

2023-24

LA CRESCENT AREA VISITORS GUIDE

LA CRESCENT MINNESOTA
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Driftless Region, La Crescent, MN



EXPLORE **mi** MINNESOTA



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Explore

Plan your next visit!
We look forward to showcasing all that we have to offer, and hope you enjoy exploring La Crescent!

Produced by the La Crescent Chamber of Commerce and Tourism. Photos provided by: City of La Crescent, La Crescent Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Hatlem Photography, Amber Thorson Photography, Apple Blossom Bike Tour, Bonnie Lynman, Greg Watson, Charlene Corson Selbee, Paige, Erin, and Adventuringwoman.com.



Welcome to La Crescent!

Tucked along the bluffs of the Mississippi River, the City of La Crescent’s natural surroundings set the stage for a vast assortment of recreational opportunities.

La Crescent is uniquely located on three scenic byways: Apple Blossom Scenic Byway, National Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and the Great River Road all pass through La Crescent. Casual travelers can find quiet time on the back roads and enjoy the scenic beauty of southeastern MN and the Mississippi River.

Recreational enthusiasts have so much to choose from with hiking, bicycling, boating, kayaking, fishing, birding, snowshoeing and so much more! A variety of eateries, shops, local wineries, orchards, and lodging will make La Crescent your planning easy and a perfect home base for all of your adventures.

Businesses, travelers, and local residents appreciate the quick and easy access to major highways and interstates, and the short drive to the La Crosse, WI municipal airport.

Come for a visit! You may just pause long enough to plant roots in our small town and stay awhile.

Mike Poellinger, Mayor
City of La Crescent

Sarah DeLacy, President
Chamber of Commerce and Tourism

For more information about La Crescent, or to plan your visit, stop by the La Crescent Chamber of Commerce and Tourism office. 111 So. Walnut Street, La Crescent, MN or visit our website explorelacrescent.com

La Crescent, MN Great River Road



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Events

2023

Prefest Events

- Button Kick Off
- Miss La Crescent (Queen Candidate Style Show)
- Apple Annie Cabaret
- Apple Cobbler Golf Open

Join the Fun!

Fest Weekend Events

- Apple Pie Sales
- Entertainment (in the King Apple Tent)
- Miss La Crescent Coronation
- King Apple Parade

La Crescent Welcomes You!

Kids Events

- Carnival, Face Painting
- Kid's Music
- Little Miss/Little King Pageant
- Kiddie Parade
- Big Wheel Races
- Magic Show

Royalty

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WHERE WILL YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE TAKE YOU!



Visit "The Apple Capital of Minnesota"

La Crescent is "The Apple Capital of Minnesota"! Steeped in tradition, La Crescent has been celebrating the apple harvest for over 70 years.

Visit us mid-May when the apple blossoms are in full bloom, the colors in the apple orchards spectacular, and the scent is heavenly.

Our Annual Apple Fest is held the third weekend in September and offers fun for the whole family culminating with the King Apple Parade on Sunday afternoon.

Apple Harvest is in full swing between August and October. Be sure to get out and visit an orchard to sample some of our many delicious and unique varieties of Minnesota grown apples. Several orchards also offer 'pick-your-own' apple harvest experiences. Fun for the whole family!



Explore our water trails Paddling/Boating/Fishing Pages 14-15



- Main Channel on the Mississippi River
- Mississippi back waters
- Small streams and tributaries

Most Minnesotans live within an hour of a state water trail. A water trail is defined as a stretch of river or lake that is mapped and managed especially for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, boating and river camping.

How fortunate the residents of La Crescent are to live within minutes of the Mighty Mississippi and its tributaries. Several public boat landings provide easy access to the water trails and abundant fishing opportunities.



Driftless landscape, your playground for all seasons. Pages 16-25



- 3 scenic overlooks
- Over 185 acres of City Parks for exploring and recreation
- Miles of trails for hiking
- Variety of terrain for road/gravel cycling

We live in such an amazing place with natural beauty and terrain that has so much to offer regardless of the season. More variety, means more access for all abilities.

Our natural surroundings set the stage for a vast assortment of recreational opportunities. You can find plenty of hiking, cycling, seasonal snowshoeing cross-country skiing opportunities in the La Crescent area, from the rugged bluffs surrounding La Crescent to the flatland neighboring the Mississippi River.

Three Scenic Drives Pages 6-11

Begin your adventures here! Apple Blossom Scenic Byway, National Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and the Great River Road all connect in La Crescent.



Mississippi River Flyway Pages 12-13

The Upper Mississippi River is a globally important bird area and 'migratory' flyway for birds.





Apple Blossom Scenic Drive National Scenic Byway

The 17-mile byway travels County Rd 1 along the rolling farmland and bluff-top views high above the Mississippi River and passes through the towns of La Crescent and Nodine. No matter the season, the scenic beauty is unsurpassed.

At the top of the bluff just outside of La Crescent, is Apple Blossom Overlook Park. It has a striking view of the Mississippi River's main shipping channel. Along the byway you'll find yourself on the top of the bluffs near pull-offs that offer some of the most magnificent vistas in the region. At the "T" at Winona County Road 12, you have the choice of traveling east into Dakota or to the west heading to Nodine and to Great River Bluffs State Park. Great Bluffs State Park, provides lovers of the outdoors hiking and camping opportunities.

