

A few of our favorite places to take in the beauty of the season include:

1. Great River Bluffs State Park

Located 15 minutes south of Winona, the Great River Bluffs State Park is perched high atop the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River Valley, and it provides year-round fun for those seeking out the best hiking and biking trails in Minnesota. In the late fall, its hardwood forests turn shades of gold, making for a pretty walk in the crisp autumn air.

2. Prairie Island Road

Skirting the Mississippi River just outside of Winona, Prairie Island Road hangs onto its fall display as the layers of underbrush take turns shifting from green to yellow. As an added bonus, the road offers many vantage points for seeing the spectacular bird migration moving through the Mississippi River Flyway, and it has two public parks with playgrounds and a deer park where you can pause to enjoy a bit of autumn sunshine.

3. Holzinger Trails

Perhaps Winona's best fall-color secret, the trails that criss-cross the bluffs behind Holzinger Lodge glow in the Fall colors and hiking or biking them in October is mesmerizing. For the best viewing, pick a sunny morning or early afternoon when the sun is dappling through the trees overhead and giving the entire hillside the Midas touch of a golden glow.

Attractions

This region is particularly well suited for the art of apple growing, with some of the best loved varieties in the state taking root in bluffs and valleys a stone's throw from Winona. The bounty includes more than 30 different varieties! Two Fall attractions we love to recommend are **Ecker's Apple Farm** just outside Centerville and **Ferguson's Orchards** in Galesville, both on the Wisconsin side of the river, but just a quick drive away from Winona.

- **Ecker's Apple Farm** has been a family-owned orchard seated on Wisconsin's Great River Road since 1945. The orchard is home to 20 apple varieties, including Honeycrisp. Ecker's also features a John Deere train, the Honeycrisp Express, an apiary, observational bee hive, and Wisconsin peaches in the fall. Home to **Hog's Back Brew Farm**, Ecker's is now a must-stop craft beer destination open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through October. Walk their orchard rows and pick-your-own apples each September. Ecker's farm market is open daily each fall, brimming with specialty foods, our gourmet caramel, and their made-from-scratch apple pies.
- **Ferguson's** is perfect for families: For a one-time, seasonal entrance fee, attendees can return as often as they please to enjoy pedal tractors for all ages, gem mining, farm animals, duck races, corn mazes, slides, live music, apple picking and more. Shop for baked goods, cider, local products, gifts and crafts in their quaint country store. Open 7 days/week through November 4.

What better way to bask in the glory—and sometimes creepiness—of the season than being thrilled at our own **C & C Xscape Rooms** in downtown Winona? Choose from 4 different, themed rooms, including “Butcher Shop”, “The Hideout”, “Extinction Level Event” and “Murder on the Midway”, that will immerse you in an escape room experience like never before. Solve puzzles, unlock doors, hinges, and use technology to escape your room. Will you and your party make it out of the room in 60 minutes? Check out C & C Xscape Rooms on Facebook or book your experience online.

Festivals/Events

Don't miss the 20th Annual **Voices from the Past Cemetery Walk**, hosted by the Winona County Historical Society. This year, the Historical Society will bring back favorites from two decades of the walk at historic and breathtaking Woodlawn Cemetery. From flood heroes to city founders to war vets to scoundrels, this will surely be a favorite with new twists and added characters for new perspectives. Worried about making the Walk? Get a ride on the Trester Trolley for no additional cost, but we encourage folks to sign up in advance to guarantee a seat. Just call the History Center to reserve your spot. Ride the route and let the actors come to you on the trolley at Noon each day at Woodlawn, or plan to attend the Thursday evening, fully-accessible performance of the sites in Wanek Hall at the History Center.

Another Winona favorite is the **Polish Cultural Institute & Museum's "Tasty Apple Festival,"** always the first Sunday of October. Featured events include arts and crafts, children's activities, traditional and contemporary music, Polish food and beer, and homemade apple pie. Minnesota's Polish culture comes to life in Winona with this special celebration held at the museum, downtown, 102 Liberty Street.

Winona Farmers' Market continues to draw residents and visitors downtown at their Levee Park location through October, every Saturday, 7:30am-Noon.

Homecoming and Family weekends on our Winona university campuses are always fun, and festive autumn traditions. Mark your calendars for Saint Mary's University Family Weekend September 28-30, and Winona State University's Homecoming celebrations on Saturday, October 6.

For many people, fall is not complete without viewing the melodious **tundra swans**. Swans begin arriving daily in mid-October to our region, and build to a peak population by mid-November. Migrating day and night, their call can be heard across the river. Our local Friends of the Refuge organization hosts a Tundra Swan Watch Bus Tour in mid-November for an even closer look.

Save the date for the 18th Annual **Winona Art Walk & Tour**, Saturday, November 17. Local artists will be displaying and selling their artwork in various venues in Winona and offers incredible variety in custom made furniture, paintings, prints, cards, traditional wood pieces, leather purses, pottery, wood carvings, jewelry, mittens and more. Shop for someone special and discover unique quality artisan gifts.

Continue to bask in the Holiday spirit by strolling through downtown and taking in the sights of the **Holiday Window Walk**, presented by Winona Main Street: November through December. The event is on its eighth year and lets people vote on participating stores festive window displays. The Holiday Window Walk started as a way to promote downtown businesses, but also to encourage area people to come downtown to see a concentrated group of lighted Christmas displays.

Speaking of Christmas lights, book your seat on the seasonal **Trester Trolley Christmas Lights Tour**, running during the evening on weekends through mid-December. These hour-long trolley tours showcase the best residential and commercial Christmas lights in Winona. Reservations are required. Visit tresterrolley.com for more information.

Make sure to stay up-to-date on all of the amazing events and happenings in Winona by downloading and sharing our **"This Week in Winona"** piece that is emailed every Monday, and check our **Online Calendar**.

As the holiday season approaches, make sure to remember our **Winona Visitor Center** on Huff Street for Winona and Minnesota apparel, drinkware, local gifts and more. We are open 7 days/week through October, then Saturdays and Sundays 10 am to 3 pm, November through the end of the year.