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2019 DESTINATION GUIDE

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EVENTS

- Feb. 1** Frostbite Festival
- March 29** "One Night in Memphis"
- April 27** "I Am... He Said"
A Neil Diamond Tribute
- June 1** Lake Region Run
- June 7-8** Summerfest
- June 20-23** Cyclone Days
- June 21** Downtown Fergus Falls
Mystery Tour
- June 22** Lake Alice Cyclone Tour
- July 11** Shop, Move 'n Groove
- July 12** Stories from the State Hospital
- July 26** Pebble Lake Youth Triathlon
- July 27** Hoot Lake Triathlon
- July 30-Aug. 4** Community Theater
- Aug. 17** Monarch Butterfly Event
- Sept. 11-14** WISSOTA 100 Races
- Nov. 7-9** MN Governor's
Deer Hunting Opener
- Nov. 9** Holiday Boutique
- Dec. 6** Annual Holiday Dinner
& Entertainment
- Dec. 7** Over the River Holiday Festival

Visit our website for 2019 event details
www.VisitFergusFalls.com

Photos: Steve Heriot, Wayne Hurley, Otter Tail County Historical Society, Visit Fergus Falls, Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, Explore Minnesota Tourism, Steve Guttormson

To Learn More: 800-726-8959 | 218-332-5425 | www.VisitFergusFalls.com





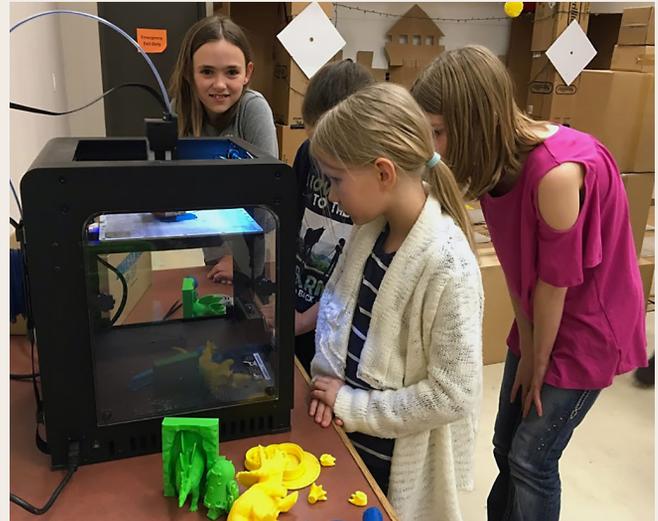
New Library is More Than Books

by Steve Heriot

They say you can't judge a book by its cover. It might also be said that you can't entirely judge a library by its books, because a library's value to its community is much more complex than one may first imagine.

Libraries are public spaces that are accessible, friendly, and welcoming to diverse populations. More than just books and banks of computers, libraries are places where individuals gather to explore, interact, and imagine. A library is a place where both random and intentional personal relationships are made and where community is strengthened and built. Libraries offer free educational resources to everyone, serving as "peoples universities" for the underprivileged and disabled. They are champions of local youth. They act as centers for the arts. The local library preserves the history of the community, and their special collections usually grow out of specific community needs. Libraries can revitalize a neighborhood, help boost local economies, provide health information, serve as catalysts for addressing social problems and can be a part of the community's political life. They serve as focal points for community education and play a major part in creating livable, vibrant cities and towns that attract new businesses and residents.

In late 2016 Fergus Falls residents approved a local sales tax to partially fund the expansion and remodeling of the existing library building at 205 E. Hampden Avenue. Other funding sources for the \$9.4 million-dollar project were a \$1 million-dollar state Library Construction Grant and \$3 million in private fundraising. Bids were advertised, received and awarded and groundbreaking took place in August of 2017. A temporary library was opened at 1505 Pebble Lake Road. The new design is more accessible and energy efficient and doubles the existing space to 26,000 square feet, which includes an expanded children's area with an enclosed early



The new Fergus Falls Library is a place of discovery.

learning activity and programming room. Other features include flexible meeting and study rooms, more computer workstations, a technology instruction area, drive-thru book drop, larger, handicap-accessible restrooms, cost-saving geothermal heating and cooling system, a public plaza, more lounge seating, a fireplace, and a reading area. There is more natural light in the building as well. One environmentally-friendly innovation is a pattern on the large windows, called fritting, that discourages birds from flying into the glass. The remodeled and expanded library reopened to the public on January 22, 2019.

