



Helping you feel at
home abroad.

Relocation Guide to Minneapolis, MN

www.iorworld.com

IOR makes every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide is as current as possible. If you notice errors, or information which is no longer accurate, please contact us immediately so that we may correct the issue.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW	1
EMERGENCY	5
HOUSING	8
US EDUCATION SYSTEM	15
SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA	23
BANKING	26
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING	28
LOCAL REGISTRATION	32
LIVING AND SHOPPING	33
RECREATION	37
EXPAT RESOURCES	40
U.S. IDIOMS	42
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS	44

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW



Photo courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Minneapolis is the 16th- largest metropolitan area in the United States and the largest city in the state of Minnesota. Minneapolis and its neighboring city of Saint Paul combine to create the Twin Cities which is the second-largest economic center besides Chicago. Minneapolis is the county seat of Hennepin County and sits along both banks of the Mississippi River, above the Minnesota River.

The city is abundantly rich in water with thirteen lakes, wetlands, the Mississippi River, creeks and waterfalls (many of which are connected by parkways in the Chain of Lakes), and the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway. It was once the world's flour milling capital and a hub for timber. In the 21st century, it is the primary business center between Chicago and Seattle, with Minneapolis proper containing America's fifth-highest concentration of Fortune 500 companies. As an integral link to the global economy, Minneapolis is categorized as a global city. Noted for its strong music and performing arts scenes, Minneapolis is home to both the award-winning Guthrie Theater and the historic First Avenue nightclub, the latter of which helped launch the career of musical icon Prince.

The economy of Minneapolis today is based in commerce, finance, rail and trucking services, health care, and industry. Smaller components are in publishing, milling, food processing, graphic arts, insurance, education, and high technology. Industry produces metal and automotive products, chemical and agricultural products, electronics, computers, precision medical instruments and devices, plastics, and machinery.

Popular Science named Minneapolis the “Top Tech City” in the US

City Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Minneapolis](#)
- Population: 410,939 (46th)
- Land Area: 58.42 mi
- Languages Spoken: Over 100
- Parks: *Best in the US* 16.6% of the city is park land, accumulating to 770 square feet of parkland per resident

- [Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Department](#)
- [Minneapolis Central Library](#)
- [Weather Today in Minneapolis](#)

History

- [Timeline of Minneapolis History](#)
- [Minnesota Historical Society](#)

What to See, Sightseeing Tours, Value Packages and Passes, Tourist Information

- [Minneapolis Visitor Information](#)
- [Information on attractions](#)
- [Tours](#)
- [Events](#)

Where to Find Arts & Entertainment

- [Minneapolis.org](#)
- [Mspmag.com](#)
- [Startribune.com](#)

Other Resources:

- [Theatre tickets and schedules](#)
- [Museums](#)
- [Cinema listings and schedules](#)

Where to Eat

- Locate restaurants by type; see menus; read customer reviews: [Minneapolis.eater.com](#)
- Make online restaurant reservations with [Open Table](#)
- Browse restaurants: [Zagat](#) publishes a respected guide to restaurants with trusted reviews and ratings.

Tipping & Sales Tax

When you eat in a restaurant in the US, you are expected to leave your server a tip, as it is not included in the final bill. In a bar, café, or modest restaurant, 15% of the total bill is acceptable. However, in an upscale restaurant (fine dining), a tip calculated on 20% of the total bill is now the norm in Minneapolis.

In addition, you will be paying the 6.875 % sales tax.

Find Customer Reviews on Restaurants, Fitness Clubs, Shopping, Services, and Much More:

- [City search](#)
- [Yelp](#)

Daylight Saving Time

Minneapolis is in the Central Time Zone and participates in Daylight Saving Time. Daylight Saving Time begins at 2:00 a.m. local time on the second Sunday in March. On the first Sunday in November areas on Daylight Saving Time return to Standard Time at 2:00 a.m. The names of each time zone change along with Daylight Saving Time. Eastern Standard Time (EST) becomes Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), and so forth. Some areas of the United States not using Daylight Saving Time include, Arizona, parts of Indiana, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa.

Area Map



Climate/Weather

Minneapolis has a humid continental climate typical of the Upper Midwest. The city experiences a full range of precipitation and related weather events, including snow, sleet, ice, rain, thunderstorms, and fog. The highest recorded temperature was 108 °F (42 °C) in July 1936 while the lowest was -41 °F (-41 °C) in January 1888. The snowiest winter of record was 1983–84, when 8.2 feet or 98.4 inches (250 cm) of snow fell.

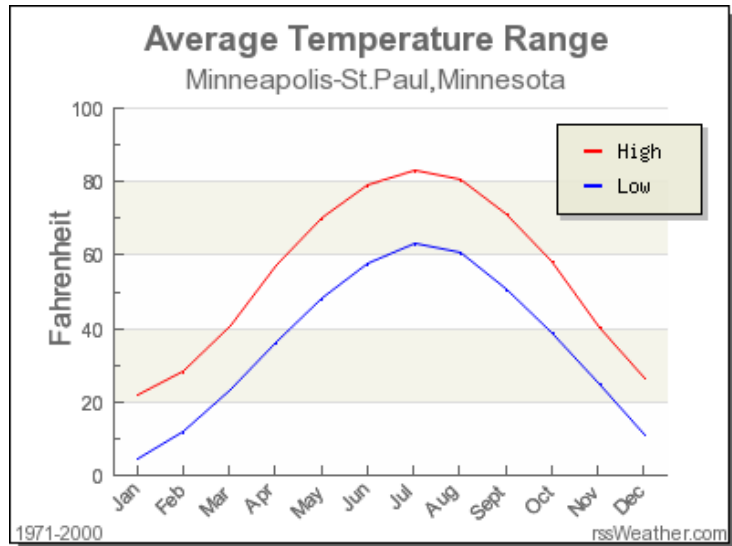


Photo Courtesy of [rssweather](http://rssweather.com)

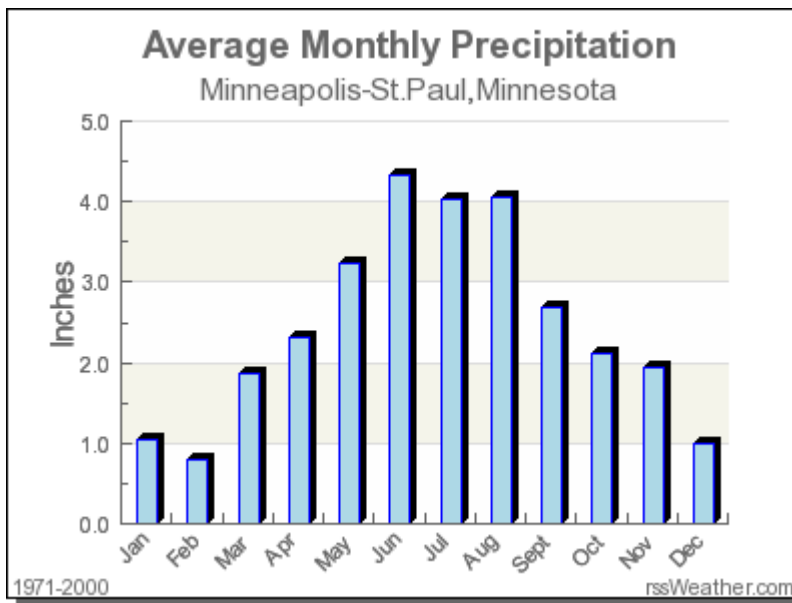


Photo Courtesy of [rssweather](http://rssweather.com)

EMERGENCY

**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY
DIAL 911
For
FIRE, POLICE & AMBULANCE**

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

If you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up. The police will automatically be dispatched to your home to make sure there are no problems. Explain to the Operator the call was an accident.

Other Important Numbers:

CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

WORK PHONE NUMBER

[POISON CONTROL](#) (800) 222-1222

[ANIMAL POISON CONTROL](#) (888) 426-4435

Dial 3-1-1 to make non-emergency requests for service, such as hazardous potholes, stray animals, or traffic signal malfunctions.

Safety and Security

While Minneapolis is relatively safe, it is still a major city. Like every major metropolitan area in the USA, there is some crime.

Take basic precautions: lock your car, lock your doors and windows in your home, be aware of strangers and things that just don't seem right. It is always better to be cautious.

Check [here for a list of crime rates per neighborhood in Minneapolis](#).

Urgent Care Centers

An Urgent Care Center is different than a Hospital Emergency Room. An Emergency room would be in an absolute emergency. You may visit an Urgent Care Center if, for example, you have a terrible ear ache and need medicine immediately but your Primary Care Physician's office is closed. Many Urgent Care Centers have extended hours and are open early morning until late evening during the week and also some weekend hours. Be sure to refer back to your health insurance company to clarify which urgent care centers and primary care physicians you are allowed to visit using your health insurance. Your insurance card should have a toll-free 1-800 number on the back for you to call and ask questions and clarify which urgent care center would be closest for you. Please always carry your insurance card with you!

