and county campgrounds, and privately owned campgrounds and resorts.

### **Food**



Food is available throughout the byway at local restaurants.

### **Gasoline**



Gasoline is available all along the byway.

### **Information**



For up-to-date information on local businesses and visitor services, visit the official byway website or call the byway's official information center at 888-463-9856.

### **Lodging**



Overnight lodging is available in many of the communities along the byway.

### **Phone**



Public phones are available at many gas stations throughout the byway.

### **Restrooms**



Public restrooms are available at most sites along the byway, as well as at local gas stations and visitor centers.

### **Retail**



There are places to shop along this byway.

## **Special Considerations**

Some parts of the byway are gravel roads. Travelers should always listen to local radio as weather conditions can change quickly and some roads can be affected by flooding, road construction, snow, and ice. The byway is in an agricultural area so travelers may encounter large and potentially slow-moving equipment and trucks throughout the year moving agricultural and mining materials.

### **Restrictions**

All roads are available for public use. Due to changing weather conditions throughout the year, 4-wheel drive may be useful on some less-traveled or gravel-surfaced roads during winter. Weight restrictions are seasonal on various roads.

### **Seasons**

#### Best Time to Drive

Any time of year is a great time to drive the byway.

#### High Season

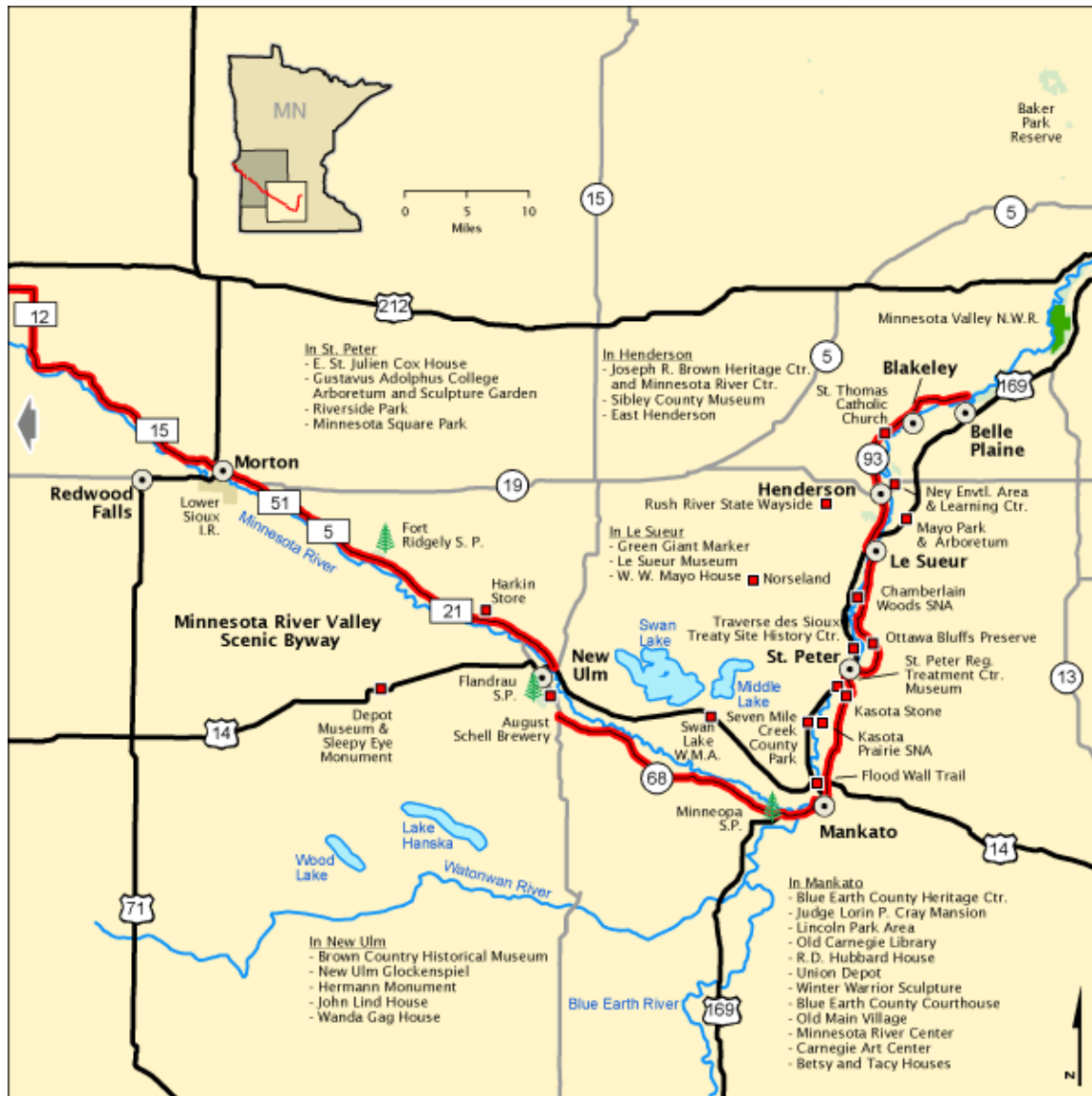
Summer is the busiest time on the byway.

