



**American
Travel Center**



Presents :
Finnish Heritage in Minnesota
9 Days / 8 Nights



It was 1864 and the Civil War was raging in the southern United States when the first sons of Suomi came to Minnesota. They were propelled to “try their luck” as they said, in this challenging section of America. All were facing tough conditions in the old country—farming worn out land, no possibility of owning their own farms, fear of being drafted into the Russian army, and enduring harsh winters—yet they all expressed the willingness to work hard to build a better life. Taking on unpenetrated or cut over lands, “probably no other group,” says a Finnish biographer, “could take over stump and rock strewn land, perhaps also burned over, and make successful farming country of it.” Songs of the pioneers are replete with the theme, “how like Finland is our new homeland.” Those who did not farm came to work hard in the mines on the Iron Range, the logging camps and sawmills, and on the railroads.

We have crafted an experience to let you explore the places where these hardy pioneers carved out new homes in the US, establishing farm cooperatives, schools, churches, newspapers, worker societies and even cooperative boarding houses. Starting in Minneapolis, you’ll visit Duluth, followed by Finland and Ely, where you can see restored uniquely Finnish structures such as the “house-barn” that served settlers well during the cold winters. After a trip through the Iron Range, where thousands of Finns worked in the mines, you’ll be introduced to New York Mills, Cokato and Menahga, the first Finnish communities in Minnesota.



Day One

Landing today in Minneapolis, get prepared to jump start your trip! Heaped with accolades, Minneapolis is overall just one great place to live — and visit. The city has been bestowed virtually every honor a destination can receive, including being ranked as one of the 10 Best Places to Live in 2010, among the 10 “greenest” cities in America and one of the three best urban areas for young professionals. It is consistently rated one of the cleanest cities in the nation. More recently, Minneapolis was honored as one of the top 10 cities for energy-efficiency, and for leading the nation in volunteering.

Start your visit to this wonderful destination with a comprehensive sightseeing tour with Grayline or Metro Connections. Travel down Summit Avenue to see where prosperous lumber barons once lived in their Victorian mansions. Stop at Minnehaha Falls, visit St. Anthony Falls, the birthplace of Minnesota, explore Nicollet Mall, see the beautiful Landmark Center and drive through the oldest and most exclusive neighborhoods in the city. If there’s time, learn more about Minneapolis at the Mill City Museum, which tells the story of a city built into the ruins of Washburn Mill, which was destroyed by a flour dust explosion in 1874, rebuilt to extraordinary capacity, and destroyed again by fire in 1991. An eight-story elevator ride up Flour Tower reveals the mill’s history floor by floor. Start your visit with the film “Minneapolis in 19 Minutes Flat.”

This evening or tomorrow night, enjoy a concert by the Minnesota Orchestra, conducted by world renowned Finnish conductor Osmo Vänskä. The Orchestra’s tenth music director, Vänskä is admired for his compelling interpretations of the standard, contemporary and Nordic repertoire, and has been awarded numerous awards and honors for his artistic contributions. For some of the best Nordic cuisine in the United States, have dinner tonight at the Bachelor Farmer.



Day Two

This morning, take the opportunity to put the rest of your trip into context at the Minnesota History Center. In this interactive museum, exhibits immerse visitors in the state's fascinating history and the lives of its diverse residents. Learn about Minnesota's early and active role in the Civil War, what life was like within immigrant communities, and how Minnesotans have and continue to survive the dramatic weather patterns that exist in this region. "If These Walls Could Talk" introduces you to 50 different families who lived in the same St. Paul house during the last hundred years. The "Percent for Art" installations in the building add a special ambience.

Later, a visit to The Landing, located in the Minnesota River Heritage Park, lets you see how settlers lived while they were establishing farmsteads and villages on the frontier from the 1840s to the 1890s. Authentic buildings and guides in period costume bring the Lower Minnesota River Valley alive at Major Murphy's Inn, the ferry crossing and the Pond Grist Mill.

A trip to Minneapolis is not complete without a stop at Ingebretsen's, an "old world marketplace" since 1921, that features Nordic gifts, needlework, clothing and food. Be sure to sample some *lefse*, traditional Nordic potato pastry, while you are there.