Hennepin County Medical Center

[Hennepin Healthcare System](#), Inc. operates Hennepin County Medical Center in downtown Minneapolis and primary care clinics in Minneapolis on East Lake Street and in the Whittier Neighborhood and in the suburban communities of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley, Richfield, and St. Anthony.

- Minnesota's premier Level 1 Adult Trauma Center and Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center with many nationally recognized programs and specialties
- A recognized system of primary care clinics and retail clinics located throughout Hennepin County
- An essential teaching hospital for doctors who go on to practice throughout the state
- A safety net hospital providing care for low-income, the uninsured and vulnerable populations, and
- A major employer and economic engine in Hennepin County.

Hospitals & Clinics

- [Crown Medical Center](#)
- [University of Minnesota Medical Center \(Riverside ave\)](#)
- [Fairview University Med Center](#)
- [Abbott Northwestern Hospital](#)
- [Univeristy of Minnesota Medical Center \(SE Harvard St\)](#)
- [Twin Cities medical Clinic](#)
- [Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota](#)
- [Shriners Hospitals for Children – Twin Cities](#)
- [Minneapolis VA Health Care System](#)

Veterinary Clinics Minneapolis

- [Minneapolis Veterinary Hospital](#)
- [Lake Harriet Veterinary](#)
- [Lyndale Animal Hospital](#)
- [Pet License in Minneapolis](#)

Pharmacies

There are two major pharmacy chains in Minneapolis, found on nearly every block on commercial streets. Click on “Store Locator” and enter your zip (postal)code to find the pharmacy near you. Several pharmacies are open 24 hours. Check for hours of operation. Also the main grocery stores like HEB, Kroger’s, Randall’s and Wal-Mart have full service pharmacies.

- [Walgreens](#)
- [CVS](#)
- [Pharmacies in Minneapolis](#)

US Leasing/Housing Guide

A lease is an agreement that outlines the obligations of the owner and the tenants of a house or apartment. It is a legally binding document, so it is important for you to know the exact terms of the lease agreement before you sign it. Please do not sign a lease without reviewing it with your IOR DS Consultant.

Types of rental properties

- **Apartment**
An apartment is rented from a company or individual that owns the property. Apartment buildings are usually multistory with people over, under and beside each other with common hallways or walk ways. Apartments are often rented from a company or individual in the form of an individual lease with no bearing on the other tenants of the building (besides noise complaints, property damage, etc.)
- **Studio Apartments**
A studio apartment is basically a one room apartment with sleeping, dining and kitchen all in one room plus a full bathroom. A “convertible” or “alcove” studio may have a nook or area which can be sectioned off separately for sleeping.
- **Condominium**
A condo is a communally owned estate and the owners share the ownership of the common areas such as grounds and hallways. Condominiums may be apartment style buildings or town house type buildings, but condo owners do not usually own the land. Condo owners are required to pay monthly common maintenance charges, although these might be reflected in your rental rate (it is important to clarify this with your landlord).
- **Townhouse**
A Townhouse is a kind of structure where the individual properties are flush against each other with tiny front and back “yards” and shared walls between them. Almost always they are multistory single family. Usually townhouse owners own the property under their townhouse.
- **Single Family Houses**
Single-family houses are free-standing rental properties that are habited by one person or a family. As you do not share this rental space with any other tenants, single-family homes offer the most amount of privacy. Homes also often come with a parking spot and/or garage space, but may require that you handle certain maintenance items (i.e. your lawn, minor repairs, etc.)

Rental Agents

In most situations, your IOR consultant will partner with a local realtor to have access to the most current and extensive property listings as well as the realtor's expertise in preparing and negotiating leases. This agent receives a commission for their assistance, in most US locations this commission is paid by the Landlord, not the tenant. Your IOR DS Consultant will discuss this with you.

Renter's Rights

Tenants who lease or rent property are protected against discrimination by [The Fair Housing Act](#). If you think your rights have been violated, you may write a letter or telephone the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office nearest you. You have one year after the alleged violation to file a complaint with HUD, but you should file as soon as possible.

While you can generally expect the same service from landlords, it's important to know your state's laws. Each state and most major cities have their own tenant rights, laws and protections. [Here](#) are Minnesota's.

You can also visit the [HUD website here for a full guide to renters' rights by states](#).

If your rental property ever suffers any defects that make your place uninhabitable, your landlord has a duty to fix it. While some apartments let you make online requests for repairs, as well as provide a phone number for "emergencies," always make sure you document your request in writing. The landlord will then have a certain amount of time to make those repairs.

Privacy

You have the right to privacy. While the landlord owns the property, they can't access it anytime they want. All states have laws stating renters have a right to privacy while renting. Pretty much the only time the landlord can come into your rental without permission or notice is when they're responding to an emergency that threatens injury or property damage.

Any other time the landlord wants to enter your apartment, they need to have your permission and in most cases give you 24-hours' notice before entering.

What to expect from the landlord:

In most states, you are legally entitled to:

- Safe structural elements including floors, walls, roofs, and secure doors and windows.
- Privacy as described above.
- All electrical, plumbing, heating, and air conditioning systems function.
- Working hot and cold water.
- Exterminating infestations of rodents and other insects.
- Access to trash receptacles.
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
- Water, electricity, and gas bills are up to you to pay. **Your IOR consultant will assist you with this process.**
- Apartment buildings sometimes come with laundry and dryer machines in the basement.

Utilities and Appliances

Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you or provide information on connecting your utilities. It is possible some will be included in your rent, but typically most are not.

If you are moving from Europe to North America, you might be surprised at the relatively large size of the kitchen appliances in your accommodation, especially the refrigerator! It may also surprise some expats that properties are rented **with** appliances. In the US it is standard for properties to include a refrigerator, stove, and oven. Properties may also include a dishwasher, microwave, washer and dryer depending on the location, size, and price point.

****Note that you will need a social security number in order to register and pay for utilities****

Recycling

Minneapolis city ordinances requires residents to use the city's trash and recycling collection. Call 612 673-1114 (same as above) to set up Trash, recycling, water, sewer and storm water utilities in Minneapolis. Click [here](#) for more information.



The Lease Process

Review your housing budget with your IOR DS Consultant

Your DSC can help you understand what kind of property you can afford. You also need to take into account that you may be responsible for some of the utility costs of your rental.

Know what you want

What are you looking for in a property? Do you want a studio or a single bedroom? Maybe you want to rent a single family home? Do you need the property to come with appliances, including washer and dryer? Do want it to be close to school or your work? Do you want it to be within walking distance of retail, like groceries or coffee shops? Are you looking for a child friendly area?

Keep in mind that outside of the city center in major cities, there is not much public transportation and most locals drive everywhere.

Identify potential apartments

IOR offers home finding services to aid you with this process. Your consultant may work with a local broker who will help to organize appointments and visit properties. They will also assist in the rental application and the leasing process.

Common Abbreviations and Acronyms used in rental housing listings

Acronym	Meaning
24-hr mtn	24-hour emergency maintenance
AC or A/C	Air conditioning
Appls	Appliances
Apt	Apartment
BA	Bathroom
BR	Bedroom
Bsmt	Basement
CAC	Central air conditioning
DA	Dining area
Det	Detached
Dk	Deck
DR	Dining room
Dw (D/w)	Dishwasher
Eff	Efficiency
EiK	Eat-in kitchen
Fin bsmt	Finished basement
FDR	Formal dining room
FHA	Fair Housing Act
FMR	Fair market rent
FP	Floorplan
Gar	Garage
H/A	Handicapped accessible
H/W	Hardwood floors
Hi ceil	High ceilings
HVAC	Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning

Acronym	Meaning
LA	Living area
LR	Living room
MBR	Master bedroom
MBTH	Master bathroom
Neg	Negotiable
Ofc	Office
OSP	Off-street parking
Pkg	Parking
PM	Property manager (management)
Pvt	Private
Pwdr rm	Powder room (1/2 bath)
RE	Real estate
Renov	Renovated
Rf	Roof
Rm	Room
SF	Single-family
SFA	Single-family attached
SFD	Single-family detached
Sp, PI (S/p)	Swimming pool
Sq. ft	Square feet
Th (T/H)	Townhouse
Vw (vu)	View
W/A	Wheelchair accessible
W/W	Wall-to-wall carpeting

Visit

Make this process as efficient as possible by visiting as many potential properties as you can in one or two days. Try to go sometime during the week if possible. Your IOR DS consultant will work with you to set an appropriate schedule and to ensure that the properties you visit meet your needs as closely as possible.

