



EXPLORE **m** MINNESOTA

# 2026-2027 La Crescent Area

## Official Visitors Guide

**Driftless Region, La Crescent, MN**  
[explorelacrescent.com](http://explorelacrescent.com)



Amber Thorson Photography

# Welcome To LA CRESCENT

Nestled among the picturesque bluffs of the Mississippi River, La Crescent boasts a stunning natural backdrop perfect for endless outdoor adventures.

Conveniently situated at the intersection of three scenic byways—Apple Blossom Scenic Byway, National Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, and the Great River Road—La Crescent invites visitors to discover the charm of southeastern Minnesota.

Whether you're seeking peaceful back-road escapes or exhilarating activities like hiking, biking, boating, kayaking, fishing, birding, or snowshoeing, there's something for everyone here. Explore a variety of local eateries, unique shops, wineries, orchards, and cozy lodging options, making La Crescent an ideal hub for your journey.

Businesses, visitors, and residents alike value the town's easy access to major highways, interstates, and the nearby La Crosse Regional Airport.

Plan your trip today—who knows, you might just decide to call our charming town home!



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*

*Jon Wilson | President  
Chamber of Commerce and Tourism*

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



SEPTEMBER 18, 19, & 20, 2026

[www.applefestusa.com](http://www.applefestusa.com)



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Amber Thorson Photography

Rich in tradition, La Crescent has been honoring the apple harvest for more than 70 years. Visit us in mid-May to experience the apple blossoms in full bloom, with vibrant colors and a heavenly aroma filling the orchards.

The apple harvest runs from August through October, making it the perfect time to explore local orchards and taste the many unique and delicious varieties of Minnesota-grown apples. Many orchards even offer 'pick-your-own' experiences, creating fun memories for the whole family.

Beyond apples, La Crescent's stunning natural surroundings provide endless opportunities for outdoor recreation. Enjoy hiking, cycling, seasonal snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, whether you're exploring the rugged bluffs or the flatlands along the Mississippi River.

With state water trails located within an hour's drive for most Minnesotans, the area is perfect for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, boating, and river camping adventures.

# 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

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## Water Trails

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## Driftless Lands

page 16



# Apple Blossom Scenic Drive

National Scenic Byway



The 17-mile Byway follows County Rd 1 through rolling farmland and offers stunning bluff-top views above the Mississippi River, passing through La Crescent and Nodine. No matter the season, the scenic beauty is unmatched.

Just outside La Crescent, Apple Blossom Overlook Park offers a breathtaking view of the Mississippi River's main shipping channel. Along the Byway, you'll find bluff-top pull-offs with some of the region's most spectacular vistas.

Traveling north, the route ends at a "T" intersection, where you can head east to Dakota or west to Nodine and Great River Bluffs State Park. Just a 15-minute drive, the state park offers hiking and camping opportunities, requiring a state park pass for entry. Looping around the park, travelers can return to La Crescent via the Great River Road or Apple Blossom Scenic Drive, both offering incredible panoramic views.



In spring, enjoy the fragrant apple blossoms and acres of blooming orchards. In fall, experience vibrant foliage, pick-your-own apple harvests, and take home orchard treats like honey, cider, pumpkins, and Indian corn. La Crescent's orchards are famous for distinctive apple varieties, including the Honeycrisp, Sweet Tango, and First Kiss, developed by the University of Minnesota Research Center. Apple Blossom Scenic Drive is a designated National Scenic Byway.

Apple Blossom Scenic Drive is a designated National Scenic Byway.





# Great River Road, Minnesota

The Great River Road, a designated National Scenic Byway, traces the path of the Mississippi River. Starting at its headwaters, the Byway meanders through the charming towns of northern Minnesota, passes through the Twin Cities, and continues south along Highway 61 to La Crescent before heading into Iowa via Highway 26.

Official "National Route" signs mark the Federal Highway Administration's designated route, while "State Alternate" signs guide travelers off the main path to discover hidden gems and local points of interest.

Don't miss the breathtaking views of the river and bluffs from Wabasha to La Crescent—this area serves as the gateway to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Watch for the green pilot's wheel logo featuring a steamboat to stay on course during your journey.



Lock And Dam #7  
La Crescent Minnesota



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.