If you were able to attend a Minnesota Orchestra performance last evening, tonight plan to see "A Prairie Home Companion" at the Fitzgerald Theater. Whether or not there actually is a Lake Wobegon, Garrison Keillor's introduction to Minnesota heritage does an incredibly good job of capturing the spirit of the church supper, ice fishing trip and other local traditions in a very humorous way.



Day Three

Traveling northeast today toward Duluth, you can follow the Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Drive, a very peaceful alternative to the freeway. The route begins in Banning State Park, where the Kettle River tumbles over boulders followed by a series of absolutely delightful towns.

Just north of Duluth, the Esko Historical Museum is a wonderful collection of seven late-19th century buildings that tell the story of a town, an era, and a culture. The 1897 School House, complete with traditional school bell, is filled with historical documents and artifacts. Imagine yourself living in the Kangas Log Farm House, or Pioneer Log Home, built in 1898. The Palkie Grist Mill was instrumental in the grinding of rye into flour, while the "Riihi," a grain-drying shed or granary, is thought to be one of only two left in the country. Visit the unique "Savu Sauna" or smoke sauna, and the "Liiteri," a storage shed that houses a horse-drawn school bus, a sleigh and other farm vehicles and tools of the time. A modern shelter protects a 1938 D-8 Caterpillar snowplow.

In Duluth, you can explore Finnish Heritage at the St. Louis County Heritage Center, which houses the Lake Superior Railroad Museum, the recently rededicated Immigrant Waiting Room, and several additional museums and arts organizations. As the most important port at the westernmost end of the Great Lakes, Duluth was heavily involved in fur trading and lumbering, and later in transporting iron ore and coal to the eastern United States. The Lake Superior Maritime Visitors Center has great exhibits about shipping, and for an up close and personal look, you can tour the S.S. William A. Irving, the proud flagship of the U.S. Great Lakes Fleet that transported iron, coal, and visiting dignitaries. This evening, get out on the water yourself on a Harbor Cruise.



Day Four

It was only a little over a hundred years ago that the Finns began settling the remote outposts of northern Minnesota, arriving by boat in the summer and dogsled in the winter. They chose the land because it felt like the rugged old country, even though they endured great hardships carving farms out of dense forests and rock strewn land. A robust timber trade soon emerged to provide more employment and schoolhouses, roads, and farmers' co-ops sprang up. It may be hard to imagine, but electricity arrived here only 75 years ago.

As you make your way up the North Shore National Scenic Byway, be sure to stop at Gooseberry Falls, famous for its easy-access waterfalls and great views of the shoreline. A bit further north, Split Rock Lighthouse is one of Minnesota's most famous landmarks. It was completed in 1910 in response to shipwrecks off the remote Lake Superior coast. Now restored to its original condition, it offers a glimpse into life at a lighthouse in the 1920s.

Soon, you'll arrive in Finland—Finland, Minnesota that is. Eight authentic buildings including the John Pine Homestead, the Fenstad Utility Building, the original Park Hill School, Heritage Sauna, a storage building, a blacksmith shop and the Heritage Museum, let you truly experience Finnish farm life in upper Minnesota.

From there, it's a short trip to Ely, where Charles Kuralt commented, "on the map, Ely appears to be the end of the road. For people who love the wilderness, beauty and solitude, on the contrary, it's the center of the world." The city is home to the world class International Wolf Center, which illuminates one of the most elusive and misunderstood animals on the planet. Exhibits about interactions between Wolves and Humans are particularly interesting. Nearby, you can learn about and observe bears, their habits and habitats first hand at the North America Bear Center.



American
Travel Center



american driving vacations



Day Five

A special historic treat awaits today as you explore the Embarrass region on a three-hour Finnish Homestead Heritage Tour. The tour includes handcrafted log farm structures that are examples of the distinctive construction techniques the Finns used for centuries. The sauna on this tour is so special that it is on the National Register of Historic Places. Other special structures include the Seitaniemi Housebarn, a totally unique structure reminiscent of the buildings constructed when no one wanted to go outside to milk the cows. It may be the only one of its kind still in existence. Also in Embarrass, you can view a farmers' co-op, which served as a focal point for each traditional farming community.

Hockey fans will enjoy the United States Hockey Hall of Fame Museum in Eveleth, where visitors can test their skills on the replica rink, visit "Our National Shrine of American Hockey," and watch the 1980 US Olympic Team take home the Gold! Not surprisingly, many of the best hockey players are of Finnish heritage.

