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# 2024

## La Crescent Area

### Official Visitors Guide



**Driftless Region, La Crescent, MN**  
[explorelacrescent.com](http://explorelacrescent.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. Casual travelers can find quiet time on the back roads and enjoy the scenic beauty of southeastern Minnesota 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, wineries, orchards, and lodging will make 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 across the river to the La Crosse Regional Airport.

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



For more information stop by the La Crescent Chamber of Commerce & Tourism office.

111 S Walnut Street,  
La Crescent, MN  
or visit our website.



*Mike Poellinger | Mayor  
City Of La Crescent*

*Olivia Lamke | President  
Chamber of Commerce and Tourism*

- 06 Scenic Byways
- 12 Explore The Driftless Region
- 18 Parks + Recreation
- 24 Hiking Map
- 28 Neighboring Communities
- 30 Historic Tours of La Crescent
- 36 About the Apples
- 40 Restaurant Directory
- 42 Business Directory

Produced by the La Crescent Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

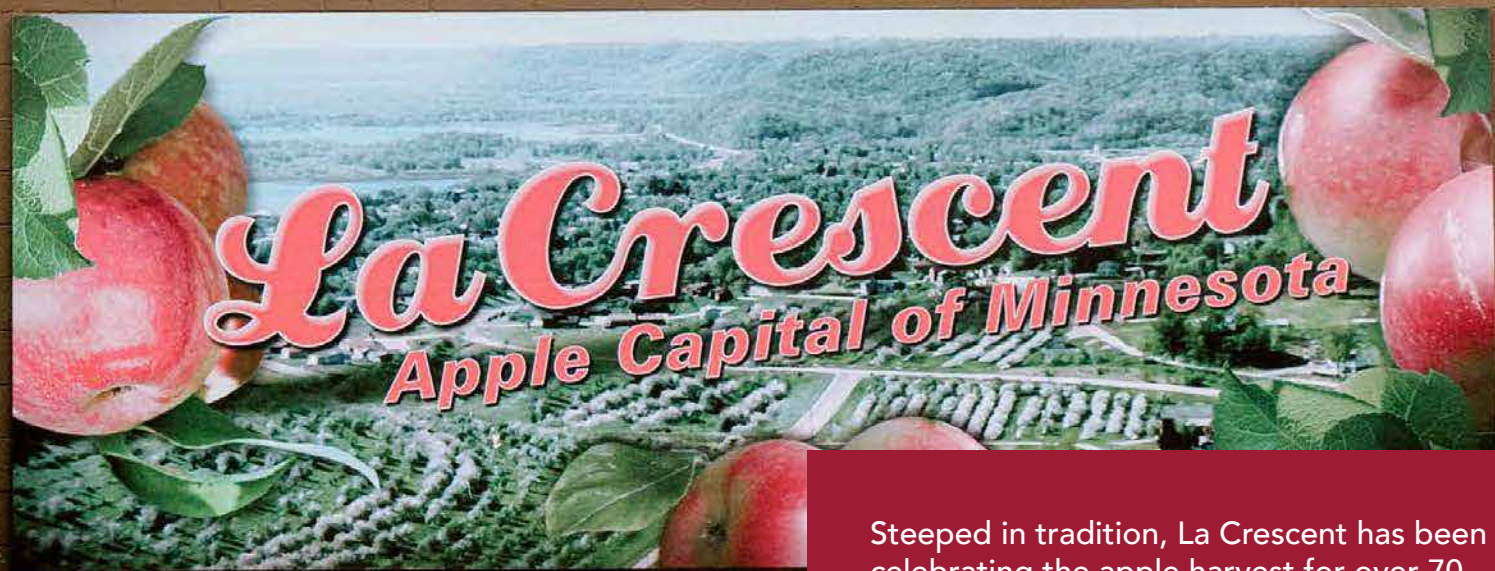
# La Crescent Applefest

September 20, 21 & 22, 2024

**Events**

- Queen Candidate Style Show
- Apple Annie Cabaret
- Apple Cobbler Golf Open
- Music & Entertainment
- Miss La Crescent Coronation
- King Apple Parade
- Food Vendors
- Bingo & Cornhole Tournament
- Little Miss/Little King Pageant
- Kids Events & Kiddie Parade