## SWING BRIDGE PUB LOCAL FAVORITE FISH FRY

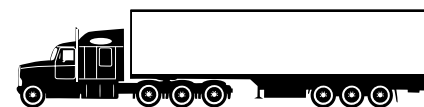


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### How Large is a Barge?



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# Historic Bluff Country

From La Crescent, take a scenic drive along the Historic Bluff Country National Scenic Byway, which connects some of the region's most beautiful, historic, cultural, and recreational sites. The 88-mile route stretches from La Crescent through the stunning Root River Valley in southeastern Minnesota. Before becoming Minnesota Trunk Highway 16, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway was once U.S. Highway 16, the main route between Chicago, Illinois, and Yellowstone National Park.



Over millions of years, geological forces shaped the region's dramatic landforms, creating deep river valleys, sinkholes, caves, and towering limestone bluffs. Visit [bluffcountry.com](http://bluffcountry.com) for a complete list of cities and attractions to help plan your journey.



- Great River Bluffs State Park
- Beaver Creek Valley State Park
- Forestry/Mystery Cave State Park
- Lake Leise State Park
- Whitewater State Park
- John A. Latch State Park

- 1 Dexter
- 2 Grand Meadow
- 3 Spring Valley
- 4 Wykoff
- 5 Fountain
- 6 Preston
- 7 Lanesboro
- 8 Whelan
- 9 Peterson
- 10 Rushford
- 11 Houston
- 12 Hokah
- 13 La Crescent
- Rushford Village

- State Highway
- US Highway
- Interstate



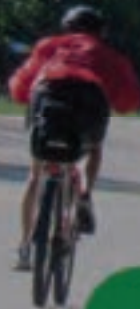
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# APPLE BLOSSOM BIKE TOUR

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# Birding On The Mississippi River Flyway

## EAGLES

From October through March, the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota is a prime spot for viewing bald eagles. They can often be seen sunning in trees or standing on the ice near open water in search of a meal.

Late fall and early spring, when eagles follow shifting ice conditions, bring chances to see several hundred in one area. As warmer weather arrives, they disperse to nesting sites across Minnesota. Wabasha, Minnesota, is home to the National Eagle Center, which offers interpretive programs about these majestic birds.

## SWANS, WATERFOWL +PELICANS

Tundra swans, ducks, and pelicans are frequent migrants through the Brownsville area. Upon arrival, the air fills with the sounds of swans calling to one another. Large flocks begin appearing in late October and stay until the water freezes—sometimes up to 25,000 birds rest and feed here at once. This wildlife refuge serves as a crucial stopover where birds build fat reserves for their final 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

