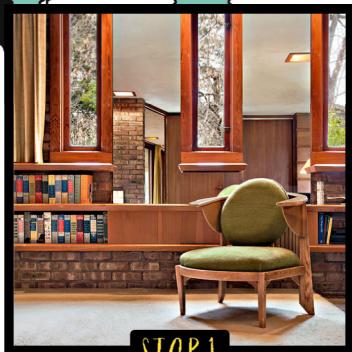




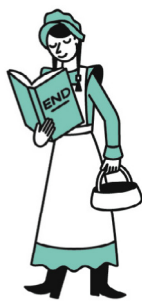
Lunch break:
Get cheese fondue and
craft beer in
New Glarus, Wisconsin.



STOP 1

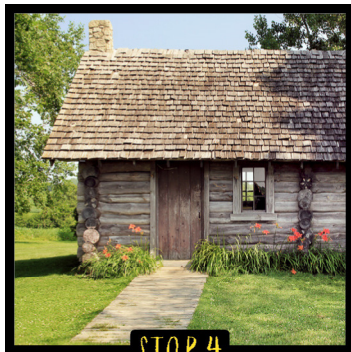
TO WISCONSIN, BY WAY OF JAPAN

With Chicago two hours deep in your rearview mirror, the urge to stretch your legs strikes. And—voilà!—Rockford, Illinois, appears. Stroll the exquisitely tended **Anderson Japanese Gardens** (\$9.50), studded with bridges, waterfalls, and koi ponds. Nearby, tour Frank Lloyd Wright's **Laurent House** (\$15), the only home the architect designed to be wheelchair-accessible, custom-built for a WWII vet.

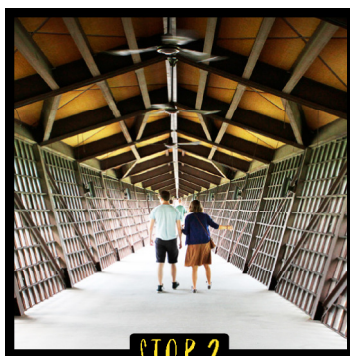


TIME TRAVEL ON THE PRAIRIE

The drive from La Crosse to Pepin, Wisconsin, is 70 miles of dramatic cliffs and river views. You want to get in to Pepin before 5 p.m. to check out the **Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum**. Fans of *Little House on the Prairie* and *Little House in the Big Woods* will recognize the replicas displayed on the land where the author was born. Venture seven miles to the **Big Woods Cabin**, a reconstruction of Wilder's home. It's all about 80 miles—and 150 years—from Minneapolis.



STOP 4



STOP 2



A MIDWESTERN MEANDER

If you think of **Chicago** and **Minneapolis** as two cities connected by a 400-mile yawn of bland scenery, it's time to get off the highway and experience the exotic gardens, radical beers, and Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in this overlooked sweep of Americana.

by KATE ROCKWOOD

WHIMSICAL EXCESS AND ARCHITECTURAL RESTRAINT

You can see its Infinity Room—a horizontal glass spire that juts out across a ravine—before you reach the **House on the Rock** (\$30) in Spring Green, Wisconsin. As striking as it is, nothing can prepare you for the weirdness inside the house: a carousel, a robot orchestra, and all manner of quirky flotsam. Book a room at the **Usonian Inn and Gardens** (from \$65), and the next morning, tour **Taliesin**, Wright's 800-acre spread (\$22–\$89), before hitting the road.



STOP 3

I SCREAM FOR SCENERY

Along the Mississippi River sits La Crosse, Wisconsin. Grab a blue cheese and spinach crêpe at the **Root Note** café, then wander the neighborhood boutiques. Next, drive five miles from downtown along Bliss Road to **Grandad Bluff Park**. The 600-foot summit is the best lookout in the state, with views of the city, the river, and the Minnesota bluffs. On your way out of town, the **Pearl Ice Cream Parlor** is a must for lollipops and small-batch ice cream scooped into homemade waffle cones.

Room in the Trunk?

Shop for furniture, vintage clothing and jewelry, old tools, and much more at the 20,000-square-foot **Antique Center of La Crosse**, housed in the Gantert Building, which dates back to 1874.