By looping around the park, travelers can return to La Crescent by way of Great River Road or Apple Blossom Scenic Drive. Either route provides picturesque panoramic views.

In spring, the route is filled with the flowery fragrance and picturesque views of acres of apple blossoms.

In the fall, enjoy the area's fall colors, and spend time at a 'you-pick' apple harvest. Take home some orchard honey, apple cider, Indian corn and pumpkins. Minnesota orchards have some of the most distinctive apple varieties in the country, thanks in large part to the University of Minnesota research center (responsible for introducing the popular Honeycrisp apple, Sweet Tango, First Kiss, among others).



Apple Blossom Scenic Drive is a designated National Scenic Byway.



Apple Blossom Overlook Park.





Lock and Dam #7,
La Crescent Minnesota

Great River Road: Minnesota National Scenic Byway

Great River Road is a designated National Scenic Byway that follows the route of the Mississippi River. Beginning at the headwaters, the Byway winds through the small towns of northern Minnesota and through the Twin Cities, and continues south along Highway 61 to La Crescent, then south to Iowa on Highway 26.

The "National Route" signs direct you on the official route of the Federal Highway Administration road. "State Alternate Signs" will take you off the beaten path along the river to points of interest. Don't miss the chance to see majestic bald eagles soar between the river and the bluffs from Wabasha to La Crescent. This is the gateway to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.



Look for the green pilot's wheel logo with the steamboat in the center to guide you on your journey.



Historic Swing Bridge on the Mississippi

Visit Lock & Dam #7 and the Historic Swing Bridge

Located two miles north of La Crescent, this lock and dam provides a vertical lift of 8 feet for boats, ranging from canoes to large towboats with barges. There is an observation deck at the lock and dam. The Army Corp of Engineers invite visitors to view the lock operations, browse displays and enjoy shore fishing.

Built in 1876, the historic swing bridge is located, just south of lock and dam #7. It has a swing span of 359 feet to allow barges and paddle boats to pass through. This historic span ran on steam until the 1940's when it switched to electric power. You can view the bridge by boat or by driving to Shore Acres.

Fun Facts on Barges

Moving goods on the water is the most efficient transportation mode. A single barge hopper has a capacity 16 times greater than one rail car and 70 times greater than one semi-trailer truck, one loaded covered barge hopper carries 58,333 bushels of wheat, enough to make almost 2.5 million loaves of bread.

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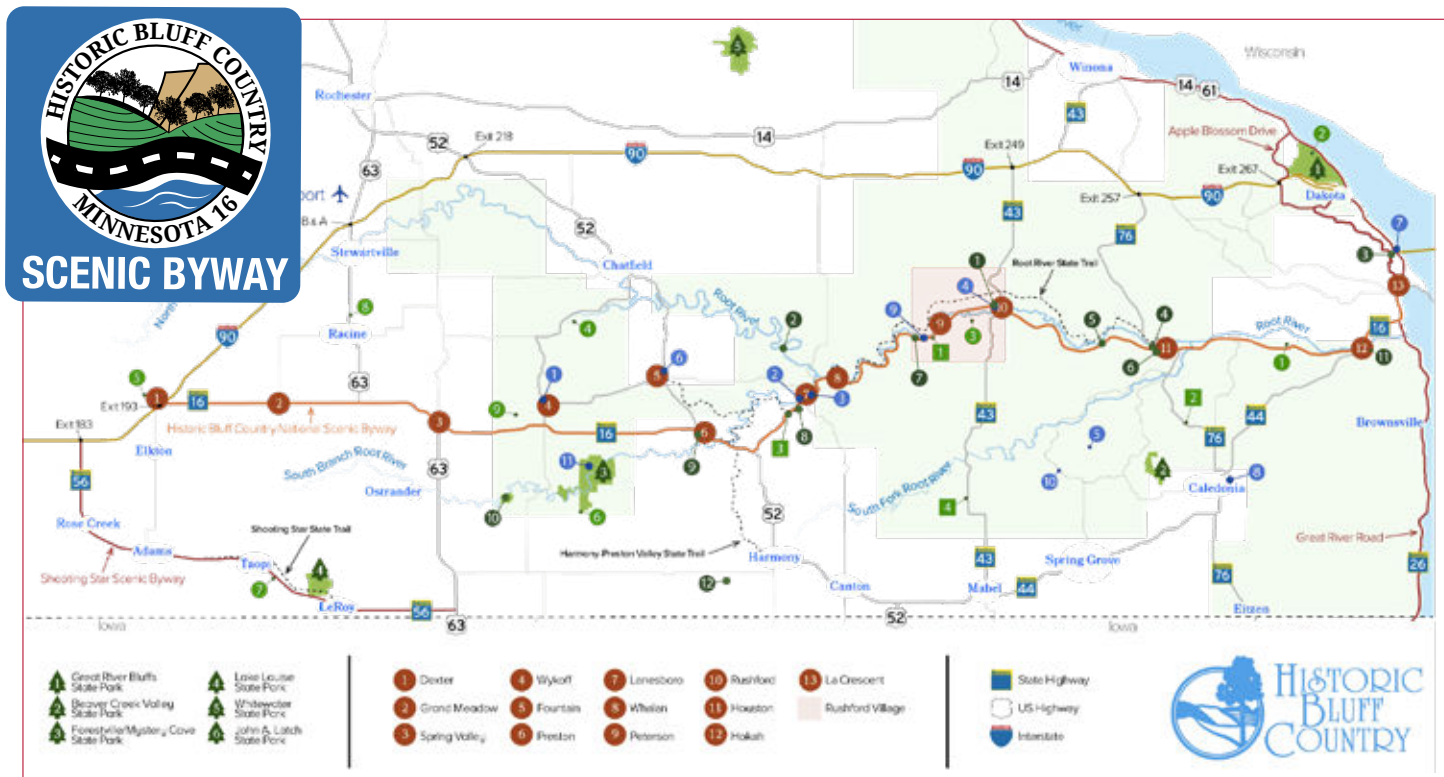
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Historic Bluff Country National Scenic Byway