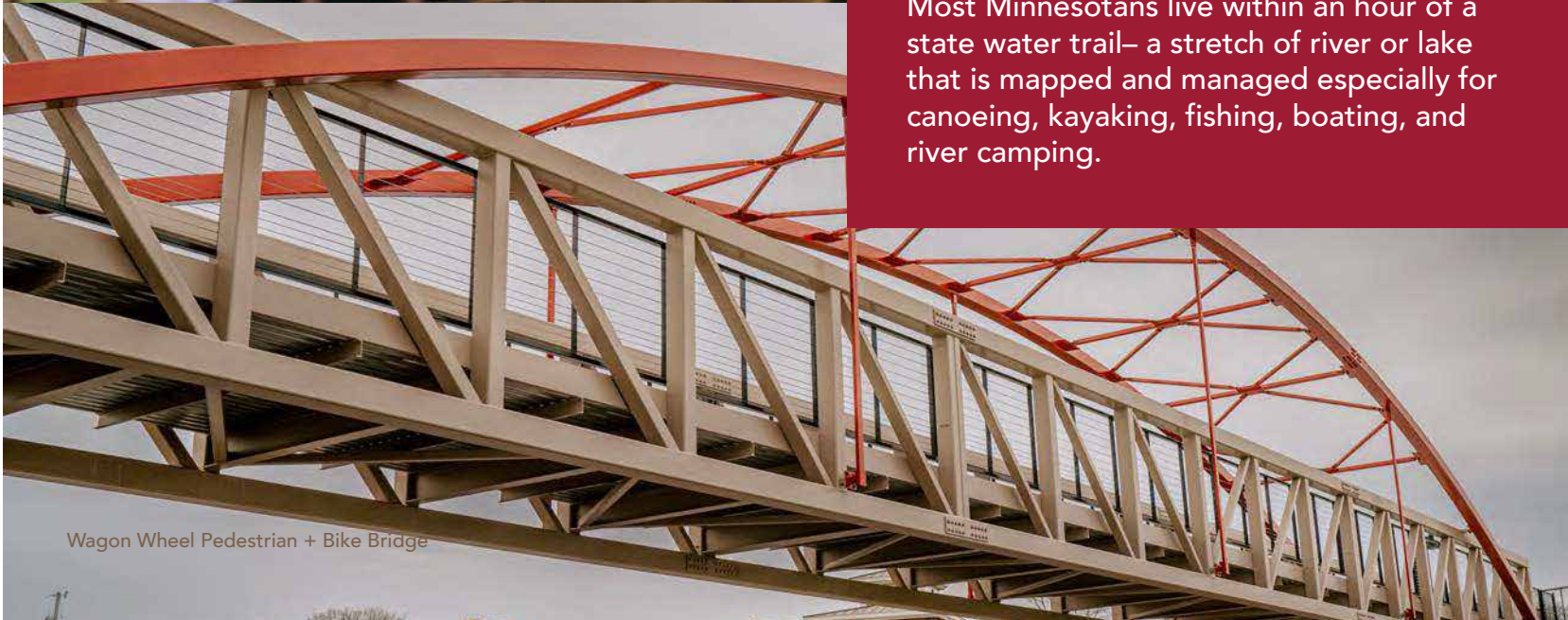
Visit  
[www.applefestusa.com](http://www.applefestusa.com)  
for more information!



Main Street Mural



Amber Thorson Photography



Wagon Wheel Pedestrian + Bike Bridge

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.

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!