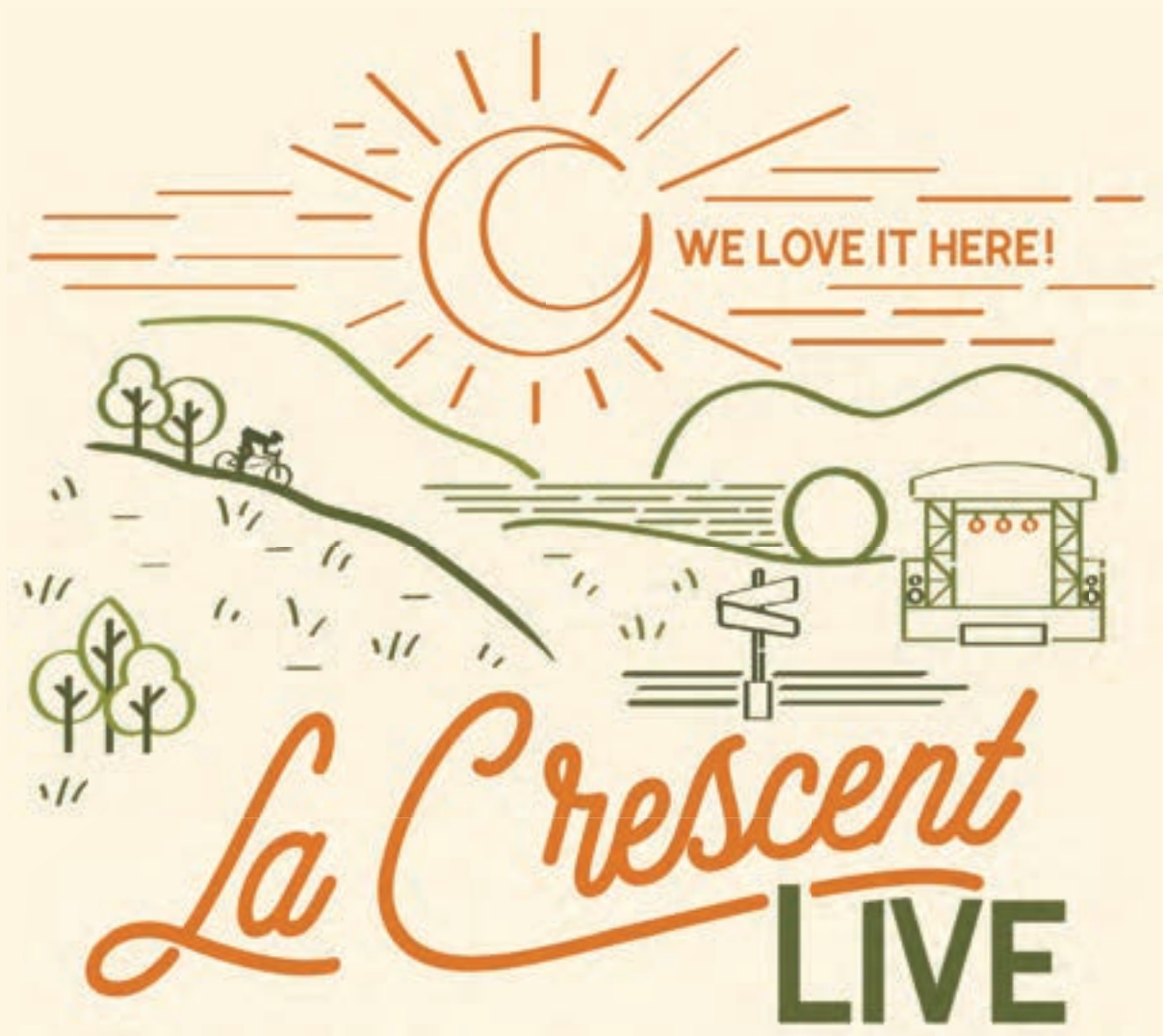


The river acts as a migration corridor not only for waterfowl but also for many other birds like raptors, shorebirds, and migratory songbirds.

In spring and summer, it provides nesting habitat for numerous species.

Even in winter, the area supports northern bird populations and year-round residents.

The Upper Mississippi River offers excellent birding in its marshes, wooded bottomlands, open waters, sand prairies, and wooded bluffs.



◆ **FREE OUTDOOR CONCERT SERIES 2026** ◆

**LOCATION:** 322 S 1st St, La Crescent

*Unless otherwise noted.*

5:30 p.m. | Wednesday

**JUNE 10**

**Mr. Blink**

5:30 p.m. | Wednesday

**JUNE 24**

**Double Take**

5:30 p.m. | Wednesday

**JULY 8**

**Ryan Howe**

5:30 p.m. | Friday

**JULY 17**

**LP and the 45's**

5:30 p.m. | Wednesday

**AUGUST 5**

**High Mileage**

12:30 p.m. | Saturday

**SEPTEMBER 12**

**MadLee Band**

*At Abnet Field*



Scan the QR code to learn more or visit

**LaCrescentLive.org**

# Fish, Boat, Paddle

There's no better way to experience the water, wildlife, and natural beauty of the Driftless region than by boat, kayak, or paddleboard. With a variety of water trails to choose from, you can explore the open waters of the Mississippi River, the calm backwaters, and the serene shores of nearby tributaries and streams. The river is home to many fish species, including walleye, perch, northern pike, catfish, bass (both large and smallmouth), bluegill, carp, and crappie.

Two public boat landings provide access to both the main channel of the Mississippi and its backwaters.

One landing is just south of Lock and Dam #7, and the other is Sportsmen's Landing, located at 1570 US-14, La Crescent, MN.

Fishing on the Mississippi River is as impressive as its views, offering abundant game fish year-round.