From La Crescent you can take a drive down the Historic Bluff Country National Scenic Byway, which links together some of the most scenic, historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources in the area. The 88-mile route extends from La Crescent through southeastern Minnesota's picturesque Root River Valley. Prior to becoming Minnesota Trunk Highway 16, Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway was U.S. Highway 16 and the main route between Chicago and Yellowstone National Park.

The unique and dramatic land formations of the Root River Valley were formed over millions of years of geological activity. The resulting landscape is a region of deep river valleys, sinkholes, caves, and steep limestone bluffs. Visit bluffcountry.com for a complete list of cities and attractions to plan your trip.



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Birding on the Mississippi River Flyway

Follow the Great River Road for a great river birding experience.

The river environment serves as a migration corridor not only for waterfowl, but also for numerous other birds such as raptors, shorebirds, and migratory songbirds. In the spring and summer, the river provides important nesting habitat for many species. Even in the coldest months, the area serves as a wintering ground for northern bird populations, in addition to year-round residents.

Eagles

October through March the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota is a great location to watch bald eagles. Eagles can often be spotted sunning in trees or standing on the ice near open water looking for a meal. Late fall and early spring, when the birds are following the changing ice conditions on the Mississippi River, provide opportunities to see several hundred in the same area. With the arrival of warmer weather, the eagles disperse to their nesting sites throughout Minnesota. Wabasha, Minnesota is home to the National Eagle Center, offering interpretive programs about the eagles.

Swans, Waterfowl, and Pelicans

Tundra swans, ducks, and pelicans are regular migrants through the Brownsville area. Upon arrival, you'll hear the sounds of the swans calling to each other! Large numbers of swans arrive in the fall beginning in late October and they stay until the water freezes. Up to 25,000 can be seen resting and feeding at one time. The wildlife refuge is a stop-over site where the birds build up fat reserves for the last leg of their journey to the Atlantic coast.

National Wildlife & Fish Refuge Viewing Area

Brownsville Wildlife Overlook
13502, 14286 Great River Rd, Brownsville, MN 55919

Birds of the Upper Mississippi River

The upper Mississippi River offers many opportunities for birding among the extensive marshlands, wooded bottom lands, open water, sand prairie, and wooded bluffs.

Here's a list of our favorites. How many species did you see on your visits to the La Crescent Area?

- Bald Eagle
- Golden Eagle
- Trumpeter Swan
- Tundra Swan
- Peregrine Falcon
- Turkey Vulture
- Canadian Goose
- Red Tailed Hawk
- Sand Hill Crane
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Woodpeckers
- Owls



Scan the code for a map of all of the unique birding opportunities in our area.





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International Owl Center

Houston, Minnesota is home to the International Owl Center. This is North America's only owl education center. The International Festival of Owls is held annually in the Spring. Thousands from around the world attend the festival each year. The International Owl Center is dedicated to raising public awareness and building support for owl issues. Call the center for special programs and events. Call the center for special programs and events.

126 E Cedar St., Houston, MN 55943
507-896-6957 internationalowlcenter.org
Open Fri - Mon. 10am to 4pm



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Fish, boat, paddle, and take in the views from the water.

Fishing on the Mississippi

There's no better way to explore the water, wildlife, and the natural beauty of the Driftless region than by boat, kayak, or paddleboard. With the diverse water trails available to us you can explore the wide open waters of the Mississippi, the calm backwaters and peaceful shores of the tributaries and nearby streams.

Two public boat landings will provide you access to the main channel of the Mississippi River and all of and backwaters and secret fishing holes. One is located just south of Lock and Dam #7. The second is Sportsmen's Landing, 1570 US-14, La Crescent, MN.

Fishing on the Mississippi River is as impressive as the scenery. The Mississippi is an incredibly rich source of game fish all year long. The many species of fish include walleye, perch, northern, catfish, large and smallmouth bass, bluegill, carp, and crappies, to name a few.