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

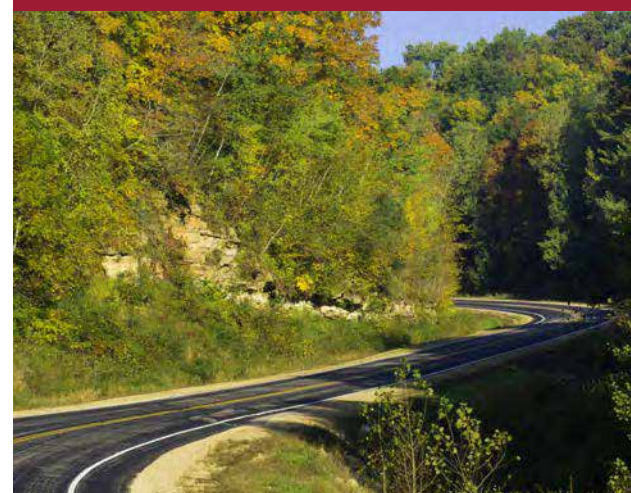
Most Minnesotans live within an hour of a state water trail— a stretch of river or lake that is mapped and managed especially for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, boating, and river camping.

# Where will YOUR next adventure take you?

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. 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.

- Main Channel on the MS River
- Mississippi Back Waters
- Small Streams + Tributaries
- 3 Scenic Overlooks
- 185 + Acres of City Parks
- Miles of Hiking + Cycling Trails

## Three Scenic Drives page 6



## Mississippi River Flyway page 12



## Water Trails page 14



## Driftless Lands page 16



# 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 offering some of the region's most magnificent vistas. Continue North until you run into a "T" intersection. You have the choice of traveling east into Dakota or to the west heading to Nodine and Great River Bluffs State Park. Great River Bluffs State Park, just a 15 minute drive, provides lovers of the outdoors with hiking and camping opportunities. A state park pass is required to access the park.

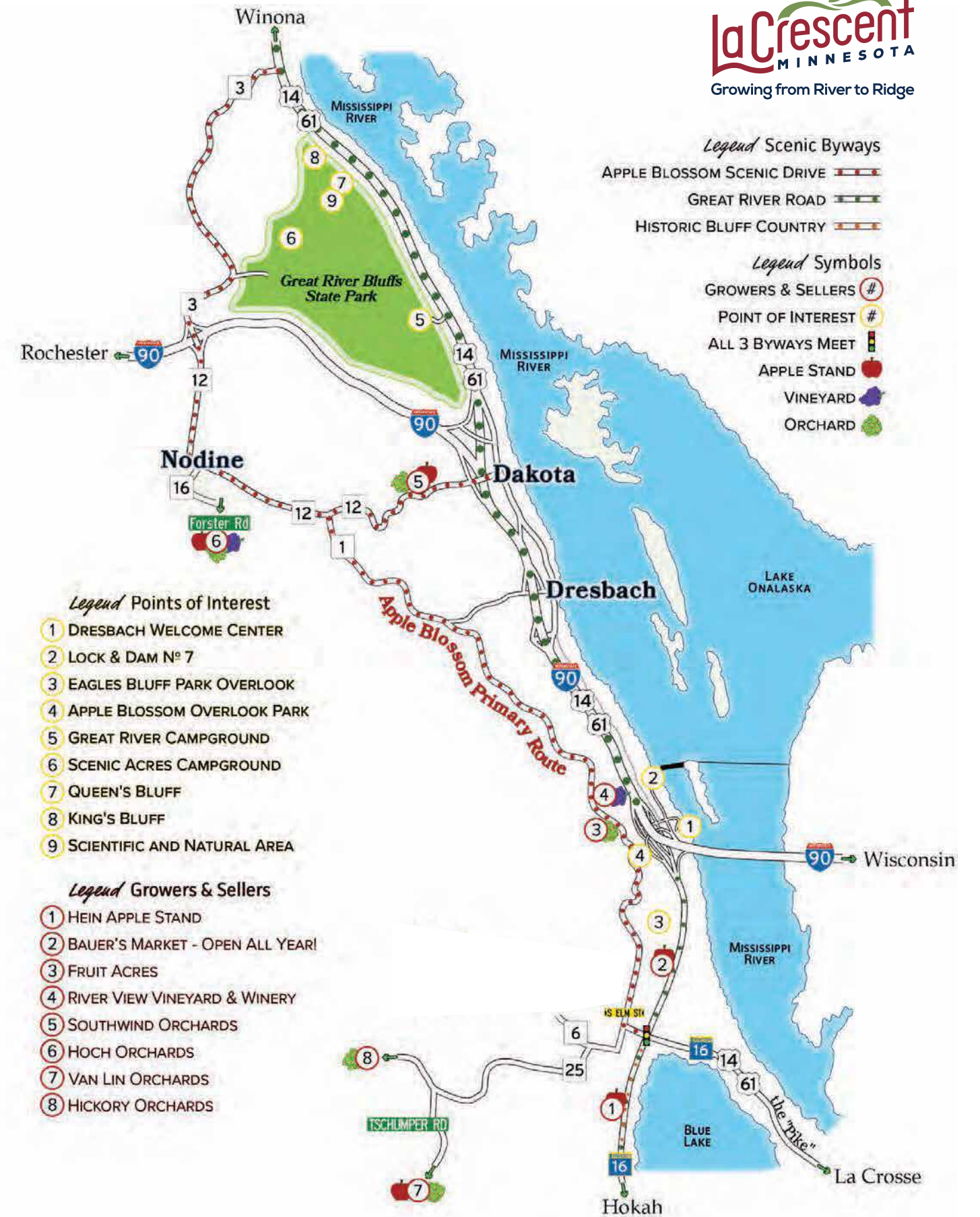
By looping around the park, travelers can return to La Crescent by way of Great River Road or Apple Blossom Scenic Drive. Either route provides picturesque panoramic views. In spring, the route is filled with the flowery fragrance and picturesque views of acres of apple blossoms.



