

## Best bets for the weekend

### Cruise for cranes, artisans and the last of the color.

The wave of fall color has moved to [southeast Iowa](#), where peak is expected this weekend, and to [Michigan's](#) Lake Michigan shoreline and its "thumb" on Lake Huron.

There still are pockets of color in southeast Minnesota and southeast Wisconsin, and the [South Central Minnesota Studio Art Tour](#) around Northfield and the [Earth, Wood & Fire Artist Tour](#) east of Madison are a good excuse to get out and see them. Along with the [First City of Arts Studio Cruise](#) around Bemidji, they're the last of the fall art meanders.

Wrapped by water, Door County stays a little warmer than the rest of the region; head there to tour six [wineries](#) or visit seven galleries on Ellison Bay's [Art Crawl](#). If the weather is nice, explore one of 28 [state natural areas](#), including [Kangaroo Lake](#) (pictured).

There's another kind of peak at [Crex Meadows](#) near Grantsburg, Wis., where up to 5,000 sandhill cranes have arrived to rest on their trip south. The refuge is holding one last sunset tour on Saturday to watch the cranes fly in from daytime feeding grounds.

The full moon is Saturday; look for lighted hikes at local nature centers or at Wisconsin's [Harrington Beach State Park](#) on Lake Michigan or [Mirror Lake State Park](#) near the Dells.

## FastPlans/Exploring Northfield

Just an hour south of the Twin Cities, the college town of Northfield makes a great excursion. Concerts put on by St. Olaf's renowned music program are perhaps the region's best deal — they're free — but be careful; it's easy to spend a bundle in the nifty little shops downtown.

**What to do:** Shop along Division Street. Learn about the infamous 1876 bank raid at the [Northfield Historical Society](#). Catch a free concert or recital at [St. Olaf College](#). Catch a play or free Friday-morning convocation lecture at [Carleton College](#). Hike in Carleton's [Arboretum](#), or "Arb," on the northeast edge of town.

**Events to catch:** Oct. 23, [Cemetery Stories](#) at Calvary Cemetery. Oct. 23-24, [South Central Minnesota Studio Art Tour](#).

**Where to shop:** First, stop at [Fireside Orchard](#), just off I-35, for apples and freshly made doughnuts. On Division Street, try Swag for home decor, Glass Garden for beads and Present Perfect for stocking stuffers. Some shops are closed Sundays.

**Where to stay:** The historic [Archer House River Inn](#) has shops and restaurants under the same roof. For more coddling, try the [Magic Door B&B](#), four blocks from downtown.

**Where to eat:** On Division Street, the [HideAway](#) is a great place for lunch or some tapas and wine after a hard day of shopping. [Chapati](#) serves the cuisines of India. The [Contented Cow](#) specializes in British fare.

Details: See [Scrappy Northfield](#).

# Scrappy Northfield

**As outlaws discovered, this Minnesota college town is small but rarely sleepy.**

© Beth Gauper

The 1877 Archer House is the anchor of Northfield's Division Street.

Northfield always has been shaped by newcomers.

First the Yankees came to town, then the Norwegians. Each started a college, and the Yankees built mills, whose flour won international prizes as the Minneapolis mill were just getting started.

Missourians arrived in 1876 for a brief but memorable visit; the violent bank raid by the James-Younger Gang is called "the seven minutes that shook Northfield."

But after the turn of the century, the town settled into a sedate existence, churning out college graduates and cream. Northfield's cows were butterfat champions that earned it the title "Holstein Capital of America"; it was the town's "contented cows," went an advertising slogan, that produced milk for the local Carnation plant.

Over time, the cows disappeared and people streamed in, drawn to the quiet but cultured town and its old-fashioned downtown. Housing subdivisions and big-box retailers followed the people, many of whom commute to the Twin Cities.

As the town of 17,000 struggles to maintain its small-town character, its longtime slogan — "Cows, Colleges and Contentment" — sounds a little dated.

But for visitors, Northfield retains plenty of small-town charm. The big stores are on a strip of highway, not downtown, which retains its century-old brick storefronts and small, locally owned shops.

The brick Victorian tower of Old Main, St. Olaf College's first building, still pokes above treetops at the edge of town, surrounded by a campus of wholesome white limestone.

Carleton's less-lofty but decorous campus is just east of downtown, tucked among the trees and clustered around the Bald Spot, a gathering place. Founded by the Congregational Church in 1866, Carleton soon became independent; it's the smaller college but is rated highest in national publications.