The 21st-century public library is sure to improve the quality of life for the residents of the community of Fergus Falls. In addition, the civic pride that drove its remodeling also serves as another of the many reasons why the city and region are rising to the top of the list of potential destinations for relocating businesses and families.

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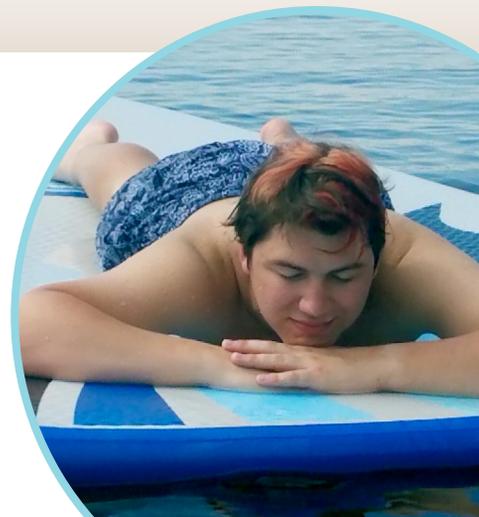


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Comfort Inn www.ChoiceHotels.com	425 Western Ave.	218-736-5787	800-424-6423	45	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Country Inn & Suites www.CountryInns.com/Fergus-Falls-MN	925 Western Ave.	218-739-2211	800-830-5222	96	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
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Motel 7	616 Frontier Dr.	218-736-2554		17	•						•	•	•
Rodeway Inn www.ChoiceHotels.com	610 Western Ave.	218-739-3311		54	•						•		
Super 8 www.WyndhamHotels.com/Super-8	2454 College Way	218-739-3261	800-800-8000	32	•						•	•	•

From “ma and pa” motels to impressive conference hotel properties, it gets down to comfort and great service – and they all deliver. The hotel grid above details the properties and their amenities.

And with 1,048 lakes in Otter Tail County, resorts are popular too. The Otter Tail Lakes Country Tourism Association web site at www.OtterTailLakesCountry.com lets you search resort properties based on many amenities.

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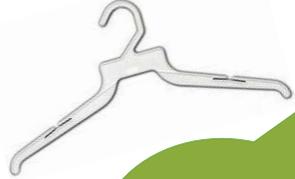

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Dynamic Arts Scene Creates Optimism

by Steve Heriot

Wonder why the Wall Street Journal calls Fergus Falls the “national model” for developing a “thriving rural arts scene?” The city’s local creative economy has attracted national grant money and has been using art to help reinvent the city. Minnesota’s Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (Legacy Grants) supports the arts, arts education and arts access and preserves the state’s historical and cultural heritage through grant programs. This investment in the arts has been and continues to be an economic and community development engine. Studies show that over 400 jobs and more than \$13 million in annual economic activity is generated in West Central Minnesota and nearly \$3 million per year in Fergus Falls.

Visual, theatrical, dance, musical, and culinary are only some of the forms of art that are thriving. In the city’s historic downtown, there are artist lofts, art galleries, a performing arts theater, park concerts, studio space above the senior center, and the offices of three arts organizations. Rotating exhibits, gallery crawls and festivals are common events.

A Center for the Arts features a year-round variety of excellent programming such as touring performers, live concerts, community theatre, dance, and visual arts programs.

Kaddatz Galleries, in a renovated hotel building, showcases the diverse artistic creativity of the region and also provides artist lofts and studio and gallery space for area artists.

Lake Region Arts Council serves artists, art consumers, and other arts organizations throughout West Central Minnesota.