#### Winter

Be sure to listen to local radio for changing weather conditions.

# Map and Directions

## Standard Map - Eastern Section



# Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

## Standard Map - Western Section



### Legend:

- |   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
|  Point of Interest |  Campground       |  Featured Byway   |  Water               |  State Border  |
|  Park              |  Picnic/Rest Area |  America's Byways |  Wildlife Refuge     |  Urban Area    |
|  Mountain          |  Interstate       |  Other Byway      |  Wilderness Area     |  Tribal Nation |
|  City              |  U.S. Highway     |  Other Road       |  Other Federal Lands |  Military Base |
|  Capital           |  State Highway    |  Trail            |  Other State Lands   |   |

### Driving Directions

When traveling the byway from east to west, begin at the junction of MN HWY 25 near Belle Plaine and follow the signs, which take you all the way to the Minnesota/South Dakota state border at West Browns Valley.

### From Belle Plaine to Mankato

- The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway begins at the junction of State Hwy 25 and Sibley County Hwy 6 just north of the Minnesota River.
- From there the route goes southwest (12.5 miles) on Sibley Co 6 to the junction with State Hwys 19 and 93 in downtown Henderson.
- The route continues south on State Hwy 93 where it joins with US Hwy 169 until State Hwy 93 breaks apart from 169 and turns east into the city of Le Sueur (5.5 miles from Henderson to Le Sueur).
- In Le Sueur State Hwy 93 turns into Le Sueur County Hwy 36 (also called Bridge Street) after crossing the Minnesota River and makes several turns before leaving Le Sueur's southern boundary (right onto 2nd Street one block, right onto Ferry Street one block, left onto South Main Street to the city's southern edge).
- The route continues south on Le Sueur County 36 to the junction with Le Sueur County 23, just east of Ottawa Village.
- Turn right (west) onto 23 into Ottawa then south (left) again for almost five miles to the jct of State Hwy 99.
- Turn right and cross the Minnesota River to the city of St. Peter and the junction of State Hwy 99 and US Hwy 169 (Minnesota Ave).
- Turn left (south) through downtown St. Peter to the jct with State Hwy 22 and turn left (east) onto State Hwy 22.
- Cross the Minnesota River again approximately one mile to the junction with Le Sueur County Hwy 21 and turn west (right) into the City of Kasota.
- Follow County 21 through Kasota south approximately four miles to the county line where Le Sueur County Hwy 21 turns into Blue Earth County Hwy 5.
- Continue for another 3.5 miles into the City of Mankato to the junction with River Front Drive.
- Turn right onto River Front and travel seven blocks watching for the sign for the exit onto Veterans Bridge (via Plum Street on the left side of River Front).
- Cross the Minnesota River on Veterans Bridge and into the City of North Mankato where the bridge enters onto Belgrade Avenue.
- Continue five blocks and turn left onto Sherman Street.
- Travel three blocks on Sherman and enter onto southbound US Hwy 169/State Hwy 60 where you cross the Minnesota River once again and head back into the City of Mankato.
- Travel southwest on Hwy 169/60 2.8 miles to the junction with State Hwy 68.
- Turn right onto Hwy 68, passing Minneopa State Park and toward the City of New Ulm.

