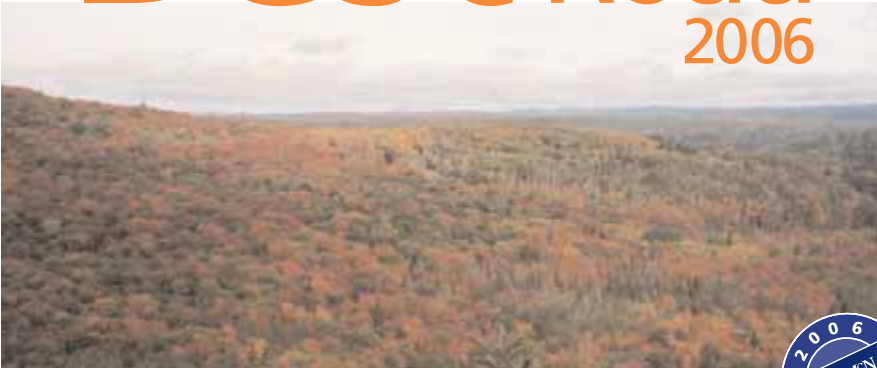


# Best of the Road<sup>®</sup> 2006



The maple canopy of the Sawtooth Mountains glows in the afternoon sun.

Located on the westernmost edge of Lake Superior, Highway 61 rises between the storied waters of Gitchee Gumee and the highest peaks in Minnesota. Locals call this winding, two-lane road the “North Shore.” The rest of the country adds “scenic drive” to that description and with good reason. Its route is dotted with natural wonders, charming shops, and terrific restaurants.

## Into the Woods Duluth/Hibbing/Thunder Bay



For full maps of Minnesota and Ontario, Canada, see pp. 53-55 and 122-123 of the Rand McNally 2006 Road Atlas.



This trip starts on Skyline Drive, 600 feet above the city of Duluth. The view of the metropolitan area as it stretches 25 miles along the water is spectacular. On the gray-blue horizon, Duluth's landmark Aerial Lift Bridge anchors the working harbor, which welcomes more than 1,000 ocean-going and Great Lakes freighters each year. But it isn't the view of the lake that draws visitors to the overlook; it is the one in the sky.



A naturalist shows off a song bird, one of the many different birds that fly along Hawk Ridge in Duluth, MN.

This area is called Hawk Ridge. Since 1972, a full-time raptor count has been conducted at **Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve** where volunteers share stories, even binoculars, with visitors. In the fall, it is not uncommon for Doppler radar to mistakenly warn of storms approaching from Canada. In truth, the mass picked up by radar systems will not be weather-related at all; it will be the shadow of huge kettles of migrating raptors. On Sept. 14, 2003, due to a combination of weather fronts and the far-reaching effects of Hurricane Isabel, more than 100,000 raptors flew over Duluth, nearly all of which were broad-winged hawks.

Back on the ground below, Duluth bustles with trendy shops, tempting restaurants, and cultural centers along the downtown lakefront. At Union Depot, restored cars from the North Shore Scenic Railroad (NSRR) sit trackside at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum. The NSRR offers theme rides – such as the Pizza Train, which serves fresh, hot pizza

delivered on board. Pizza Train rides are family favorites at \$18 per adult and \$12 for children. After a few short whistles from the engineer, the train chugs along the lake and into the northwoods. The excursion lasts about 90 minutes and is hosted by an interpreter dressed as a conductor.

Trains are still used commercially to haul iron from the Mesabi Range to the lake, where it is shipped to worldwide destinations. The center of Minnesota's iron range is Hibbing, home of the Hull Rust Mahoning Mine, the world's largest open pit iron mine. The pit stretches for more than three miles in length, and is two miles wide and 600 feet deep. Because of its size, it is often referred to as the “Grand Canyon of the North.”

