

The Washington Post
TRAVEL

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PHOTOS BY TIFFANY CLARK FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

For fans, Harry Potter charms on two continents

BY ALEXANDRA PECCI

My 10-year-old daughter, Chloe, squared her feet, raised her arm toward the dark, diamond-paned windows, and waved her wand in a triangle pattern as she shouted an incantation into the night air.

“Incendio!”
 Immediately, the building’s dark windows glowed with brilliant white light, and a small crowd of people around us gasped and clapped. Chloe looked at me with a smile as bright as the magical glow she had just conjured.

It’s a great time to be a Harry Potter fan.

“Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” the first installment in J.K. Rowling’s seven-book juggernaut, might be more than two decades old, but in many ways, the world of Harry Potter fandom seems more fevered than ever before.

One word helps explain why: immersion.

Fans (remember, the word is SEE POTTER ON F6

YOU’RE GOING WHERE?

St. Paul

Minnesota’s capital city has a spirited side unrivaled by its twin sibling to the west

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

Twin schmin. ¶ When I visited St. Paul this summer, I was vaguely aware of another city nearby. I saw skyscrapers in the distance and heard mention of a twin — a sparklier, sassier, busier, bigger city slightly to the west. A city that gets first billing and all the love. ¶ I registered that other city in my mind and then dismissed it altogether. Because St. Paul, I discovered, is more fun than second fiddle and too important to be an afterthought. ¶ St. Paul is the capital of Minnesota, the older and smaller of the Twin Cities. It’s quieter and more relaxed, wholesome and family-friendly, with an air of romance, as though it’s winking at a bygone time. It’s F. Scott Fitzgerald’s birthplace and boasts one of the country’s best-preserved neighborhoods from the Gilded Age. St. Paul is hardly a sleepy town — it attracts big-name entertainers, goes hockey crazy in the winter and this year opened Allianz Field, a gleaming world-class soccer stadium. I ran out of time during my visit before I ran out of highly recommended restaurants. ¶ St. Paul may be accused of being the buttoned-up sibling, but it doesn’t take long for a visitor to see the city’s silly and spirited side: Take the baseball team’s SpongeBob SquarePants promotion; the croquet group that plays in Victorian dress; the watering hole called Bad Weather Brewing Company; or the beloved Winter Carnival, featuring a legendary fight between King Boreas and the firetruck-riding Vulcanus Rex. Of course, if a SpongeBob-celebrating, croquet-playing, Vulcan-fighting city isn’t your jam, there’s always the other city. For the rest of us, there’s St. Paul.

SEE ST. PAUL ON F3

Big adventures, no small talk: An introvert’s guide

BY KATE SILVER

“How is the lack of talking?” a good friend asked in an email.

I was eight days into a 10-day solo trip in Portland, Ore., and the lack of talking was, in a word, refreshing.

Disclosure: There was some talking. I’d chat with neighbors at the house where I was staying, to cashiers at stores and to the occasional passerby. In between, I was loving every minute of what I’ve come to call my semi-social introverted adventure.

If you’re a sister or brother in introversion, then you already know we live in an extroverted world and are expected to conform to the societal expectations of, well, being social — and, gasp, make small talk while doing it — despite the energy suckage that comes with the territory. (As opposed to extroverts, who, on the opposite side of the continuum, tend to feel energized through interacting with people.)

Travel can sometimes seem at odds with introversion, whether

SEE INTROVERT ON F5

NAVIGATOR

How to hire a travel agent — make that adviser — for your next vacation. F2

TOP: The Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, one of the few remaining glass-domed Victorian-style gardens in the country, is located in Como Park. ABOVE LEFT: Vintage pinball machines light up Can Can Wonderland in the Creative Enterprise Zone, a neighborhood of artists, makers and entrepreneurs. ABOVE RIGHT: Customers at Holman’s Table eat breakfast while watching football on TV and the planes take off and land at the nearby airfield.

SAFETY

Front-end planning is key when your child needs a car seat on a trip. F5

Land of parks, planes, Prince

ST. PAUL FROM F1

Go Local faves

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called District del Sol for its many Latino-owned businesses, El Burrito Mercado has been a fixture for decades. At the market, piñatas hang from the ceiling and shoppers read signs in Spanish, buying souvenirs; Fanta bottled in Mexico; freshly made tamales, empanadas and guac; and bakery items like tres leches cake and cookies the size of portobello mushrooms. Return in May for the neighborhood’s Cinco de Mayo celebration, one of the largest in the country.

