

TRAVEL

Duluth isn't for the accidental tourist anymore

BY DORIS SCHARFENBERG

SPECIAL WRITER

Going to Duluth, Minn., used to be almost accidental. You went because you were born there and mother never moved, or you were going around Lake Superior and Duluth was on the route.

No more. America's westernmost Atlantic port (2,342 freshwater miles from the ocean) still works on shipping out ore and grain, but the fun side has gone far beyond ice games and friendly beers. Duluth is climbing fast on destination lists.

The city began life on a wide sweep of hillsides where neighborhoods rise like tiers of bleachers for watching over 1,000 ships come and go annually. Today's watchers see art fairs, summer fests and bright splashes of color edging the harbor. Beyond the hilltop spreads a new expansion of malls, schools and all the fast food icons a car full of kids could want.

There's more good news. Older eateries still serve lumberjack-size helpings in the Minnesota manner and winter has lost much of its bite under enclosed

skywalks linking hotels and shops downtown.

Undisputed Duluth logo is the high, aquarish Aerial Lift Bridge that hoists a road out of the way when freighters come through the narrow channel into the harbor. This piece of practical engineering (visible from a thousand vantage points) looks like a giant suitcase handle — an image of souvenir coffee mugs and even neckties.

Next to the bridge the steadiest spectator sport in town is more of the Duluth game: watching long ships ease in and out of the harbor. A waterside walkway lets gazers stroll or bike while waiting for the next freighter. Or they sit in an area called Lake Place within easy reach of downtown stores. Nearby a Sculpture Garden draws its work from Japan, Sweden and Russia in "sister" city tributes.

Also at bridgehead a Marine Museum has model ships and exhibits on the aspects of running a major world port, which turns out to be more interesting than most inlanders would ever guess. If ship traffic is slow, a 24-hour boat-watcher's hotline

(in season: (218)722-6489) tells what's coming in and when.

Two blocks away on Lake Street, the Grand Slam Adventure World indoor miniports complex attracts visitors all year with restaurant and more. Free to enter. Only steps from a new Omnimax Theater where you climb Mt. Everest in comfort across from a Duluth reality, the freighter William A. Irwin. Open houses for summer tours. Call (800)828-8385. Ask about the "Ship of Ghouls," spooky stuff just before Halloween.

Three strides west Bayfront Festival Park hosts musical "Bayfront Fridays" (rock and roll) or the Bayfront Blues Fest with national headline bands.

From the skywalk connection to the Duluth Convention Entertainment and Convention Center you might get to watch a summer curling game in the ice arena through a large window. Free unless you want to go in and sit down.

Sitting firmly at the west end of downtown is a grand old chateau-style train station transformed into the St. Louis County Heritage and Arts Center. The Depot provides group housing for eight different cultural organizations and their museum collections.

A round-up of trains, streetcars, etc., under the wing of the Lake Superior Museum of Transportation fills the lower level. Unstated the Chisholm Museum of world cultures emphasizes children. In other rooms the St. Louis County Historical Society spotlights Minnesota's heritage and Duluth's Art Institute rotates its exhibits.

Four active art groups with impressive records perform in a modern addition to the Depot. Duluth Ballet, Superior/Duluth Symphony, Duluth Playhouse

and the Matinee Musical charge their own admission fees (218)727-8025.

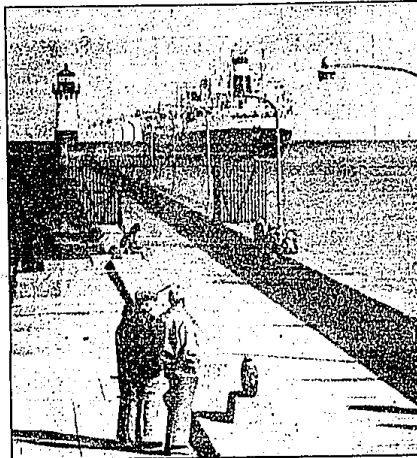
For old house addicts the 39-room Jacobean revival mansion on the shores of Lake Superior made the National Historic Places list. "Glenheath" and its gardens can be toured (218)724-8863. Guided walks in vintage neighborhoods are also available.

What do the U.S. Bill of Rights, Handel's "Messiah" and the Constitution of the Confederate States of America have in common? Their original-draft papers wound up with other great documents in the Karples Manuscript Library Museum on the University of Minnesota-Duluth campus. Another Duluth coup is the UM-D's handsome Tweed Museum of Art and European paintings (218)728-0630.

For children, the 76-year-old Lake Superior Zoological Gardens will succeed wonderfully. Home to more than 600 species from tigers to bats and — of course — polar bears. Open all year. Picnic areas and campgrounds in easy range.

Meanwhile, back at the docks, take a Vista Fleet harbor cruise for a close look at freighters, loaders and elevators often containing enough grain to bake an individual loaf of bread for the entire U.S. population. Lunch and dinner cuisines, too.