For 21 years, the late Paul Wellstone taught at the college. The famously scrappy former wrestler taught political science, shaping a generation of independent thinkers, before he became a U.S. senator.

Carleton's free public Convocation lectures bring in well-known speakers whose exchanges with students tend to be spirited; the college also is the alma mater of economist Thorstein Veblen, the iconoclast who coined the term "conspicuous consumption."

St. Olaf still is a bastion of Norwegian Lutherans, though its student body is diverse. The college's choirs, orchestras and bands are known worldwide, and its professional and student musicians give recitals and concerts that are free to appreciative public audiences in hilltop concert halls.

Bridge Square is the heart of town and the spot at which it began. For years, the only bridge across the Cannon River led into the square, past the Ames flour mill on one bank and the North grist mill on the other.

A horseman fires during a Defeat of Jesse James Days reenactment. - photo caption

It was across this bridge that the James-Younger Gang rode in September 1876. Adelbert Ames saw them; he had been a Union commander during the Civil War, became the carpetbagging governor of Mississippi and had just been impeached.

Ames' father-in-law, Union Gen. Benjamin Butler, was one of the most hated men in the South.

He was infamous for filching Confederate silver — his nickname was "Spoons" — and for his occupation of New Orleans in 1862, when his "Woman Order" decreed that any local woman who insulted a Union soldier could be treated as a prostitute. Around the South, his face often was featured on the bottom of chamber pots.

He also was a major investor in Northfield's First National Bank.

That bank was the target of the Younger brothers and Frank and Jesse James, who had been Confederate guerrillas during the war. On Sept. 7, three men in long white dusters strode into First National Bank.

Another two men, Cole Younger and Clell Miller, slowly rode toward the bank, and Miller took up guard at its door.

But a nosy local man named Joseph Allen tried to get inside; instead of pulling him in, Miller shoved him away, whereupon Allen cried, "Get your guns, boys, they're robbing the bank."

A former Union sharpshooter and an expert hunter were nearby; they grabbed rifles, and in a few minutes, Miller was dead. So was William Stiles, part of a rear guard that included Jesse James and Jim Younger. Bob Younger, Cole Younger and Charlie Pitts

were wounded.

"These were hard-working Northerners who did not believe in such foolishness as letting people come into their town and hold up their bank and take their hard-earned dollars," says historian Cathy Jackson in the PBS film "Jesse James."

Frank and Jesse James escaped, but Pitts was killed by a posse from the town of Madelia, Minn., and the Younger brothers were captured and served terms at the state prison in Stillwater.

Northfield became known as "The Little Town That Defeated the Jesse James Gang." Its fame came with a price: For several years, it received anonymous threats from those who considered the gang folk heroes.

Division Street is lined with interesting shops and cafes. - photo caption

The Northfield Historical Society has restored the bank office, part of its museum in the 1868 Scriver Building, on the corner of Division Street and Bridge Square. Visitors see the original gilt vault door and guns used in the raid.

A video re-enactment shows the action inside the bank, when cashier Joseph Lee Heywood, who refused to open the vault, was shot and killed, reportedly by Frank James.

Every September, townspeople re-enact the street scenes of the famous raid. As spectators watch from the sidelines, women and men in 1870s garb begin to walk up and down Division Street. "Who could have suspected," the announcer asks, "that violence lurked just a moment away?"

Then the street is filled with gunfire and the thundering of hooves. Horses wheel and rear, and at the end, three men lie still in the street — the two outlaws and an immigrant from Sweden who didn't understand English.

The Ames Mill still stands across the river; it's now part of the Malt-O-Meal plant.

Most Division Street storefronts were built just after the raid. Now, the handsome Second Empire and Richardson Romanesque and Queen Anne buildings that once housed hardware and department stores are the homes of cafes and gift shops.

The 1877 Archer House was built a year after the raid and has been a distinctive presence on Division Street ever since. The mansard-roofed hotel has housed generations of travelers and visiting parents, and it's also a destination for day-trippers, who browse in its first-floor shops and eat in its restaurants.

My friend Grace and I stayed there during a November shopping foray. Trade from the colleges help keep Northfield's downtown healthy, and it's filled with specialty stores.