In the fall, enjoy the area's beautiful changing colors, and spend time at a pick-your-own 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 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.



# Great River Road, Minnesota



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, passing 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 along 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 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.



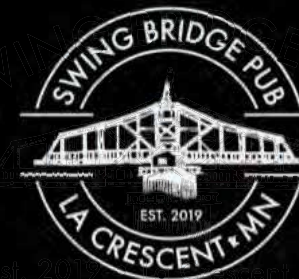
Historic Swing Bridge on the Mississippi  
Amber Thorson Photography

## Lock & Dam 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.

Moving goods on the water is the most efficient transportation mode. One 15 barge tow can move the equivalent of 216 rail cars or 1,050 semi-trailer trucks.



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## How Large is a Barge?



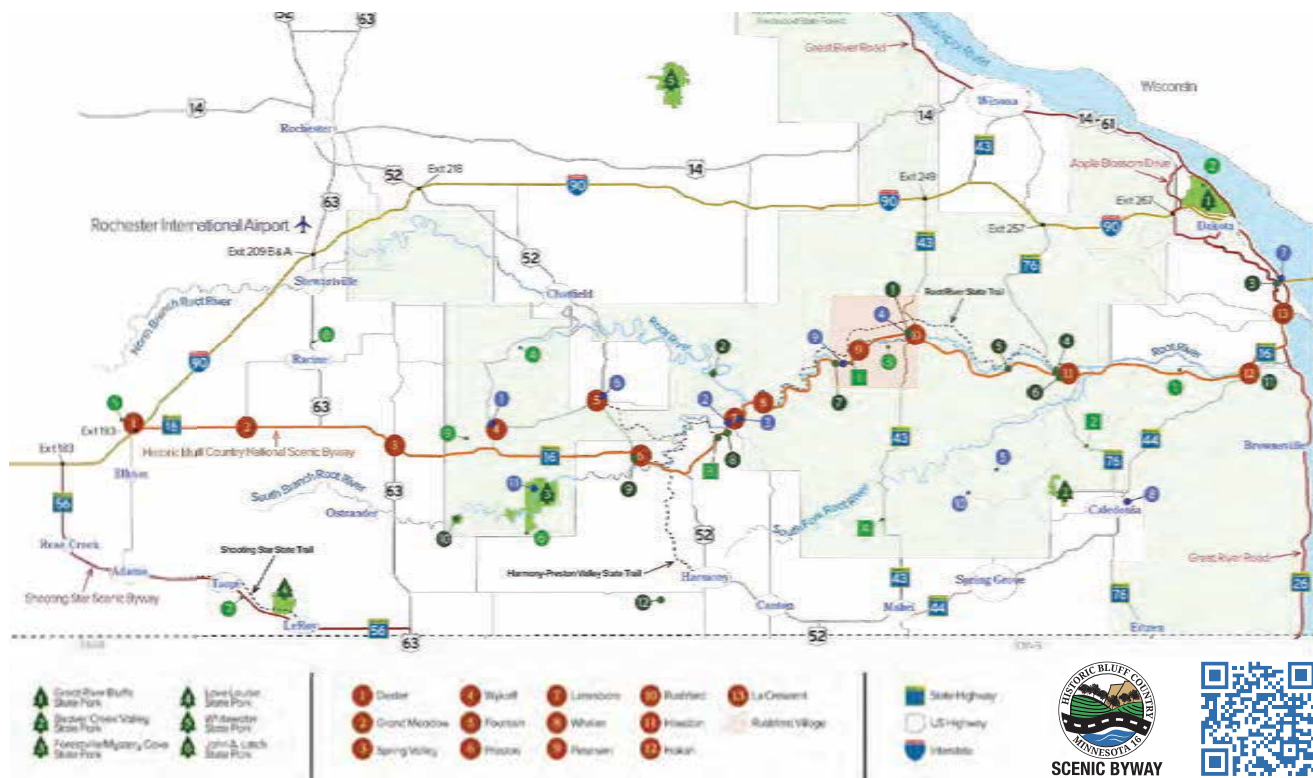
16X LARGER!