Climb the tower in Enger Park. Check train rides, charter fishing, two casinos, "Dukes" baseball or live acts in Library plaza. The popular Grandma's Original Salsón & Deli sponsors a whopping Big Marathon Run in June, one of the nation's largest. Or hang around to see the 16-dog teams of the 600-mile Beargrease Dog Sled Race huff past



Deep harbor: The Duluth Harbor is the furthest inland with a connection to the Atlantic Ocean.

in January.

Lake Weebegone might be found near Chisholm and Ironworld USA. A 90-minute drive north on U.S. 23 and U.S. 169. (Note the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame at Eveleth). Grounds include a stunning Mendenhall Range museum cantilevered over a former open pit mine, a train ride, living history tapes. In summer main line entertainers come to the park's amphithe-

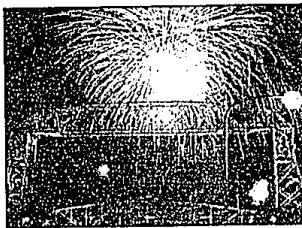
ater and ethnic food booths serve their specialties (800)777-8497.

U.S. 53 is also the route to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area on the Canadian border, a sprawling wilderness adventure region.

Make traveling the north shore of Lake Superior your next adventure.

Doris Scharfenberg is a Farmington Hills free-lance writer who has published several guides to Great Lakes Travel.

Bridge works: The Aerial Lift Bridge is illuminated by Fourth of July fireworks. The bridge is the symbol of Duluth.



DULUTH CONVENTION AND VISITOR'S BUREAU

GREAT ESCAPES

Great Escapes features various travel news items. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, assistant managing editor, Observer & Eccentricist Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

WEST MICHIGAN GUIDE

The phone number to receive the 1998 edition of the West Michigan Travel Guide, published annually by the West Michigan Tourist Association, was incorrect in last week's Great Escapes. The correct number is (800)442-2084. The 144-page guide is a comprehensive compilation of attractions, activities and vacation destinations throughout West Michigan's 41 counties. The guide's Fun Index lists more than 350 things to do — including dunes, cruises, summer theater, winery tours, museums, zoos and fishing charters.

For a free West Michigan Travel Guide, stop by the associ-

ation's Visitor Information Center at 1253 Front Ave., Grand Rapids NW, just off U.S. 131 at exit 87.

NOMADS OPEN HOUSE

The Nomads will hold an open house for the public noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 22. Tours will be given of the exclusive passenger lounge and hangar facility as well as Nomads' state-of-the-art Super 27 flying clubhouse. Flight attendants will be available to point out the features of the "Nomads Class" passenger cabin. Refreshments will be served throughout the afternoon.

The Nomade World Terminal is at 10100 Middlebelt Road in Romulus. From I-94, exit at Middlebelt Road, turn south on Middlebelt toward the airport and the west side of the road.

For more information, call (734)841-8000.

FRANKENMUTH TRIP

West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation is offering a one-day trip to Frankenmuth, 8:15 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 9.

Sponsored by Bianco Tours, the trip costs \$39 for a resident of West Bloomfield; \$43 for a non-resident. It includes transportation by bus.

To register, call (248)738-2500.

GALDER CELEBRATION

The Grand Rapids Art Museum is celebrating the centennial of sculptor Alexander Calder. Calder's "La Grande Vitesse" erected in 1969 has been both controversial and inspirational for the city. The museum has two exhibits, "Calder for Kids," at the Porter Gallery through Sept. 6 and "Alexander Calder to Maya Lin: Art & the Public Environment," also through Sept. 6. In "Calder for Kids," visitors will enter four Calder-like environments to experience various aspects of his work. "Art & the Public Environment" presents an exploration of public

sculptures and the controversies that surround them.

The museum is open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily and 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday. Closed Mondays. Call (616)831-1001 for information.

VEGAS VACATIONS

HMHF Fun Vacations is offer-

ing new moonlight flights to Las Vegas aboard Pro-Air's 737-400 jets from Detroit City Airport beginning Dec. 20. Prices are from just \$109.95 each way.

Passengers will fly out of City Airport at 8 p.m. Thursdays and Sundays, arriving in Las Vegas at 10:15 p.m. Returning home,

travelers will depart Las Vegas at 11 p.m. Sundays and Thursdays, arriving in Detroit at 6 a.m. the next day. The moonlight flights are available through 1999.

Passengers can book through their travel agency or by calling (800)669-4466.

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See the 3 Tenors concert live from Paris.

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MONDAY 9:00 PM
belgium

Helmut Lotti goes classic from Cloyde Castle and live at 56.

TUESDAY 7:30 PM
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John Inman returns to Channel 56 for an Are You Being Served? marathon.

WEDNESDAY 7:30 PM
poland

From pierogi to polkas, a proud look at The Polish Americans.



Detroit Public Television