- At the junction of State Hwy 68 and Brown County Hwy 25 the byway designation stops. A gap was created due to commercial and industrial zoning and because the area was deemed not scenic.
- Follow the byway signage to continue through New Ulm on State Hwy 68 to the junction with US Hwy 14/State Hwy 15.

### **From New Ulm to Morton**

- At the junction turn right (northeast) onto US 14/ State Hwy 15 across the Minnesota River approximately one mile to the junction with Nicollet County Hwy 21 where the byway designation begins once again.
- At Nicollet County Hwy 21, turn left (northwest) and travel 16.5 miles.
- The highway will cross State Hwy 4 at Fort Ridgely State Park and Nicollet County Hwy 21 turns into Nicollet County Hwy 29 for 2.5 miles to the Nicollet and Renville County lines.
- At this point, the county road number changes again into Renville County Hwy 5.
- Follow Renville County 5 for 7.5 miles to the south border of the city of Franklin and the junction with Renville County Hwy 51.
- Follow Renville County 51 3.5 miles to the junction with State Hwy 19, turn left (northwest) and travel 1.5 miles to the city of Morton.
- Another gap in designation occurs at this point due to zoning and areas deemed not scenic. Travel through Morton on State Hwy 19 to the junction with US Hwy 71 and turn right (north) for approximately 1/2 mile to the junction with Renville County Hwy 15, a gravel road.

### **From Morton to Montevideo**

- At this junction turn left (west) and travel almost 18 miles to where Renville County 15 joins Renville County Hwy 12 (a paved hwy) for 1.5 miles.
- At the "Y" junction of Renville County Hwy 12 and Renville County Hwy 81, turn onto County Hwy 81 (gravel road) and pass the Joseph R Brown Wayside Rest.
- After traveling on County 810 for about eight miles turn left (south) onto Renville County Hwy 10 for about one mile until you cross the Minnesota River.
- Drive Yellow Medicine County Hwy 21 for another 1/2 mile to the junction of State Hwy 67.
- Turn right onto State Hwy 67 for approximately nine miles. As you travel you will pass Upper Sioux Agency State Park and Historic Site and eventually enter into the city of Granite Falls.
- At the junction of State Hwy 67 and State Hwy 23, turn right onto 67/23 for one block to the junction with US Hwy 212 (stoplights).
- Turning left onto Hwy 212 at the stoplights you will travel northwest along the Minnesota River 14 miles to the City of Montevideo.
- A gap in designation occurs through this area due to non-scenic areas and commercial and industrial development.

