



# Bike



# Camping Twin-Cities

2023



**bike.MN**

BICYCLE ALLIANCE OF MINNESOTA

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# Route Overviews

(Click Destination For Route Link)

Page	Destination	Distance (Miles)	Bike Trail Percentage
13	<a href="#"><u>Bunker Hills Regional Park</u></a>	23.7	92%
15	<a href="#"><u>Lake Elmo Park Reserve</u></a>	24.4	98%
17	<a href="#"><u>Elm Creek Park Reserve</u></a>	27.8	98%
19	<a href="#"><u>Carver Park Reserve</u></a>	28.3	88%
20	<a href="#"><u>Lebanon Hills Regional Park</u></a>	13.1	39%
22	<a href="#"><u>Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve</u></a>	26.9	78%
23	<a href="#"><u>Morris T Baker Park Reserve</u></a>	26	97%
25	<a href="#"><u>Lake Rebecca Park Reserve</u></a>	33.7	84%
26	<a href="#"><u>Cleary Lake Regional Park</u></a>	28.1	37%
28	<a href="#"><u>Afton State Park</u></a>	32.5	82%
29	<a href="#"><u>Willow River State Park</u></a>	34.4	82%
31	<a href="#"><u>St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park</u></a>	34.8	35%
32	<a href="#"><u>William O'Brien State Park</u></a>	39.8	62%
33	<a href="#"><u>Sand Dunes State Forest</u></a>	50.7	18%

\*all route start at BikeMN Headquarters: 3745 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55406

# Bike Camping For Rejuvenation & Community

Dear Reader,

I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joys and benefits of bike camping. However, for many people there are significant systemic barriers to leisure/recreation activities, biking, and accessing healthy & restorative outdoor space including financial constraints, lack of safe and accessible bike environments (social and physical), and limited proximity to "green" space as a result of historic and ongoing white supremacist and discriminatory housing, land use, transportation, and environmental planning. I also wanted to acknowledge that for my unhoused neighbors, camping and biking are often part of how they meet their everyday basic needs and not necessarily for recreation.

As a result, I hope this zine will find its way into the hands of groups and individuals working to make bike camping more accessible and inclusive through their work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience the many benefits of bike camping as a joyful, liberatory endeavor.

Spencer  
*BikeMN*



# Overview

This booklet highlights 15 bike camping overnight routes and destinations in the Twin Cities weaving in the personal experience of local bike campers as a source of inspiration and insight. As a central location, routes begin at BikeMN Headquarters and were created using [Komoot](#) and [Ride with GPS](#) websites.



# Acknowledging Indigenous Places, People, and the Land

These routes transverse traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of Dakota and Anishinaabe people.



# Resources



## Adventure Cycling

"This guide has a TON of information and covers how to ensure everyone on your trip has BIG FUN!"

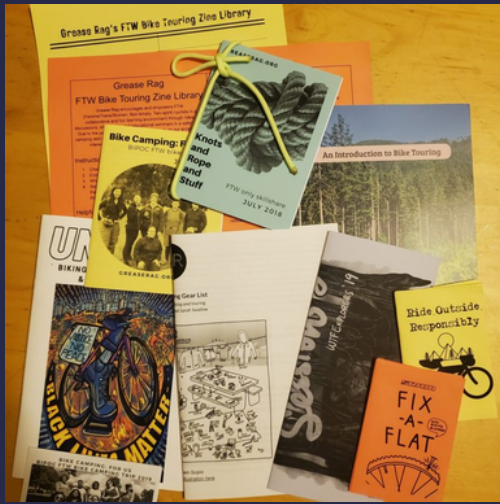


## BikeMN

"The Minnesota Bicycling Handbook is meant to help bicyclists use Minnesota's roads and trails safely and enjoyably."







## Grease Rag

"Grease Rag has put together a collection of zines (all FTW, mostly BIPOC creators) on the topic of bike touring."



## Radical Adventure Riders (RAR)

"A continuous work-in-progress resource page for the RAR community and allies. Our aim is to co-create a resource that is of, by, and for FTWN-B and BIPOC folks."



## Bikepacking Roots

Bikepacking Roots supports and advances bikepacking, the growth of a diverse bikepacking community, and access to and the conservation of the landscapes and public lands through which we ride.



# Community Voices

Unny Nambudiripad



Unny Nambudiripad is enthusiastic about spending time outside, moving his body, and organizing for social change. He's currently organizing a group of BIPOC triathletes and fundraising across the country to make plant-based eating the norm.



Check out more of Unnys work and bike camping stories and photos at <https://unnypn.org/touring-list/>



# Community Voices



## Natalie Corbett

I am the first transgender person to bike the Pan American Highway which I completed in January of 2020, I couldn't have timed out my finish better if I tried. I am a freelance writer and photographer who tripped and fell into being able to write about what I love to do.

I fell in love with being in the high Andes above 3500 meters. The cool nights and thin air and even at that elevation the peaks still tower 2000 meters above you in some places. It's brutal and it's harsh and that's what I love about it. Also southern Patagonia but because it's harsh in a different way but still cool temps.

As for organizations I've been connected to: Machines For Freedom, Greaserag, Cumbre, Red Comunitaria Trans in Bogotá, Adventure Cycling Association, Bicycling Magazine, Bikes and Bites Minneapolis - Nat



# Twin Cities Bike Camping Routes



# Bunker Hills Regional Park



23.7 miles

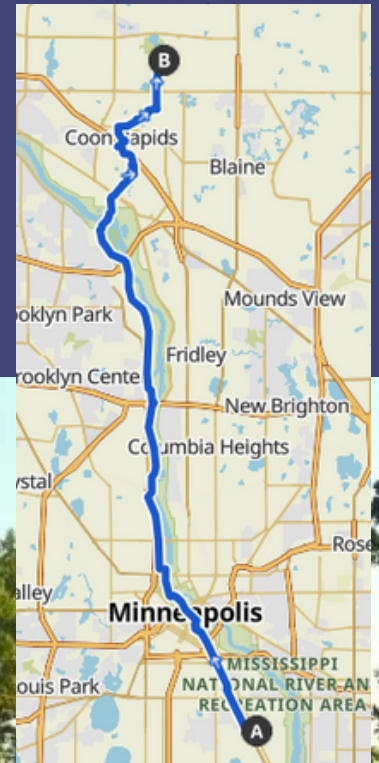


92% Bike Trail

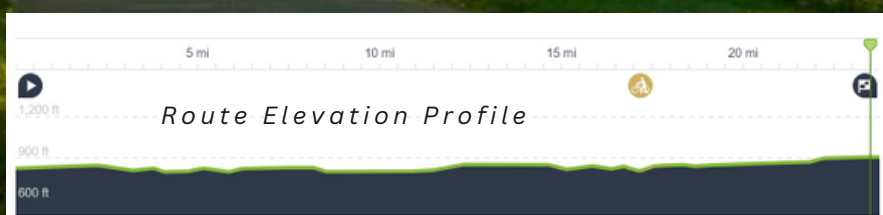
*"I will be going to Bunker Hills in a few weeks to bike camp and go to the water park!" - Nat*