70X LARGER!

# Historic Bluff Country

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, Illinois 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](http://bluffcountry.com) for a complete list of cities and attractions to plan your trip.



APPLE BLOSSOM BIKE TOUR

August 10, 2024

Second Saturday of Every August  
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Registration: \$55 (Family Ride is FREE)

Register at: [AppleBlossomTour.org](http://AppleBlossomTour.org)



# Birding On The Mississippi River Flyway

## 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 eagles.

## SWANS, WATERFOWL + 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.

### How many species did you see on your visit 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
- Woodpecker
- Owl



## Great Spirit Bluff Peregrine Falcons



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.

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



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# Fish, Boat, Paddle

There's no better way to explore the water, wildlife, and the natural beauty of the Drifless 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 the 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](http://www.bestdamfishingfloat.com) for more details.

Just because it gets cold in Minnesota, does not mean we give up on 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.

The safest depth for ice fishing is at least the thickness of four inches. Always use an ice spud and for more information contact the Minnesota DNR.

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 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. A Trout stamp and fishing license are required when fishing designated trout waters.



All Fishing licenses can be purchased through the Minnesota DNR. [www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing).

## Time to Switch Banks?

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## Driftless Terrain

The “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 600 to about 1,200 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 quiet country roads make biking in this region some of the best biking in the country. From atop the bluffs, you can smell the apple blossoms blooming in the spring and view the beautiful Mississippi River valley below. Whether mountain biking, road cycling, or getting gritty with gravel, Southeast Minnesota has a ride for you. The steep bluffs attract cyclists from around the country who are looking for a challenge. They provide great training for those preparing for races or to simply stay in shape. 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, and is accessible by the new bike/pedestrian bridge on Walnut Street. The Wagon Wheel Trail takes you through the backwaters of the Mississippi and connects to a variety of trails in La Crosse, WI.

Riding Highway 16 or Houston County Highway 21/9 west to Houston, MN 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 500-foot bluffs. This 60-mile trail attracts thousands of outdoor enthusiasts throughout the year.

If you want to ride some of Minnesota's best gravel, visit <https://driftlesscycling.com/gravel>

Take your pick of multiple ride options. Several gravel rides are hosted in the vicinity of La Crescent including the new Old Fashioned Gravel in Hokah, MN

<https://www.oldfashionedgravel.com/>

## 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 of 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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la crescent, mn

# OUTDOOR EXPLORATION

## Abnet Field

1200 Spruce St., La Crescent, MN



## Apple Blossom Overlook

169 County Hwy 1, Dakota, MN



## Como Falls + Spring Pool

9 Mill St., Hokah, MN



## Great River Bluffs State Park

43605 Kipp Dr, Winona, MN



## Eagles Bluff Park

422 Red Apple Dr. La Crescent, MN



## La Crescent Aquatic Center

608 S 7th St., La Crescent, MN | Kistler Park



## La Crescent Community Arena

520 S. 14th St., La Crescent, MN



## Old Hickory Park

1200 Johnathan Ln., La Crescent, MN





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**Vet's Park**

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# GOLF



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## Pine Creek Golf Course | 9

38155 North Pine Creek Road,  
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507.895.2410

Pine Creek offers a unique experience for golfers young and old. The club house features a bar and grill and 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 recreations programs for the city.