Since the mid-1960s, Hibbing has gained international recognition as the hometown of singer and songwriter Bob Dylan, whose writings were nominated for a Nobel Prize in literature in 2004. One must-see stop is **Zimmy's & the Atrium Restaurant**. Housed in the town's first trolley station, the restaurant boasts the largest-known collection of Dylan



Zimmy's & the Atrium owners Linda and Bob Stroback were Bob Dylan fans long before opening their restaurant in his hometown of Hibbing, MN.

memorabilia as well as an extensive menu named after his songs, like “Forever Young” veggie burgers at \$6.99.

Driving back toward the shore, the route passes Chisholm, where Ironworld commemorates the struggle of the immigrants who came to work the mines. And in Eveleth, visitors at the United States Hockey Hall of Fame, located on Hat Trick Drive, can relive the thrill of the 1980 match between the U.S. Olympic hockey team and the Soviet Union. This video presentation is the most popular exhibit at the hall.



One of the open-pit mines is visible from the train ride through Ironworld in Chisholm, MN.

The Superior National Forest Scenic Byway starts at nearby Aurora and connects the Iron Range to the North Shore. The byway is wide and smooth with broad shoulders that allow unobstructed views of the boreal forest and occasional marshland. With an abundance of “Moose Crossing” signage, the exposure is most welcome, as moose sightings are quite common. This serene 61-mile stretch offers access to a variety of recreation areas including the Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area, a 1,200-acre recreational area for all-terrain vehicles, off-road motorcycles, and 4x4s.

The byway ends at Silver Bay, where Split Rock Lighthouse State Park provides an impressive view of Lake Superior. Visitors can blast a foghorn – “Beeeee-ohh!” – that can be heard for five miles, and climb to the top of the lighthouse to see its original Fresnel lens. Time permitting, strap on a pair of in-line skates and take a turn on a section of the Gitchi-Gami State Trail that was developed for hiking, skating, and snowshoeing.

North on Hwy. 61 at Sawtooth Mountain Park in Lutsen, the summit of Moose Mountain is open all year, thanks to an aerial gondola service. Lutsen is the Midwest’s largest downhill ski area. The view from the top of the surrounding Sawtooth Mountains and its maple canopy is dazzling. Visitors can enjoy the mountain by hiking any number of well-marked trails or simply enjoying the return ride on the four-seat, enclosed gondola. From the top, one ski run appears as if it goes right out onto the lake. It doesn’t.



Caribou Trail Scenic Drive winds along the foothills of the Sawtooth Mountains near Lutsen, MN.

Caribou Trail, located just east of Lutsen, is the starting point for one of the North Shore’s favorite fall color drives. It also inspired the name of an award-winning maple syrup called **Caribou Cream**. Herb Wills and Sonja Helland produce the syrup in a refitted garage located on their property about a mile from Hwy. 61. Their syrup won the blue ribbon at the Minnesota State Fair a number of times. In 2003, it also snared the blue ribbon for best syrup at the Vermont State Fair.

With the exception of Grand Marais, 30 minutes northeast of Lutsen, most communities along the North Shore have no downtowns, just services along the sides of the road.



The main street of Grand Marais, MN, is lined with shops, restaurants, and galleries.

**The Angry Trout Café** at the Grand Marais harbor features an eclectic ambience as special as its partially-organic menu. So many diners ask about the décor that laminated flyers identifying which local artisan made the chairs, who created the mosaic mural in the unisex bathroom, and the like are placed on the tables. Purveyors are even credited on the menu – bread is delivered daily from

the Coho Café’s bakery in Tofte, the wild rice is harvested by Tim and Laurie Melby of Finland, Minn., and the shiitake mushrooms come from Forest Products in St. Joseph. Even the sereware at Angry Trout is artisanal. According to the cheatsheet, it was hand-thrown by Dick Cooter at his studio in Two Harbors. The food? Extraordinary. The locally caught lake trout is expertly grilled and served with wild rice mixed with peas, shiitake mushrooms, and cranberries alongside an ear of roasted calico corn. Both wheat and herbal baguettes arrive warm. A meal at the Angry Trout costs between \$8 and \$23.