## Route Example



*"This is a beautiful big park in close to the city. Some of the ride is unpleasant suburban roads, but there are some pleasant bike trails through parks just south of Bunker Hills. It's mostly up the Mississippi River, and that's nice to ride up." - Unny!*







# Lake Elmo Park Reserve



24.4 miles

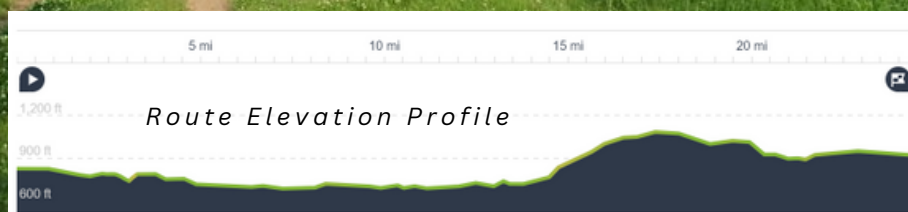
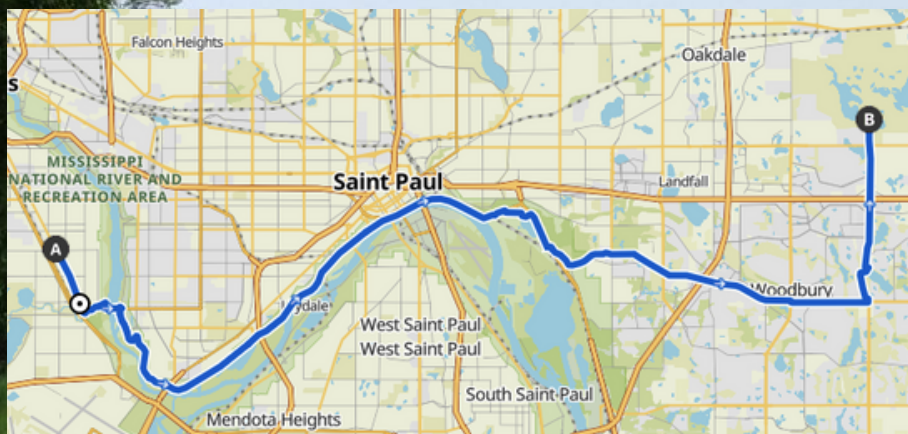


98% Bike Trail



*"A pleasant campground"*  
- Unny

## Route Example





*Alaska Highway at Kluane Lake Yukon - Natalie Corbet*

One of my favourite sensations is breathing in the crisp and thin mountain air, especially in the high Andes.

The crunch of the dry altiplano dirt under my Chacos while I walk to fill up my cook pot with water to steep some coca tea to help with effects of altitude.

Or the smell of burning palo santo wood in Colombia.

Now THAT brings me back.

And most importantly, the feel of my bike underneath me, after traveling on her for months she and I have become one. Every time I get on my Surly Long Haul Trucker, whom I've named Yonder Esmeralda Shitkicker, I get transported back to riding the Ruta 40 in Argentina or the Carretera Austral in Chile.

I often have to shake myself out of a daydream whilst riding because I was lost in a memory. - Nat



# Elm Creek Park Reserve



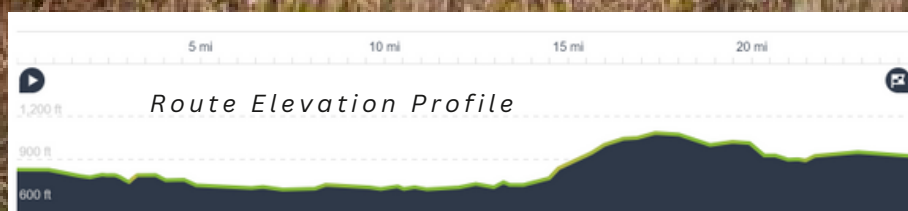
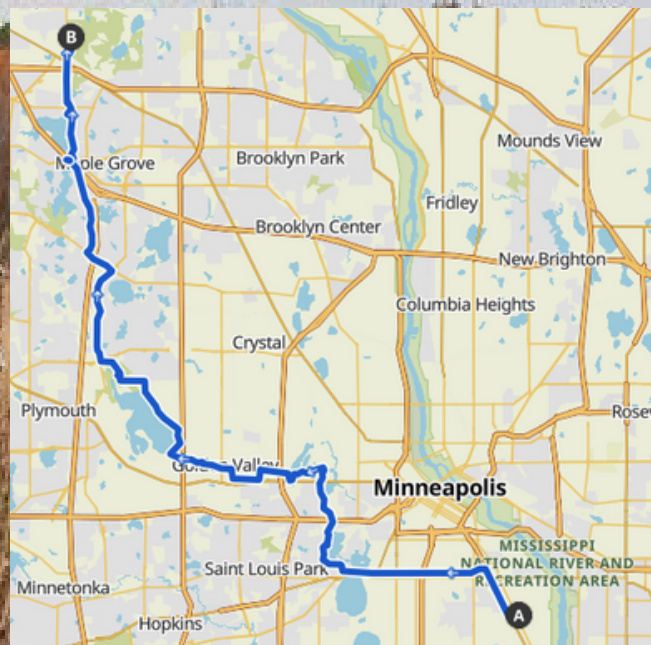
27.8 miles



98% Bike Trail



## *Route Example*





I would love to see more people riding to improve our health, lessen our impact on clean water and air, and feel the joy of being outside and moving their bodies! And we need to help folks who don't have access -- low income folks, BIPOC, women, trans, immigrant, and many more if we're going to do that!