## Valley High Golf Course | 18

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Houston, Minnesota  
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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.



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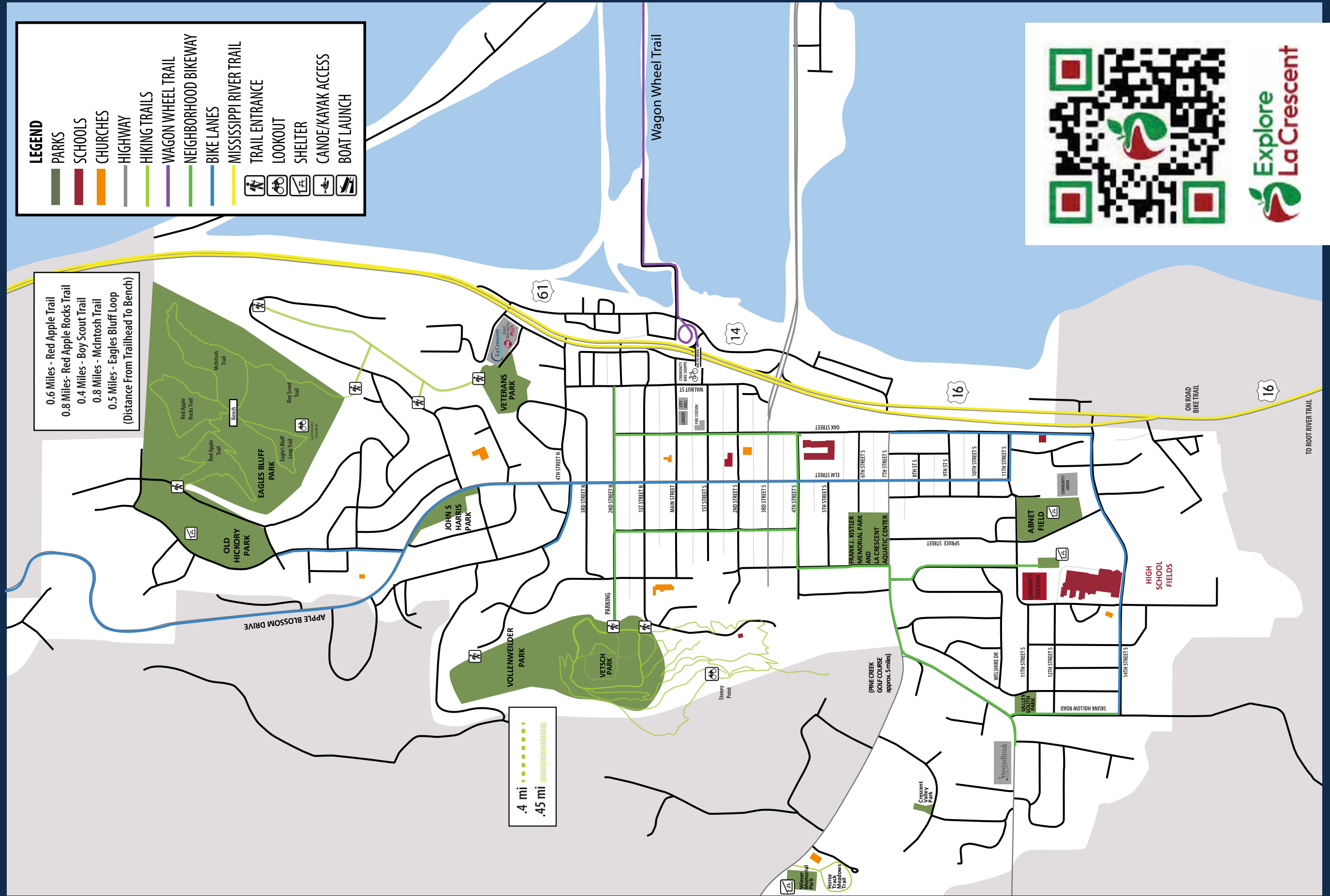


