

Two-Day Lake Country Scenic Byway Tour 1

Day 1: (In-town lodging is available accommodating small to larger groups, as Park Rapids is home to three larger motel chains.)

Continental breakfast may be available at your lodging or gourmet coffee is available at Jack Pine Java and Bella Caffè or try a healthy smoothie from Beyond Juice, all on or within a block of our Main Avenue as is McDonald's if fast food is your desire. The locals prefer Great Northern named after our train depot. For a breakfast to remember, a logging camp-style complete breakfast at Rapid River Logging Camp is the answer. Rapid River Logging Camp is about 7 miles from town but well worth the trip.

Depending on where breakfast has left you... If you're near the downtown area, you're in for a great shopping experience. Our city is known for its unique shops, one-of-a-kind items and legendary center street parking. Our historic Main Street is extra wide, the legacy of a street laid out wide enough for logging horse teams to turn around and come back down the street. Visit more than 55 unique stores offering everything from gifts, jewelry, collectibles and items for the home or cabin to furniture, moccasins and more. Enjoy homemade candy, hand-dipped ice cream cones or a malt at Minnesoda Fountain, an old-time soda fountain with '50s and '60s decor.

Leave Park Rapids & head north on US Hwy 71.

Stop at the quaint and delightful Summerhill Farm. Visit each of the seven gift shops with its own special appeal and different varieties of gifts, decorative accessories, clothing and much more. Depending on the timing of your tour, you could take in a delectable dessert and coffee or lunch at their delightful Sun Porch Restaurant.

A mile or two farther north, your lunch options expand with Vacationaire Lodge, Restaurant & Lounge where you can enjoy lunch or dinner overlooking beautiful Island Lake.

Another two miles north you could stop at World of Christmas where it's Christmas all year round. Shop the collectible ornaments, crèches and don't miss out on some homemade fudge. Work off your fudge with a round of miniature golf (no golf prowess necessary) and then take the winner on and out-manuever them on the go-cart track.

Eleven miles up US 71, you arrive at the Jacob V. Brower Visitor Center at Itasca State Park, the Headwaters of the Mississippi River. Itasca is Minnesota's oldest state park, established in 1891, and the most visited state park with 32,000-plus acres and more than 100 lakes. Visit the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) exhibit and learn more about the men who were responsible for much of the work at Itasca, including tree

planting and construction of many of the buildings built in the park. Gift shops also are available. Visit Peace Pipe Vista. Have lunch or dinner at historically impressive Douglas Lodge. Choose an entrée, several with Minnesota flavors: walleye, wild rice and local winery wines. Watch nature while you dine.

Take a two-hour, naturalist-narrated guided tour aboard the historic 1948 Chester Charles II as it cruises on Lake Itasca. While at the park you will be able to walk across the Headwaters of the Mississippi River.

After leaving Itasca State Park, why not travel a little farther and stop at Forestedge Winery for a tour and tasting. This homegrown winery provides its visitors with a stroll through nature trails, a wander in the gardens and a taste of 11 varieties of wine. After wine tasting, step next door to the Gallery for original arts and fine crafts. Forestedge Winery's Art Fair is the third weekend in August.

If you started out early enough, you can leave Forestedge Winery and arrive for dinner at the Brauhaus German Restaurant & Lounge as you head back east on the Lake Country Scenic Byway. Enjoy an authentic German dining experience presented by servers in traditional German attire. The Brauhaus is also open for lunch, offering daily specials, terrific desserts and a wine list.

If your hunger pangs can wait just a couple more miles, there is yet another dining option at the Velvet Antler & Whitetail Tavern. They serve breakfast, lunch and dinner year-round from burgers to lobster, accompanied by the soft dinnertime sounds of Don Holmen.

Plan to take in a theater performance. There are a variety of choices; whether an afternoon matinee or evening performance, you are sure to find something that suits you. Our area offers opportunities to go to Community Theater performances, fun family "mini-Branson" style music and comedy, musicals and even light opera, if you can time your tour right, options abound! See our website online at: www.parkrapids.com and check out attractions for a listing of the theaters and link to their Websites for times, performances and contacts.

Day Two:

If you haven't already had a meal at Rapid River Logging Camp, you may want to go there for a breakfast to remember. Start your day in the same fashion that the lumberjacks did a half century or more ago. Enjoy their great pancakes and visit the Cook Shanty, where lumberjack cookies are baked daily in the same tradition used years ago. Tour the "Camp" to see equipment and methods used to move massive logs to float downstream to a mill that once turned out boards to build homes in Park Rapids. The Logging Camp offers breakfast from 7:30-Noon, lunch/dinner from 1-9pm. All meals

are served family-style on huge platters and you eat from tin plates and drink from tin cups.

Head to downtown Park Rapids for a great shopping experience. Our city is known for its unique shops, one-of-a-kind items and legendary center street parking. Our historic Main Street is extra wide, the legacy of a street laid out wide enough for logging horse teams to turn around and come back down the street. Visit more than 55 unique stores offering everything from gifts, jewelry, collectibles and items for the home or cabin to furniture, moccasins and more. Enjoy homemade candy, hand-dipped ice cream cones or a malt at Minnesoda Fountain, an old-time soda fountain with '50s and '60s decor.

You will want to board the bus or vehicle and travel south on Hwy 71 to visit the All Veterans Memorial Park, a memorial in honor of all branches of the Armed Forces and all the wars members have served in. The memorial park is next to the Chamber of Commerce & Wayside Rest, the perfect break area.

Now we're off to the Northland Bison Ranch Tour. Bison have been called the most important wild animals in the development of North America. This tour will bring you up close and personal to these majestic creatures that once numbered in the millions and then narrowly escaped extinction. A bus takes you out in the field and so close you can take memorable photographs. If you are part of a tour bus group, you may be able to make reservations and enjoy a wonderful Buffalo Burger and picnic lunch as well.

You will pass both the Velvet Antler and Brauhaus German Restaurant & Lounge mentioned in Day 1 if a meal is needed on your way to Akeley.

As you pass through Akeley, you will want to visit the Red River Museum to see a re-creation of Akeley and the Red River Lumber Company during the logging days. You will also want to visit the Paul Bunyan statue downtown for a photo op of you seated in his huge hand.

If your first-day adventures didn't include a trip to our local winery, you are just 9 miles away. Take Hwy 64 just past Akeley and head north. See yesterday's itinerary for more winery details.

If you have time and money, head 13 miles farther east on Hwy 34 from Akeley along our Lake Country Scenic Byway, traveling through Walker, to Northern Lights Casino,

Head back from Walker along the Lake Country Scenic Byway toward Park Rapids and enjoy more scenic beauty and take in more of its attractions and sites.

Our Web Site: www.parkrapids.com

Many of the above listed activities are by special arrangement, especially for large groups.

Be sure to contact:
Our Friendly Chamber Staff
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(800)247-0054