What to do once you're there

As you look at the rental unit, be sure to ask a lot of questions. While you should keep small concerns to yourself about the unit while looking at it, feel free to ask the landlord or apartment manager any questions you might have that will help in your decision. Here are some possible questions you may consider asking:

- What's the monthly rent?
- Are any utilities included with the rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- When is rent due? Do you have auto-pay?
- What's the make-up of the other tenants? Are they mainly younger students? Married couples with families? Older folks?
- What's the parking situation like? Do you pay for a parking spot?
- Do you take care of small maintenance issues or am I responsible for some of the repairs in the property?
- Am I able to re-paint the walls or make other modifications?

Again, be friendly and polite when you ask these questions.

The Application

The next step in the leasing process for an apartment is to submit a rental application for the location you want. The manager or landlord will be able to give you the application as well as anything else that they may need to have filled out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist with this process. For a single family home there will likely be a rental application.

You will need your passport, Social Security number, Visa, and proof of employment. Some landlords may charge you an application fee which could be between \$20 to \$400 dollars, depending on the landlord. This could be a combination of an application fee and move-in fee.

Once you've done this, it can take up to a few days to hear back from the property manager. Once your application has been approved the lease approval process will begin with IOR and likely your employer.

Signing the lease

DO NOT SIGN THE LEASE until your IOR DS Consultant has reviewed it in full and given their approval.

The lease is a binding contract, so it is very important to pay attention as a leasing agent goes over it with you. It is perfectly normal for you to take your time and read all the fine print for yourself. If you are working with an IOR consultant, make sure to talk with them and receive approval before signing.

You will also be given a copy of the lease to take with you and keep for your records, but it is very important to know everything included in your lease from the start.

Some things to look for in a lease:

- Term of the lease and any important dates such as when the rent is due.
- Extra fees for parking spaces or storage, garbage collection, and pets.
- Information regarding utility providers and whether you or the landlord is responsible for those bills.
- Notification requirements in case of renewal.
- Requirements/responsibilities of the tenants to do routine repairs such as lawn maintenance, cleaning or notification of repairs.
- Clauses that allow the landlord to change the terms of the lease after it is signed
- Restrictions that would prevent you from living normally or comfortably in the home

Sometimes landlords will ask for a security deposit before you sign the lease. This is normal, but you shouldn't pay in cash. Make sure all payments are made out as a check or money order just in case.

What to expect from the lease

Most leases in the United States include the following or a variation thereof:

- Your employer requires that all leases include a Break Clause in the case that you are transferred for work or personal needs.
- Contracts will often be for periods of a year or more.
- Minimum stay. Typically three fourths of your lease contract time. If you choose to move out before this date, you will lose your security deposit. If you move out afterwards, you are still required to give a specified number of days notice.
- Security Deposit. Landlords will expect you to leave them with a deposit (usually about one to two month's rent) that they will hold for the duration of your lease. You will receive your security deposit back at the end of the lease provided you don't break any specific clauses in your lease, such as moving out without proper notice, not paying rent, causing damages to the property, etc.
- Landlords should not be given unchecked access to your apartment. If there isn't anything in your lease about landlord's rights to enter the leased premises, suggest the following clause:

Entry by the Landlord. Landlord or his agent will not enter Tenant's home except to deal with an emergency; to make necessary or agreed repairs; to supply necessary or agreed services; or to show the unit to potential purchasers, tenants, or repair persons. Unless there is an emergency, Landlord will give Tenant at least 24 hours' written notice of the date, time, and purpose of the intended entry and will schedule entries during normal business hours, Monday–Friday.

Most landlords will be hard-pressed to say no to such a reasonable clause. If the landlord refuses, it's a sure sign that he won't be reasonable in other respects, too. Continue on in your housing search.

Moving In

On your selected move-in date, after the lease has been signed, and deposits have been paid...you should be given your keys and more than likely a move-in form to fill out. Your IOR Consultant will assist you with an initial walk through of your apartment. Look for dings in the walls, cracked windows, or other irregularities and report them on this form. This will indicate that these things were there before you moved in and you will not be held responsible for them at the end of the lease term.

Get Renter's Insurance

Renter's insurance covers any loss to your personal property due to robbery or accidents. It also covers any damage you might cause to other tenant's property. For example, let's say your washing machine springs a leak and water seeps through the floor and ruins your neighbor's antique dresser. Renter's insurance would cover that.

Renter's insurance will cost approximately about \$15-125 a month, less if you tack it onto another policy (like auto) you have with an insurance company. A few popular options are [Allstate](#) and [StateFarm](#).

When relocating internationally, your children's education is of great concern. IOR eases this concern by exposing you to the various school options available for your child and helping you to work within the framework of options to find the best solution for your family.

I. **Overview and Philosophy of the United States Educational System**

In most U.S. locations you will have the choice of sending your children to either a public or private school. A public school must accept your child for enrollment if you live within its designated district. A private school may have a general curriculum similar to that of public schools, but may or may not accept your child depending on availability of space, your child's prior academic history, language ability in English, or the result of entrance exams. Private schools charge a fee, which can be quite high. If you are considering private school, be sure you have a clear understanding of your employer's policy regarding reimbursement. In the U.S. approximately 85% of the children attend public schools for ages 5 to 13, and approximately 93% of the children attend public school at the high school level. Many, though not all, private schools are parochial, or religiously affiliated schools.

A third option called 'charter school' is sometimes available. Charter Schools are similar to public schools in that they are free, non-religious, publicly funded, and are held to state and federal academic standards. Each charter school is governed by its own local school community, which often includes parents and teachers - rather than a district. This freedom allows teachers to be more innovative, and communities to shape their local school. Charter schools can set their own hours and adjust their curriculum to fit their student needs, and give teachers the opportunity to experiment with next-generation teaching models including technology and the virtual classroom. Charter schools typically admit students by random lottery and do not restrict enrollment based on location, academic achievement, or other factors private schools may consider.

Most Americans, regardless of their level of education and income, send their children to public schools. Because each town or community typically has its own school system funded by local municipal taxes and state revenues, residents in an area with a higher tax base can usually be assured of quality public education. IOR is very conscientious about placing assignees and their families in areas with good public school systems.

Private schools do not receive state revenue, although they may be entitled to assistance with transporting students and providing for special needs such as speech therapy and assistance of the learning disabled. Private schools are funded through tuition paid by the student's parents. Typically, there are additional fees for books, uniforms, and school supplies, and the parents are usually solicited for additional charitable donations. There may also be book or activity fees at public schools.

The public education system in the U.S. is administered by local and state government, rather than by the federal government. Each state has a board of education which sets policy for all school districts and standards which all students must achieve. In addition, each local district has a board of education which sets local policy and curriculum within the parameters set forth by the state.

School districts can provide specialized programs and services for children with special needs. The general philosophy of education in the United States is to educate the entire diverse, ethnically mixed population with equal educational opportunity for all, while serving the educational needs of the individual student.

If you choose public education for your child, the particular school your child attends is determined by the school district boundaries containing your residential address. The school may or may not be within walking distance to your home. Generally, if the distance to the school is greater than one mile, the school district provides bus transportation to and from school. For those children who do not live far enough away from the school for bus service but are too far to walk comfortably, parents may have the option of paying for bus transportation, or they may choose to drive their children to and from school. Very often parents form 'car pools', sharing the responsibility of driving groups of children.

Generally private schools do not have residential boundaries for their students' families. In most cases, parents rely on car pools to ease the burden of transporting their students to and from school. In selecting your home, consider the driving distance and time to and from the private school.

Ultimately, the school your children attend is determined by your residential address, so it is a good idea to include visits to potential schools and properties in your pre-trip visit. Your pre-trip visit will consist of selected sample houses in a variety of communities, along with information, or perhaps visits, to the appropriate schools. However, there may be a limited selection of homes available within each community. It is possible you may find a school you like, but there may not be any available housing options within that school's enrollment radius. We will show you housing in school districts with proven academic standards, but be aware there are cases when certain schools are unavailable due to housing concerns.

If you are considering a private school, you may wish to visit it as well as a public school to compare. It would be advisable, however, to first determine if the private school has space available for your child. Additionally, you will want to know the amount of tuition and fees for the school, as that may be a factor in your decision.

II. Academic Standards

A. Curriculum:

The overriding objective of elementary and secondary education, public or private, is to prepare students for higher learning and future employment. Each school district or private school will have a unique curriculum which meets the above overriding goals.

Elementary School:

The elementary years (kindergarten through fifth grade) focus on fundamental academic skills, language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics in addition to introduction to technology, art, music, physical education, and sometimes foreign languages. Students' personal development is energized through emphasizing strong work habits which provide a positive feeling toward learning.

Middle School:

Middle School helps children in early adolescence (sixth through eighth grade) transition from elementary to high school and from childhood into young adulthood. The structure of the school day includes contact with several teachers who specialize in their subject matter; students usually move from one classroom to another. Curricular content focuses on expansion of skills in math, science, reading, writing and social studies. Further exploration of foreign languages, practical and fine arts, music, health, physical education and computer literacy are also provided. Middle school students are able to enhance their formal education by participation in school sponsored adult supervised competitive athletics and a variety of clubs and special interest groups.