If you are visiting La Crescent, you can try the "Best Dam Fishing Float," which is a floating dock just south of Lock and Dam #7, on the opposite side of the river from the Dresbach Welcome Center. Find them on Facebook or visit www.bestdamfishingfloat.com for all the details.

Just because it gets cold in Minnesota, does not mean we give up fishing! To the contrary, ice fishing houses line up along the backwaters of the Mississippi River. For safety, many visitors check with the local bait shop for answers to questions, such as ice thickness and the best place to ice fish. Safest depth for ice fishing is at least a thickness of four inches. For more information about ice safety, contact the Minnesota DNR.



Cold-Water Trout Fishing

The Driftless Area of Southeast Minnesota is home to crisp cold waters and spectacular trout streams that hold brown trout, brook trout and rainbow trout. The season opens in mid-April. There are over 700 miles of naturally cold streams, including Whitewater River, Root River, and the famed Trout Run Creek which flows for 13 miles south to the Root River. Note: A trout stamp and fishing license are required when fishing designated trout waters.

All fishing licenses can be purchased through the Minnesota DNR website. www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing

Rest Assured Your Family Will Be Safe At All Times

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Driftless Terrain

'Driftless' terrain offers outdoor enthusiasts more variety for all types of recreation and all abilities. Steep hills, forested ridges, deeply carved river valleys and karst geology with spring-fed waterfalls and cold-water trout streams define our region. The Driftless region has elevations ranging from 603 to 1,719 feet. The Driftless region covers more than 24,000 miles across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois.

Biking The Driftless Area

Apple Blossom Scenic Byway is a biker heaven. Picturesque bluffs and a quiet country road make biking in this region some of the best-mountain and road biking in the area. From atop the bluffs, you can smell the apple blossoms blooming in the spring and view the beautiful river valley below. The steep bluffs attract athletes from around the country that are looking for a challenge. They provide great training for those

training for races or to simply stay in shape. In fact, Greg LeMond the first American to win the Tour de France trained on these bluffs.

The newest trail in La Crescent is the Wagon Wheel Trail, is accessible by the new bike/pedestrian bridge on Walnut Street takes you through the back waters of the Mississippi and connects to La Crosse and the bicycling trail system in Wisconsin.

Riding Highway 16 south to Houston takes bikers to the Root River trail-head at the Houston Nature Center. The Root River Trail is southeast Minnesota's paved trail network meandering along the Root River amid 300-foot bluffs. This 60-mile trail attracts thousands of outdoor enthusiasts each season.

If you want to ride some of Minnesota's best gravel, go to gravelbikeadventures.com and search for "Magnificent Minnesota Gravel Route". This 40-mile route highlights gorgeous gravel, rolling

green hills and small towns of Minnesota. Lanseboro, MN also offers two rides in October. The 'Pretty Filthy 25' and the 'Filthy 50'. Visit the-filthy.com for more information.

Paddling the Driftless

From the Mississippi River and the many tributaries, our bluffs provide a majestic scenic backdrop while paddling out on the water.

You can kayak, canoe, or paddle board the quiet backwaters on the Mississippi, the smaller tributaries and lakes. There are two boat landings on the Mississippi as well as two canoe/kayak launch access points. One is on Blue Lake (on the Mississippi River backwater) between La Crescent and La Crosse. Another is in Reno Bottoms where you can explore Pool 9. Be sure and get a water trails map to assist you in navigating.





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Outdoor exploration and adventure all year round

La Crescent residents have access to over 185 acres of parks and recreation area in the city!



Eagles Bluff Park

Eagles Bluff Park sits atop a prominent bluff providing a 360-degree view of the area around La Crescent. 112-acres of wooded land, many use it for hiking and snowshoeing. A strenuous off-trail hike to the top of the bluff is well worth the effort as soon as you witness the view. Eagles Bluff is protected from development under a preservation trust.

422 Red Apple Dr. La Crescent, MN

Great River Bluff State Park

A 20 minute drive north of La Crescent, the park sits high on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, scenic overlooks are easily reached by walking trails and offer a chance to get away in the quiet bluff country. Oak-hickory woods, pine plantations and goat prairies provide excellent birding, scenery, and hiking on over 6 miles of trails. In the winter there are nine miles of marked and groomed cross-country ski trails as well as plenty of open space for snowshoeing. Picnic areas and camping available. State Park permit required.

43605 Kipp Dr., Winona, MN



Apple Blossom Overlook Park

Apple Blossom Overlook Park is located north of La Crescent at the top of Apple Blossom Drive Scenic Byway. This park features picnic tables and hiking trails. Overlook Park is frequented by photographers to capture images of the morning sunrise over the Mississippi River Valley. Enjoy sweeping views of the main channel of the Mississippi River and the Driftless region. A 1.5 mile looping trail with oak-hickory-birch woods and goat prairies provides a variety of scenery for hiking and snowshoeing. Wide, groomed trails good for all abilities.

169 County Hwy 1, Dakota, MN



Vetsch Park

A gem of a park located in La Crescent city limits. Variety of looping trails and terrain with access to the top of the bluff. Hiking, running, and mountain biking, also a fun park for sledding in the winter.