For a unique experience, check out the "Best Dam Fishing Float," a floating dock located just south of Lock and Dam #7, across from the Dresbach Welcome Center. Find more details on their Facebook page or visit [www.bestdamfishingfloat.com](http://www.bestdamfishingfloat.com).

For ice fishing, ensure the ice is at least four inches thick, and always use an ice spud. For more ice fishing info, consult the Minnesota DNR. Even in the coldest months, ice fishing remains a popular activity, with numerous ice fishing houses along the Mississippi River's backwaters.

Visitors are encouraged to check with local bait shops for ice conditions and fishing tips.

The Driftless Area is also known for its cold, clear waters and world-class trout streams, home to brown, brook, and rainbow trout.

The trout season opens in mid-April, and with over 700 miles of naturally cold streams, including Whitewater River, Root River, and the famous Trout Run Creek, anglers have plenty of opportunities. 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).



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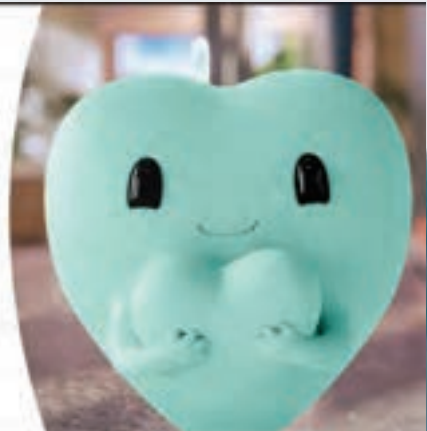
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## Driftless Terrain

The “Driftless” terrain offers outdoor enthusiasts a diverse playground for all types of recreation, regardless of skill level. Steep hills, forested ridges, deep river valleys, and karst geology define the region, with spring-fed waterfalls and cold-water trout streams enhancing the landscape. The Driftless region spans over 24,000 miles across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois, with elevations ranging from 600 to 1,200 feet. This unique geography provides a perfect setting for outdoor adventure and exploration.

## Biking The Driftless Area

The Driftless Area’s Apple Blossom Scenic Byway is a biker’s paradise, offering some of the best biking in the country. With rolling hills, scenic bluffs, and quiet country roads, cyclists can enjoy picturesque views and exhilarating rides. In the spring, the air is filled with the fragrance of blooming apple blossoms as riders take in stunning views of the Mississippi River valley below.

Whether you’re mountain biking, road cycling, or tackling gravel trails, Southeast Minnesota has routes for all preferences and abilities. The region’s steep bluffs draw cyclists seeking a challenge, with many training on these hills for races or fitness. Greg LeMond, the first American to win the Tour de France, honed his skills on these same bluffs. La Crescent’s new Wagon Wheel Trail, accessible via the bike/pedestrian bridge on Walnut Street, takes cyclists through the Mississippi’s backwaters and connects to various trails in La Crosse, WI. The Root River Trail, a 60-mile paved path starting in Houston, MN, winds through 500-foot bluffs, attracting cyclists year-round.

For gravel enthusiasts, Southeast Minnesota offers some of the best routes in the state, including the Old Fashioned Gravel ride in Hokah, MN. Visit <https://driftlesscycling.com/gravel> for more options.

## Paddling the Driftless

Paddling through the Driftless region is an unforgettable experience, with the majestic bluffs framing the waters of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding are perfect ways to explore the quiet backwaters and smaller lakes of the area. Two boat landings on the Mississippi provide easy access to the river, while canoe/kayak launch points are located at Blue Lake, nestled between La Crescent and La Crosse, and in Reno Bottoms, where you can explore Pool 9. Be sure to grab a water trails map to guide your adventure across these serene waters.

Whether you’re seeking a peaceful paddle or a scenic challenge, the Driftless region’s waterways offer a unique experience for all water lovers.