High School:

The premise of elementary and middle schools is to prepare students for the academic, social, and physical challenges of high school. All high schools maintain defined academic requirements for graduation, however great flexibility of classes is usually available within this framework. Most schools provide more challenging academic courses entitled honors or advanced placement which award college credit to successful students. High school extracurricular and athletic activities are more competitive than those found at lower levels and often provide talented students with opportunities continue this activity in college or university.

B. Grading Systems/Assessment of Child Progress

Schools typically report students' progress to parents with written report cards, which may be either mailed or carried home by the student. Many schools also set one or two days aside each semester for parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are an opportunity for parents to meet with their children's teachers and hear the teacher's evaluations of their student's performance in school. At the elementary school level, where children usually have one primary teacher, a teacher conference may last from fifteen minutes to an hour in length. At the middle school and high school levels, you may meet with your child's teachers for a period of five or ten minutes. If you need additional time with the teacher, you may schedule a follow-up visit

allowing time for a more complete discussion. It is a good idea to participate fully in teacher conferences. Your children's teachers may be able to provide valuable insight regarding your children's academic and social adjustments. Should there be concerns, they may be able to assist you with helpful suggestions of additional resources to contact.

C. Standardized Testing

Challenged to prepare students for higher learning and future employment, all school districts and private schools utilize standardized testing to measure student progress over time and compare themselves to national standards. Such tests are prepared by national groups of parents and educators as well as business and academic leaders. Tests vary from state to state, but typically students in prescribed grade levels (for example, grades 3, 6, 8 and 10) are tested in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing science and social science. Colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT tests to measure incoming student abilities; the results of these tests are nearly as important as high school grades when students apply for entrance into US colleges and universities.

III. Definition of School Groupings

A. Pre-School or Nursery School

In the U.S., 3, 4 and some 5 year olds have the opportunity to attend a pre-school under a private system. These schools can be located in a local school, a church, or an independent free standing building. Pre-school is not publicly funded and is fee-based. Typically children are grouped by age. Most of the schools are play-based, although different philosophies of formal education can be found. Typically, 3 year olds attend 2 half days a week and 4 year olds may attend 3 half days a week. Some preschools also serve as day care centers for families in which both parents work. Typically reading is not taught in pre-school, although a few programs can be found which include reading fundamentals. Concentration of learning is on small and gross motor skills, and basic academic readiness skills. Some pre-schools offer a full-day Kindergarten option for those parents who work. The public school kindergarten programs are typically only half day programs with no before or after school care. If a Kindergarten program is offered it follows the state curriculum guidelines, and teaches pre-reading and math skills.

B. Elementary School

Elementary school provides education for children ages 5 to 11, Kindergarten and Grades 1,2,3,4 &5. While kindergarten at age 5 is not required, most families send their children to kindergarten. Elementary school is the beginning of publicly funded school. In the U.S. children are grouped by age and advanced in school by age. There are usually opportunities within the grade for different levels of learning, with opportunities for advanced learners and remedial learners. The public elementary school is usually neighborhood based and the source of playmates for your child. In the U.S., pre-reading skills are introduced in kindergarten (age 5) along with early math skills. Formal reading begins in the 1st grade (age 6). Studies have shown that while children learn to read at different ages, the difference between early and late readers is not a predictor of reading skills by about the age of 8 or 9 years old. In addition to reading

and math, elementary school also has a broad base of writing, science, social studies, art, music, computer, personal development and physical education. Only in a few schools will a 2nd language be introduced at the elementary level. English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered starting at the elementary level in the public school. Parents are allowed to visit the schools, and there are many opportunities for parents to volunteer their skills, particularly at the elementary school. Parents may approach teachers and administrators with suggestions and concerns with their child. Usually the personnel are willing to consider changes if they feel it would be in the best interests of the child. With a child coming to a new country and sometimes starting a new language, feel free to talk to the school if you think something could be done to ease your child's adjustment. The school day is from approximately 8:30a.m. to 3:00p.m. with recess (playtime break) and a lunch break at the school.

C. Middle School

Middle school provides education for children ages 11 to 14, grades 6, 7 & 8. The children attend school in a different location and in the public school system several elementary schools will combine into the same middle school. A middle school is usually 2-4 times the size of the elementary school. Middle school is considered the transition between elementary school and high school and from childhood to young adulthood. Because of this philosophy, U.S. students at this age level are all introduced to the same academic curriculum. The school day is structured differently with the children changing class rooms and teacher with each subject. There are 6-8 different class periods daily. Within the grades children may be separated by academic ability in classes, particularly math and English. Often an introduction to foreign languages is offered. For those who choose, the student may have the option to complete one year of high school foreign language during middle school. If your home country requires more advanced language development at this age, you may want to consider outside supplemental language instruction. Middle school is a time when extracurricular activities such as theatre, music, sports and clubs become important activities in adolescent life.

D. High School

High school provides education for children ages 14 to 18, grades 9, 10, 11 & 12. It is the final level of education before the university, community college, or trade school. The terms Freshman (9th), Sophomore (10th), Junior (11th) and Senior (12th) are also used to identify grade level. At the high school level the student has more specific choices of course work. Each district has a set of minimum graduation requirements, which will include courses in English, math, science, social studies, physical education and a combination of foreign language, fine arts and practical arts. Within this framework the student has various choices from more remedial levels, average levels, and more advanced levels. If a student is prepared for the material, by the 11th or 12th grade a student may have the opportunity to take a college level course for advanced credit in the U.S. university system. In high school competitive sports are offered along with theatre, orchestra, instrumental and vocal music and clubs. Your child will have an opportunity to meet more U.S. children by participating in a school extracurricular activity. Each school district has 1 or more high schools with 800-2500 students. A student's high school

performance may determine the type of university or higher education program they pursue upon graduation. During high school national tests are given to determine the student's potential to advance to various higher education levels.

If your child anticipates returning to your home country to continue higher education within your university system, you might want to consider the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This program is recognized internationally for entrance to universities. In contrast to the typical high school college preparatory curriculum, the IB semester consists of fewer subjects, studied in greater depth and with a bilingual proficiency. Developed in Switzerland, the curriculum was intended as a secondary education program which could be utilized and accepted worldwide. Not all US schools will offer an IB curriculum.

E. Post-Secondary Education

While most families on international assignment do not bring their older children (19 years+) for education in the U.S. we include a brief description of the US university system. Some form of post-secondary education is available to those U.S. students who seek it. Each state offers a public university system which the tuition is partly subsidized by the state for state residents. Residency of at least 1 year is necessary. Some are medium to large institutions (with undergraduate and graduate level programs). Some can be quite competitive for admission while others may not be competitive at all. Student's admission to the university is in part determined by their high school academic performance and course selection and as well as the results of a national standardized test (SAT or ACT). Post-Secondary is the educational level that students in the U.S. study subjects in great depth and select their majors and career choices. Graduate level programs on the master level, professional level, and PhD level are pursued after completing the 4 years of undergraduate studies.

IV. Life in Schools

A. Atmosphere

It is valuable to visit your child's school to understand the academic and non-academic atmosphere that prevails. Administrators or counselors are happy to serve as tour guides and should always be contacted in advance. Do not be alarmed if your visit takes place during the lunch hour if the children seem a bit rambunctious. Students in American public schools generally enjoy a great deal of personal freedom in the cafeteria, on the playground, and in the halls before and after class. They are supervised by teachers or members of the school staff, but they generally are more relaxed in the lunch room and in the halls. If you are visiting on a rainy day, you may observe "indoor recess" in the gymnasium which could be noisy. Rest assured that when they are in the classroom, students do settle down and work quietly and diligently. Some classrooms are more informally arranged than others. For instance, some teachers prefer to have the children's desks in a circle rather than in rows. Teachers will sometimes assign group projects, where several students work together and are thus not seated at their desks during a part of the classroom period. Teachers are expected, however, to have good control of their classrooms. Private school policy regarding these issues of personal freedom varies. Some private schools function as the public schools do, while others may have a more closely

supervised approach. Again, it is always a good idea to visit the school so that you are comfortable with that particular school's management style.

B. Parental Involvement

In addition to participating in parent/teacher conferences, most American schools encourage parents to become involved in the volunteer activities of the school. Most schools have a "PTA" (Parent Teacher Association) or "PTO" (Parent Teacher Organization). These organizations usually work with the school administration, dealing with issues such as student safety, communication to parents, academic concerns, etc., as well as fundraising and planning special programs to enhance the school experience for the student population.