In the 18th century, afternoon tea was served with sandwiches and sweets at what is now **Grand Portage National Monument**, 26 miles east of Grand Marais, but only when



One of the lookouts on Mount Rose Trail affords this grand view of Grand Portage National Monument, Grand Portage, MN.

officers of the North West Company were attending the Rendezvous at the depot. Held each July for more than 40 years, the Rendezvous brought together voyageurs from the north with their stock of fur pelts to be exchanged for goods brought from the east by the men from Montreal. It took two months for the voyageurs to make their way from the wilds to the “great carrying place” and nearly that long for the eastern traders to paddle across the Great Lakes. Reenactors recreate daily life at the depot as it readied for the meeting. Visitors can see a fur press in action, examine trade goods, visit with the fort cook in the kitchen, and watch craftsmen building birch bark canoes. Open year-round, Grand Portage National Monument is located on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation, home of the Ojibwe band. Members of the tribe work at the monument and at the nearby Grand Portage Lodge and Casino. There is a \$3 admission to the monument with a maximum of \$6 for a family.

Crossing the border into Canada, Hwy. 61 becomes Kings Highway 61, making the transition to Ontario as easy as showing proof of citizenship, proof of identity, and automobile registration to the border guard.

The drive to Thunder Bay curves through provincial park before meeting once again with the forested shores of Lake Superior. Thanks to the friendliness of its residents, Thunder Bay (pop. 120,000) has a small-town feel to it. Must-see stops include Fort William Historical Park, which replaced Grand Portage as the meeting place for trading in the early 19th century. Costumed interpreters

bring the fort to life at Trades Square, in the Great Hall kitchen, and at the pharmacy, where the goodly doctor prescribes questionable treatments. Reenactors lead escorted 90-minute tours, several times a day, all year long. Admission for a family of four is \$32.71 CDN.



The entrance to the fort at Historic Fort William Park in Thunder Bay, ON, is still a welcome site for visitors.

Downtown there’s plenty of shopping in trendy neighborhoods, like Victoria Street, where fashion designer Joyce Seppala’s studio is located, and in the Bay/Algoma Street area for a stop at the Finn-Tastic Sauna Shop (pronounced “sow-na” in Canada just as in Finland) or at the Fireweed cooperative, which sells Canadian handicrafts.



Fireweed is a retail co-op that represents many artisans in Thunder Bay, ON.

North America’s largest vein of amethyst is a short drive north of town. Up a climbing, twisting, partially paved road, the fun at **Amethyst Mine Panorama** is worth the drive. Following a brief instructional tour, visitors grab a bucket, select a pick, and dig for gemstones in great mounds of dirt, debris, and sparkling purple amethyst. Price for any found amethyst is based on the weight of the bucket and the day’s market. If picking through a hill of dirt doesn’t sound appealing, the gift shop has a wealth of gemstones already cleaned and polished. Admission is \$3 per person and free for children five and under.



Owner Steve Lukinuk stands by one of the powerful water hoses used in the commercial areas at Amethyst Mine Panorama, just outside of Thunder Bay, ON.

On the south side of Thunder Bay, the province’s only Gouda cheese farm draws visitors from all over the world. In addition to making traditional Gouda, owners Margaret and Jacob Schep flavor some of their cheese with herbs – not just culinary herbs, but those found in folklore. One cheese includes seeds from fenugreek, an herb used in some folk medications to reportedly control diabetes and cholesterol. Plain or herbed, the Gouda is terrific. Mrs. Schep will vacuum seal rounds or wedges for the trip home. And she promises



Gouda cheese is the specialty of the Thunder Oak Cheese Farm in Thunder Bay, ON.

that the border guard will not confiscate the package. (She is correct.) Much like the rest of the trip along the North Shore, this day at Thunder Oak Cheese Farm ends with a smile. Say cheese!