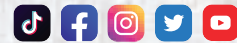
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la crescent, mn



# OUTDOOR EXPLORATION

## Abnet Field

1200 Spruce St., La Crescent, MN



## Eagles Bluff Park

422 Red Apple Dr. La Crescent, MN



## Apple Blossom Overlook

169 County Hwy 1, Dakota, MN



## La Crescent Aquatic Center

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



## Como Falls + Spring Pool

9 Mill St., Hokah, MN



## La Crescent Community Arena

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



## Great River Bluffs State Park

43605 Kipp Dr, Winona, MN



## Old Hickory Park

1200 Johnathan Ln., La Crescent, MN







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**Vetsch Park**

722 N 2nd St., La Crescent, MN



**Vet's Park**

144 Timm Ln., La Crescent, MN



**Wieser Memorial Park**

1817 County 6, La Crescent, MN



Shelter



Camp



Overlook



Landing



Bike Trails



Baseball



Tables



Grill



Pass Req.



Hiking



Playground



Nets



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## Wildcat Landing + Campground

11011 MN-26, Brownsville, MN 55919



Basketball



Ice skating



Swim



Pickleball



Snowshoe



# GOLF



## Ma Cal Grove Country Club | 9

15939 State 76  
Caledonia, MN 55921  
507.725.2733

Nestled in the bluffs of Southeastern Minnesota, Ma Cal Grove Country Club is a par 36 course offering nine challenging holes of golf. Clubhouse with full-service bar and a short order grill for lunch. Full service kitchen and grill available for catered events.



©Eugene Alberts

## Pine Creek Golf Course | 9

38155 North Pine Creek Road,  
La Crescent, MN  
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

9203 Mound Prairie Drive,  
Houston, Minnesota  
507.894.4444

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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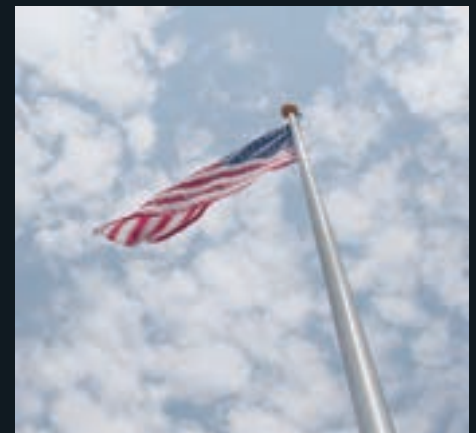


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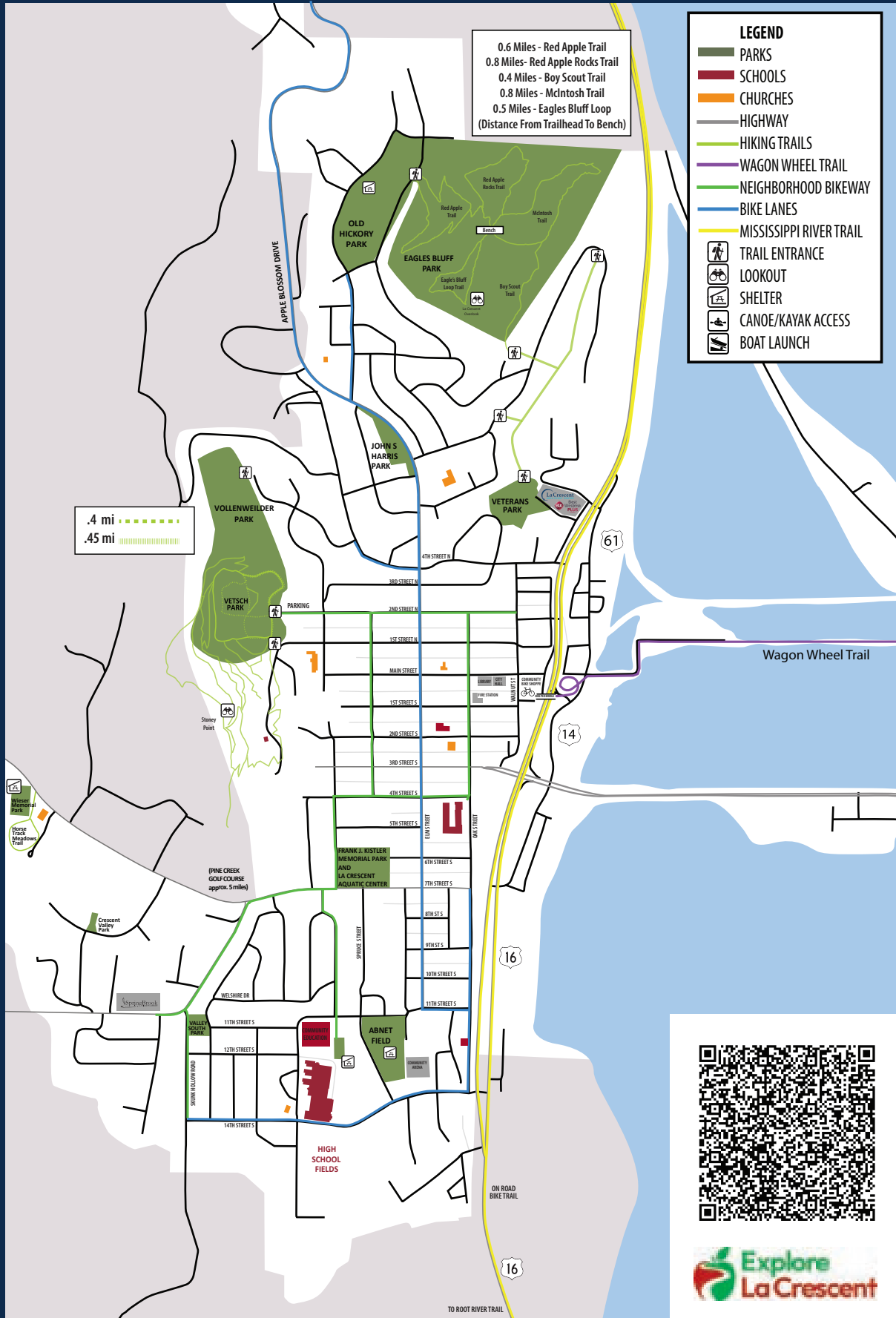