Getting involved with the PTA or PTO is a great way to become well informed about your child's school. It also provides you with an opportunity to meet and really get to know other parents. There will probably be a choice of committees on which you could work; you do not have to commit to a leadership role. Some volunteer opportunities may involve actually working in the school, volunteering in the school library on day a week or one day a month for example. Be sure to alert the school administration that you would like to get involved, and ask for the name and phone number of the head of the parent volunteer organization at the school. Parent volunteers are usually welcomed and encouraged at all levels at all schools, both public and private.

C. Extracurricular Activities

A well-rounded education requires that students learn their academic subjects as well as develop socialization skills and learn nonacademic skills. Belonging to a group can be a rewarding connection with peers and a good way to develop self-confidence. These are the reasons that schools, public and private, provide numerous extracurricular activities from which their students can choose to participate. At each level of education the opportunities and choices increase. For example at the elementary school level, all students are introduced to art, music, drama and a variety of athletic experiences. At the middle school level students have required courses in some of the above areas but are provided opportunity to participate in after school activities of their choice. For example, competitive football, soccer, swimming, track, lacrosse, basketball etc. In addition many clubs allow students to pursue other interests, for example, computers, drama, fine arts, forensics, jazz band, photography, yearbook and student council. Almost universally, each activity or club is sponsored by adults, using specialized instruction, who demonstrate a working knowledge of the activity and a desire to teach children. An even greater variety of extracurricular experiences are available at the high school level, many of which help students identify strengths, talents and interests which may direct them to future colleges, vocations or avocations.

D. Facilities

All schools maintain facilities other than classrooms which enhance or support their educational mission.

Libraries and Media Centers

Libraries are universally available and are accessible to students throughout the day and often after hours. Libraries often contain a “media center” which maintains and makes available other types of educational materials including computers and software, audio and video tapes, slides, sound sequences, projectors and recorders of various types for use individually or in groups. The wide availability of computers and access to the internet has provided almost unlimited opportunities for students and teachers to obtain information that can enhance and facilitate learning.

Fitness Facilities/Gymnasium

Fitness facilities, or ‘gyms’ as they are typically referred to, are supplied by almost all schools in the United States. Gyms often consist of a large indoor court with various sports equipment. They are open during lunch hours and for specific hours before and after school for athletes or students who wish to exercise. Many gyms will be accompanied by a weight room and a locker room with a shower. Students are sometimes expected to use these communal showers following Physical Education classes or general use of the gym’s facilities.

SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA

In a city as advanced as Minneapolis, education options are in no short supply. Expat parents will need to carefully evaluate their priorities, and then choose an institution that can best satisfy their preferences. It's worthwhile to consider how much you want to pay for your child's schooling, the proximity of the school from home and the workplace, the curriculum you'd like your child to learn, and what kind of teaching style or environment is best for your child.

School attendance is compulsory for students between the ages of 6 and 18, and as in the greater US, school is divided into three levels.

Public schools in Minneapolis

By far, the greatest perk of public schools is that they're tuition-free. Locals and expats alike can take advantage of a Minnesota education system that is free of charge (paid for by taxes), but that doesn't mean that you should do so without any preliminary research.

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) or Special School District Number 1 is a school district that covers all of the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis Public Schools enroll 36,370 students in public primary and secondary schools. The district administers about one hundred public schools.

The Minneapolis Public School System's mission is to prepare students for college and beyond by embracing diversity and creativity. The MPS system offers families and students a wide variety of tools to make their education successful. Some of those tools are before and after school child care, caring teachers, community partnerships, early childhood education, English language learners, healthy meals, parental involvement opportunities, rigorous academic programs, school choice, special ed, and year-round learning opportunities.

Click [here](#) to visit the MPS website.

Charter schools and Magnet schools in Minneapolis

The public school system in Minneapolis also includes charter schools and magnet schools. Charter schools are institutions that use state-funding and uphold state curriculum, but tend to be more innovative and flexible than traditional public schools. Magnet schools are schools that use state-funding, but may offer an International Baccalaureate curriculum, rather than a state curriculum. They are associated with high achievement and cultural diversity.

Both are good options for parents looking for an affordable, but elevated standard of education for their child. Admission can be competitive in some cases, and waiting lists long. Lottery systems are often used to confirm enrolment for these types of schools.

Click [here](#) to view a guide to Minnesota charter schools.

Click [here](#) for a list of Magnet schools.

School Districts in Minneapolis and surrounding areas

- To find the elementary school options available to you, visit [schoolchoice](#) and simply enter your address.
- To find the High school options available to you, visit [highschoolrequest](#) and enter your address.

Private Schools in Minneapolis

Private schooling is a broad category, and includes international schools, religious schools and alternative learning schools. Some schools uphold the state curriculum, others a home country curriculum, and still others an International Baccalaureate curriculum.

Regardless though, all of these schools are tuition-based. Fees vary, and parents will need to inquire with each individual school regarding costs. What's more, the schools that are generally thought of as the "best" private schools in an area may have long waiting lists, and so it's recommended that parents apply as early as possible.

There are 76 private schools in Minneapolis, MN, serving 17,467 students. The average private school tuition is \$5,485 for elementary schools and \$12,690 for high schools. The average acceptance rate is 89%. Minority enrollment is 24% of the student body, and the student:teacher ratio is 11:1. 66% of schools are religiously affiliated (most commonly Roman Catholic and Christian).

Many of Minneapolis' private schools require that students complete an entrance exam, which must also to be financed by parents.

The current top private schools in Minneapolis are:

- The Blake School ([avg ACT 32](#))
- Breck School ([avg ACT 30](#))
- St. Paul Academy & Summit School ([avg ACT 31](#))
- Mounds Park Academy ([avg ACT 30](#))
- Convent of the Visitation [School \(avg ACT 30\)](#)
- * All of these schools boast a 100% Four-Year Matriculation Rate

Visit [privateschoolreview](#) to learn more about Minnesota's private school's curriculum, tuition, religious affiliation, acceptance rate, enrollment, and more.

Preschools

A directory of preschools in the Minneapolis area can be viewed [here](#).

Additional resources to compare Public and Private schools, view ratings, reviews and test scores

- www.greatschools.org
- www.eschoolprofile.com
- www.schooltree.org

Colleges and Universities

- [Carleton College](#) (Nationally ranked #24)
- [Macalester College](#) (Nationally ranked #71)
- [University of Minnesota – Twin Cities](#) (Nationally ranked #72)
- [St. Olaf College](#)
- [Gustavus Adolphus College](#)
- [University of St. Thomas – Minnesota](#)
- [University of Minnesota – Morris](#)
- [St. Catherine University](#)
- [The College of St. Scholastica](#)
- [Bethel University – Minnesota](#)
- [Concordia College – Minnesota](#)
- [Augsburg College](#)
- [Winona State University](#)
- [Hamline University](#)
- [North Central University](#)



Macalester College



University of St Thomas

BANKING

Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit and debit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Banks in the United States are insured by the Federal Government for deposits up to \$250,000 per depositor per bank. The bank or credit union will display the letters FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) as proof.

Checking and Savings Accounts

To open a checking or savings account you will need the following information:

- Two forms of picture identification including but not limited to your passport, driver's license, or work ID.
- Social security number. If you have not yet received your social security number, the bank can open an account with a W8 Temporary Tax ID form (available at the bank). You will need to call the bank with your social security number once it arrives in the mail.
- Local mailing address. You may use your office address as your mailing address, but be prepared to call your bank branch as soon as you have your permanent address.
- Letter of Employment
- Cash for the initial deposit can range from ~\$25-\$150 dollars.

Checks

More businesses and banks are offering online or automatic bill paying options. However, you may still need to pay some bills by mail. **NEVER SEND CASH!** You will want to order at least the minimum quantity of checks. This will cost a set fee that the bank will charge you. The checks will be pre-printed with your name, address, telephone number and account number and will be mailed to your home.

ATM or Debit Card

The most popular way of obtaining cash is by using an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) card, also referred to as a debit card. ATM's are located in most banks, malls, airports, grocery stores, and in many other public places. You will be given a PIN (Personal Identification Number) for using your card. It is important that you memorize this number and not keep written record of it with your card in order to protect your account. Most ATM's will take all cards, but many banks will charge a service fee for using another bank's ATM. Through the ATM you may deposit, transfer, and withdraw funds. There will usually be a limit to the amount of money you can withdraw in any 24-hour period.

Credit Cards

For many international transferees, the lack of a US credit history can be a challenge. In most cases, you will not be approved for a US credit card initially. One suggestion to assist in building your US credit history is to open a **secured credit card**. With approval from the bank, you can put a certain amount of money in a savings account that will remain in the account. The secured credit card would have a credit limit equal to the amount deposited in the savings account. You will need to use your secured credit card and make the minimum monthly payments, you may also pay in full the amount due. After 9 months or so, if the bank sees that you have a good payment record, they may approve you for a regular credit card.

Security

Always pay attention to the other people around you at an ATM. Do not use the machine if you are suspicious of someone's behavior. It is safer to find another ATM or to come back later. Do not put your PIN number in with anyone close enough to see it.