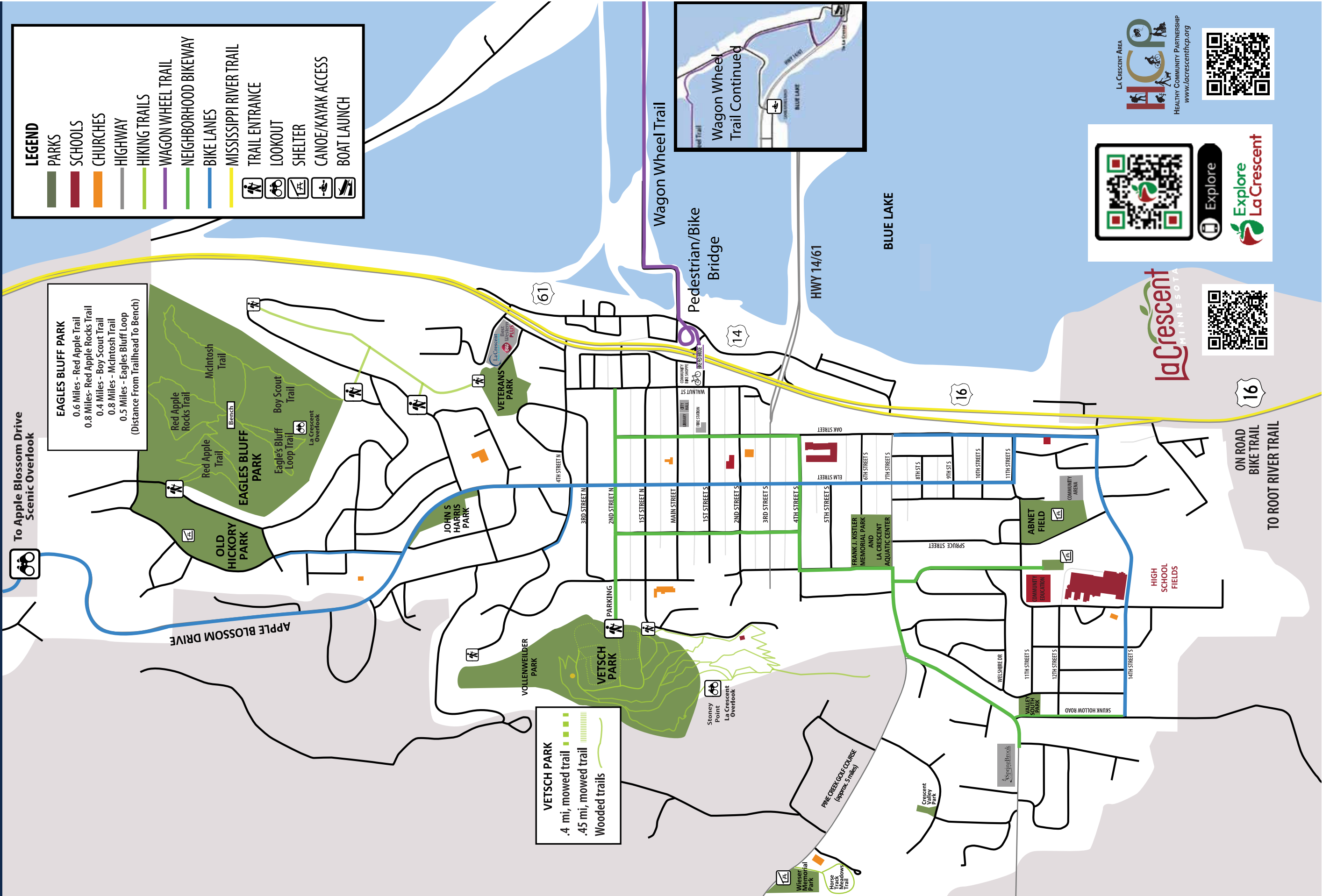
Contains a mixture of wooded and mowed trails that meander up the bluff to an observation area. This vantage point of the park presents birders and other nature lovers a haven with geographical beauty. A conservation easement limits changes to Vetsch Park insuring it stays in its natural state.

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Old Hickory Park

Old Hickory Park is an 18 acre, family neighborhood park in La Crescent with a playground, soccer fields, baseball, and a shelter. Old Hickory park also connects to trails on Eagles Bluff Park trails on the west side.

1200 Johnathan Lane, La Crescent

La Crescent Community Arena

It is used for many activities in addition to hockey, making it busy year-round. Lancer Youth Hockey is the primary occupant and the work they have done in recent years has turned the arena into a shining star of the city once again. While hockey receives the most attention, this is Minnesota, the indoor ice sheet is also used for figure skating, open skating, and broom ball.

520 So. 14th St., La Crescent

Wieser Memorial Park

A scenic 6 acre park perfect for family picnics. Includes a playground, soccer fields, baseball, volleyball, pickleball courts and a new brand new picnic shelter.

1817 County 6, La Crescent

Vets' Park

Veterans' Park includes a skate park, soccer fields, softball fields and picnic shelter. One of the city's oldest parks, this 8-acre facility has hosted gatherings and sporting events for decades.