## From Montevideo to Ortonville

- Follow the signs at the jct of US Hwy 212 and State Hwy 59 (stoplights). Go straight at the stoplights along State Hwy 59 for one block where you can turn left to continue on State Hwy 59/7.
- Travel for 7.5 miles to the junction with Chippewa County Hwy 13 north of the city of Watson.
- Turn left onto County 13 and you will travel 2.75 miles and cross the Minnesota River at Lac qui Parle Dam and Recreation Area and into Lac qui Parle County where the road number changes from Chippewa County 13 to Lac qui Parle 33.
- Following 8 miles along County 33 you will pass Lac qui Parle State Park, Refuge, and Wildlife Management Area.
- At the junction of County 33 and State Hwy 40 turn left onto State Hwy 40 for about four miles to the junction with State Hwy 119.
- Turn right onto Hwy 119 and travel north five miles to Lac qui Parle County Hwy 34 where you turn left toward the town of Louisburg.
- Travel five miles west on Hwy 34 to the junction with Lac qui Parle County Hwy 19 south of Louisburg and turn right (north) onto Hwy 19 and to the city limits where another gap occurs due to non-scenic development areas.
- Signs direct the traveler easily through this small town on Hwy 19 to the junction with Lac qui Parle County Hwy 38 where you will turn left (west) and travel seven miles to the junction of US Hwy 75.
- Turning right onto Hwy 75 you will travel about 13 miles toward the city of Ortonville and you will pass the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.
- At the Ortonville city limits another gap in designation occurs.
- Turn left at the junction of US Hwy 75 and State Hwy 7. Hwy 7 pulls the traveler through downtown Ortonville.
- Travel along Big Stone Lake northwest of the city about 24 miles past Big Stone Lake State Park and Bonanza Environmental Learning Center to the city of Beardsley. In Beardsley, a gap occurs within city limits.
- Continue to follow State Hwy 7/28 almost 10 miles toward the city of Browns Valley. Another gap occurs in Browns Valley but the route extends on the west side of Browns Valley for a half mile to the South Dakota border where a wayside rest includes byway information. The byway designation ends at the state border.

## Getting to the Byway



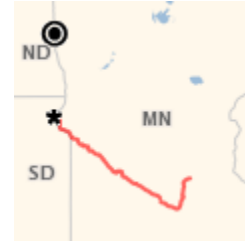
### Nearby cities

**Fargo, ND** (99 miles / 159.33 km, 1 hour 35 minutes)


**Start:**  Hector Int'l Airport  
N 46.905° W 96.823° [?]

- Directions:**
- From Hector Airport travel west on US Highway 81 to Interstate 29.
  - Turn onto southbound I-29 and follow it approximately 100 miles to Roberts County (South Dakota) Road 10 (Sisseton exit).
  - Turn east on County Road 10 toward Browns Valley (approximately 10 miles).
  - At the Minnesota state border and Minnesota State Highway 7/28 the byway begins.

**Junction with byway:** \* Highway 7/28, Minnesota state line  
N 45.599° W 96.850° [?]

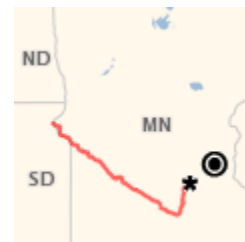


**Minneapolis, MN** (44 miles / 70.81 km, 55 minutes)

**Start:**  I-35W southbound, Minneapolis, MN  
N 44.971° W 93.253° [?]

- Directions:**
- Take I-35W south to I-494.
  - Follow I-494 west to US-169.
  - Take US-169 southwest to Belle Plaine.
  - Get on MN-25 and go north to CR-6 where the byway begins.

**Junction with byway:** \* Intersection of MN-25 and MN-40  
N 44.643° W 93.767° [?]



## Road Trip: History Tour of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway (Eastern Half)

**Departure:** St. Thomas Church (in Jessenland Township), Minnesota

**Destination:** New Ulm, Minnesota

**Time to allow:** 1 day

Travel the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway and visit many of southwestern Minnesota's historic sites along this scenic river.

This itinerary describes a route that follows the byway where possible, and encompasses the eastern half of the byway. For more itineraries, visit the byway's website.

### Day 1

- **Start: St. Thomas Church (in Jessenland Township)**



**Suggested time at this stop:**

15 minutes

Begin your journey at the St. Thomas Church, located at the intersection of the byway and County Highway 19, approximately 5 miles north of Henderson. The current church was built in 1870 to replace previous structures, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. St. Thomas Church was the first Irish agrarian settlement in Minnesota.

• **Stop 2: Joseph R. Brown Heritage Center & Minnesota River Center**

**From previous stop:** 11 minutes / 5.5 mi (8.8 km)

- Directions:**
- Head southwest on Scenic Byway Rd toward 238th St
  - Continue north on N 5th St
  - Turn right at Main St
  - Take the first left onto S 6th St

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

The Joseph R. Brown Heritage Center & Minnesota River Center tells the story of the Minnesota River Valley and Joseph R. Brown. Brown founded Henderson, was a United States Indian Agent for the Dakota, helped put together the Minnesota state constitution, and more. Come learn about this extraordinary man!

