

MINNESOTA

Hello, my name is Robert Mevissen and I'm an intern working in the Political Economic section of the American Embassy here in Vienna. I am from the great state of Minnesota, which is located in the middle of the United States and shares its northern border with Canada.

Because Minnesota is as far away from the ocean as the middle of Siberia and quite far north, we have very hot summers and very *very* cold winters. Temperatures can range from 46 degrees Celsius in the summer to minus 51 degrees in the winter.

Despite the extreme weather, we Minnesotans love to be outside. During the summer we go canoeing, camping, biking and swimming. And in the winter we can have a meter or more of snow on the ground, so we like to go sledding and cross-country skiing, as well as playing a Canadian sport called Broomball. But we especially enjoy activities on or near water.

The slogan for our state is the land of 10,000 lakes and while we aren't near the ocean, our lakes provide more shoreline than California, Hawaii and Florida combined! These lakes were *actually* formed millions of years ago by huge glaciers scraping the region's landscape. But we Minnesotans like to tell the legend of Paul Bunyan - a giant lumberjack- whose enormous footsteps formed the lakes while he wandered around lost in a blinding snowstorm with his pet ox, Babe.

The large number of lakes in our state plays an important role for the people and history of Minnesota.

The state's name itself comes from the American Indian tribes who lived there- Minnesota translates from the Dakota language as "sky-tinted or sky-colored water." These tribes hunted and fished along the lakes, and some of their most important activities and ways of life still influence Minnesotans today.

For example, tribes harvested wild rice from the northern lakes, drilled holes in the ice to go fishing in the winter, as well as collected sap from maple trees to make syrup. When I was growing up my family always made wild rice soup throughout the winter to keep us warm. "Fish fries" are also common social gatherings in Minnesota.

Because Minnesota is heavily forested in the north, more than half of Minnesota's population lives in or around the "Twin Cities" down in the south. The term "twin" refers to both the state capital Saint Paul and its sister city Minneapolis. Both cities are along the Mississippi river. For many years, the two cities were bitter rivals and as a result, all of our sports teams today like the Minnesota Twins, Vikings and Timberwolves have to be "Minnesotan" and cannot be named for either city.

Historically, both cities were settled by different immigrant groups from Europe. Swedes, Norwegians and Finns influenced the development of Minneapolis. Today the city appears much more modern with huge skyscrapers, famous music halls, and an abundance of

theaters. Saint Paul, on the other hand, was settled by German, Irish and French immigrants and it has remained much more traditional with late Victorian-era “European-looking” architecture.

Now that you know more about Minnesota, come and discover it yourself! Whether you love exploring the great outdoors on your bike and in your canoe, or if you prefer visiting art museums and attending orchestra concerts, there is something for everyone here. You know you’ve arrived when you hear the friendly Minnesotan exclamations “Oofda!” and “Ya sure you betcha!”