Enjoy the local farmers market held Tuesdays from 4-7pm in the parking lot from May through October.

144 Timm Ln., La Crescent

Abnet Field

Abnet Field has two softball fields and a sheltered picnic area which are utilized extensively from spring through fall. La Crescent's fall celebration of the apple harvest, The Applefest fall festival, is held at Abnet Field.

1200 Spruce St., La Crescent

Como Falls & Hokah Spring-Fed Pool

A 10 minute drive south of La Crescent, Como Falls Park is located behind the Fire Station, and is accessible either from there (9 Mill St.) or from the pool (20 Como St.). There are picnic tables and charcoal grills for picnics, as well as plenty of open grass for family activities.

The Hokah Pool was built in 1968, and it still stands as a popular spot in Hokah today. In a way, the Hokah Pool is pretty similar to a lake. It has three walls, just like your average swimming pool. But the 'fourth wall' is actually a sandy beach. Also like a lake, the water is chemical free. From the beach, visitors can wade into the sand-bottomed pool for summertime fun. Or, they can stay on shore for sand castles and sunbathing.

9 Mill St., Hokah, MN

Camping

Wildcat Landing & Campground Located by Brownsville, MN, Wildcat Campground offers a great beach, camping and a ramp for your boat. From Highway 16 south of La Crescent, follow Highway 26 to Brownsville.



Camp on a Sandbar

For a "primitive" camping experience, stay on a Mississippi River sandbar! Adventurers may camp at a single location for up to 14 days over 30 consecutive days. After two weeks, find another spot half a mile away and do it again.

Great River Bluffs State Park

Great River Bluffs State Park north of La Crescent includes 40 campsites with 4 of them designed as group sites. A 5-site bicycle campground is also available for cyclists riding along the Mississippi River Trail bicycle route. Reservations can be made up to a year in advance on the Minnesota DNR website.

Pettibone Campground

Pettibone is the closest private campsite to La Crescent and has an incredible view of the Mississippi cutting through the Driftless Area. The entrance to the park is just before the approach to the big blue bridge to La Crosse.

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La Crescent Aquatic Center

La Crescent Community Aquatic Center includes a designated children's area includes a zero-depth entry, kiddie slide, spraying ring, and a signature apple tree water umbrella. There is also a 1-meter diving board, a 3-meter diving board, and a 14-foot climbing wall and two 33-foot slides. Special events, water exercise, open swim, and lap swimming make this the place to be all summer long. La Crescent's aquatic center is Open May 28 - August 20th, and is located at Kistler Park.

608 S 7th St., La Crescent



Pine Creek Golf Course

A 9-hole course, Pine Creek offers a unique experience for golfers young and old. The club house features a bar and grill and a nice patio. Situated in the beautiful Pine Creek valley, just outside the west side city limits. Not only are the green fees low, but profits are pumped back into youth recreation programs for the city.

3815 North Pine Creek Road,
La Crescent, Minnesota

For Tee times: 507-895-2410
cityoflacrescent-mn.gov



Valley High Golf Course

Located just off the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway between Hokah and Houston, this 18-hole course is designed to make golf fun again for any player at any age. After golf, take a break and enjoy the full restaurant and bar in the clubhouse.

9203 Mound Prairie Drive, Houston,
Minnesota

For Tee times: 507-894-4444
valleyhighgolfclub.com



The Apple Jacks Base Ball Club of La Crescent

Apple Jacks is a community outreach program of the La Crescent Area Historical Society.

Established in 2004, the Apple Jacks are members of the national Vintage Base Ball Association (VBBA). Players follow the rules of 1860. You'll hear the bell clang when they reach home base. There are no gloves, the pitcher throws underhand (like horseshoes) and the uniforms are crisp white shirts and long black pants. It's great fun for players and spectators.

Apple Jacks Base Ball

2023 Home Games - Old Hickory Park

Sat., 5/20 at 12:00pm & 3:00pm

Sat., 6/10 at 12:00pm & 1:30pm

Sat., 9/16 at 12:00pm & 1:30pm

For a complete schedule of games visit their Facebook page.



La Crescent Farmer and Artisan Market

This market has a wonderful variety of farm goods, meats, honey, eggs, fruit, mushrooms, baked goods, crafts, jewelry, tea, plants, and more!!

Mid-May through October the market is held outdoors, every Tuesday from 4-7pm. In the event center parking lot at 595 Veterans Parkway, La Crescent, MN.

November through March the market moves indoors at the La Crescent Area Event Center and is held the second Tuesday of the month, 4-7pm.



Dewey Enterprises

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Neighboring Communities

City of Hokah

Located just six miles southwest of La Crescent, Hokah was originally an Indian village named after their leader, Chief Wecheschatope Hokah. Situated between the bluffs and the Root River, this small community is home to Como Falls, a popular and peaceful venue for picnics and weddings, or just relaxing.

Hokah offers opportunities for outdoor recreation all year long. Ride the Root River in a canoe or tube to enjoy the beautiful scenery. In the winter, experience the miles of snowmobile trails or skate at the rink.