- Unny



[The first time I bike camped]. It was such a journey! I had never biked that far and it was a big challenge. My girlfriend at the time and I wanted to go camping, but we didn't have cars or drivers' licenses. So we decided to bike. We had to figure out how to pack things on our bike. We rode to William O'Brien State Park. It was wonderful! It took me several years to really get into it, and then after that I was hooked. A huge difference it made is that I learned all the aspects (routes, gear, fitness, etc) to be a regular bike commuter. So I started riding a lot more to get places. I was already doing that, but I did it a lot more after I toured! - Unny



# Carver Park Reserve



28.3 miles



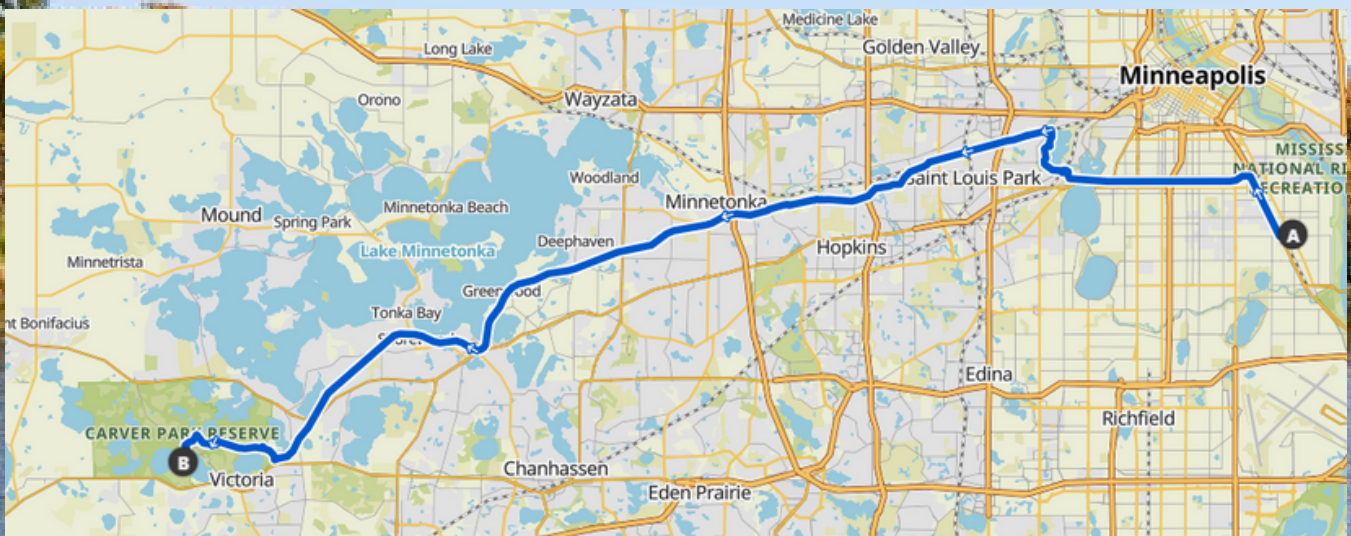
88% Bike Trail

*"Biking to Carver Park is a nice beginner trip, lots of dedicated bike paths to get there and they have bike camping spots." - Nat*

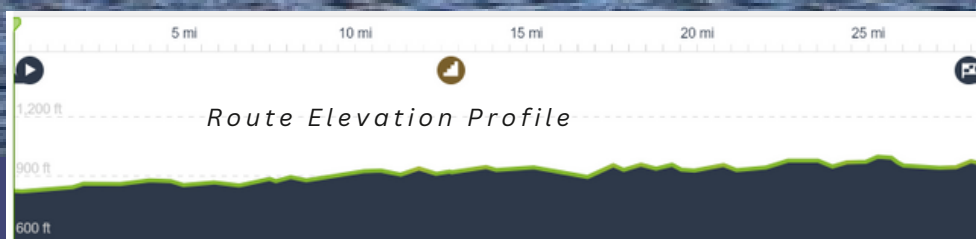
*"This is one of the best campgrounds to bike to because you can go almost entirely on trails! The Greenway and Kennilworth Corridor trails cover the first portion, and the Lake Minnetonka LRT trails brings you into the park. At thirty miles, it is a short ride. This is a place I go when I have limited time or I am going with new people." -Unny*



## Route Example



*"Big park with lots of rolling hills and lakes! I haven't tried it yet, but they now have a bike-only site that is non-reservable. The camping fee is just \$10/night and they have room for up to 10 tents." - Unny*





# Lebanon Hills Regional Park

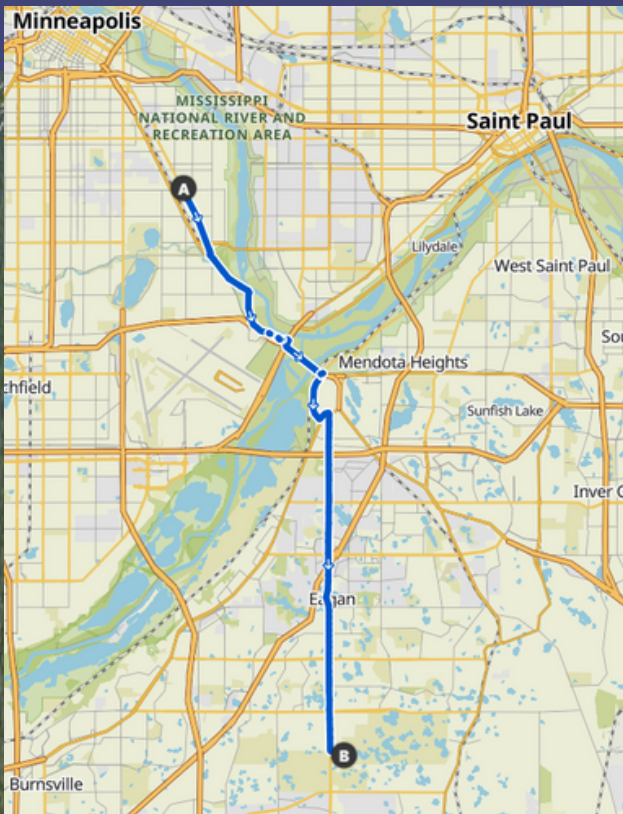


13.1 miles



39% Bike Trail - 54% Road

## Route Example



"This is my go-to place if going with friends who can't ride very far"



"A favorite! It's a short enough ride to do in a half a day, and it's a pretty large, hilly park, so it feels relatively remote. The campgrounds are nice and secluded, and the hiking trails are extensive and the park is ridiculously big for being so close to the city." - Unny







*Salar de Uyuni Standing - Natalie Corbett*

Make your adventure YOUR OWN and treasure it because YOU are the only one who do that exact one. No one else. That makes it unique and special just like you. - Nat

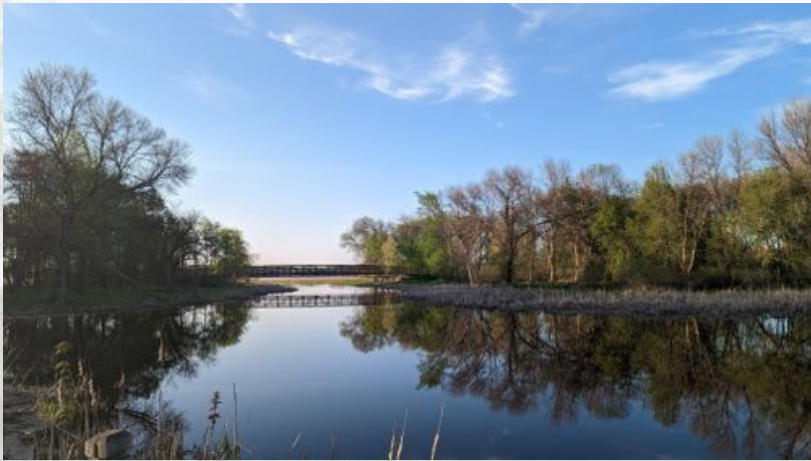
# Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve