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# BICYCLE AND HIKING MAP





# INSPIRATION... IT'S IN OUR NATURE

## ADVENTURE CALLS BETWEEN THE BLUFFS AND ALONG THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI RIVER!

The La Crosse Region bursts with adventure as unique as each explorer. Discover exciting flavors, charming history, captivating views, and epic outdoor recreation just a road trip away!



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. 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.



2024 Home Game Schedule -  
Old Hickory Park, 1135 Jonathan Lane, La Crescent, MN

5.18.24 12pm and 3pm  
6.01.24 12pm and 1:30pm  
8.17.24 12pm and 1:30pm  
9.21.24 10:30am and 12pm

Apple Jacks is a community outreach program of the La Crescent Area Historical Society. Established in 2004, the Apple Jacks are members of the 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.



At the La Crescent Area Event Center, our team is experienced, with an eye for detail and passion for making your vision come to reality. We look forward to working with you from start to finish to ensure your day goes as perfect as it should!

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# Neighboring Communities

## 17.5 City of Houston

The City of Houston is located in the beautiful Root River Valley of Southeastern Minnesota. Houston is home to the International Owl Center and the Trailhead 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.

## 10 City of Brownsville

Brownsville is situated on the magnificent Mississippi River. Wildcat Landing, a Houston County park, has a public boat landing and well-maintained riverside campsite facilities. Up the channel, Lawrence Lake Marina offers bait, boat slips, and rentals.

## 6 City of Hokah

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.

## 5.7 Dresbach Township

Just a few miles north of La Crescent is Dresbach, which is home to a Minnesota Department of Transportation welcome center and Lock & Dam #7.



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# La Crescent History

On a high plateau, with channels of a great river spread below it, a small settlement grew into a prosperous town due to the grit of its residents. The Hopewell and Oneota people were the forerunners of today's farmers. They learned how to survive the harsh winters, fish and hunt year-round, and grow fields of crops such as corn. They moved away in 1685 when explorers came through. However, other indigenous peoples followed, attracted by the rich hunting grounds.

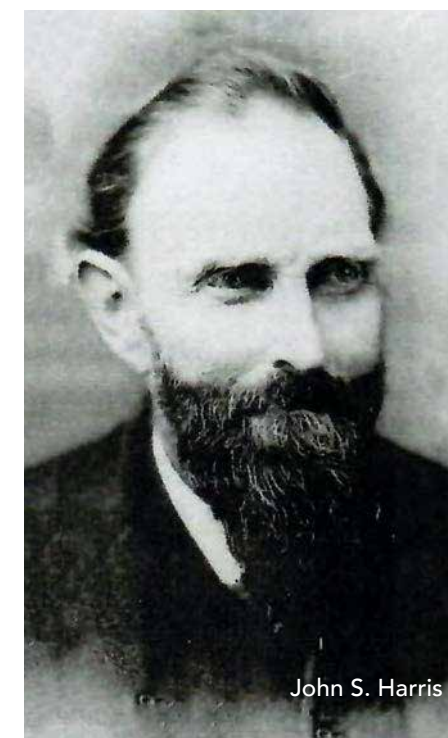
In 1803, this area was in the Louisiana Purchase, which caused more explorers and fur traders to move through, followed by settlers from the east and eventually by immigrants from Europe. Many of those first settlers were buried in either Prospect Hill Cemetery or Pine Creek Catholic Cemetery. The town's picturesque elevation, and proximity to the city of La Crosse, attracted people with leadership skills and vision.

One of the first visionaries was the town's founder, Peter Cameron from New York State who built a lumber business in La Crosse and then opened a trading post in La Crescent. Cameron wanted to see river traffic arrive here instead of La Crosse, so he planned to build a canal that diverted the Mississippi River to create a natural port in La Crescent. Sadly, he died shortly after digging began in 1851. The canal was never completed, but Cameron's ambition to create a vibrant town and commerce was followed by other like-minded individuals. A group of businessmen organized as the Kentucky Land Company platted the town. John S. Harris, who arrived in 1856, developed orchards and new varieties of apples that would withstand the harsh winter weather. An apple industry was born.

