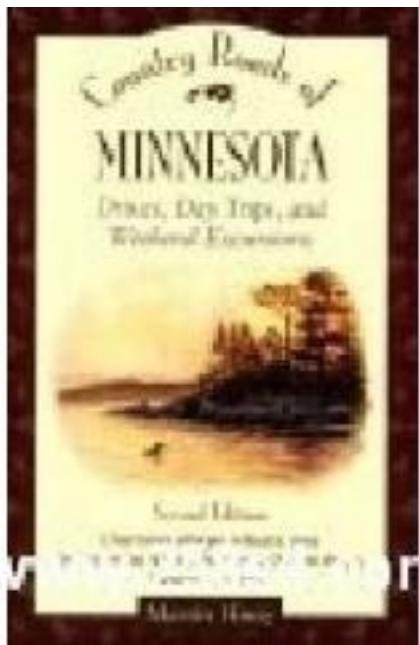


Country Roads of Minnesota: Drives, Day Trips, and Weekend Excursions



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Before hitting the Country Roads of Minnesota, a traveler needs to know some of the basics: the who, what, where, why, when, and how. Longer than it is wide (406 miles from north to south and about 300 miles from east to west at its skinniest point midstate), Minnesota is bordered to the north by Canada, to the south by Iowa, to the east by Wisconsin, and to the west by the Dakotas. The state can be divided into three distinct terrains: the grassy prairies in the south, the pine forests of the north, and the hardwood forests to the east. Only about 10,000 years ago, the landscape was covered by glaciers.

When they melted, lakes and rivers were created, creating more shoreline than in California and Florida combined. While the state license plate says "Land of 100 Lakes", there are actually at least 1,000 lakes that have not been mapped. Coming up with names has been a challenge for surveyors. There are only so many Big Lake, Little Lake, a Lake, and Lake Lake appellations to go around. In fact, there are 20 Mud Lakes and 54 Long Lakes. Some names started into One-Mile Lake, Two-Mile Lake, and so on. And there is even a Swan Lake (in Nicollet County, six miles east of New Ulm). Some of the best lake names are logna, Diddle de Woddle, and Dismal Swamp. There are 84 lakes of more than 1 acre each, with one boat for every six people. The state received its name from the Dakota Sioux, who lied their country Minisota, which means "sky-tinted" orers.

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