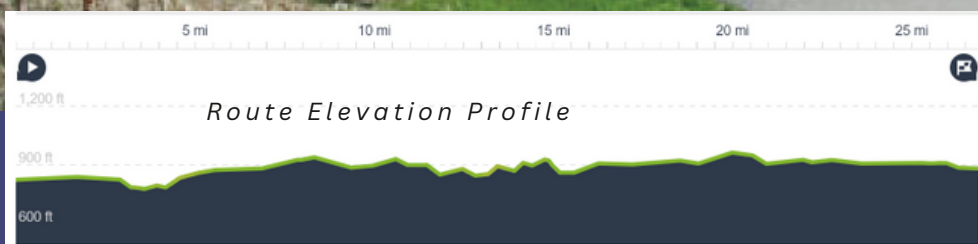
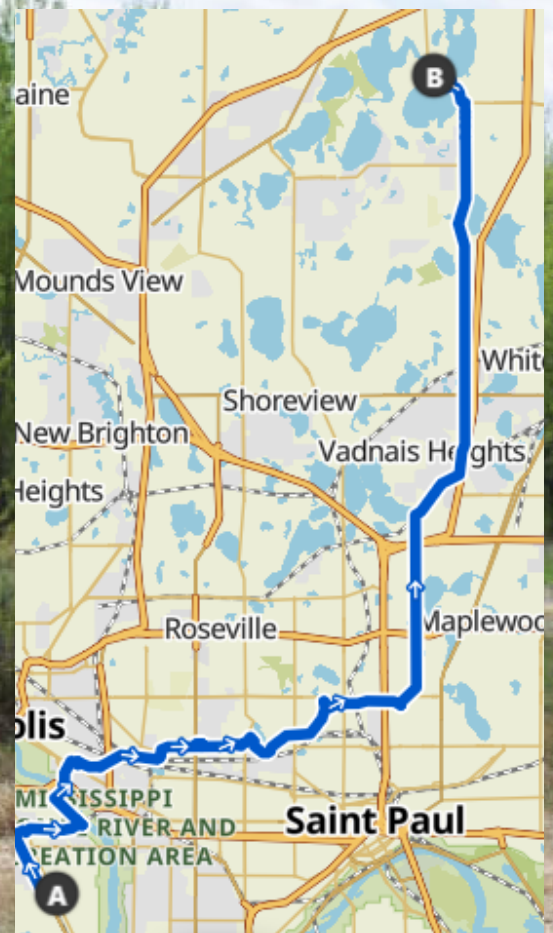
26.9 miles



78% Bike Trail



*Route Example*





# Morris T Baker Park Reserve

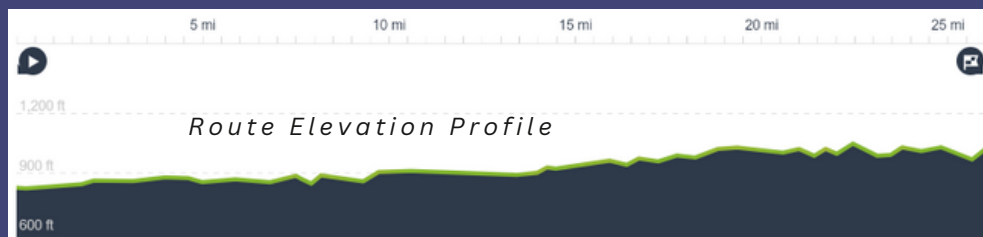
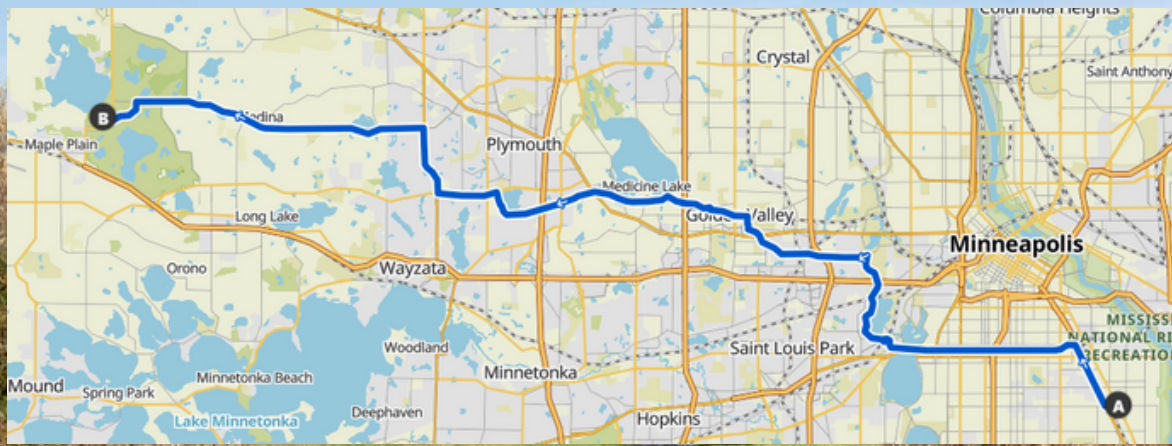


26 miles



97% Bike Trail

## Route Example



"Our bikes are still at the bottom of the river, sadly. - Unny



I'd say the biggest barrier for most people is financial. Bikes can be expensive and so can camping gear. But for me I'd say the biggest issue when I was getting started was not knowing this world and community really even existed. When I started on my first trip I went in with backpacking experience and road cycling experience. Putting those together early on proved challenging as the best practices in either don't always overlap. But now after a decade of bike touring I love that the word is getting out there and more and more people are finding this activity and lifestyle - Nat



Although the suburbs can be terrible for riding. I have found it helpful to go out of the way in certain routes to avoid busy road with no shoulders. Riding with others helps. I would feel really safe if cars were abolished and I would like for us to move in that direction. - Unny