Springboard for the Arts fosters community interaction, historical preservation, and economic development through innovative arts programming, creative placemaking and community storytelling. Staff members train Fergus Falls artists to run their small businesses. Their programs also attract artists from around the country for weeks-long residencies.

Other communities in Otter Tail County are also rich in the arts including the Art of the Lake Gallery in Battle lake and the New York Mills Cultural Center.

Adding to the art community are a variety of arts-related businesses including galleries, art and recording studios, a dance school, music instruction, various gift shops, and craft stores. Live music and ‘open mic’ nights are offered at various nightclubs around town.

All of this recent activity, from the opening of galleries and new businesses to having young people move back home, has added to the energy and quality of life in Fergus Falls. The burgeoning arts scene in Fergus Falls also attracts tourists, artists and new residents to the city.

Surveys have shown that a healthy arts scene is high on the list of amenities that people look for in communities that they are considering relocating to. The momentum and optimism continue to feed off of itself. There are good things happening in Fergus Falls, and the arts are part of that.



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Winter Fun in Fergus Falls

by Steve Heriot

For most of human history, winter has been a time of inactivity and resource conservation. Winters were spent listening to and telling stories, rationing food, and getting a lot of rest. However, in our modern world, many of us go to work or school from dark to dark, then sit in front of a screen until a bedtime made artificially late by electric lights. Add holiday overeating and lack of exercise and it's no wonder that most folks are not at their healthiest in the winter.

There are many health benefits to getting outdoors in the winter months. Most winter outdoor activities are fun and burn lots of calories. Exercise raises serotonin levels, which fights off depression symptoms. In addition, the increased blood circulation from exercise helps to boost the immune system. Finally, the sun improves mood by fighting off SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder).

When taking part in outdoor winter activities, make sure you are properly prepared. Be sure to dress in layers so you are able to control your body temperature by removing and adding clothes. Also, be sure to cover your head, hands, feet, and ears because your blood circulation is concentrated in your core when it is cold. Also, don't forget to stay hydrated and take an occasional break.

Some time-honored activities to put on your winter to-do list include ice skating or snowshoeing on one of the area's many ponds, lakes, and trails, sledding, or making a snow fort or snowman. With so many lakes in the Fergus Falls area, ice fishing is a popular activity. Snowmobilers can explore

"getting outside in the winter can improve your mood and health... and make a long winter seem much shorter."

360 miles of groomed trails and the Central Lakes Trail is popular for fat tire bikes. Other locations to enjoy outdoor activities include the Pine to Prairie Birding Trail, the North Country Scenic Hiking Trail, the Otter Trail Scenic Byway, and Maplewood and Glendalough State Parks.

More specifically, head on out to Spidahlski Gaard for some cross-country skiing. The 350-acre site is located just fifteen miles northeast of Fergus Falls and four miles south of Maplewood State Park in the beautiful sugar maple hills of Friberg Township. Spidahlski Gaard offers 24 km (15mi) of classical and skate groomed cross-country ski trails. All trails are marked for difficulty level and are continuous one-way loops that bring you back to the heated lodge. Ski packages and rentals are available for groups of up to 30 people.

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center offers nature programs on winter ecology and an extensive schedule of winter activities and learning experiences for both children and adults, including skiing, snowshoeing, and winter hobby exhibits.

On January 20, the annual Noon Kiwanis Lake Alice Winter Carnival celebrates winter with skating, frozen lake golfing, horse and carriage rides, hot chocolate and treats, a warm bonfire, snow painting, and other family fun.

Whatever activities you decide to pursue, getting outside in the winter can improve your mood and health, build relationships with friends and family, and make a long winter seem much shorter.

