

NEED MORE ADVENTURE while in Minnesota?

Check out these individual
field trip possibilities

The following are *some* of the parks and preserves within or near the metropolitan area that could be easily visited in one day or less. The state parks require a daily fee; the Scientific and Natural Areas are restricted preserves (no collecting, pets, picnicking, etc. allowed). Additionally there are many county parks offering opportunities for birding, spring flora quests, and general hiking enjoyment.

This information comes from the Department of Natural Resources website <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/index.html> where additional information and maps may be found.

Southeast Metro Area ...

Fort Snelling State Park

Take Highway 5 (West Seventh Street) west to the Post Road exit south and follow the signs.



Located in the heart of the Twin Cities, this park offers extensive hiking, bike and ski trails that link to Minnehaha Park and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Canoe on Gun Club Lake, play golf, swim in Snelling Lake, or hike on Pike Island where the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers converge. Interpretive exhibits and films on display in the Thomas C. Savage Visitor Center give visitors a good background on the history and resources of the park and area. Trails also allow visitors to hike up to the historic Fort Snelling for a view of military life in the 1820s. This is a day-use only park; no camping is available.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

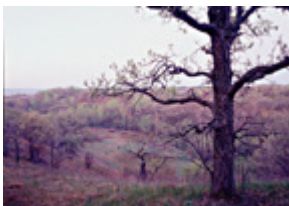
Take Highway 5 (West Seventh Street) west to the Post Road exit, continue past Fort Snelling and follow the signs to the Refuge.



To get a glimpse of the multiple habitats within the Minnesota Valley take a hike on the Hillside trail just outside the Visitor Center. The half-mile loop trail will take you through prairie, hillside forest, and wetlands. Ask for the Songbird Trail Pack at the information desk to learn about the birds that use the Refuge. One may also enjoy a panoramic view of Long Meadow Lake on our observation platform.

St. Croix Savanna Scientific and Natural Area

Take I-94 east about 9 miles to MN Hwy 95 (almost to Wisconsin) and go south to Bayport. Located approximately 0.5 miles south of Bayport on MN Hwy 95. Park along the shoulder of highway near the SNA sign.



Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: St. Paul-Baldwin Plains & Moraines
The St. Croix Savanna occurs along a south-facing bluff, with views of the St. Croix River. Its slopes of loamy sand have eroded extensively, their soils now supporting an alluvial forest along the bottom. Scattered bur oak and pin oak on the open gravel prairie become increasingly dense.

The St. Croix Savanna is the best hill prairie and oak savanna along the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.

Afton State Park

Take I-94 east about 9 miles to MN Hwy 95, then 7 miles south to County Road 20, go 3 miles east.



Grand oaks and delicate prairie flowers grace the rugged, rolling landscape of this park. Trails traverse remnant and restored prairies, wind down deep ravines and rise up to the grassy ridgetops and bluffs overlooking the scenic St. Croix River.

Hastings Scientific and Natural Area

Take I-94 to US 61. Go south approximately 13 miles to Hastings. Located in Hastings on MN Hwy 291 near the eastern city limits. Park in city park on west side of SNA.



© MN DNR

Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: Blufflands

The Hastings site contains two forest communities: the upland hardwood forest is dominated by old growth red oak, sugar maple, and basswood; the floodplain forest, by cottonwood, green ash, and silver maple. American elm, formerly the most important species, has all but vanished due to Dutch elm disease. A wide diversity of plant species

occur on this site, including the very rare snow trillium. Talus slopes and steep escarpments of dolomitic limestone provide habitat for specialized plants, such as mosses, lichens, and liverworts.

Southwest Metro area ...

Savage Fen Scientific and Natural Area

Take I-35E south to I-494, go west about 1 mile and exit on MN Hwy 13. Located in Savage, .5 miles south on MN Hwy 13, then 0.25 miles east on 128th St. Park on south side of road.



© For MNDNR by ColdSnap Photography

Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: Big Woods

Savage Fen is notable for its rare wetland plant community. A series of alkaline seeps and springs emerge from the base of a bluff formed of calcareous glacial deposits, which were left by the Des Moines lobe at the end of the Wisconsin Glacial period. Rare plant species include valerian and marsh arrow grass throughout the fen

community. The fen community found on the moist peat substrate is very sensitive to disturbance.

Wolsfeld Woods Scientific and Natural Area

Take I-94 west to I-394 (US12). Located from Long Lake 0.5 mi north on Brown Road to County Road 6. Park in the Trinity Lutheran church parking lot.