Credit card theft is another increasing problem. In order to protect your card from being abused, never give your credit card or credit card number to a service provider you have not called. Another precaution is to destroy or shred copies of receipts and bills. Criminals will not hesitate to dig through the trash to find a copy of your credit card number.

Major US Banks

Below is a list of links to some of the larger US banks. Not every bank is represented in all US locations, in some cases you may find that the local bank is a better option for you than some of the larger banks. Your IOR DS Consultant can help you in selecting a bank by sharing the various options available locally as well as the products they offer to support expatriates.

- [Bank of America](#)
- [TD Bank](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [CHASE](#)
- [HSBC](#)

Click [here](#) for list of local banks in Minneapolis

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING

Driving in Minneapolis

Minneapolis has a number of major highways that make getting around fairly easy. Evening rush hour begins as early as 4 PM and can last more than 2 hours. Morning rush hour is between 6 and 10 AM. During rush hour, traffic on the highways can come to a halt.

- [Minneapolis Traffic Map](#)
- [Minneapolis Freeways and Major Highways](#)

There are no tolled miles on the Minnesota Interstate, with the exception of HOV lanes governed by the MnPASS program. The system is made up of three primary routes, four auxiliary sections, including two spurs and two loop sections, as well as one of two split sections remaining in the United States, I-35E and I-35W.



Public Transportation

[Metro Transit](#) operates one of the largest public transportation systems in the country. Riding public transit is a convenient and inexpensive way to get around. Fares range from \$1.75 to \$3.00, depending on time of day. If you're already downtown and need to hop a ride a few blocks, the fare is 50¢ in the Downtown Zone. Look for buses marked "Free Ride" and pay no fare when boarding along Hennepin Avenue.

Metro Transit offers fast, frequent service to both downtowns, Mall of America and hundreds of other popular attractions. For an extremely efficient way to travel, zoom around town on the METRO Blue and Green lines, the Twin Cities light- rail transit (LRT) service. The METRO Blue Line connects downtown Minneapolis with the airport and Mall of America, and the METRO Green Line connects downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota and downtown Saint Paul.

The METRO Blue Line offers fast, quiet light-rail service between downtown Minneapolis and Mall of America.

Dozens of bus routes are timed to connect with trains at Blue Line stations, making it easy to get to work, to shopping or wherever you need to be.

The METRO Green Line has many destinations to choose from: the history of the Capitol City, the cuisine along University Avenue, the energy of the University of Minnesota campus, the bustle of downtown Minneapolis.

The METRO Blue & Green Line lines charge the same fares as local buses. Light rail trips operate every 10 minutes throughout the day, every 10-15 minutes evenings and every 30-60 minutes overnight.

Guaranteed Parking

- Metro Minneapolis has partnered with [Parking Panda](#), the nationwide leader in online parking reservations, to allow visitors to purchase guaranteed parking near their destination. View real-time availability and pricing at many locations within easy walking distance to many attractions around Minneapolis. Once purchased, parking is 100% guaranteed even if the location otherwise fills up.

Car Sharing

- Book a [Zipcar](#) for a couple of hours or the whole day. Do it online or on your phone via the mobile app. Gas and insurance included.

Transportation “App” Options

Several web based phone applications to secure a driver are available throughout the area. The driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS. Payment is automatic through the app and fares may be cheaper than a taxi.

- [Uber](#)
- [Lyft](#)

Amtrak

- [Union Depot](#) is the train station of the Twin Cities and a part of the Amtrak national train system. Visit [amtrak.com](#) for current information about routes and schedules, and start planning the one-of-a-kind journey only rail travel provides. Amtrak Ticket Office Hours: 6:30 am to 11:30 pm. Self service kiosks are available 24 hours.

Bike

- [Nice Ride](#) is a non-profit bike sharing system, and anyone can become a member. Simply take a bike when you need one, and return it to any station in the system when you arrive at your destination. It's fast, easy and affordable.

Taxi

Taxis in Minneapolis are generally dispatched by various companies. You can learn more information about them at www.yellowpages.com .

Limousine

Traveling via a limousine has become more popular lately. Many Minneapolis limousine companies offer full ground transportation options such as town cars, classic cars, stretch limos and luxury vehicles that can be utilized for special occasions like airport transportation, parties, school dances, business functions and weddings.

Airports

[Minneapolis–Saint Paul International Airport](#) is a joint civil-military public use international airport. It is located in a portion of Hennepin County, Minnesota, within 10 miles (16 km) of both downtown Minneapolis and downtown Saint Paul. It is the largest and busiest airport in the six-state upper Midwest region of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Airlines out of MSP serve 155 nonstop markets from the airport, including 126 domestic and 29 international markets. Internationally, Delta Airlines flies to four trans-oceanic destinations year round: Amsterdam, London, Paris, and Tokyo-Narita, with two additional trans-oceanic flights seasonally to Reykjavík–Keflavik and Rome. Both Delta Airlines and Sun Country Airlines serve many cities throughout the Caribbean, Canada, and Mexico with seasonal or year round service. Air France has seasonal service to Paris and Condor Airlines has some to Frankfurt. Icelandair has year round service to Reykjavík–Keflavik. Compared to other large metropolitan areas in the United States, only Atlanta and Denver serve more non-stop markets per capita.

Like many other airports, MSP interconnects with several other forms of transportation. Several large parking ramps are available for cars. Most other connections are made at the Hub Building and adjacent Transit Center, which has city and shuttle bus, taxi, light-rail and rental car service. Two trams (people movers) are at the airport. One carries passengers from the main section of Lindbergh Terminal 1 to the Hub Building and another runs along Concourse C in that terminal.

Car Rentals

Every residential neighborhood has several car rental companies. Rates vary according to demand.

If you plan on renting a car on a holiday week or weekend, it is wise to reserve well in advance because there may be no cars available. For better rates, try:

- [Dollar Rent A Car](#) or [Budget Rent A Car](#)
- [Hertz](#) and [Avis](#) are generally more expensive.

Map Websites

- [Google Maps](#)
- [Map Quest](#)

AAA Travel Protection

[AAA](#) is a membership organization that offers benefits such as roadside service and towing, discounts on car products and services, maps, reference materials, etc.

Call 1-800-352-5382 for additional information and cost.

LOCAL REGISTRATION

Social Security and Social Security Procedures

United States Social Security Administration

1-800-772-1213

www.ssa.gov

Upon arrival in the United States, employees holding work visas will be required to apply, in person, for a Social Security number. The Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) can be used by anyone who has never been issued a card, needs a replacement card or has changed his or her name. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process and can answer any questions you might have.

THIS SERVICE IS FREE.

To get an original number and card, you'll need to complete an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf> , and show the following documents IN PERSON at the local social security office.

- Passport
- I-94 obtained from www.cbp.gov/I94 web site
- Work Visa
- Any other documents received by US Immigration

If all of your information is confirmed, your Social Security card will arrive in the mail in approximately 2-4 weeks. Several days after you have successfully completed the application process, you may be able to take your identification with your receipt, back to the Social Security office to inquire about your Social Security number before you receive your card.

L-2 Visa Employment Opportunity Law Changes

The L-2 visa allows the dependent spouse and minor, unmarried children of qualified L-1 visa holders to enter into the U.S.

Changes took place on July 27, 2006 that apply to spouses of L-1 Visa holders in the US on an L2 Visa. Prior to that date, spouses on L-2 Visas were not permitted to obtain a social security card and were denied the right to be employed in the US. The law change now permits L-2 Visa holders (spouses only, not dependent children) to work on a full-time basis in the U.S. with proper employment authorization from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The L-2 Visa holder must apply for a social security card in addition to applying for an Employment Authorization Document before they can begin employment.

Social Security Numbers

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued guidelines, which permit E-1, E-2, and L-2 spouses to obtain Social Security Numbers without having to first obtain employment.

Authorization Documents (EADs) from the CIS. They must show proof that their spouse is in E-1, E-2 or L-1 status, and present an original marriage certificate, in the native language. However, before they are authorized to work, they must obtain an EAD. [The new SSA guidelines are online here.](#)

Employment Authorization Document (EAD): L-2 Visa holders can apply for this document utilizing USCIS Form 1-765, Application for Employment Authorization. They must provide the following forms of identification: valid passport, 1-94 Arrival-Departure Document, Marriage Certificate from home country, two identical, and color photographs taken within 30 days of application. Currently, the process from application to EAD issue takes 3 to 4 months. The L2 Visa holder may also engage in full-time study in the US. A dependent child still may not apply for an EAD card except in cases of severe hardship. Local offices are open Monday thru Friday 9am to 4pm.

****Notice**** Social Security offices are closed on all US Federal holidays.

Obtaining a Driver's License

In the US, a driver's license is issued by each individual state and not by the federal government in Washington DC. Since there is no national identity card in the USA and many Americans don't have a passport, a driver's license issued by your state is the only official piece of identification for many citizens. Since 9/11, you will need to show a valid driver's license to enter many big office buildings.