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What a way for an aviation geek to start the day! Holman Field, the onetime headquarters of Northwest Airlines, opened this all-day restaurant before the 2018 Super Bowl to feed hungry VIPs arriving in their private jets. Now, most of the 100-plus daily takeoffs and landings are corporate aircraft (no commercial flights means no security hassles), and the restaurant is a great spot for pilots and passengers to grab a bite. Let’s just say I was mesmerized by every little plane that landed before me, wobbling down the runway. A floatplane took off, a Black Hawk helicopter was towed into the Minnesota Army National Guard hangar, and I couldn’t imagine being more delighted if a Richard Scarry book came to life. Even-

SEE ST. PAUL ON F4




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Forbes
TRAVEL GUIDE



Colonial Williamsburg
RESORTS



Colonial Williamsburg
Resorts
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

*Minimum stay of three nights. Offer valid September 1, 2019 through November 26, 2019.



ST. PAUL FROM F3

tually, I realized my toast was cold — a shame because the food is too good to be forgotten. Insider tips: Bring binoculars and download the LiveATC app to listen to air traffic control. Ask to sit in the viewing area on the tarmac, and order a Red Eye or Airmail cocktail around the firepit.

Step back in time at the **Commodore**, an art deco and Jazz Age restaurant and cocktail lounge in the Cathedral Hill neighborhood. Perhaps best known as a favorite spot of Fitzgerald's (the writer and wife Zelda lived upstairs in the early 1920s), the legendary restaurant has its own colorful history — home to a basement speakeasy during prohibition and a destination for Chicago mobsters. Beautifully restored and glamorous, with a killer bar, the Commodore serves starters including lobster deviled eggs and Waldorf salad, and entrees like seven-spice cauliflower and beer-battered walleye. You'll want to dress up here, to honor the history and romance of the Commodore, which turns 100 in 2020. Toast the Fitzgeralds with a gin cocktail named for him and a sparkling wine concoction named for her. (In the summer, take a Fitzgerald walking tour with the Minnesota Historical Society.)

Shop

Local faves

Channel your inner homesteader and trot over to **Egg|Plant Urban Farm Supply**, which sells all sorts of seeds, kits, books and tools for the inspired city gardener. I scanned titles like "Attracting Beneficial Bugs," "Epic Tomatoes" and "Good Mushroom, Bad Mushroom" and contemplated all the ways I could procrastinate on work back home — with DIY goat cheese or bitters kits and supplies for canning and pickling. The shop sells handmade brooms and canvas aprons and offers Saturday classes on topics such as cheese-making and chicken-keeping, which has become more commonplace here (Egg|Plant even sells chicken harnesses). I bought a vegetable-themed pack of temporary tattoos and picked up a brochure on raising chickens, which points out that hens are quieter than dogs. Also in the brochure: "Take a class on chicken keeping. They depend on you for their comfort and safety."

On Grand Avenue, a shopping district where many of the independent retailers operate out of little houses, **Red Balloon Bookshop** was my favorite. The 35-year-old store not only offers weekly story times, author readings and a thoughtful collection of titles for kids, it also has a small section of books for adults and sells some of the best book-related merch I've seen for both small and large readers: "Goodnight Moon" tees, "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" socks, "Make Way for Ducklings" zipper pouches, "Corduroy" onesies and "Blueberries for Sal" tote bags. Local reads: "Goodnight Minnesota" and "Boundary Waters ABC." Also on Grand: Mischief Toy Shop, the Yarnery and Northern Brewer Homebrew Supply.

Guidebook musts

Keg and Case West 7th Market, a food and retail hall that opened last year in the old Schmidt Brewery, was described to me by St. Paulites as a little "too hip" and "too



TOP: Prince's famous suit from the movie "Purple Rain" is on display at the Minnesota History Center as part of an exhibit celebrating the 50th anniversary of the legendary Minneapolis music club Prince called home. **MIDDLE:** Keg and Case West 7th Market is a food and retail hall that opened last year in the old Schmidt Brewery and includes a 15-foot-high mushroom grow chamber, cotton candy and halvah stands, and many other options to eat and shop. **ABOVE LEFT:** The Davidson, scheduled to open in mid-October, is a nine-room, 1915 house and the city's first boutique hotel. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Tongue in Cheek restaurant offers five "teasers" appetizers to choose from, plus five-course "carnivore" and "herbivore" tasting menus. Brunch is also available daily.

glossy" for St. Paul, maybe more at home in that other city to the west. I predict even the locals who said this will, in time, come to love the market. Entering, you see a dazzling, 15-foot-high mushroom grow chamber at Forest to Fork, a shop that sells wild foraged and

cultivated mushrooms (more than a dozen species at any given time, counting the 800 pounds that grow in the chamber each week), foraging supplies, books and tools. You can find an "Edible Mushrooms of Minnesota" calendar, mushroom cocoa mix, a "brushroom" for

mushroom cleaning and "Mush love" stickers. Also at Keg and Case: House of Halva, where you can order a tahini smoothie and halvah in unexpected flavors like coffee; Spinning Wyld, offering cotton candy in more than 50 flavors (black licorice, rum and coke); and

In Bloom, which cooks all its food over fire.

