



Maverick Adventures Finding adventure anywhere...

Adventure is a lifestyle. Even though Maverick Adventures at Minnesota State University, Mankato is closed, we are still thinking about you. Like us, the majority have been sheltering-at-home. It's been hard for all of us. Many of you have been able to limit your exposure to others thanks to online learning, working from home, and virtual meetings and chats. Unfortunately, the increased screen time and time spent indoors can take a toll on the best of us. Luckily for us, we live in a state with many outdoor opportunities and adventures right out of our front door close to home. Numerous studies show that time spent in nature helps to decrease stress and anxiety and contributes to better physical and mental health. We wanted to create a short guide to help bring short, close to home adventures to you.

We still encourage and recommend limiting your time outdoors to brief, local outings and close-to-home adventures. When planning your outings, please try to choose less visited sites and trails as you should still be practicing social distancing. You should also be aware of and follow all federal, state, and local laws and guidelines. The following is a list of ideas to help you get outside a few hours a week whether you're here in Mankato, Minnesota or elsewhere. Stay safe and healthy as you find an adventure near you.

Use this guide to help you find adventure anywhere!

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Hikes in the Mankato area: Mankato and North Mankato are full of trails. These trails include dirt, paved, and multiuse hiking and walking trails. The City of Mankato has created a map of the trails located in both Mankato and North Mankato.

<https://www.mankatomn.gov/home/showdocument?id=1312> There are many regional trails and parks as well including Seven Mile Creek County Park, Kiwanis Recreation Area, and Indian Lake Conservation Area.

Hiking in Minnesota and beyond: Some of you who may come across our site might not be from Mankato but elsewhere in Minnesota or another state altogether. Minnesota is full of state parks and trails. You can visit the Minnesota DNR website

(https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/index.html) to find a trail or park near you. If you are not near a Minnesota State Park or from another state you can search these sites for a trail near you: <https://www.hikingproject.com/> or <https://www.alltrails.com/>



Biking in the greater Mankato area: The Mankato area has a wide variety of biking opportunities. Many of the loops and trails connect. While you are biking the trails, you may find a new, enjoyable way of getting around Mankato for future use! You can find a map of the bike trails in Mankato here:

(<https://www.mankatomn.gov/home/showdocument?id=130>) and here:

(<https://www.mankatomn.gov/home/showdocument?id=1312>). You can find more information about the bike loops here: (<https://www.visitgreatermankato.com/biking-loops/>).

Mountain biking: Mankato does have some options related to mountain biking including the [Kiwanis Mountain Bike Trail](#) at Kiwanis Recreation Area. For people outside of the Mankato area, you can find more trails at (www.mtbproject.com).



Birding: Birding is an activity that can stand alone or done in combination with another activity. It's a fun activity the whole family can enjoy (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/birding-for-beginners.htm>).

The Mankato area has multiple great spots for birding, including Indian Lake Conservation Area, Kasota Prairie Scientific and Natural Area, Seven Mile Creek Park, and Minneopa State Park. You can find more birding areas around Mankato and Minnesota at

(<https://mn.audubon.org/birds/birding-minnesota>). For help with bird identification, the following website is a helpful resource (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/?pid=1189>). Lastly, here are some fun activities for kids involving birds and birding (<https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/activities/audubon-for-kids>).



Paddling: A quintessential Minnesota activity, paddling is a great way to experience the outdoors either solo or with the whole family. Our 10,000+ lakes and numerous rivers offer adventure for all skill levels. With more miles of river than any other county in Minnesota, Blue Earth County and the Mankato area has an abundance of paddling opportunities: [Paddling in Mankato](#)

Not in the Mankato area? No worries. [Paddling.com](#) has an abundance of information on thousands of locations all across the country, including trip reports! Always remember to wear a PFD, and check the water information before you go: [Minnesota DNR River Levels](#), [USGS Water Data](#), [NOAA Hydrologic Prediction](#)



Geocaching: Geocaching brings treasure hunting to life! There are thousands of caches hidden all over the state. Some are in parks or other recreation areas, but many are in urban and suburban areas, and many could be within walking distance of your home. Some involve a bit more physical effort, and others require some problem solving. All you need is a smartphone or other GPS device to get in on the adventure! Check out Geocaching.com to learn more. More resources: [MN Geocaching](#)



Mindfulness: When most people think of mindfulness, they think of meditation. Yes. People who meditate are practicing mindfulness, but mindfulness is much more than meditation alone. It's being aware of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surroundings in the present moment. You can practice mindfulness anywhere including on a walk or at home! You can find more information about mindfulness, how to practice mindfulness, and its benefits here:

(<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition#what-is-mindfulness>) and here: (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356>)



Nature journaling and sketching: It's no secret that people enjoy the outdoors. What are your favorite outdoor activities? Have you ever sat down and reflected on how these activities and the outdoors affect you? Have you just sat outside somewhere to take in the beauty of the world around us? Nature journaling and sketching is an excellent tool to help you reflect in the outdoors. It's also a great way to keep your brain active. [Nature Mentor](#) is a good introduction to nature journaling and sketching. Here are a few examples of journal sketching as well:

(<https://johnmurlaws.com/portfolio/>).



Photography: Springtime is an excellent opportunity for outdoor and nature photography. The colors are vibrant, animals are active, and temperatures are warmer. You don't need expensive gear either. You can use a cell phone, a basic point-and-shoot camera, or an old film camera if you have a roll of film at home. <https://www.outdoorphotographer.com/tips-techniques/>








Wildflowers and plant identification: The seasons are changing, and spring is upon us once again. The trees and flowers are becoming more vibrant and colorful every day. Spring is an excellent time to find and identify wildflowers as they are active and blooming. (<https://wildflowersearch.org/>) A few good places in the Mankato area include Minneopa State Park, Rasmussen Woods, and Kasota Prairie Scientific and Natural Area, but you can also do it right out your front door at a local park, walking down the sidewalk, or a nearby trail.



Historical & Art sites and tours: The Mankato area is full of historical monuments, areas, and tours. During a walk near your home, you can learn something new about your local area. You can find a Mankato walking tour here: (<https://www.citycentermankato.com/city-center/things-to-do/history/>) and for North Mankato here: (<https://www.northmankato.com/history/>). Mankato and North Mankato are full of art as well. You can find sculptures and paintings throughout the two cities. (<https://www.citycentermankato.com/city-center/cityart-mankato/>)

Helpful Apps:

In the age of mobile technology, there are many resources available right at your fingertips. Here are some apps that may help you in your outdoor endeavors:

<p>Alltrails:</p> 	<p>Digital topo maps, difficulty ratings, elevation profiles, driving directions, and the ability to save your favorites. Free and paid options.</p>
<p>Strava:</p> 	<p>GPS tracking for running, biking, paddling, swimming, hiking, skiing, etc. Find local running routes, track your training, join challenges, compete against friends for the best time on local “segments”, and more! Free and paid options.</p>
<p>Go Paddling:</p> 	<p>Go Paddling: Find paddling locations based on geographic location, read trip reports, add your own comments. Locations for all skill levels and styles (canoe, kayak, SUP, etc.). Go Paddling is completely free!</p>
<p>Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab:</p> 	<p>Easy to use and great for new and experienced birders alike. Identify birds by answering a few questions about their description, or take a photo and allow the app to find a match. Merlin Bird ID is completely FREE!</p>
<p>Geocaching:</p> 	<p>Explore and find new caches. Navigate using map, compass, or step by step directions. See notes on each cache, message other users for advice, and make a list of caches for offline use. Free and paid options.</p>