City of Houston

The City of Houston is located in the beautiful Root River Valley of Southeastern Minnesota, just 17 miles west of La Crescent. Houston is home to the International Owl Center and the Trail head to the Root River Bike Trail System which provides access to over 60-miles of paved trails for bicycling, hiking, and in-line skating in Southeast Minnesota.



Como Falls, Hokah MN

City of Brownsville

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The historic Cameron House, 429 South Seventh Street, La Crescent. was built before the Civil War and completed in 1856 by Peter Camerons brother, Daniel Cameron. Above right: Emma Eastman

La Crescent's Founders: Peter Cameron and wife Emma Eastman

Two of the most interesting people in La Crescent's past are its founder and his wife. Peter Cameron and the notorious Emma "Virgin Em" Eastman. Cameron originally settled on the other side of the Mississippi in La Crosse Wisconsin and in 1846 became the city's first newlyweds. Eastman was a beautiful woman with a reputation for collecting husband's, nine - eleven - maybe twelve, only Emma truly knows.

Cameron was the fourth of her many husbands and they were together until his death in 1855.

According to legend, she rode around town on a white horse armed with a double-barreled shotgun and slept with a six-shooter under her pillow. And rumor has it, she knew how to use them. In 1859 she shot Daniel Cameron, Peter's brother, at her home when he confronted her about ownership over family deeds.

Peter's lumber business provided him with vast land holdings in La Crosse. Angry about his legal issues in Wisconsin, Cameron founded La Crescent in 1851.

La Crescent, unlike La Crosse, had no natural port on the Mississippi River which made the town slow to settle since people had to ferry over. Cameron tried to remedy the situation by digging a canal over to La Crescent intending to change the course of the Mississippi so it would pass La Crescent instead of La Crosse. The canal was never finished and he died shortly after the digging began.

La Crescent was originally named "Camerons" after Peter Cameron, but then renamed to "Manton" a few years later by William and Harvey Gillett. Cameron gave the downtown land to the brothers on the promised they would clear it and plat a town. A few years later, the Kentucky Land Company bought Manton and built 12 of the city's original houses. Thinking they needed a more romantic sounding name to entice settlers to come here, they renamed the town "La Crescent." The reasons for the name were not recorded, but locals believe the name symbolizes the crescent shape of the bluffs around the town and the bend of the Mississippi River around it.

La Crescent's Fascinating Beginnings

Historical information about La Crescent is available by visiting one of the two museums - the Heritage House and the Apple Shed. Located on South 3rd Street, a visit to the museums is like a walk through time.

Artifacts include equipment from the 1876 Railroad Swinging Bridge when it was operated by steam. The bridge is no longer steam operated, but is still in use and with a short drive down Shore Acres Road, you can get an up-close view of the historic overpass.

The Apple Shed documents the history of local orchards with orchard equipment, photographs, and memorabilia, giving visitors a true sense of how La Crescent gave life to the state's apple industry.



La Crescent History Center and Apple Museum, 328 So Third St. Open Saturdays 10am - 2pm lacrescenthistory.org



Boone Historical Marker Shore Acres Rd., La Crescent

John S. Harris: Father of the Orchardists

The "father of the orchardists" and "godfather" of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society, John S. Harris (1826-1901) left a sweet and juicy legacy.

John S. Harris, Minnesota's first successful apple grower, moved to La Crescent in 1856. He settled near the base of what is now Apple Blossom Drive as it heads up the bluffs from La Crescent. There he planted his first apple trees in 1857, the year that La Crescent was incorporated.

Harris grew up on a farm in Ohio where he began his own small nursery at age 11. Harris moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1851, where he was married in the second wedding held in the young city. He and his bride started their market gardening business but soon decided that the grass was greener and the soil more accommodating on the other side of the river. They moved to La Crescent in 1856 where they established Sunny Side Gardens, a fruit, flower, and vegetable farm.

Although most people agreed with Horace Greeley's notorious 1860 assessment that apples wouldn't grow in the often-harsh conditions of the brand new state, Harris was undeterred. He planted more trees every year, thousands in total. He shared his experiences, along with apples and seeds, with his neighbors. In his persistent pursuit of apples that would thrive in Minnesota, Harris experimented with hundreds of varieties, most of which, he admitted, were failures.

At the 1866 Minnesota State Fair, his exhibit of 20 apple varieties inspired the state's fruit growers to form the Minnesota Fruit Growers Association. In 1868, the group changed its name to the Minnesota Horticultural Society and Harris was elected president in the following year. Harris continued to farm and exhibit his produce for the rest of his life. His entries won 19 prizes at the 1900 State Fair, and he died with his boots on as he said he wanted to, about six months later.



John S. Harris
(La Crescent Area Historical Society Photo)



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Minnesota Apple Varieties Developed in Minnesota!



What would the 'Apple Capital of Minnesota' visitor guide be without at least one page dedicated to the reason we're a city at all?

La Crescent has entertained a number of businesses throughout its history, but the one that has endured the longest is the apple industry. Around the 1940's La Crescent had about 40 small orchards in and around the city. Although the number of orchards has dwindled to less than a dozen, the acreage is about the same, as the orchards have been expanded in the bluffs farther away from the city. Eighty per cent of its apples are sold in Minnesota, although they are also exported to surrounding states and Canada.

