

taking off G2
Steer clear of bed bugs at your next hotel.

tip sheet G3
Changes — both good and bad — for frequent fliers.

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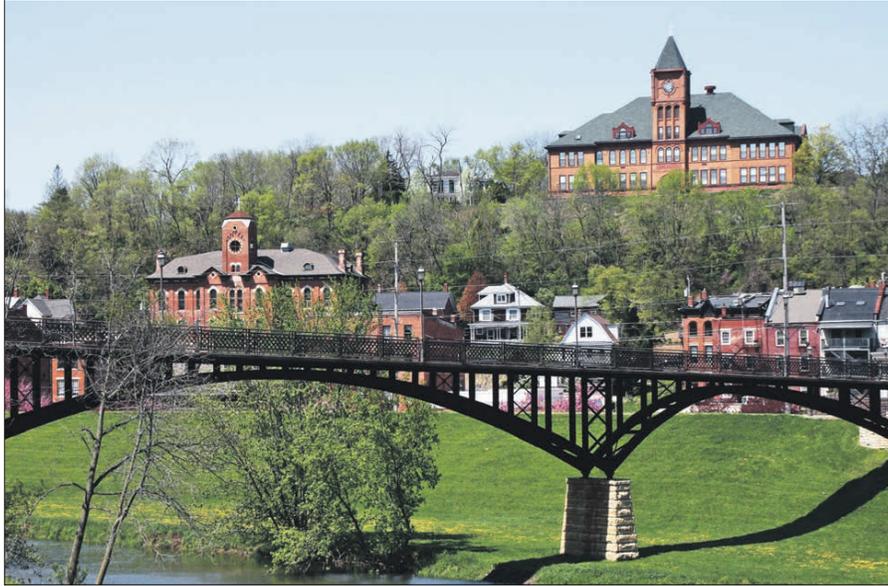


midwest traveler G5
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travel

STARTRIBUNE.COM/TRAVEL • SECTION G • SUNDAY, JULY 14, 2013

Behind all its Victorian beauty, Galena, Ill., is embracing 21st-century tools that will help preserve this river town.



A graceful footbridge over the Galena River connects Grant Park, on the city's residential east side, to the west side, with its Main Street and dense collection of pre-Civil War buildings. Photos by CATHERINE WATSON • Special to the Star Tribune



The centerpiece of Galena's Grant Park is this statue of the victorious general, donated by a grateful citizen.

GALENA thrives in the modern age

By CATHERINE WATSON • Special to the Star Tribune

Settled in a velvet armchair in the formal parlor of a mansion-turned-museum, I stared into the darkened dining room beyond and waited for Galena's past to collide with its future.

Then Galena's favorite couple — Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia — materialized from the dining-room shadows and proudly welcomed me to their historic town, he in uniform, holding his trademark cigar, she in a long, bell-skirted gown.

They're holograms — life-size, 3-D holograms — projections more suited to "Star Wars" than the Civil War. Brainchildren of the Galena and U.S. Grant His-

torical Museum, they're symbolic of other 21st-century changes underway in this nearly 200-year-old community in Illinois' northwest corner.

Galena is going green, as green as the green shutters that grace so many of its handsome 19th-century homes. And it's doing it without fanfare.

Visitors invariably hear a lot about Grant, who left for the Civil War from here. But no tourist trolling the Main Street shops is likely to hear about — let alone visit — the gleaming 1,440-panel solar array that powers the town's new sewage plant.

Galena continues on G6 ▶

In Madagascar, land of lemurs

• This large island off the coast of Africa is a world apart, filled with unique wildlife and lush landscapes.

By ANN GERACIMOS
Washington Post

What's this lemur doing? He's not exactly in my lap, but close enough for me to wonder about its next move.

I'm at Camp Amoureux near Madagascar's Kirindy dry rainforest reserve, where I've come to explore the country's flora and fauna. The pesky creature is poised to grab my mango.

