

August 24, 2009

## **Brainerd Lakes Area visitors can look to local communities for a wealth of things to do this fall**

BRAINERD, Minn. – Known primarily for its lakes, golf courses and resorts, the Brainerd Lakes Area also has a collection of unique and quaint communities that often overlooked by visitors who are eager to get in the water, on the tee box or off on their adventures.

Each of the communities is very distinctive in the mix of events, festivals, attractions and shopping and dining opportunities, but all offer a taste of the northwoods and provide a wide selection of things to see and do. They're also interconnected for those who want to spend a leisure fall day driving or biking through the area to enjoy the spectacular fall colors.

During the summer, the local communities are full of visitors who come to sample the local culture, but the pace drops off during the fall, which can be the best time to find excellent bargains at restaurants, gift shops and other businesses that are winding down their season.

“The Brainerd Lakes Area is popular with many people for many reasons, but what many don't sometimes realize is that we have 10 very unique communities within 30 miles that offer very unique activities, events and shopping opportunities,” Tourism Director Gretchen Ennis said. “You could easily spend a day in each community just exploring all they have to offer. And fall is a great time to do that, especially for those who want to enjoy significant savings.”

The Brainerd Lakes Area takes on a much different feel after Labor Day. Gone are the visiting families, the tubers, jet-skiers, etc. It's much more quiet and peaceful, and the streets and shops are far less busy, giving visitors more access to shop owners and their products and services.

“For many of our visitors, fall is the ultimate time to come here because of the great deals they get and the laid-back atmosphere that the area takes on,” Ennis said. “That's why we get more couples, ‘girlfriend getaways’ and golfing groups.”

Below is a breakdown of each community and what they have to offer.

### **Brainerd/Baxter**

The Brainerd/Baxter area is the largest of the area's communities. The Mississippi River slices right through them, offering a beautiful canoe or kayak ride in the fall. Brainerd's historic downtown just received extensive improvements to the streets and sidewalks. It now has more than 200 locally owned stores, restaurants, clubs and professional businesses, not to mention some incredible architecture from its days as a railroad and paper mill town. Downtown walking tours are available to learn more about the history and architecture. Outside of downtown, the 500-acre Northland Arboretum offers programs and has many trails that wind through the natural setting. It's next door to the beginning of the Paul Bunyan Trail, an old railroad bed that was converted to a paved bike trail that extends north about 100 miles to Bemidji.

## **Crosslake**

Situated on the east end of the 14-lake Whitefish Chain of Lakes, Crosslake is a charming northwoods village with a variety of small retail shops, excellent dining on and off the lake, and community events that draw thousands here: St. Patrick's Day Parade, Fourth of July Celebration, Crosslake Days and Winterfest. Town Square creates a small-town feel, with stores that offer essentials as well as gifts and novelties. The Historic Village offers a look into the area's past when logging was the main industry, most of the resorts were fishing lodges, and gangsters would frequent local establishments. Crosslake is also on the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway, which loops around the Whitefish Chain and provides a very colorful fall drive.

## **Cuyuna Range (Crosby, Ironton, Deerwood)**

The Cuyuna Range is the gateway to the 5,000-acre Cuyuna State Recreation Area, which features 15 deep and clear lakes that are abandoned mine pits and are surrounded by 25 miles of undeveloped shoreline. A trail system winds its way throughout the area for biking, inline skating, mountain biking and walking. This area was developed as a mining community and used to sit on a rich basin of iron ore. The mines closed in the 1930s, leaving behind a fascinating history that is on display at the Croft Mine Historical Park and Ironton Sintering Plant Complex. In town, Crosby is considered the "Antique Capital of the Lakes Area," as its downtown is lined with many antique shops and retail stores.

## **Nisswa**

Nisswa is easily the quintessential northwoods town, where the downtown streets are lined with quiet coffee shops, restaurants and unique shops that have names like Lazy Turtle Art & Gifts, Buffalo Plaid, Totem Pole, Chocolate Ox and Honey Huggers. The Paul Bunyan Trail cuts right through town, ensuring activity in town year round. Nisswa is a resort community, surrounded by lakes, a variety of family resorts and some of the top golf courses in the Midwest. It's also on the north end of Gull Lake, one of the area's most popular fishing and recreational lakes.

## **Pequot Lakes/Jenkins/Breezy Point**

Pequot Lakes is probably best known for its water tower, which is painted like a giant bobber. There's much more to Pequot Lakes, though, and the neighboring towns of Jenkins and Breezy Point. Like Nisswa, Pequot Lakes is a small, northwoods town with a busy downtown that features distinctive shops and dining. Trailside Park, where the Paul Bunyan Trail runs through town, is the city's hub and the location of community events such as Bean Hole Days, Taste of Pequot and the Choke Cherry Festival. The Pequot Lakes Community Theater, in its 26<sup>th</sup> season, produces three shows a year. Just east is Breezy Point, on the shores of Pelican Lake. The focal point, Breezy Point Resort, is one of the oldest and largest resorts in the Brainerd Lakes Area and hosts a number of annual festivities such as Ice Fest and the Polar Plunge.

Below are some of the Brainerd Lakes Area's fall events and activities:

- **Cowboy & Hobo Days Music Festival** – 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Sept. 7-8 at Crow Wing County Fairgrounds. Music, storytelling and much more from Cactus Willie, Boxcar Bob and the Drifters, and more.
- **15<sup>th</sup> Annual Arts & Crafts Fair and Taste of Pequot** – 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sept. 19 at Trailside Park. The park will be full of arts and craft vendors as well as local chefs who will be sharing their specialties.

- **36<sup>th</sup> Annual Nisswa Fall Festival** – 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sept. 19 in Nisswa. Art & craft show, food, music, pumpkin seed spitting contest, pumpkin carving contest and the Smokin’ Hot BBQ Challenge.
- **Crosslake Days** – Sept. 23-27. Five days of activities including the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Classic & Custom Car & Motorcycle Show, Tour of Colors Bicycle Ride, Cider & Candlelight Tour, kids’ pirate costume party, 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Chili Cook Off and much more.
- **Tour of Colors Bicycle Ride** – Starting 8 a.m. Sept. 26 in Crosslake. Three routes of 12, 25 and 40 miles throughout the area gives riders a great view of the fall colors.
- **Christmas Tour of Homes** – Starts at 7:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Oct. 16-18 in Nisswa. Morning and afternoon tours available. Board a motor coach bus and visit various Nisswa homes that have been decorated by area merchants for the holidays.
- **Octoberfest at Ruttger’s Bay Lake Lodge** – Oct. 17-19 at Ruttger’s Bay Lake Lodge. Sample authentic German food and enjoy three days of German entertainment that includes singing and dancing. An arts & crafts fair is included.
- **Nisswa City of Lights – Holiday Lighting Event** – Starts at 5 p.m. Nov. 27 in downtown Nisswa. Nisswa kicks off the holiday season with a countdown to lighting up the whole city. Horse-drawn wagon rides, storytelling, food merchants, etc.

A comprehensive list of activities and events is available by visiting the Brainerd Lakes Chamber Web site. Lodging and golf specials and packages are available on the property’s or golf course’s individual Web site; some are featured on the chamber’s Web site as well. The Brainerd Lakes Chamber is an excellent resource for planning a family vacation, group tour or area adventure. Contact the Chamber first at 1-800-450-2838 or [www.explorebrainerdlakes.com](http://www.explorebrainerdlakes.com). The new 2009 Visitors Guide is now available as well.

**Note: Contact PR Coordinator Geoff Gorvin at 218-821-9513 or 218-829-2838 for more information or photos.**