Whether you're new to Minnesota or you're ready to get your first driver's license, you'll need to visit the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) to apply.

If you have moved to Minnesota from a country other than the U.S. or Canada, you must pass a knowledge, a skills test and a vision check, even if you have a valid driver's license from your former home country.

You have 60 days to transfer your out-of-state driver's license when you move to Minnesota.

- For information on how to obtain a driver's license, see the [DMV website for Minnesota](#) for more information.
- [Other Information regarding applying for a Driver's license](#)

Your Destination Services Consultant will assist you with the proper procedure.

LIVING AND SHOPPING

TV, Cable, Telephone, and Internet

The City of Minneapolis provides and bills for water. Call 612 673-1114 to set up Trash, recycling, water, sewer and storm water utilities in Minneapolis.

[Xcel Energy](#) is Minneapolis' electricity utility company.

There are two choices for home telephone service in Minneapolis.

- [Qwest](#) provides local and long distance telephone service.
- [Comcast](#) provides local and long distance telephone service.

[Vonage](#) and other VoIP telephone services operate in Minnesota, requiring a broadband telephone service to operate.

There are three choices for high-speed internet in Minneapolis.

- [Qwest](#) provides broadband internet services
- [Comcast](#) provides cable internet services
- [USI Wireless](#) provides the City of Minneapolis' public wi-fi service.

If USI Wireless works at your home - there's many places in the city it doesn't work or the higher speeds are not available - it's the cheapest option. USI Wireless users have the added advantage of being able to use the service anywhere in the city.

If you need ultra high speed, then Qwest or Comcast are the only choices.

They all offer combination packages. They are in stiff competition with each other, so special offers change monthly, sometimes even weekly.

Mobile Phones

There are four major wireless carriers in the US.

- [AT&T Wireless](#)
- [Verizon Wireless](#)
- [Sprint](#)
- [T-Mobile](#)

Computers, Electronics, Cameras

- [Best Buy](#) is a national chain. Apart from sales, their [Geek Squad](#) repairs PC computers.
- [Fry's Home Electronics](#)
- [Apple Stores retail locations](#)
- [TigerDirect](#)

Housewares and Furniture

- [Bed Bath & Beyond](#)
- [Ikea](#)
- [Home Depot](#)
- [Pottery Barn](#)
- [Williams-Sonoma](#)
- [Rooms to Go](#)
- [The Container Store](#)

Food Shopping

Minneapolis is home to award-winning restaurants and chefs. As of 2016, four Minneapolis-based chefs have won James Beard Foundation Awards: Alexander Roberts, Restaurant Alma; Isaac Becker, 112 Eatery; Paul Bergland, Bachelor Farmer; and Tim McKee, La Belle Vie. In 2014, seven chefs and restaurants in the area were named as semifinalists. USA Today's reader's choice 10 Best decided that Minneapolis–Saint Paul was the Best Local Food Scene in 2015.

Farmers Markets

For those looking to get their goods directly from the producer, there are a growing number of farmers markets popping up across Minneapolis. From fresh produce to prepared foods, you can find popular places doing the mobile market concept right.

In Minneapolis you can taste the cuisine from Japan, Germany, Vietnam, Russia, India or rural Minnesota -- all within blocks of one another on Eat Street or downtown.

Farm-fresh, organic ingredients inspire many local chefs, such as long-time restaurateur Chef Brenda Langton from Spoonriver, who pioneered the locavore movement here and runs the uber-popular [Mill City Farmer's Market](#). James Beard Award (the culinary world's "Oscar") nominees are interspersed throughout the city. Up-and-coming chefs and seasoned kitchen veterans cook alongside one another in every neighborhood. We enjoy our [Jucy Lucys](#) as much as our sushi.

In Minneapolis, experience a food and wine scene that rivals any large city in the nation, where you'll find a culture of locally-grown, globally-inspired foods that nourish body and soul.

Dining

Minneapolis has a good number of its own restaurants which have become quite successful in the area, offering unique local flavors.

- [Betty Danger's Country Club](#)
Dine and drink on a revolving patio (Ferris wheel) or while playing a round of mini golf, all within the world of Betty Danger's Country Club. Located in the beautiful Northeast Arts District of Minneapolis. Betty Danger's Country Club is available to rent for special events! By renting a special event space, you also get a membership to the club. Call to learn specifics.

- [Crave Downtown](#)
Crave offers innovative fresh American cuisine and sushi brought to life in a chic and casual environment for a familiar yet unforgettable experience.
- [Hell's Kitchen](#)
Winner of multiple restaurant awards, Hell's Kitchen offers "Damn Good Food" by celebrated chefs. Breakfast, lunch, happy hour, dinner, weekend brunch are on-tap, with private catering/events welcome. Live music during weekend brunch, dinner hour and late night music Thursday - Saturday.
- [McCormick and Schmick's Seafood Restaurant](#)
McCormick & Schmick's has more than 40 varieties of seafood flown in daily from the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, as well as shellfish and freshwater fish from around the globe, with the ability to do private parties for sit down and 165 cocktail style.
- [Union Restaurant](#)
UNION Restaurant features two dining destinations in one building. The stunning Union Rooftop features the only year-round glass enclosed rooftop in Minnesota. Enjoy scratch American cooking, crafted cocktails, beer and wine during summer and winter while taking in the downtown Minneapolis skyline. On the main level, Union Bar and Grill, features American fare and a variety of bar snacks, burgers, sandwiches, tons of TV's, bar games, and more!

Sightseeing

Get acquainted with Minneapolis Saint Paul by first visiting the [Stone Arch Bridge](#)—it’s recognized as a National Civil Engineering Landmark that spans 2,100 feet across the Mississippi River. You won’t get a better view of the Minneapolis skyline and St. Anthony Falls. You can bike, jog or blade over the bridge, but there are other paths with great views in the area as well.



Minnesota wasn’t named the Land of 10,000 Lakes for nothing. You’ll find 13.3 miles of pathways that encircle the [Chain of Lakes](#) in Minneapolis, including Lake of the Isles, Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet. No matter where you are in Minneapolis, you will be able to easily find a park, considering that 94 percent of residents live within a 10-minute walk of one, and in 2013, Minneapolis was named to have the nation’s best park system.

For a different kind of park—one with twists, turns and hair-raising drops—spend the day at [Valleyfair](#), the Midwest’s largest amusement park with an assortment of thrill, family and kid rides. Launch into 360-degree spirals on Steel Venom, hang out with the Peanuts gang at Planet Snoopy or unwind on the lazy river at Soak City Waterpark. Double up on shopping and thrill seeking by going to Nickelodeon Universe at [Mall of America](#). While you’re there, shop and dine at the nation’s largest indoor mall, experience life under the sea at [SEA LIFE Minnesota Aquarium](#) where you can travel through a tunnel 14-feet below the water’s surface and spot more than 10,000 sea creatures, or splash at the nearby Water Park of America.



To see other creatures and animals, visit the [Minnesota Zoo](#) in Apple Valley, which encompasses 500 acres with close to 3,000 animals and 504 species. Don’t miss the Penguins of the African Coast, the bird show, Discovery Bay where you can touch a stingray, or a chance to catch a movie at the adjoining Great Clips IMAX Theatre. At Saint Paul’s [Como Park Zoo and Conservatory](#), the whole family will enjoy seeing polar bears, zebras, lemurs and 1,000 other animals that call the Como Zoo home. Also check out Como own, the adjacently located kid-centered amusement park, or the beautiful displays of exotic plants at the conservatory gardens.

Arts and Culture

World-class museums. Breathtaking architecture. More theater seats per capita than any U.S. city outside New York. Minneapolis has become a premier destination for arts lovers. Take in a show at the [Guthrie Theater](#), one of the city's Tony Award-winning theaters. Discover new worlds at the [The Science Museum](#) of Minnesota. Take in the arias of Rossini at the [Minnesota Opera](#). Or visit the [Walker Art Center](#), hailed by Newsweek as "possibly the best contemporary art museum in the country."