We found a trove of interesting, inexpensive gifts and stocking stuffers at Present

Perfect, which has a sharp eye for pop-culture paraphernalia and kitchen gewgaws. At Glass Garden, I bought a simple but lovely glass pendant for \$10. At Oolala, I found my favorite Crabtree & Evelyn hand cream.

At Swag, we found colorful area rugs, paper floor lanterns and folk art, including a handpainted cigar-store Indian. Monarch, the Enchanted Garden, was full of gifts with Celtic and fairy themes. At Sketchy Artist, I found a box of comic-book postcards.

The Magic Door B&B is walking distance from downtown shops. - Photo caption

For dinner, we drove down the Minnesota 3 strip to Dundas, where Fermentations has served as Northfield's fine dining spot since 2002. We had lamb and a delicious sole en papillote with flights of wine, the restaurant's specialty.

We had a hard time deciding what to do next. There was a lot going on that Saturday night: a staged reading of a new play at the Northfield Art Guild Theater, an antique auction by the Historical Society, a Renaissance-music concert at Carleton and, at St. Olaf, a production of Chekhov's "The Seagull" and a Javanese gamelan performance.

We decided to do the Gallery Crawl, starting with a reception at the Arts Guild Gallery downtown. Then we caught the free van to an exhibit of works by Edward Anders Sovik, the architect of the St. Olaf look — spare but splendid, with vertical lines soaring heavenward.

The van already was waiting to take us to Carleton's Art Gallery. Then we had it drop us off at the Contented Cow pub, where we ordered glasses of ale and listened to a set of live jazz before walking next door and up to our room in the Archer House.

The next day, we took a hike along the Cannon River in Carleton's Arboretum, then returned to pick up cappuccinos at Goodbye Blue Monday, one of the few spots downtown with a collegiate atmosphere.

"I've been wondering where all the students are," Grace said. "For a town with two colleges, you don't see that many students."

The colleges, several people had mentioned, keep their students busy. With so much going on all over town, there's enough to keep visitors busy, too.

## **Trip Tips: Northfield**

**Getting there:** It's an hour or less south of the Twin Cities.

**2010 events:** July 4, Fourth of July celebration. Sept. 8-12, [Defeat of Jesse James Days](#) (don't miss the re-enactments). Oct. 23-24, [South Central Art Studio Tour](#). Dec. 2, Winter Walk.

**Shopping:** Some the shops are closed on Sundays. In fall, stop at [Fireside Orchard](#), just off I-35, for apples and freshly made doughnuts.

On Division Street, try Swag for home decor, Glass Garden for beaded jewelry, Present Perfect for small gifts, Oolala for bath and body goods, Digs for fabrics and the Sketchy Artist for art supplies and cards.

Antiques of Northfield is a multi-dealer mall with an interesting selection of finds. Hodge Podge Que has a high-class array of new and vintage home accessories and folk art.

**Northfield Historical Society Museum:** This is the place to learn about the infamous bank raid. Volunteers discuss some of the odd aspects of the raid, including smuggled cadavers, a mystery skeleton and the bizarre fates of the gang members who survived the raid. 507-645-9268.

The Historical Society Museum occupies the 1868 Scriver Building on Bridge Square. - Photo caption

For more about the pursuit of the outlaws after the raid and their capture in Madelia, Minn., see [Posse on the prairie](#).

**Hiking:** Carleton's [Arboretum](#), or "Arb," lies on the floodplain of the Cannon River on the edge of town; from downtown, head northeast on Division Street. Three loops, with 7½ miles of trails, take hikers past oak savanna and prairie being restored by the college.

Nearby, [Nerstrand Big Woods State Park](#) has 13 miles of hiking trails and is best known for its splendid display of spring ephemerals and for fall colors. From downtown Northfield, take Division Street (Minnesota 246) south for about 11 miles to County Road 40 and into the park, 507-333-4840.

**Nightlife:** The [Northfield Arts Guild](#) sponsors theater and music events. [St. Olaf College](#) hosts many free concerts and recitals, by world-renowned musicians as well as professors and students. [Carleton College](#) brings in well-known speakers of its free Friday-morning convocation lectures. The [Contented Cow](#) often schedules music.

**Dining:** On Division Street, the [HideAway](#) is a great place for lunch or some tapas and wine after a hard day of shopping. [Chapati](#) serves the cuisines of India. The [Contented Cow](#) specializes in British fare.