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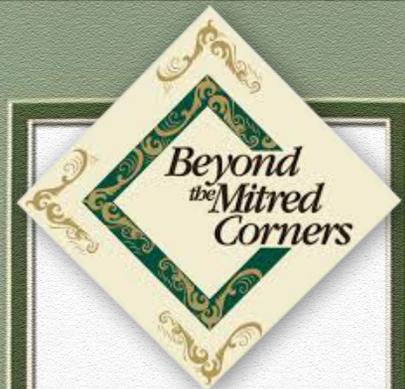
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Fergus Falls Culinary Options

by Steve Heriot, photo by @mnorganicroots

If you are thinking about relocating to Fergus Falls or just visiting, you might be wondering where to shop for groceries, find a good restaurant, or enjoy a glass of your favorite libation. Luckily, Fergus Falls has an inordinate variety of choices to offer, with new business openings becoming the norm. The 'rural rebound' that the town is enjoying comes after a period of decline in the family farm system of the 20th Century. Recently, a new migration of young people to the area has revitalized the city. Young families have been attracted by the beautiful environment of lakes, woods, and country, the relatively low cost of real estate, the low cost of living, excellent schools, safe communities, and the many new jobs that area businesses are providing. Where there is growth, there is business opportunity, and hence the reason for the influx of new restaurants,

several craft breweries, coffee roasters, a Community Supported Agriculture association (CSA), and farmers market with locally grown food.

The eating establishments in Fergus Falls range from pubs to pizza houses, from delis to fine dining, from BBQs to buffets, from kombucha to ice cream, from steakhouses to supper clubs, and from seafood to specialty and ethnic foods.

Area restaurants also include several grills with tasty burgers, cafes with great sandwiches and soups, and several bistros with specialty coffee drinks. Fergus Falls has all the fast food chains but offers some very special local flavor too.

It's said that variety is the spice of life, and if it's the cooking type of spice you're looking for, Fergus Falls offers the dining experience to fit any palette and appetite.



If you own or manage a business in Fergus Falls and would like to be published in this magazine, please contact the Otter Tail Lakes Country Association. marketing@ottertailcountry.com, 218-998-8052

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100th Anniversary of the Fergus Falls 'Cyclone'

by Steve Heriot

Cyclone, a colloquial term for a tornado, was coined in the late-1700s. Its more technical meteorological definition refers to either a typhoon or hurricane. However, the tornado that struck Fergus Falls on June 22, 1919, is still known and referred to locally as 'The Cyclone.' There is a good reason why a century-old storm would still be remembered in Fergus Falls, as it was the second deadliest tornado to ever strike Minnesota, killing nearly 60 people and injuring hundreds of others.

The tornado hit at 4:46 on a very humid Sunday afternoon. Witnesses describe seeing a "black funnel-shaped, twisting cloud." Some saw three funnel clouds, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) experts who have studied photos of the wreckage surmise that the storm was an F5 on the Fujita Tornado Damage Scale. Less than one percent of all tornadoes reach that level of destructive power, with winds estimated at between 261 and 318 mph.

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M State graduates rank in the top 10 nationally among two-year college graduates for mid-career earnings, according to a 2015 Brookings Institute study.



The multiple vortex tornado was on the ground for 20 miles and was estimated to be a quarter mile wide. The power of the storm was so great that debris was found 60 miles east of Fergus Falls. Damage was also reported in nearby towns, and bridges were washed out by heavy rain in many places.

The tornado tore through the northern part of town, leveling 44 city blocks (including the business district), completely destroying 159 homes and damaging 250 more. The power of the tornado was awesome, ripping entire buildings off their foundations and turning them upside down. The twister reduced steel bridges to piles of scrap iron. Of the nearly 60 people who died, at least 35 of them were in the Grand Hotel, a three-story, 100 room establishment that was completely flattened in the tragedy. The tornado also destroyed the Otter Tail County courthouse, the county jail, four churches, and multiple other businesses. The Northern Pacific rail depot was completely destroyed and swept away. Trees in town were uprooted and debarked, and railroad tracks were reportedly pulled from the ground at one location.

The Great Northern 11-car passenger train, the "Oriental Limited," was hit by the twister when it was six miles east of Fergus Falls. It was thrown into the air and off the tracks by

the tornado, but none of the 250 passengers on the train were seriously injured.