He isn't the only greedy one. Lured by the scent of fresh fruit, a bunch of lemurs have sprung out of the forest during our breakfast hour. They're aggressive, but not threatening, these furry brown primates with the irresistible bug eyes.

I held out a piece of mango to one. The animal reaches over with a thin, leathery-fingered hand and snatches it away.

Such intimacy is thrilling.

even if animal protectors might protest that getting too close could accustom our visitors to handouts. In the distance, black-and-white sifaka lemurs dance like circus performers around an unusual baobab specimen.

Madagascar boasts more baobab species than anyplace else in the world, but they aren't the only natural phenomena of note in a country where 80 percent or more of the plants and animals are indigenous.

Madagascar continues on G5 ▶



Other than in zoos and research centers, lemurs are found only in Madagascar; there are dozens of species of different colors, behaviors and sizes.

ANN GERACIMOS • Washington Post

Galena thrives in the modern age

GALENA FROM GI

I've always been fond of the Grants, but I am way beyond fond of Galena itself. When it comes to this little town, I'm flat-out biased, so watching it embrace modern technology — without losing its Victorian charm — has been a treat.

I fell in love with Galena 40 years ago, on an assignment to cover a Civil War re-enactment for the Star Tribune. It was dusk when I drove into town, and the redbrick canyon that is Galena's Main Street was wall-to-wall with off-duty blue and gray.

I felt as if I'd stepped into history. After more visits than I can count, I still feel that way.

Still Galena, only better

Once bigger than Chicago and the busiest steamboat hub between St. Louis and St. Paul, Galena was the focus of America's first mining rush. Long before California and the Klondike, miners rushed here for high-grade lead ore, known locally as "gray gold" and technically called galena sulfide, which is what gave the town its name.

But before the 19th century was over, the lead mines played out, railroads put an end to steamboating, Galena's once-wide river silted in and the town gradually fell asleep. Its population has shrunk steadily from a high of 15,000 in the 1840s to about 3,400 now.

Over the years I've known it, plenty of other small towns have changed beyond recognition. But not this one. Galena's Main Street looks just like it used to — only better. The whole town, in fact, looks just the way it did — only better. Abe Lincoln would still recognize it, and so would Grant.

Most of Galena has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1969, and its preserved architecture is still a big attraction. But now people come for good restaurants, local wines, rental canoes and kayaks, hot-air balloon rides, concerts and plays, art gallery crawls, tours by foot and trolley, and more than two dozen bed-and-breakfast inns.

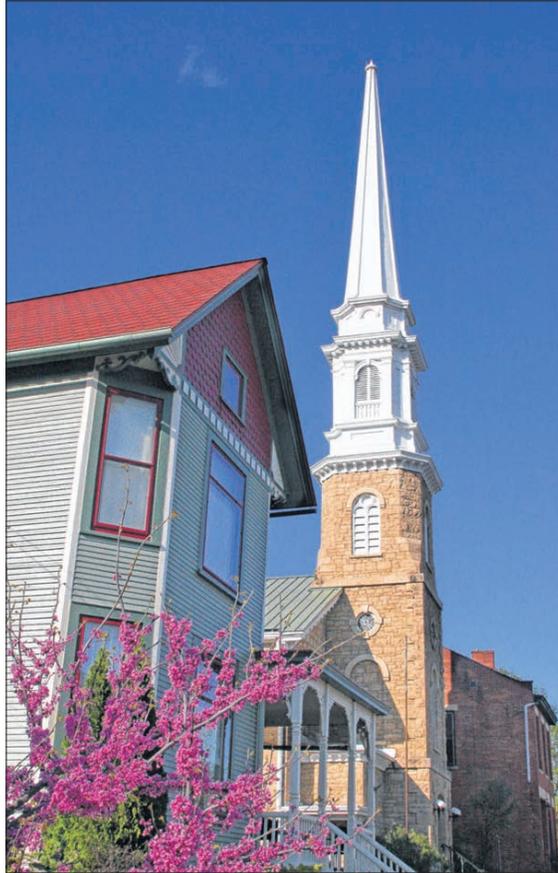
Accommodating visitors while keeping Galena, well, Galena for the people who live there is a big job for its small city government.