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# BICYCLE AND HIKING MAP





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LA CRESCENT, MN | SEPTEMBER 12, 2026

FROM ANCIENT BLUFFS TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

# EXPLORE

The La Crosse Region

FESTIVE  
SPIRIT  
—  
ELEVATED  
ADVENTURE  
—  
INSPIRING  
HEIGHTS





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.



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.

May 16	Saturday	10:00	East Bethel MN
June 5	Friday	6:15 PM	Wykoff MN
June 20	Saturday	TBD	Menomonie WI
June 28	Sunday	12:00 PM	La Crescent MN
July 18	Saturday	TBD	Stillwater MN
July 26	Sunday	12:00 PM	Highland Prairie MN
Aug 8	Saturday	TBD	Rochester MN
Aug 15	Saturday	12:00 PM	La Crescent MN
Sep 13	Sunday	12:00 PM	Highland Prairie MN
Sep 19	Saturday	12:00 PM	La Crescent MN

Old Hickory Park  
1135 Jonathan Lane  
La Crescent, MN



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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 Wecheshatope 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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(507) 895-3066

CLA-98015-A-RECIPRO



# La Crescent History



Perched on a high plateau with the great river's channels spread below, a small settlement grew into a thriving town, thanks to the determination of its residents. The Hopewell and Oneota peoples, the area's first inhabitants, were the forerunners of today's farmers. They mastered survival in harsh winters, fished and hunted year-round, and cultivated crops like corn. These early settlers moved on in 1685 as explorers passed through, but other indigenous peoples soon followed, drawn by the region's abundant hunting grounds.

In 1803, this area became part of the Louisiana Purchase, which brought explorers, fur traders, and later settlers from the East, and eventually immigrants from Europe. Many of these early settlers now rest in Prospect Hill Cemetery or Pine Creek Catholic Cemetery. The town's picturesque location and its proximity to La Crosse attracted leaders with vision.

One of the first was Peter Cameron, a New York native who established a lumber business in La Crosse before opening a trading post in La Crescent.

Cameron envisioned La Crescent as a major port, planning to build a canal to divert the Mississippi River through the town. However, he passed away shortly after work on the canal began in 1851, and the project was never finished. Despite this, his dream of a bustling town and vibrant commerce was carried on by others. The Kentucky Land Company, a group of local businessmen, platted the town.