At Lake Alice and One Mile Lake, summer homes were swept into the water along with their occupants, resulting in several fatalities. Old photos show the lake nearly covered by wooden debris from the storm.

After all of this destruction, the city ran short on food, lost power and all its communications. Martial law was declared and the town was put under the military control of the Minnesota National Guard. Clean-up efforts involved both civilian volunteers and military personnel, who picked through the rubble looking for survivors and victims. Then came the massive project of cleaning up, removing debris and rebuilding the city. A memorial to the people who lost their lives is in place on the northeast side of Lake Alice.

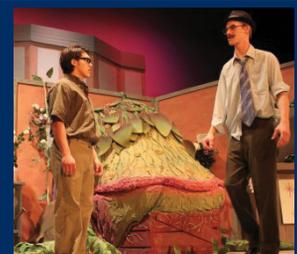
The story of the 1919 Cyclone is undoubtedly one of utter destruction. However, there are also many stories of the resolute steadfastness of the victims, and of the many unselfish acts performed by people helping neighbors to recover and rebuild. To commemorate this historic event several activities are planned this year including a new exhibit at the Otter Tail County Historical Museum and Cyclone Days June 20-23.

"The multiple vortex tornado was on the ground for 20 miles and was estimated to be a quarter mile wide."



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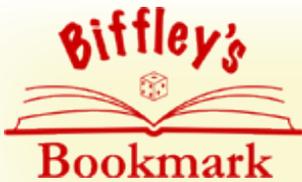
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The Central Lakes Trail: A Pathway to Recreation

by Steve Heriot

The Central Lakes Trail is built upon the abandoned Burlington Northern Railroad bed that stretches 55 miles between Fergus Falls and Osakis, transversing a scenic mixture of woodlands, grasslands, lakes, wetlands, and farm country. The 14-foot-wide pavement is perfect for walking and running, and provides a smooth ride for bikes, in-line skates, roller skis, cross-country skis, and wheelchairs. Snowmobiles are allowed in the winter.

The idea of building the trail arose in the early 1990s when Douglas and Otter Tail Counties worked with local volunteers and the Minnesota DOT and DNR to find ways to finance the construction. Federal and state grants provided the bulk of the funding and many organizations, government agencies, foundations, businesses, and individuals contributed to the 12-year project. The Central Lakes Trail merges with the Lake Wobegon Trail in Osakis, which extends to St. Joseph, Holdingford, and Morrison County, making a total paved trail length of 130 miles.

The land corridor through which the trail passes is 100 feet wide and full of wildlife and a variety of trees and plants. Wildflowers are very common and include both pink and yellow Lady Slippers. It's not unusual to see deer, rabbits, beaver, muskrats, turtles, and numerous bird species, including ducks, songbirds, and eagles. In some locations, the trail passes between steep wooded banks, giving trail users a cool, shaded refuge from the mid-day sun.

The frequently elevated former railroad grade passes through the communities of Dalton, Ashby, Melby, Evansville, Brandon, Garfield, Alexandria, and Nelson. These towns provide easy access to water, snacks, restaurants, parks, and other facilities such as shelters, bathrooms, picnic tables, benches, parking areas, connecting community trails, and helpful signage. Some sections of the trail are greatly separated from roads, while other stretches are within sight of them.

Many trail users spend an hour or two on the trail, while others spend the day or even multiple days. Sometimes bikers ride part of the trail and find lodging in one of the communities along it, returning the next day. Others ride one way down the trail and get picked up by a friend. Some even bike or skate to Alexandria and catch the bus back.

There are several events on the trail. The Rail Trails 100, held August 3rd, starts in St. Joseph, where ride participants load their bikes in a bike trailer and ride a luxury coach bus to the event start in Fergus Falls. They then ride their bikes 100 miles back to St. Joseph. There are rest and refreshment stops all along the route. Registration is limited to 50 riders. Check out their website at www.RailTrails100.com.

The Central Lakes Trail Skate Challenge, with three different route lengths, is held in July and hosted by the IDSA (International Distance Skateboarding Association). Check out their website at www.theidsa.org.



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