"In the last decade, we've been trying to create the best quality of life we can," said Mark Moran, the city administrator, this past spring. "We're trying to do the right thing."

Visitors as well as citizens benefit from such improvements as the modern boat dock on the Galena River, the walking path atop the levee and the well-groomed bike trail that follows the river down to the Mississippi, 4 miles away.

And when it officially opens this fall, everyone will enjoy the new Gateway Park — 100 acres of pastureland on the heights east of town. It was saved from development by local efforts and \$1.2 million in grants and donations, because people didn't want to lose Galena's most beautiful view: Galena itself, spread out like a redbrick, white-stepped banner against its wooded hills.

"These projects have a value in terms of our footprint on the planet," Moran said. "We're trying to be more sustainable as a community."



Set among wooded hills, Galena and its First Presbyterian Church look much as they did in U.S. Grant's day. Photos by CATHERINE WATSON • Special to the Star Tribune

That's why city government is testing LEDs in its stoplights, why its recycling program now handles batteries, prescription drugs and every kind and size of electronics, even why City Hall is pushing "My Green Galena" tote bags.

"We're just temporary caretakers" for Galena, Moran said. "We want to be able to hand it off better than we found it."

The biggest changes — though not yet tangible — are expected to come from a communitywide project called Galena 2020. Residents were asked to vote on what they most valued about

Galena life, and citizen task forces are now figuring out how to preserve and improve — and pay for — the top half-dozen priorities by the year 2020.

One priority is the history museum. In addition to the holograms, it has venerable exhibits ranging from one of Grant's cigar butts, to an actual lead mine found under the building, to a computer program that lets visitors explore the history represented by its prize exhibit, a 9-by-12-foot oil painting called "Peace in Union." It depicts Robert E. Lee surrendering to Grant at Appomattox, as a crowd of other officers looks on.

"Attention spans are so tiny now," museum director Nancy Breed explained, that visitors used to quickly move on. Now, they tend to linger. I did, too. The computer lets you choose a man in the painting, find him on the screen, click and read the first page of his biography. Keep clicking, and more and more details come up.

That bronze-skinned officer toward the back, for example — click — is Ely S. Parker, a brilliant Seneca Indian who was one of Grant's adjutants, at a time when American Indians weren't yet citizens. Click some

more, and you learn he helped write the terms of Lee's surrender.

But there's a lot more history to cover, and the museum doesn't have enough room "for the big stories about Galena that we have to tell," Breed said. The next 2020 step will be asking experts to determine the size, location and type of space needed for the museum's extensive collection, now mostly in storage.

The Grant holograms are a glimpse of this Victorian future. They are effective enough that when the imaginary Julia gestured toward her own real-life portrait, hanging on the parlor wall next to me, I automatically turned and looked.

It's a famous portrait, by the way — the only one known that was painted full-face. Julia Grant had crossed eyes and was so self-conscious that she usually posed in profile. She once asked her husband if she could have an operation to repair them, but the general said he loved "your dear eyes just the way they are."

A downtown revival

Forty years ago, when I first saw that portrait of Mrs. Grant, time was by and large passing Galena by. Many of Main Street's mid-19th-century storefronts were empty, and most — including the once-grand DeSoto House Hotel, which anchors Main Street — badly needed restoration.

A downtown drugstore was still displaying its aspirin and cough syrup on the original Victorian shelves — not because it was decorator-quirk, but because it always had. Dusty antiques and collectibles were economic mainstays, there were few restaurants and, as a local man once complained to me, "you couldn't buy a pair of shoes on Main Street anymore."

There weren't even any stoplights because traffic and tourism were so low that lights weren't really needed. The most noticeable traffic warning, in fact, was the yellow "Duck Crossing" sign at the foot of Main.

Ducks actually used it. On spring visits, I often saw mother ducks calmly waddling up from the Galena River, leading strings of fluffy youngsters and stopping big, roaring semi-trailer trucks in their tracks.