It's easy to forget, when you're walking past the crowded indoor stalls or outdoor vegetable stands in **Hmongtown Marketplace**, that you're in the American Midwest. The sounds, smells, voices on TV

and faces proclaim, "Southeast Asia!" St. Paul is said to have the nation's largest Hmong population, and when locals shop here, it feels like home. Hundreds of vendors pack the market with trinkets, soaps, bowls, cosmetics, traditional Hmong headaddresses and robes, platform shoes, DVDs, fake eyelashes, knockoff designer handbags and cheap toys. You can also find 50-pound bags of jasmine rice (for that friend who has everything) and another section with Asian produce like rambutan (a relative of the litchi), jackfruit and ginger root knobs the size of your fist. There are plenty of authentic and flavorful street food spots to try here and countless ethnic restaurants nearby. Favorites are Ngon Bistro (Vietnamese-French) and Trieu Chau (Vietnamese).

Stay

Local fave

The city's first boutique hotel, the **Davidson**, is scheduled to open this month in a century-old Tudor mansion on stately Summit Avenue, said to be the nation's longest stretch of Victorian-era homes. The nine-room, 1915 house was originally home to real estate magnate Watson Davidson and his wife, Sarah, and later home to the College of Visual Arts. Guests have access to a fitness center, outdoor pool, restaurant and social events at the nearby University Club. Rooms start at \$249; all have kitchens or kitchenettes, soaking tubs and smart TVs. A couple of blocks up Summit, tour the 1891 James J. Hill House, Minnesota's own Downton Abbey — a 36,000-square-foot mansion built for railroad titan James J. Hill. Around the corner from the Hill House, tour the Cathedral of Saint Paul.

Guidebook must

The **Saint Paul Hotel** doesn't need to drop names — the doorman's stovepipe hat and hotel's ornate decor speak volumes — but what the heck. Charles Lindbergh dined here, Lawrence Welk regularly played here and Gene Autry and his horse stayed here. Overlooking Rice Park and a short walk from the Xcel Energy Center, where the NHL's Minnesota Wild play, and Meritage, a favorite French brasserie, the hotel offers a five-course afternoon tea and private etiquette classes. At the lobby bar, find live jazz and handcrafted cocktails. Rates for the 255 rooms and suites (some look out to the cathedral) start at \$149. If you'd rather rock to sleep on a boat, check in at the Covington Inn, a year-round floating, three-story bed-and-breakfast on the Mississippi just across the Wabasha Street Bridge from downtown. The four staterooms all have private baths and working fireplaces.

Explore

Local fave

Don't let the jargony name scare you away from the **Creative Enterprise Zone**, a neighborhood of artists, makers and entrepreneurs near Raymond and University avenues, between downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis. Shop for records at Aghart and Barely Bros., vintage clothing at Shag Studio, and mid-century modern at MidModMen+friends (if you love the colorful handmade lamps, also check out Modilumi) and Succotash. Fuel up at Caffè Biaggio, a simple, old-school Italian restaurant. If you're ISO a taproom, visit the Lab, a new test facility for alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks; Dual Citizen, a kid-friendly brewery where you can order food from the Naughty Greek; and Urban Growler, which hosts, along with Dual Citizen, a monthly public book club called Books & Bars. Stop at Can Can Wonderland for a vintage arcade and mini-golf like you've never seen. This walkable neighborhood is accessible by light rail, so be green and hop on the Green Line.

Guidebook must

Looking to eat or shop downtown? Head to the old warehouses and artists' lofts of the historic **Lowertown** neighborhood, established in the late 1880s to support Mississippi riverboat traffic and rail commerce. Start off any Saturday with free yoga at the historic train station, Union Depot, then head to the farmers market (the summer market runs through October; a smaller one is held in the winter). Grab an egg sandwich with Gruyere and a hot cocoa at Salty Tart, grapefruit brulee made with a blowtorch at Saint Dinette, or loaded hash browns at the Buttered Tin. Walk to Mears Park, a favorite spot for locals, and plan your visit around Lowertown First Fridays, when artists open their studios. The Black Dog Cafe, a Lowertown old-timer, is open all day and has live music (jazz, roots, bluegrass) most nights.

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