**For more information:**

**Amethyst Mine Panorama**

East Loon Road, off Hwy. 11-17  
400 Victoria Ave. E., Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
CAN P7C 1A5  
(807) 622-6908  
[www.amethystmine.com](http://www.amethystmine.com)

**Angry Trout Restaurant**

416 W. Hwy. 61,  
Grand Marais, MN 55604  
(218) 387-1265  
[www.angrytroutcafe.com](http://www.angrytroutcafe.com)

**Caribou Cream Maple Syrup**

558 Caribou Trail, Lutsen, MN 55612  
[www.cariboucream.com](http://www.cariboucream.com)

**Finn-Tastic Sauna Shop**

321 Bay St., Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
CAN P7B 1S2  
(807) 344-6656

**Fireweed**

182 S. Algoma St., Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
CAN P7B 3B9  
(807) 345-4686

**Fort William Historical Park**

1350 King Rd., Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
CAN P7E 1L7  
(807) 473-2344  
[www.fwhp.ca](http://www.fwhp.ca)

**Grand Marais Area Tourism Association**

13 N. Broadway Ave.,  
Grand Marais, MN 55604  
(888) 922-5000  
[www.grandmarais.com](http://www.grandmarais.com)

**Grand Portage Lodge and Casino**

P.O. Box 233, Grand Portage, MN 55605  
(218) 475-2401 or (800) 543-1384  
[www.GrandPortage.com](http://www.GrandPortage.com)

**Grand Portage National Monument**

170 Mile Creek Rd.,  
Grand Portage, MN 55605  
(218) 475-0123  
[www.nps.gov/grpo](http://www.nps.gov/grpo)

**Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve**

Skyline Drive, P.O. 3006,  
Duluth, MN 55803-3006  
(218) 428-6209  
[www.hawkridge.org](http://www.hawkridge.org)

**Hibbing Chamber of Commerce**

211 E. Howard St., Box 727,  
Hibbing, MN 55746  
(218) 262-3895 or (800) 444-2246  
[www.hibbing.org](http://www.hibbing.org)

**Hull Rust Mahoning Mine**

401 Penobscot Rd., Hibbing, MN 55746  
(218) 262-4166

**Ironworld Discovery Center**

801 SW Hwy. 169, Ste. 1,  
Chisholm, MN 55719  
(800) 372-6437  
[www.ironworld.com](http://www.ironworld.com)

**Lutsen Mountain Park**

P.O. Box 129, Lutsen, MN 55612  
(218) 663-7281  
[www.lutsen.com](http://www.lutsen.com)

**North Shore Scenic Railroad**

The Depot, 506 W. Michigan St.,  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 722-1273 or (800) 423-1272  
[www.lsrn.org](http://www.lsrn.org)

**Joyce Seppala Designs**

508 E. Victoria St., Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
CAN P7C 1A7  
(807) 624-0022  
[www.joycesepaladesigns.com](http://www.joycesepaladesigns.com)

**Split Rock Lighthouse State Park**

3755 Split Rock Lighthouse Rd.,  
Two Harbors, MN 55616  
(218) 226-6377

**Tourism Thunder Bay**

1000 Hwy 11/17  
Thunder Bay, Ontario, CAN P7A 0A1  
(800) 667-8386  
[www.visitthunderbay.com](http://www.visitthunderbay.com)

**Thunder Oak Cheese Farm**

Boundary Drive, Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
CAN P7C 4V2  
(807) 628-0175  
[www.cheesefarm.ca](http://www.cheesefarm.ca)

**United States Hockey Hall of Fame**

801 Hat Trick Ave., Eveleth, MN 55734  
(800) 443-7825  
[www.ushockeyhall.com](http://www.ushockeyhall.com)

**Visit Duluth**

21 W. Superior, Ste. 100, Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 722-4011 or (800) 438-5884  
[www.visitduluth.com](http://www.visitduluth.com)

**Zimmy's & the Atrium Restaurant**

531 E. Howard St., Hibbing, MN 55746  
(218) 262-6145  
[www.zimmys.com](http://www.zimmys.com)