• **Stop 3: W.W. Mayo House**



**From previous stop:** 11 minutes / 5.8 mi (9.3 km)

- Directions:**
- Head south on 6th St toward Mill St
  - Take first left onto Mill St
  - Turn right onto MN-93 S/5th St
  - Take the Co Hwy 8 exit toward Le Sueur
  - Turn left at 336th St., which turns into Bridge St. Turn left onto Highway 112 (Main Street) and follow 230 feet to destination.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 30 minutes

Come see the site of Dr. William W. Mayo's first medical practice, made before he founded the Mayo Clinic. Dr. Mayo built this gothic-style home in 1859. In 1874 the founders of the Green Giant Company (the Cosgrove family) bought the home. Come take a self-guided, interpretive tour of the home, and learn about both of these prominent Minnesota families.

• **Stop 4: Le Sueur Museum and Green Giant Interpretive Center**

**From previous stop:** 3 minutes / 0.5 mi (0.8 km)

- Directions:**
- Head northwest on Highway 112 (Main Street).
  - Take a right onto Grove Street.
  - Take your next left onto N 2nd Street. The museum will be on your right.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 45 minutes

This former Le Sueur school building has been converted into a museum. Exhibits include a complete history of the Green Giant Company, an old-time drug store, displays about local military history and agriculture, and much more.

• **Stop 5: Traverse des Sioux Treaty Site History Center**

**From previous stop:** 38 minutes / 14.9 mi (23.8 km)

- Directions:**
- Head southwest on N 2nd St.
  - Turn right at Co Rd 36/Ferry St.
  - Take the first left onto Co Rd 36/S Main St.
  - Turn right at 390th St/Co Rd 23.
  - Take the first left onto Co Rd 23/Ottawa Rd.
  - Turn right at MN-99 W.
  - Turn right again at Minnesota Avenue.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour

The Traverse des Sioux Treaty Site History Center is split into a park and History Center. The park offers hiking and historical interpretation. Here, you can see the Treaty Rock, an old abandoned city, the 1850 steamboat landing, and more. In the History Center, explore three exhibit halls, an audiovisual room, and archives.

• **Stop 6: R.D. Hubbard House**

**From previous stop:** 30 minutes / 14.9 mi (23.8 km)

**Directions:**

- Head south on Minnesota Avenue/Old Minnesota Avenue.
- Turn left at MN-99 E/Broadway Avenue.
- Take the second right onto Co Rd 102/Rabbit Rd.
- Take the first right to stay on this road. \* Take the first left after that onto Co Rd 102.
- Turn right at MN-22 S.
- Turn right at Riverfront Dr.
- Turn left at W Hickory St.
- Turn right at S Broad St, and arrive at your destination.

**Suggested time at this stop:** 1 hour

Built in 1872, the Hubbard is the oldest remaining example of a 19th-century mansion in the area. The carriage house contains a collection of horse-drawn vehicles and antique autos. The house, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is open for walk-in visitors during the summer.

• **End: New Ulm**



**From previous stop:** 40 minutes / 28.4 mi (45.4 km)

**Directions:**

- Head southwest on Broad St.
- Turn right at onto Liberty St.
- Turn left at Riverfront Dr.
- Merge onto MN-60/US-169.
- Turn right at MN-68.
- Turn right at MN-15 N/MN-68.
- Turn left at Center St, and find yourself in New Ulm.

Spend the night in New Ulm, a town founded by German immigrants in 1854. New Ulm reflects rich German heritage in its fun festivals and enjoyable events.

---

**Totals for Day 1**

**Total Distance Traveled:** 70 miles / 112.0 km

**Total Travel Time:** 2 hours 13 minutes

**Total Stopping Time:** 4 hours