Since 1868, the University of Minnesota has been responsible for developing nearly 30 varieties of apples. Most are hardy enough to survive our cold winters.

EARLY SEASON HARVEST

State Fair

Harvested in mid-late August, prior to the Minnesota State Fair, this apple has a firm and creamy flesh. Its juicy aroma and slightly tart flavor makes this apple an excellent choice for fresh eating or cooking. Introduced in 1977 by the University of Minnesota, this apple is hardy to withstand the Minnesota cold winters.

SweetTango®

SweetTango® is juicy and sweet with hints of fall spices. This apple's thin skin makes it a favorite for eating. This apple inherited the crisp texture of Honeycrisp and the juiciness of Zestar!® Ripening in early September, this is one of several apples developed at the University of Minnesota.

Zestar®

Large, crunchy, juicy red fruit with a sprightly sweet-tart flavor with a hint of brown sugar. Excellent for both fresh eating and cooking. Zestar apples are a great early season apple that has a strong shelf life of over a month, providing you convenience and delicious taste.

MID SEASON HARVEST

Honeycrisp

Honeycrisp, a mid-September apple is exceptionally crisp and juicy with just a hint of tartness that makes it perfect for eating fresh off the tree. Named the Minnesota State Fruit in 2006, the Honeycrisp was produced from a 1960 cross of Macoun and Honeygold apples and is one of the top 10 best-selling apples in the U.S.

Sweet Sixteen

Sweet Sixteen is another University of Minnesota apple. Crisp and juicy with a yellow flesh and a very sweet, unusual sugar cane or spicy cherry candy flavor, the fruit stores for 5 to 8 weeks. Introduced in 1977, this is a popular apple with the locals.

La Crescent

La Crescent, yes there is actually an apple named La Crescent, which ripens in late August is a tart apple with a soft texture. The La Crescent was first grown in La Crescent by an orchardist originally from Holland. Frank Van Lin, of Van Lin Orchards, chose to name it after his new hometown, La Crescent. Thank you, Frank.

LATE SEASON HARVEST

Honeygold

Honeygold is a cross between the Haralson and Golden Delicious apples. This sweet, crisp, and juicy apple is perfect for eating, baking, and freezing. Ripening in late September, the Honeygold will store for two to three months.

Haralson

One of the oldest varieties introduced by the Minnesota Horticulture Research Center in 1922. Named for Charles Haralson, superintendent of the University of Minnesota Fruit Breeding Farm, these apples are crisp and juicy with a tart flavor. They are especially good for eating, apple crisps and pies.

Frostbite™

Developed in 1978, this crunchy hard apple offers a spicy sweet flavor perfect for eating fresh or cooking.

Fireside/Connell Red

Fireside/Connell Red apples are a sweet and crisp apple harvested mid October. The texture is chunky making them perfect for cooking and sauce. Fireside/Connell Red apples are very large and flavorful. Another University of Minnesota variety, the Fireside/Connell Red apple was first introduced in 1943.

Pazazz

Pazazz is an apple variety like no other. It's a descendent of the beloved Honeycrisp but has a unique look and taste all its own. With every bite you'll enjoy a burst of sweet yet tart flavor – plus Pazazz's famous crunch.

Regent

An heirloom variety, this apple was developed in 1963. A semi-sweet and crisp apple, the regent offers a soft slice for baked pies and tarts.


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Snowy Glazed Apple Squares

A La Crescent Apple Fest favorite, made with local apples of course!

- 2 1/2 C. flour
- 1 c. shortening
- 8 med. size tart apples, (about 5 cups)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs, separated
- 1 1/3 c corn flakes, crushed
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Glaze: Combine 1 1/4 c. powdered sugar, 3 Tbsp. water, and 1/2 tsp. vanilla.

Combine flour and salt in a bowl. Cut in shortening. Beat egg yolks and add enough milk to make 2/3 cup. Add to mixture; toss with fork to blend. Divide dough in half. Roll one portion to fit a 9x15 jelly roll pan. Sprinkle with cornflakes. Spread apples over cornflakes. Combine sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over apples. Roll out remaining dough. Place on top and seal edges. Beat one egg white until foamy and brush on crust. Bake at 350F for 1 hour. Cool Slightly. Spread with glaze.



Find Your Favorite Apple

Here's a list of our favorites. Is your favorite on the list?

- State Fair
flavor: tart/mild
enjoy fresh or for cooking
- Sweet Tango®
flavor: sweet/crisp
enjoy fresh for eating
- Zestar®
flavor: sweet-tart, crisp, juicy
great fresh or baked
- Honey Crisp
flavor: sweet-tart, crisp, juicy
- Sweet Sixteen
flavor: sweet/crisp
- La Crescent
flavor: tart/mild
- Honey Gold
flavor: sweet/crisp
- Haralson
flavor: tart/crisp
great for baking pies
- Frostbite™
flavor: tart/mild
- Fireside / Connell Red
flavor: rich, sweet, and crisp
perfect for applesauce
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flavor: semi-sweet, and crisp
great for baking pies



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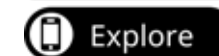
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