In the Archer House, Bittersweet serves soups, sandwiches and pastries. In the river level, the Tavern serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

The Reub-N-Stein is a longtime student hangout with happy hours, drink specials and a menu of lasagna, reubens, burgers and other basics. Goodbye Blue Monday is the college coffee hangout.

In Dundas, Fermentations has fine food and exceptional service, 507-645-8345. To reach it, take Minnesota 3 south and turn right after the K mart; it's in Dundas'

downtown.

**Accommodations:** The historic [Archer House River Inn](#) has 36 individually decorated rooms, some with two beds, and has shops and restaurants under the same roof. 800-247-2235.

The [Magic Door B&B](#) is an 1899 Victorian on four blocks from downtown. Its three rooms are very attractive, especially the Summer Suite, which has a gas fireplace and a whirlpool room. All rooms have VCRs and mini-fridges; rates include breakfast as well as wine or beer, a fruit and cheese plate and a bottomless cookie jar. 507-664-9096.

There's a Country Inn & Suites across the river from downtown. There's a pool, and rates include breakfast. Trains run just behind the hotel, and whistles may bother guests. 507-645-2286.

**Information:** [Northfield tourism](#), 800-658-2548.

## November getaways

**During hunting season, women head out to have fun with friends.**



In Northfield, Division Street is lined with interesting shops.

In November, women make a break for it.

As men sit in deer stands or watch football games on TV, women hit the road with their friends. They shop, they visit spas, they sip wine and they see shows their husbands or boyfriends don't want to see.

For women, November is a great month. Not only do they have a good excuse to get away with their friends, but it's time to start shopping for Christmas. There are art fairs and holiday markets everywhere; Madison has them on three weekends in a row.

And festivities start early in such shopping meccas as Cedarburg, Wis., which starts its Festive Friday Eves on the eve of Wisconsin's firearms deer opener.

Broadway shows draw weekenders to Chicago and the Twin Cities. Galena is the perennial favorite for power shopping, but groups of girlfriends also sample wine, tour historic houses and take cooking classes.

Women who love the outdoors can join a snowshoe-making workshop or hike in the woods. Hiking won't be so fun after Minnesota's firearms deer season starts Nov. 6, but Wisconsin's doesn't start until Nov. 20. On Michigan's Upper Peninsula, it's Nov. 15-30.

Below are some of the choicest events going on around the region in *November 2010*.

For the rest of the year, see [12 months of girlfriend getaways](#) and [50 great girlfriend getaways](#).

## **Art fairs**

Madison always is a fun place to shop, in the quirky shops and museum stores along State Street and on more sophisticated Monroe Street. And in November, three big markets make shopping especially fruitful.

The run starts with the Madison Ballet's [Madison Holiday Market](#) at the Alliant Energy Center, *Nov. 5-7*. The [Winter Art Festival](#), featuring the work of 140 Wisconsin artists, is at Monona Terrace *Nov. 13-14*. And the [Holiday Art Fair](#) is at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art on State Street *Nov. 19-21*.

For more, see [Shopping in Madison](#).

The [Autumn Festival: An Arts & Crafts Affair](#), with 500 artisans from 30 states, will be *Nov. 11-14* at Canterbury Park in the *Minneapolis* suburb of Shakopee and *Nov. 18-21* at the Odeum Sports & Expo Center in the *Chicago* suburb of Villa Park.

The Wisconsin Holiday Market at the [American Club in Kohler](#) is *Nov. 19-21*; it tends to be heavier on crafts than fine arts. For more, see [Kohler's luxuries](#).

## **Scrapbooking**

Near Galena, Ill., [Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa](#) holds a Scrapbooking Weekend *Nov. 19-21*, with work space, supply shop and product and technique demonstrations.

## **Antiquing**

In Minneapolis, Southwest High School Community Education offers an annual antiques trip that's very popular. This year, the River Ramble Antique Tour will visit the St. Croix River Valley on *Nov. 6*.

Cost is \$50, including transportation by motorcoach, coffee and pastries. To reserve, call 612-668-3100.

## **Shopping and a free concert**

Less than an hour south of the Twin Cities, the college town of Northfield has an adorable downtown full of unique, locally owned shops. Spend the day browsing, then take in a free concert at [St. Olaf College](#), whose music program is world-renowned.

On *Nov. 12*, hear the Early Music Singers & Collegium Musicum. On *Nov. 20*, hear the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

For more, see [Scrappy Northfield](#).