In 1856, John S. Harris arrived and began cultivating orchards, developing apple varieties hardy enough to survive the harsh winters. This sparked the birth of the apple industry. Today, the City of La Crescent, the La Crescent Public Library, and the La Crescent Area Historical Society are working in partnership with the Ho-Chunk Nation, Dakota Nations, and area tribal members to ensure indigenous history is a vital part of La Crescent's story.

Visit our websites for updates on this important work to honor the past, present, and future of the indigenous people who have deep roots in this region now known as La Crescent. <https://lacrescenthistory.org/>



La Crescent History Center +  
Apple Museum  
Saturday's 10am-2pm

Photo Credit USFWS



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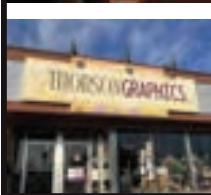
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# Minnesota Apple Varieties

La Crescent is home to a variety of successful industries, but one that stands out with a rich and colorful history is the apple industry. In the 1940s, the area boasted around 40 small orchards scattered throughout the city and its surroundings. While the number of orchards has since decreased to fewer than a dozen, the apple industry remains strong in La Crescent. Approximately 80 percent of locally grown apples are sold within Minnesota, with the remaining harvest being exported to neighboring states and Canada. Since 1868, the University of Minnesota has played a key role in developing nearly 30 apple varieties, many of which are hardy enough to endure the region's cold winters.

## Early Season Harvest

### State Fair

Harvested in mid to late August, just before the Minnesota State Fair, the State Fair apple boasts a firm, creamy flesh. Its juicy aroma and slightly tart flavor make it an ideal choice for both fresh eating and cooking. Introduced in 1977 by the University of Minnesota, this apple is hardy enough to endure the cold Minnesota winters.

### SweetTango®

SweetTango® is a sweet, juicy apple with subtle fall spice notes. Its thin skin makes it perfect for snacking, while its crisp texture (inherited from Honeycrisp) and juiciness (from Zestar®) provide a delightful eating experience. Ripening in early September, it's one of several apples developed at the University of Minnesota.

### Zestar®

Zestar® apples are large, crunchy, and juicy with a slightly sweet-tart flavor and a hint of brown sugar. These apples are perfect for fresh eating or cooking. Known for their strong shelf life of over a month, Zestar® apples provide both convenience and delicious taste as an early-season variety.

## Mid Season Harvest

### Honeycrisp

Harvested in mid-September, Honeycrisp apples are known for their exceptional crispness and juiciness, with just a touch of tartness that makes them perfect for eating fresh off the tree. Named Minnesota's State Fruit in 2006, Honeycrisp was developed from a 1960 cross of Macoun and Honeygold apples and is now one of the top 10 best-selling apples in the U.S.

### Sweet Sixteen

Introduced in 1977, Sweet Sixteen is another standout apple from the University of Minnesota. This crisp, juicy apple features yellow flesh and a unique, very sweet flavor reminiscent of sugar cane or spicy cherry candy. It stores well for 5 to 8 weeks, making it a convenient and flavorful choice.

### La Crescent

Ripening in late August, the La Crescent apple is a tart variety with a soft texture. First grown in La Crescent by orchardist Frank Van Lin, who was originally from Holland, the apple was named after his new hometown. Van Lin Orchards helped popularize this distinctive variety in the region.

# Late Season Harvest

## Honeygold

A cross between Haralson and Golden Delicious apples, Honeygold is a sweet, crisp, and juicy variety that's perfect for eating, baking, and freezing. Ripening in late September, this apple can be stored for two to three months, offering long-lasting flavor.

## Haralson

Introduced by the Minnesota Horticulture Research Center in 1922, Haralson apples are crisp and juicy with a tart flavor. Named after Charles Haralson, the superintendent of the University of Minnesota Fruit Breeding Farm, these apples are great for eating fresh, as well as in apple crisps and pies.

## Frostbite™

Developed in 1978, Frostbite™ apples offer a crunchy, hard texture and a spicy-sweet flavor that makes them perfect for eating fresh or cooking. Their unique taste adds depth to many recipes, especially in baked goods.

## Fireside/Connell Red

Harvested in mid-October, Fireside/Connell Red apples are large, sweet, and crisp with a chunky texture, making them ideal for cooking and making sauces. This University of Minnesota variety, first introduced in 1943, delivers a flavorful punch in every bite.

## Pazazz

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