# Lake Rebecca Park Reserve

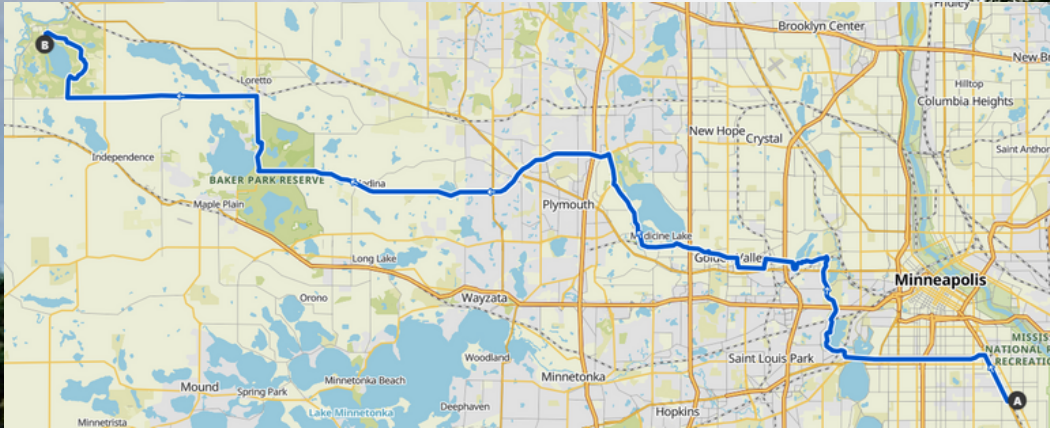


37.7 miles



84% Bike Trail - 16% Road

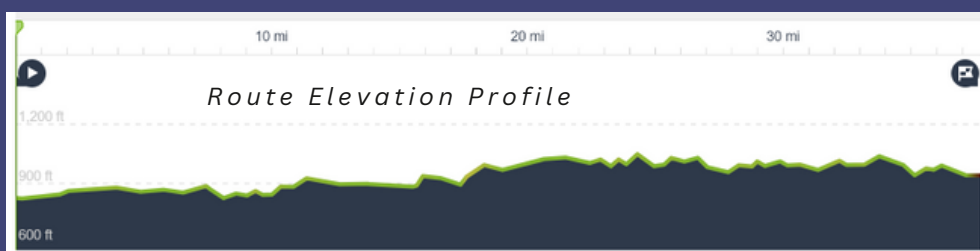
## Route Example



*"Lake Rebecca only has group sites. So get a crowd and come here." - Unny*



*"I stayed at the South Group campsite, and it was large and excellent. It had its own toilets, water, free wood with the site, a building for eating or storing food, and a lot of nicely mowed grass. We hiked through a tiny portion of the extensive hiking trails. Really great stuff." - Unny*





# Cleary Lake Regional Park



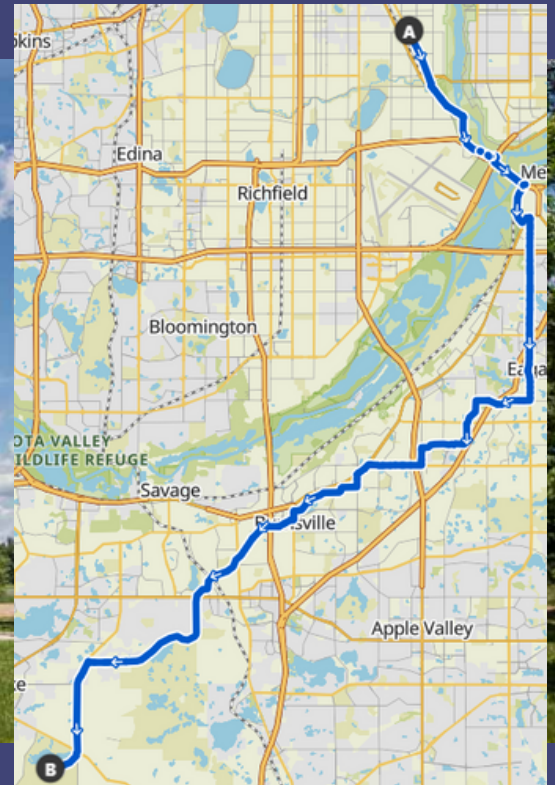
28.1 miles



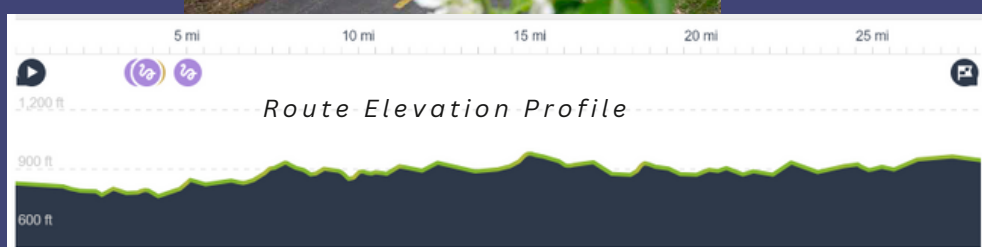
37% Bike Trail - 54% Road

*"The ride is not great, but not terrible. A lot of the miles are on suburban highways that have decent shoulders and moderate traffic. It would probably be unpleasant to be riding near rush hour on a weekday." - Unny*

## Route Example



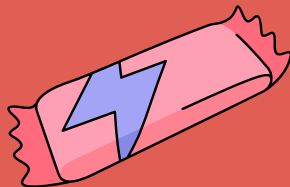
*"The group site is very nice and secluded. In general the sites are pretty good. The lake is really big but murky so it's not great for swimming. Big park with lots of canoeing and trails to walk." - Unny*







Visibility is important. And also feeling like you belong in a space is huge, when I go to an event or shop and it's only white dudes and then me I don't feel super welcome or comfortable all the time. I love groups like Greaserag that focuses on being for all the people who have historically been marginalized. Meeting new and interesting people is a huge reason I love adventure cycling so much. I don't want every bike traveler I meet to be the same. - Nat



Don't hesitate to get out there, go slow and enjoy the ride. Take pleasure in the ability to eat ridiculous amounts of whatever foods you want and the only calorie counting you do on tour is upgrading to the King Size candy bar because you need the extra energy. -Nat