© For MNDNR by Cold Snap

Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: Big Woods
Wolsfeld Woods, named for its German homesteaders, is a premier example of the original "Big Woods" forest that once covered the south central part of the state. Very few remnants remain due to urban expansion, agriculture, and industrial development. This large, mature stand of hardwoods covers gently rolling hills with a wide variety of tree species, including red oak, ironwood, butternut, maple, elm, and basswood.

Northwest Metro Area ...

Helen Allison Savanna Scientific and Natural Area

Take I-35E north to I-694, west to US10, north to MN Hwy 65. Follow Hwy 65 north about 15 miles to East Bethel and County Road 24 east (237th Ave. N), then 3.5 miles south and east on County Road 26 (229th Ave. N), then 0.25 mile south on County Road 15. Parking is on west side of road.



© MN DNR, Robert Dana

Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: Anoka Sand Plain
This SNA provides an excellent example of sand dune plant succession, with blowouts and dunes in various stages of stabilization. Community types include oak sand savanna, dry prairie with bur oak and pin oak, thickets of willow and aspen, and sedge marshes in scattered depressions.

Uncas Dunes Scientific and Natural Area

Take I-94 west to US 169, go north to Zimmerman. Located from Zimmerman 4 miles west on County Road 4, then 1.5 miles south to the Sand Dunes State Forest Campground, follow campground road to SNA sign.



© MN DNR

Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: [Anoka Sand Plain](#)
Uncas Dunes, located within the Anoka sand plain, contains a relic dunefield associated with Glacial Lake Grantsburg. Natural plant communities found here include oak savanna, oak forest, and wetland. The rare Uncas skipper gives this site its name; this is one of only two sites in the state where this species is found.

Lake Maria State Park

Take I-94 west to Monticello. Exit onto County Road 39, go west to Wright County Road 111 then north to park entrance.



Visitors who come to Lake Maria State Park will enjoy one of the few remaining stands of the "Big Woods," a maple, oak and basswood forest that once covered part of southern Minnesota. Take a stroll on the boardwalk which winds through a marsh. Lake Maria State Park is home to the Blandings turtle, easily identified by bright yellow spots on its shell. It is one of Minnesota's threatened species.

Clear Lake Scientific And Natural Area

Take I-94 west to the Clearwater (MN Hwy 24) exit. Go east to County Road 8 and then south on county road 57 for 1 mile. Park on west side of road.



© MN DNR, Karen Van Norman

Type: Deciduous Woods; Subsection: Anoka Sand Plain
Clear Lake SNA contains a mosaic of oak forest, floodplain forest, and old field sumac thicket, along with a small population of the rare Hill's thistle.

Northeast Metro Area ...

Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area

Take I-35E to Forest Lake, Wyoming or Stacy exits and go west. The office is 7 miles west of Forest Lake on Anoka County Road 18.



Carlos Avery WMA is Approximately 23,000 acres. It consists of about 2/3 wetland 1/3 upland and is managed primarily for deer, waterfowl and wild turkeys and hunting opportunities. There are 20 pools where water is actively managed to produce habitat for waterfowl. Very popular area for bird watching throughout the year.

William O'Brien State Park

Take I-35E north to MN Hwy 36, east to MN Hwy 95. The park is located 12 miles north of Stillwater on Highway 95, near the town of Marine-on-St. Croix.



William O'Brien provides a beautiful setting for quality recreation along the banks of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Hiking trails offer quiet exploration of the park's rolling, wooded hills. Ideal for canoeing, the river is also a migratory pathway that offers visitors an exciting diversity of sights and sounds.

Interstate State Park

Take I-35E north to US 8. The park is located on the St. Croix River as the highway crosses into Wisconsin.



Visitors can climb the cliffs of the St. Croix River Dalles, canoe the flat-water, watch kayakers rush through the rapids, or relax on an excursion boat. Spring brings a great diversity of wildflowers and in fall, the St. Croix River Valley forest is ablaze in the autumn colors of red, gold, and orange. The geology that formed this park intrigues visitors, and brings geologists from all over the world. At least 10 different lava flows are exposed in the park, along with two distinct glacial deposits, and traces of old streams valleys and faults.

Wild River State Park

Take I-35E north to MN Highway 95, then east to County Road 12. Drive 3 miles on County Road 12 to park entrance.



Wild River is located along the beautiful St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Day visitors can enjoy a leisurely paddle down the St. Croix River from the Sunrise river access to the southern park river access. Walk under white pines and compare yourself to the height, width, age, and weight of the trees that once stood in the St. Croix River valley. Learn how logging in the 1800s affected the "endless" pine forests and the culture of present-day Minnesota.