Later today on the Iron Range, you can learn how the Finns transformed their lives when mining replaced farming as a dominant way of life in this area. A stop at the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm introduces you to the spirit and sensibility of the region's immigrant peoples. Started as a way to celebrate the ethnicities of the folks that migrated to the region in the early 20th century to find work, the facility has grown to house artifacts and explore the geography that made the region what it is today. The Minnesota Museum of Mining tells more of the story. You can climb aboard the massive trucks used to move ore, sit in the driver's seat of a steam shovel and watch a steam-driven diamond drill as it cracks the rocks to deliver the ore.



Day Six

It's a very short drive from Chisholm to Grand Rapids, so you'll have plenty of time to explore before moving on to New York Mills and Little Falls. The Forest History Center in Grand Rapids provides the opportunity to explore the importance of timber as a resource to those who lived and worked in northern Minnesota. After an introduction at the Interpretive Center, join a tour or grab a map and head to the living history Logging Camp or join the crew of a "wanigan" barge getting pine logs ready to push downstream. Walk the nature trails or survey the forest from the 100-ft fire tower.

In New York Mills, visit one of the oldest Finnish settlements in Minnesota. You can still hear Finnish spoken in the cafes in New York Mills, where the first settlers arrived in 1874. You can still buy flatbread at the bakery and many families have their own saunas. Even though there are no more public saunas, many resorts in the area offer them. The Finnish newspaper was published until 1985. Finn Creek Open Air Museum, an eighteen-acre interpretive site dedicated to the preservation of Finnish culture, features a 1900 original farmstead, summer kitchen, log barns, a "Savu" smoke sauna, school house, sawmill, gift shop and more. In late August, join the celebrations at the Finn Creek Festival, with traditional entertainment, demonstrations and food.

The Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site in Little Falls tells the story of the famous aviator's childhood along the Mississippi River, his historic 1927 flight across the Atlantic Ocean, and his family's subsequent triumphs and tragedies. See photographs, mementos and artifacts of Lindbergh's life, and sit in a full-scale replica of the Spirit of St. Louis cockpit, imagining that incredible journey.



Day Seven

The Cokato Finnish-American Historical Society carries out educational and social initiatives throughout the year to preserve the history and culture of the Finnish pioneers who settled in this area. The Society owns and operates Finnish Pioneer Park (or Temperance Corner), which comprises four historical buildings that made up another of Minnesota's early Finnish settlements. The 1866 log cabin on the property once housed more than 15 people during the winter. The oldest Savu Sauna in North America, one of the oldest functioning temperance halls, and the Lee Schoolhouse, which dates back to 1899, are also open to tour. Pioneer Memorial was erected in 1949 in memory of the early Finnish settlers.

In downtown Cokato, visit the award-winning Cokato Museum for more about the history of the town and surrounding townships. The 1905 Gust Akerlund Photography Studio was used for more than 50 years by Akerlund as he chronicled Cokato. Fully restored and displaying Akerlund's cameras and equipment and furnishings, the studio is the only one of its kind in the Upper Midwest.

In St. Paul tonight, enjoy a Minnesota Wild hockey game (in season), featuring star players from Finland! The University of Minnesota men's and women's ice hockey teams also have great Finnish players.



Day Eight

Back in Minneapolis, you have to spend at least one day at Mall of America, the largest shopping complex in the nation. Imagine a small town of 12,000 people that 35-40 million people visit each year attending over 400 events and shopping in more than 520 stores. That's the Mall of America!

Choose carefully, because if you spend only 10 minutes in each store, your visit will take 86 hours! In addition to the stores, there are 25 rides and attractions in Nickelodeon Universe and a 1.2 million gallon Sea Life Aquarium. Those fish eat nearly 200 pounds of food every day! Skylights deliver a very pleasant environment that is kept at 70 degrees Fahrenheit year round.

Yet, this is no ordinary Mall. It includes a campus where high school students learn about hospitality, the visual arts, law enforcement and retail management. Classes teach English as a second language. Every day, hundreds of mall walkers use the Mall for exercise and to socialize.

Enjoy your day—there is truly no other place in the world like this!



Day Nine

As you depart Minneapolis today, we trust you have enjoyed a fascinating exploration through Finnish culture and heritage in Minnesota. We wish you a safe and pleasant journey home.