# Afton State Park

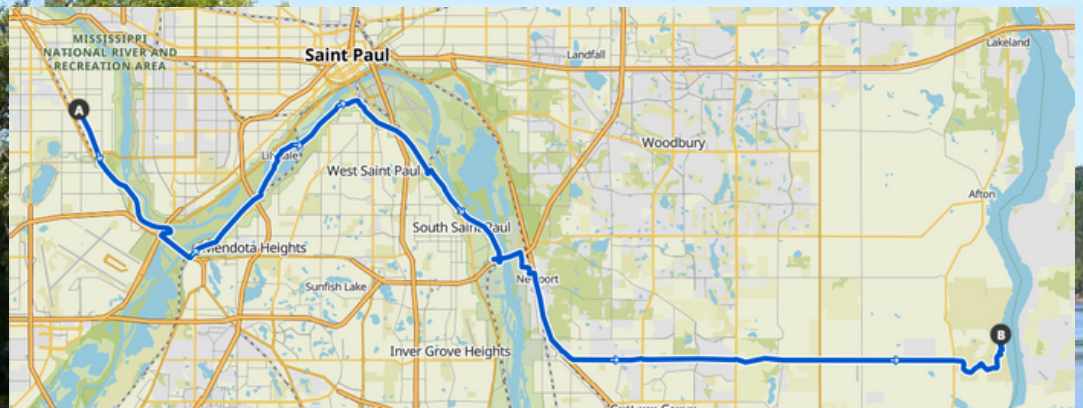


32.5 miles



82% Bike Trail - 16% Road

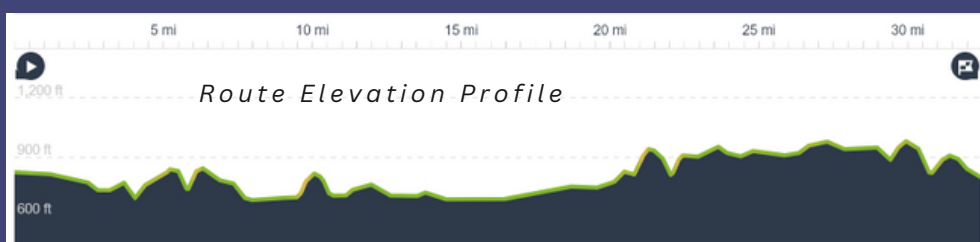
## Route Example



"A favorite! It's a short enough ride to do in a half a day, and being along the river in a hilly area gives a feeling of remoteness." - Unny



"When you get close to the park, there are rolling hills. Overall I find it easy to navigate and it's a fast ride, though I'm tolerant of hills." - Unny





# Willow River State Park



39.4 miles



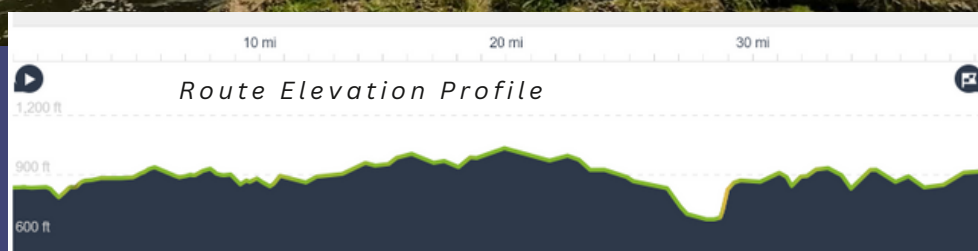
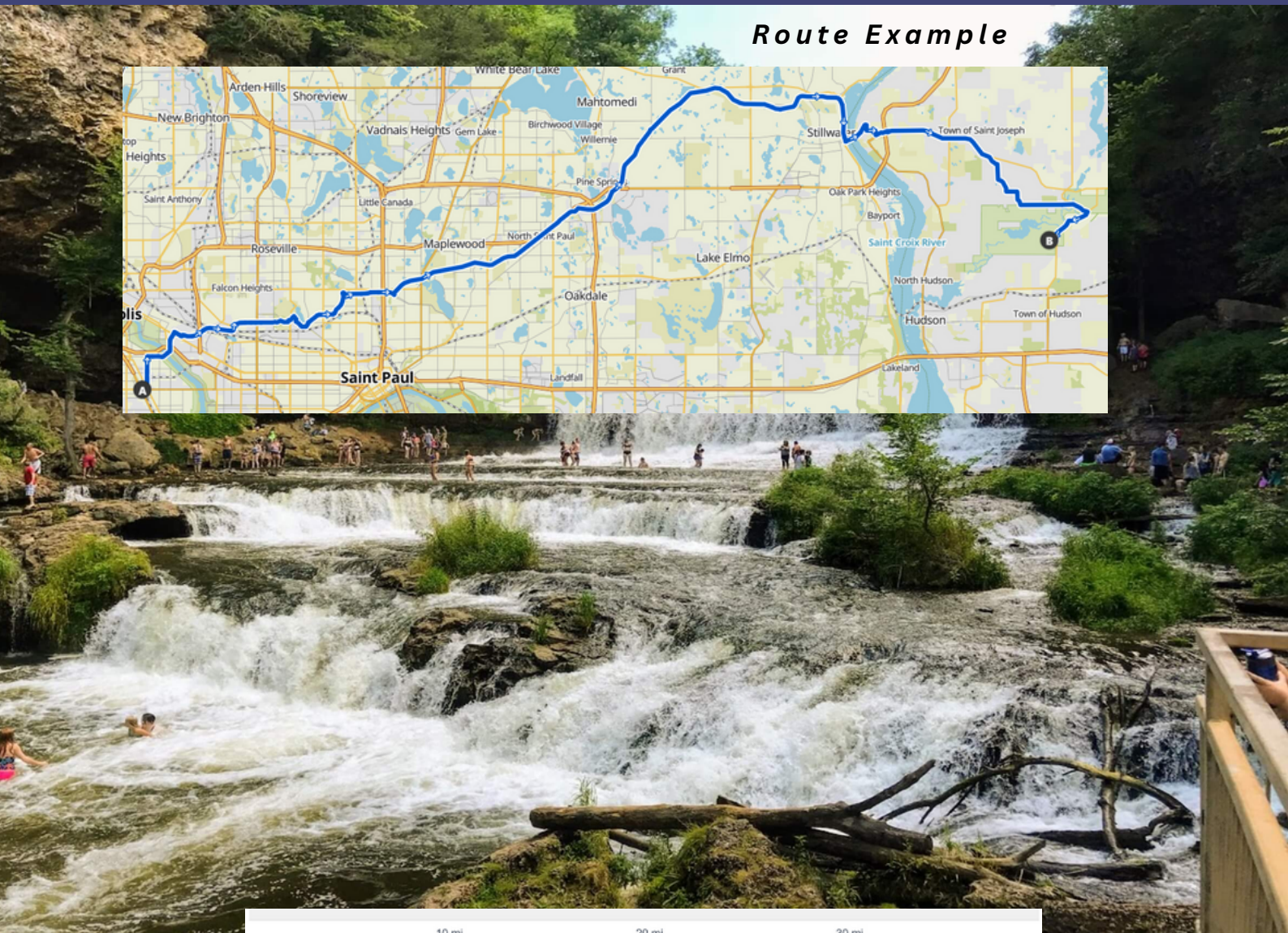
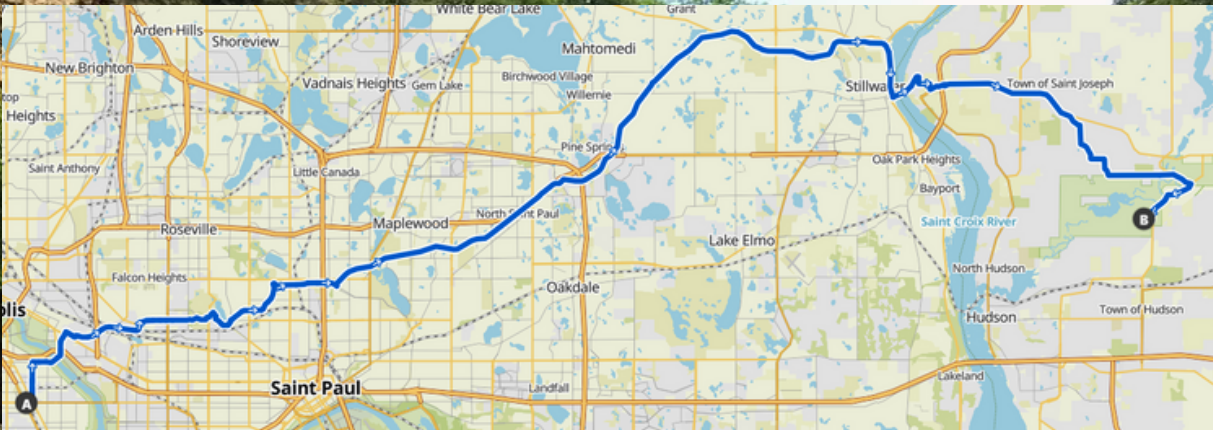
82% Bike Trail - 16% Road



