

Good evening. I'm very pleased to be here with you.

First, I want to thank Ambassador Coats, and Mrs. Coats, for their hospitality. Your warm welcome to Germany shows the true hospitality of the American Midwest.

As you may know, the Ambassador is from Indiana, another Great Lakes state.

Like much of the Great Lakes region, Minnesota has strong German roots. Almost half of our population has German ancestry. Today, there are many business and trade connections that tie Minnesota to Germany. And each year, more than 30,000 Germans visit Minnesota.

The travel companies here in Germany help make that happen, and I'd like to say thank you for sending those visitors to the Land of 10,000 Lakes. We hope that as Minnesota becomes better known in your country, even more German visitors will come.

Like many destinations in the United States, Minnesota has enjoyed a long relationship with AmericanTours International. I was pleased to meet Noel (*no el*) Irwin Hentschel (*hent shull*) and Michael Fitzpatrick of ATI during a visit to Los Angeles two years ago.

- At that time, we talked about Berlin and ITB and the importance of the German travel market. So it's good to be here together with them.
- Since that time, ATI has expanded tour programs to Minnesota. These tours explore the Mississippi River, the shoreline of Lake Superior, American Indian heritage, and the Twin Cities, including, of course, the Mall of America.
- Thank you, Noel and Michael, for your support of Minnesota as a destination for the German market.

ATI is always looking for the best American experiences to offer to travelers around the globe. In Minnesota, we're always looking to keep our travel experience fresh and interesting.

We've been a vacation destination for about 150 years, about as long as we've been a state, and our beautiful lakes and woods are still part of our appeal.

But we've also been developing the resources that we know today's travelers, your customers, are looking for. And we know that you are always looking for new ideas to sell to your customers.

For example, here are some of this year's travel stories in Minnesota.

- The state is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the flight across the Atlantic by aviator Charles Lindbergh. He's one of our native sons with German ancestry. His historic solo flight helped link our two continents.

He grew up in the town of Little Falls, Minnesota, and there will be a special celebration there this August. Also, the museum at Lindbergh's boyhood home has been totally renovated, with many new exhibits on his life.

This is one of many sites that tell the history of our state.

- And we're having a big birthday celebration in our state this summer. Mall of America, in suburban Bloomington, will be 10 years old this year. It's the largest shopping and entertainment complex in the U.S., and draws visitors from around the world. Shoppers enjoy the over 500 stores, but they can ride a rollercoaster or go bowling, too.
- Also this summer, Minnesota is hosting the PGA Championship golf tournament, bringing the world's best players to our state. In September, the Solheim Cup will bring European and U.S. women's golf teams to Minneapolis.

It isn't surprising that these major tournaments are coming to our state, because we have developed some of the most scenic, well-designed courses in the country. You can find them not only in the Twin Cities area, but also in the lake country to the north. Our lakeside resorts make a great destination, not just for their golf, but also for their fishing and other recreation.

- We know that our German visitors are very interested in our Dakota and Ojibwe Indian heritage. This year, two Indian heritage tours are being offered in the Twin Cities area. They are a good way for visitors to learn more about these native Minnesotans.

Shopping, golfing, fishing, and our heritage are all draws for today's visitors. But what Minnesota is best known for is the beauty of its lakes and woods, vast areas of natural beauty that everyone enjoys.

- Minnesota is here at ITB as a partner with the Great Lakes of North America marketing consortium. The hilly forests of northeastern Minnesota border the north shore of Lake Superior, the greatest of the Great Lakes. The North Shore Drive along Lake Superior is one of only 15 nationally designated All-American Roads. It begins in the city of Duluth. Duluth has warmly received the hundreds of German visitors who arrive in port on the German cruise ship *Columbus*.
- The wilderness lakes of Minnesota attract many German visitors. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is a vast network of clean, clear lakes, an escape from the

distractions of today's world. A place to camp, fish, and enjoy the beauty of nature untouched by humans.

- You can find another wilderness experience on the lakes of Voyageurs National Park. But here, you can take in the comforts of civilization, staying at lakeside resorts or touring the lakes on your own houseboat.
- And of course, the Mississippi River draws visitors from around the world. It begins its journey as a small stream in the northern forests of Minnesota, so small you can walk across it. By the time it passes through the Twin Cities, it is already a large river. Mark Twain considered southern Minnesota one of the prettiest spots on the Mississippi, as it flows between tall, wooded bluffs.

We have no majestic mountains in our state, but Minneapolis-St. Paul is a gateway city to the Rocky Mountain area. Minnesota is a member of Rocky Mountain International, another multi-state marketing group.

German travelers can fly to our airport and explore the Twin Cities before they head west. Our airport is known for its convenience and shopping, and it's only five minutes from the Mall of America.

A great way to get around Minnesota is to drive the miles of designated scenic byways. They make it easy to find our most treasured areas, including the Mississippi River, Lake Superior, lakes and forests, and the beautiful chain of lakes right in the heart of Minneapolis.

So, during ITB, I invite you to discover more about Minnesota, in the heartland of the United States.

Travelers will find it's the perfect place to spend their vacation days. A place to step away from the pressures of everyday life and refresh themselves.

I'm enjoying my opportunity to visit with you here in Berlin, and I hope the next time I see you, you'll be exploring Minnesota.

Thanks so much for being with us this evening. Please enjoy yourselves.

Vielen dank. (feelin dahnk)