The City of La Crescent, the La Crescent Public Library, and the La Crescent Area Historical Society are partnering with the Ho-Chunk Nation and Dakota Nations, along with area tribal members, to be sure indigenous history is included in the story of La Crescent. Watch our websites for more information on this important work to recognize and honor the past, present and future of the indigenous people who have a strong connection to this place we now call La Crescent. <https://lacscenthistory.org/>



La Crescent History Center +  
Apple Museum  
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John S. Harris



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# Minnesota Apple Varieties

La Crescent is home to several successful business industries, but one that has endured with a colorful history 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 industry is still strong in La Crescent. About Eighty percent of locally grown 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 and 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 slightly sweet-tart flavor with a hint of brown sugar. Excellent for both fresh eating and cooling. Zestar apples are a great early season apple that has a strong shelf life of over a month, providing you with 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

Introduced in 1977 the 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.

### La Crescent

The La Crescent ripens in late August is a tart apple with a soft texture. First grown in La Crescent, the orchardist was originally from Holland. Frank Van Lin, of Van Lin Orchards, chose to name it after his new hometown.

## 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 or three months.

### Haralson

This is 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, apples 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, 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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Flavor: Tart/Mild  
Enjoy fresh or for cooking

## Sweet Tango®

Flavor: Sweet/Crisp  
Enjoy fresh for eating

## Zestar®

Flavor: Sweet-tart, crisp, juicy  
Enjoy fresh or baked

## Honey Crisp

Flavor: Sweet-tart, crisp, juicy

## Sweet Sixteen

Flavor: Sweet, crisp

## La Crescent

Flavor: Tart, mild

## Haralson

Flavor: Tart, crisp

## Frostbite™

Flavor: Tart, mild

## Fireside

Flavor: Rich, sweet and crisp  
Perfect for applesauce

## Regent

Flavor: Semi-Sweet and crisp  
Great for baking pies



Recipes

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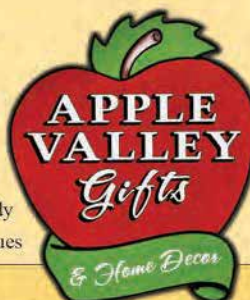
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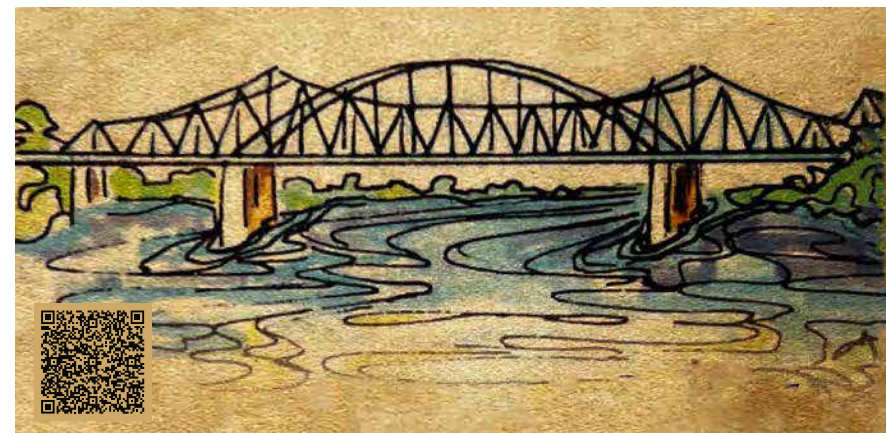
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# Local Dining

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Coffee shop + mobile trailer that specializes in high-quality espresso and bites. Stop in, introduce yourself, grab a coffee, and connect!

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Since 1958, the La Crescent Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism has been helping member businesses, professionals & individuals stay informed and connected. Our mission is to strengthen and promote our members by building community alliances and working as business advocates, making La Crescent, MN an even greater place to visit, work and live.



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