**Adventure  
Cycling**

\*This Route is an official part of the Adventure Cycling Route Network Short Routes! [adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/short-routes/](https://adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/short-routes/)

## *Route Example*





My dad grew up in a rural area in India with lots of water access and enjoyed canoeing and swimming and being outside a lot. I grew up in Burnsville and we did a lot of outdoor things including swimming and canoeing. It took some years into adulthood to embrace it fully on my own. - Unny



I had no idea what I was doing and I knew few people who had done it. Everything about finding my way, carrying things on my bike, and fixing my bike was a mystery. I asked around some and slowly learned. I overcame it because I wanted to be outside and this was a feasible and affordable option! I have since led many people on tours. I think we need more institutional resources including digital media, organizations, trips, and such to make it more accessible. - Unny



# St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park

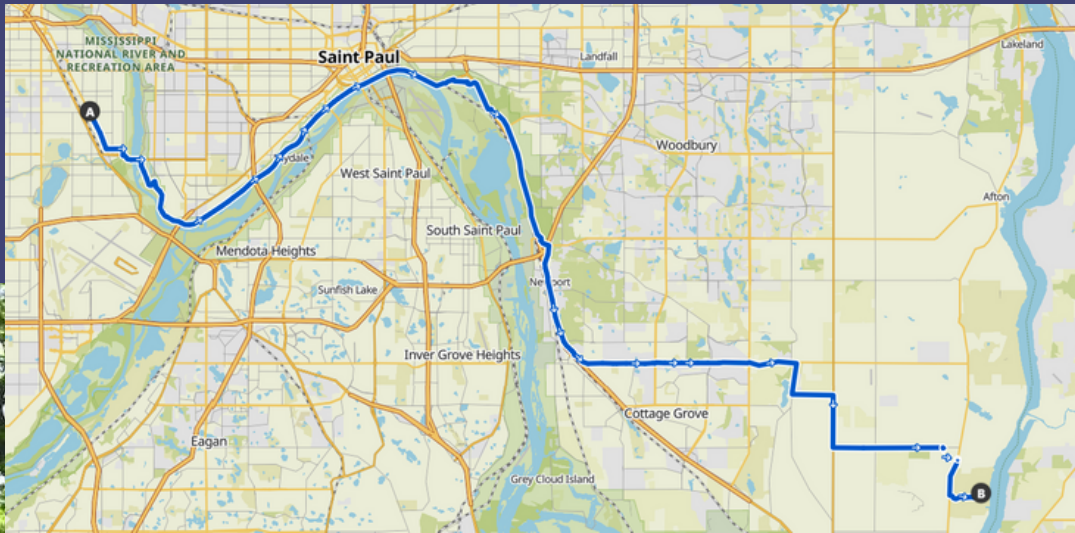


34.8 miles



35% Bike Trail - 39% Road - 20% State Road

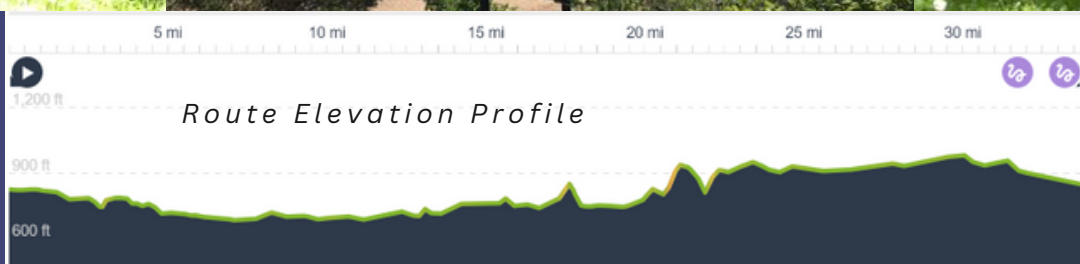
## Route Example



"It's an excellent ride to get here, very similar to the ride to Afton State Park (which I have done several times). It's highways with nice shoulders and relatively low traffic. The last road that you have to take to get there — St. Croix Trail — is no fun. The shoulder is narrow and traffic was high on one of my trips there." - Unny

"Less popular and known than Afton State Park and the other parks along the St. Croix, and a nice river location. It's easier to get a reservation here."  
- Unny

"The campground is really big!! And the park has many miles of trails and lots of places to play. The beach is beautiful and great for swimming."  
- Unny