There are traffic lights now, a lot of them, and they're needed, because Galena is bustling. On busy weekends, locals complain that it's hard to find a parking place downtown. That's the flip side of success.

You can once again buy shoes on Main Street. Also handcrafted jewelry, rare books, European cookware, upscale clothes and homemade fudge that my choicest friends swear is the best in five states.

Beneath it all, though, Galena remains a small town. People still watch out for one another, and they're willing to trust strangers in a way that's rare in big American cities: You can still call any restaurant in town, order a meal for pickup and not need to give any more identification than your name.

I haven't seen any pedestrian ducks lately, but yes, there's still a "Duck Crossing" sign at the foot of Main.

Catherine Watson is a former Star Tribune travel editor. She has had a weekend home in Galena since 1986.



Galena's groomed bike trail, seen here from the Grant Park footbridge, follows the Galena River 4 miles to its confluence with the Mississippi.

THINGS TO DO AND SEE IN GALENA

This spring, Smithsonian magazine called Galena "an open pop-up book of classic Midwestern Victorian" and named it one of the "20 Best Small Towns to Visit in 2013." Today's named it among the "10 Best Small Towns in America," saying Galena has "all the trappings on a small-town wish list." In the past 10 years, Galena has earned similar praise from, among others, Midwest Living, Trip Advisor, Travel and Leisure, Forbes, the American Institute of Architects and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The city now has so much to do and see and eat and drink and stay in that it takes a 100-page publication, The Galenian, to cover it all. Published twice a year, it is available free around town or go to www.galenianonline.com.

TRAVEL INFO

A variety of organizations offer Galena travel information: The City of Galena, at www.cityofgalena.org; the Galena/Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau, at www.galena.org; the Galena Visitors Bureau, at www.VisitGalena.org, and the Galena Chamber of Commerce: www.galenachamber.com.

GETTING THERE

Galena is in the uttermost northwest corner of Illinois, about 8 miles

south of the Wisconsin state line. The prettiest way to get there from the Twin Cities is to drive south along either side of the Mississippi to La Crosse or Prairie du Chien, Wis., and then angle southeast through the hills of rural Wisconsin. That route takes about six hours, if you don't count stops for gas, eating, dog-walking or checking out junkshops.

DON'T MISS

U.S. Grant Home State Historic Site: A showpiece on Bouthillier Street, on the east side of town, it holds some of the Grants' original furniture, china they used in the White House and gifts they received on their two-year round-the-world tour after he left office. Grant supporters presented this house to him on behalf of the town when the victorious general came home to Galena after the war. Open Wednesday through Sunday from 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. (www.granthome.com).

Galena and U.S. Grant Historical Museum: Open daily year around, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (1-815-777-9129; www.galenahistorymuseum.org).

Elihu B. Washburne House: A powerful politician, later ambassador to France, Washburne helped Grant get a military command when the Civil War broke out. The living room of this house was where Grant received the

news that he'd been elected president in 1868. One of Elihu's many brothers was Cadwallader Washburn, who came to Minnesota and founded what would become General Mills. Open Fridays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., May through October (1-815-777-3310).

The flood gates: You pretty much can't miss these because Main Street runs right through them. Most of the time, they stand open, but they are part of the post-World War II levee system that protects downtown from the little Galena River's occasional floods. One in 1937 was so bad that townspeople negotiated lower Main Street in rowboats. Even with the gates, a flood in 2011 did an estimated \$16 million in damages.

Grant Park: On the east bank of the Galena River, connected to downtown by an elegant footbridge, its centerpiece are a life-size bronze statue of Grant (his wife, Julia, said it looked just like him) and a restored Victorian fountain. The park also has a monument to local Civil War soldiers and trophy cannons from World War I, the Spanish-American War and the Civil War. That last one is an English-made Blakely rifled gun that was used by the Confederates to fire on Fort Sumter. Despite the park's military theme, it's a peaceful, shady place with great views over the river.

CATHERINE WATSON