- [Mill City Museum](#): The story of a mighty river, a young city and how one product - flour - fueled the growth of Minneapolis. Mill City Museum's 12,000 square feet of exhibit space is packed with fun for visitors of all ages.
- [Minneapolis Institute of Art](#): Home to over 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, MIA inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country - Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African - MIA links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration. General admission to MIA is always free.
- [Minnesota History Center](#): An interactive museum with both permanent and changing exhibits. The Minnesota History Center hosts concerts, lectures, family days and other special event throughout the year. The building is also home to the Gale Family Library and archives, a research destination for schoolchildren, family historians and academics. The Minnesota History Center's distinctive architecture adds a unique ambiance for events from 50-1,500 guests. Constructed of Minnesota granite and limestone with marble accents, the History Center's spaces offer classic flair with grand vistas of the State Capitol, Cathedral of Saint Paul and the downtown Saint Paul skyline. The Minnesota History Center is one of 26 historic sites and museums operated by the Minnesota Historical Society.
- [Red Bull Crashed Ice](#): Saint Paul, Minnesota has been a fixture on the calendar of the fastest sports on skates for the past five seasons, but in 2016 it will host the thrilling season finale for the first time. The Minnesota course usually takes the form of a track of around 500m in length with a drop of 12 stories in front of the Cathedral of St Paul, and draws in excess of 120,000 wild fans, so expect high stakes and big drama as the riders fight it out for the honors.
- [Science Museum of Minnesota](#): At the Science Museum of Minnesota, the science that shapes our daily lives comes to life through hands-on exhibits, larger-than-life Omnitheater films, and a world-class collection of fossils and artifacts.
- [Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum](#) is an art museum located on the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis.



Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum

Festivals and Holidays

The word "boring" just isn't in our vocabulary.

Minneapolis is a city that likes to celebrate, and we're one of the best in the nation at doing it. We have the largest 12-day state fair in the nation - [The Minnesota State Fair](#) - where over 450 different types of food can be found; deep fried, on a stick or even in a bucket. There are larger state fairs (Texas for example)...but it's a month long, and they count attendance differently. Iowa is a 10-day fair. Indiana is also a 10-day fair. You can step back in time to the days of fair damsels and court jesters with the Renaissance Festival, a seven week ode to the olden times where you can eat oversized turkey drumsticks and cheer on your favorite jousting. In the winter, we light up the streets with the nationally - acclaimed Holidazzle Parade - a three week celebration of the serene beauty of the holiday season.

Whatever the season, whatever the day, you're bound to find a celebration breaking out in the streets of Minneapolis.

During the holiday season Minneapolis is buzzing with excitement. Here are just a few things going on during this magical time of the year.

- [Holidazzle](#) - Holidazzle will begin the day after Thanksgiving, Friday, November 27, and run Thursdays through Sundays through Sunday, December 20. Operating hours will be 5-9 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays and 11 a.m.-9 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. No admission fee—All activities will be free of charge.
- [Star Tribune Holiday Cookie Contest Winners](#) Get holiday baking inspiration when the finalists in the Star Tribune's annual Taste Holiday Cookie Contest bake their winning recipes in the Mill City Museum Baking Lab. Meet the finalists as they bake their award-winning cookies, learn more about the history of the recipes, get baking tips for the holiday season and sample each of the winning cookies. The Star Tribune's Taste section sponsors the annual Holiday Cookie Contest in which readers submit their favorite holiday cookie recipes. The winner and runners-up are announced in the Taste section in early December.
- [Hill House Holidays](#) The bustle and excitement of a Gilded Age Christmas is brought to life as the servants of the James J. Hill House prepare for the holidays. Costumed actors portray people who worked for the Hill family in a dramatized portrayal of servant life and holiday preparations at the Hill family's Summit Avenue mansion. The program moves through the elegant first floor spaces and then to the basement servant work areas. The script is based on letters and oral histories of people who worked for the Hill family during the first decade of the 20th century. Tours leave every half hour.
- [Macy's Santaland at Macy's Downtown](#) Take in the magical, animated display of "A Day in the Life of an Elf," telling the story of Santa's elves as they prepare for Christmas! Then, visit Santa and tell him all your wishes! Have your picture taken with the man himself! An assortment of photo packages are available for purchase. Before you go, make a stop at Mrs. Claus' bakery and Santa's toy shop.

EXPAT RESOURCES

Expat Resource Guide

- www.expatechange.com

Google Translator

- [Translate](#) 90 languages to and from language of choice using iTunes.

Volunteer Opportunities

- [Volunteer Match](#)
- [United Way](#)

Parent & Children Resources

- [Mom's Clubs](#) - social groups offering events and outings with mothers and their young children.

Smart Phone Apps for Travel:

- [Uber](#) : Similar to a taxi service but all web based. Payment also handled online, do not pay or tip driver directly. Uber driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS.
- [Lyft](#) : Wherever you're headed, count on Lyft for rides in minutes. The Lyft app matches you with local drivers at the tap of a button. Just request and go.
- [Google Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Apple Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Map Quest](#) : Map by direction
- [Waze](#) : Community based traffic & navigation with alternate route suggestions
- [CityMaps2Go](#) : The #1 travel app lets you discover exciting new places. Beautiful photos and insider tips at the touch of a button. You will receive stories about places you like and can instantly save and find them on your maps and in your lists.

Smart Phone Apps for Communication:

- [WhatsApp](#) : Free local & international Real Time messaging
- [Line](#) : Exchange free instant messages with friends whenever and wherever with one-on-one and group chats. LINE is available on all smartphone devices (iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry, Nokia) and even on your PC.
- [Viber](#) : Free text, calling, photo messages and location-sharing with Viber users. No registration, alias or invitations required. Instantly integrates with your own contact list. Best-quality mobile calls using 3G or Wi-Fi.
- [Skype](#) : Stay in touch with your family and friends for free on Skype. Download Skype today to chat and call on desktop and mobile.

Smart Phone Apps for Local Information/Reviews:

- [Angie's List](#) : Referrals for doctor, dentist, child care, maid, mechanic, painter, plumber, etc.
- [Yelp!](#) : Find local businesses, restaurants, bars, clubs, events, etc. with map, lists, and reviews
- [Next Door](#) : Neighbors share community events, items for sale, recommendations for babysitters, doctors and handymen, crime reports, ideas about how to improve their neighborhood and more.
- [Meet Ups](#) : Meetups are neighbors getting together to learn something, do something or share something. Cultural groups advertise gatherings here as well.

Smart Phone Apps for Weather:

- [Weather Channel](#) : National and international time, temperature & weather
- [Tornado](#) : Set up tornado alerts & siren

U.S. IDIOMS

Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that are not taken literally- they have meaning beyond a literal translation of the words. Idioms are generally used in casual, familiar conversation but can also come up in certain business settings. Here are some examples of commonly used American English idioms:

better off - in a more fortunate position

Big deal! - So what? That doesn't really matter.

(to) blow things out of proportion - to exaggerate; to make more of something than one should

(to) call it a night - to stop an activity for the rest of the night

dime a dozen - so plentiful as to be nothing special; common

(to) do the trick - to achieve the desired results

(to) give someone the cold shoulder - to ignore someone on purpose; to snub someone

(to) get the ball rolling - to get started

(to) go back to the drawing board - to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

happy camper [slang] - a happy person; a satisfied participant

(to) have a heart of gold - to be very kind and giving

(to be) head over heels in love - very much in love

(to) hit the nail on the head - to be right

(to) learn the ropes - to learn the basics

(to) lose one's touch - to no longer be able to do something well

made of money - very rich

needless to say - obviously

piece of cake - very easy

(to) pitch in - to help

(to) pull an all-nighter - to stay up all night to do work

rule of thumb - a useful principle

(as) sharp as a tack - very intelligent

(to) sit tight - to wait patiently

(to) stab someone in the back - to betray someone

(to) tell someone off - to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

When pigs fly! [slang] - never

(to) twist someone's arm - to persuade someone; to convince someone

(to be) up in the air - not yet determined; uncertain

Many common American idioms come from sports, here are some examples:

strike out- to fail or to do poorly at something (*baseball*)

(to) call the shots- to make the decisions; to be in charge (*basketball*)

ballpark- a guess or an estimate (*baseball*)

down and out- lacking money or prospects; penniless or destitute (*boxing*)

down to the wire- to the very end or last minute (*horse racing*)

drop the ball- to make an error, to miss an opportunity (*football, baseball, rugby*)

hands down- with great ease; unconditionally; often (and originally) in the phrase “to win hands down” (*horse racing*)

(to) have someone in your corner- to have the support or help of someone (*boxing*)

(to) hit it out of the park; home run- to be wildly successful, to do a great job (*baseball*)



To learn even more idioms, visit the following links:

- [Everyday American English Idioms](#) - with example sentences.
- [Useful Idioms for Lower-Intermediate to Advanced Students \(Teacher's Resource\)](#)
- [Idiom Site A-Z](#)
- [Sports Idioms](#)
- [English Language Learning: American English Idioms](#)

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be confusing as there are national (federal) holidays, bank holidays, state holidays. Verify those in your area with Human Resources at your place of business, especially before planning vacations or weekend get-aways!

[Federal Holidays listed through 2020](#)

[State of Minnesota Holidays](#)

The following are federal holidays in the United States and need to be treated as such by employers:

- New Year's Day January 1*
- Memorial Day Last Monday in May
- Independence Day July 4*
- Labor Day First Monday in September
- Columbus Day Second Monday in October
- Veterans' Day November 11*
- Thanksgiving Day Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day December 25*

*If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the day following is observed as the legal holiday.