# William O'Brien State Park

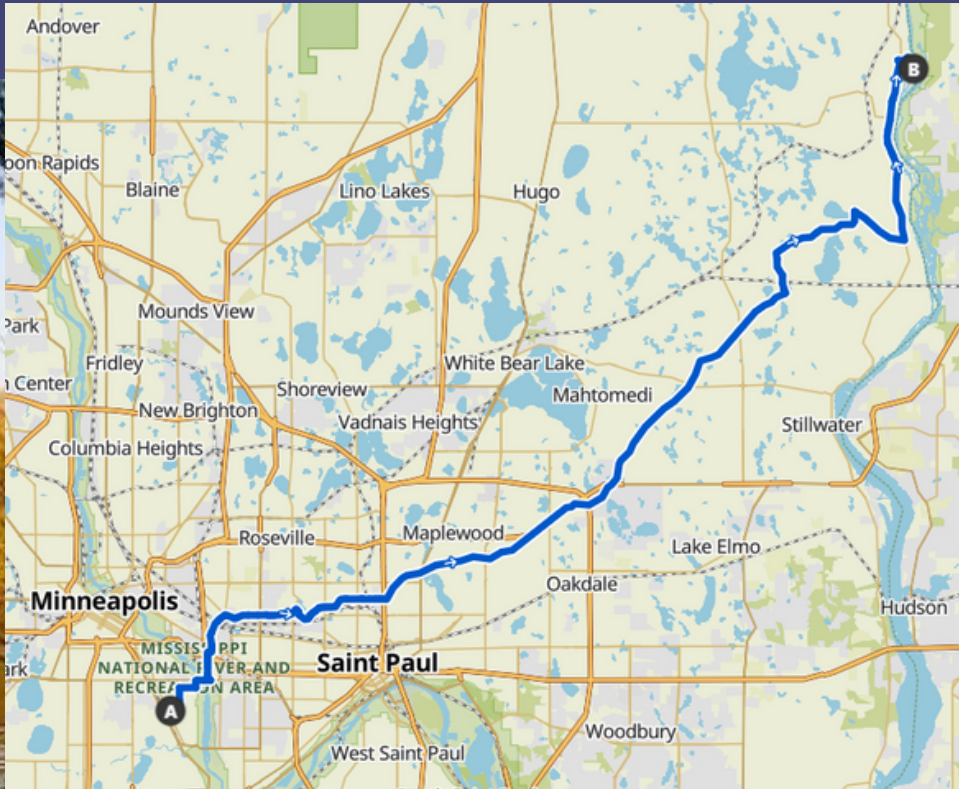


39.8 miles



62% Bike Trail - 27% Road - 10% Street

## Route Example



*"This was my first-ever tour, and what an adventure it was!" - Unny*

*"Excellent ride! Much of it is on the Gateway State Trail, which is beautiful and doesn't have many intersections." - Unny*





# Sand Dunes State Forest

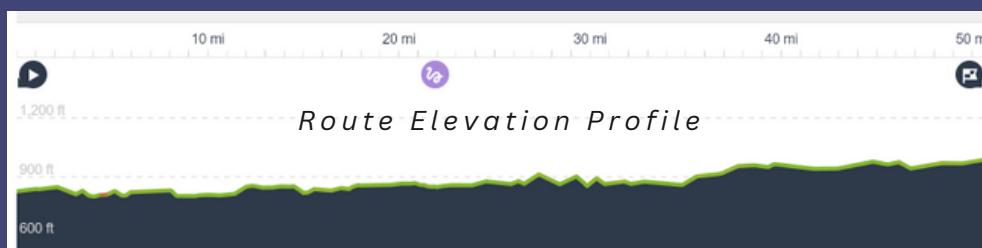
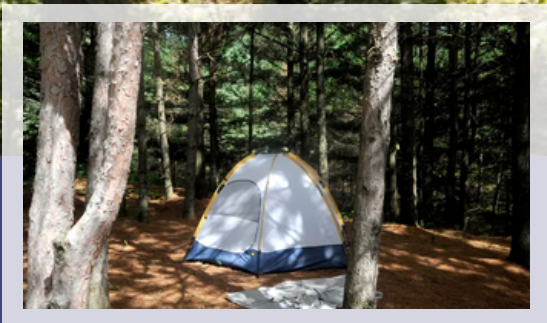
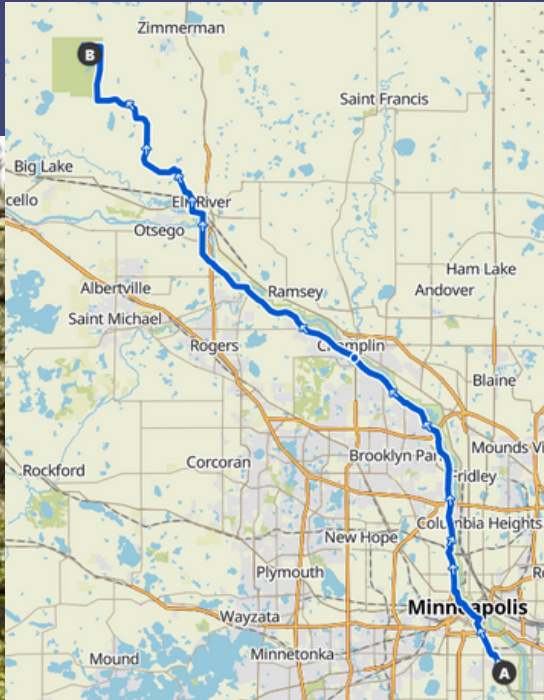


50.7 miles



18% Bike Trail - 68% Road - 10% Street

## Route Example



# Train to Trails

Want to start closer to your destination or visit trails and campsites in greater Minnesota? Consider a short trip on the NorthStar, Amtrak, or Metro Transit as a boost and added adventure. Red Wing, for example, is a popular short trip out of the city and close to trails.





# Additional Routes

## Lake Byllesby

44.4 miles, 55% Bike Trail

## Nerstrand Big Woods State Park

51.3 miles, 52% Cycleway

## Interstate State Park

53.7 miles, 58% Bike Trail

## Lake Maria

53.8 Miles, 33% Bike Trail

## Frontenac State Park

70.5 miles, 78% Bike Trail

## Nugget Lake County Park

75.8 miles, 50% Bike Trail

# Acknowledgments



## A Legacy of Twin Cities Bike Maps

I tip my hat to Doug Shidell, the original visionary of the comprehensive Twin Cities Bike Map, who I met as I was starting this project. We talked on end over the transformation of the map making process from analog to digital and were both excited over the idea of a bike camping map.



## Thimbleweed Custom Bike Bags

Out there in the depths of my computer or wherever it is is a lost recording of a conversation I had with Jess at Reverie in 2022, back when I started this project. We connected over our journey to long distance biking after and through injury. I am super grateful for that conversation. It was a highlight and inspiration throughout project.

Jess founded Thimbleweed Custom Bike Bags in 2021. They are leading a a trip to Carver Park this year during bike Camp Weekend, and organized a series of beginner friendly bikepacking events particularly geared toward FTW and BIPOC participants in partnership with Adventure Cycling.

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Thank you to my colleagues at BikeMN, Carmen from Adventure Cycling, and to everyone who has taken time to read and enact the dreams of this zine.

Sincerely,  
Spencer