Introduction

The St. Croix Scenic Byway is a 124-mile scenic route that follows along the St. Croix National Scenic River for much of its length, sometimes hugging its banks and at other times traversing bluff lands that can rise up 200 feet above the water, and suddenly open into six and eight-mile vistas along the river. For much of its length the St. Croix Scenic Byway also follows along the original alignment of the 1852 Point Douglas to Superior Military Road, which was originally cut through a wilderness of 4 million acres of dense pine forests to create the first overland connection between the junction of the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers and Lake Superior.

For centuries, the vast pine forests had supported a traditional way of life for the Ojibwe and Dakota peoples, and also generated vast wealth in furs for French, English and American traders. With the start of logging in the 1830s the first European settlement, in what would become Minnesota, was founded at present day Marine on St. Croix. Stillwater and other historic river towns along the St. Croix Scenic Byway provide an opportunity to experience this river region that has been called the "Birth Place of Minnesota."

The State of Minnesota designated the St. Croix Scenic Byway in 2004 to give the public new opportunities to experience the St. Croix River region, already acclaimed for its scenery and natural places, but now enhanced with stories drawn from the rich history, heritage, and culture of the valley, dating from earliest times into the present.

A number of Minnesota firsts can be experienced along the St. Croix Scenic Byway— first European settlement in the state (Marine, 1838), first Swedish settlement (Hay Lake, 1850), first Lutheran church (Scandia, 1856), oldest parsonage (Scandia, 1868), first school house (Taylors Falls, 1852), first court house (Taylors Falls, 1852), first county court house in Minnesota (Stillwater, 1870), first Interstate Park in the nation (Taylors Falls/St. Croix Falls, 1895/1900)—and a wealth of additional heritage sites and experiences waiting for you, along with hundreds of National Register properties and untold recreational opportunities in six State Parks (Afton, William O'Brien, Interstate, Wild River, St. Croix and Banning), two National Landmarks (St. Croix Boom Site and St. Croix Recreational Demonstration Area) and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, a unit of the National Park System. These travel experiences, and more, are brought to life in this *Historical Travel Guide*, and in the people you will meet and communities you will get to know as you drive the St. Croix Scenic Byway.

St. Croix Scenic Byway Map Index

The nine maps in this Historical Travel Guide cover a 124-mile scenic and historic corridor running along the St. Croix River through communities in Washington, Chisago and Pine Counties in Minnesota.

The Guide's nine maps are designed to help travelers discover early settlement sites and the charm of historic river towns, along with contemporary recreational opportunities and appreciation for the pristine nature and scenic qualities of the St. Croix River valley landscape. This river region has attracted peoples of diverse backgrounds over centuries, each group adding its unique cultural heritage and stories to historic events that shaped the St. Croix Scenic Byway story—a rich and fascinating tale of how the St. Croix valley became the birthplace of Minnesota.

How to Use St. Croix Scenic Byway Travel Guide Maps

Mile Post (MP) Map Location System

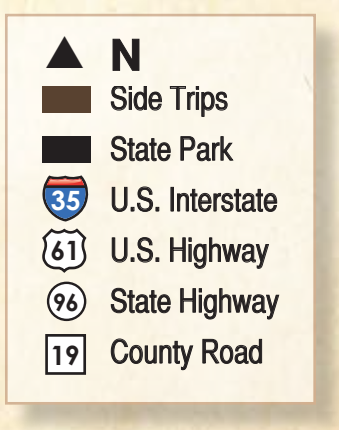
St. Croix Scenic Byway locations, driving directions, and wayfinding assistance is based on a system that uses relative mileage as measured from the Byway's southern terminus in Point Douglas to its northern terminus north of Sandstone. ***Each Byway site location is identified with a unique Mile Post (MP) number on the map, and distance is measured from the Byway's southern terminus to that specific site****. Where possible GPS coordinates for Byway locations are also provided in the text.*

Side Trips

Sometimes ***Side Trips*** *from the Scenic Byway are suggested. They provide an option to exit the Byway, drive to and experience a single site, and then return to the Byway using the same route. Side Trips are a simple "out and back" drive (usually less than two or three miles)—once back on the designated Scenic Byway the Mile Post (MP) system provides direction again.*

Historic Backways

Historic Backways *provide an option to divert from the designated Scenic Byway for a distance and then rejoin the Byway farther up the road. Backways loops also provide connections to a broader heritage in the region by using a carefully selected network of historic roads that once connected Byway communities by wagon and logging roads, ferry crossings and rail. Backways provide enhanced history and adventure, and are a good way to maximize your experience by traveling the Byway in one direction and returning home by an alternate route. All information about Historic Backways loops and sites is provided in text boxes to visually differentiate them from sites along the designated Byway route.*

Map Key

The ***St. Croix Scenic Byway Historical Travel Guide*** *has plenty of maps to assist in finding the right Byway experience. This Map Legend applies to each Byway map and the Mile Post (MP) Location System is used throughout—each Byway site has a unique location number that is easy to find relative to the entire collection of maps. Mile Post (MP) numbers start at the southern Byway terminus and increase as you drive north.* ▼