



Grand Prix: Madison

Travel Guide

By Mike Torrissi

So you're coming to our lovely city for Grand Prix: Madison (Or as I like to call it, "Grand Prix: eh, I can walk")! On behalf of the Madison judges, I'd like to welcome you to the city. The venue (the Alliant Energy Center) is located on the south side of town, just off Hwy 12/18 (usually referred to as "the Beltline"). The venue is on the bus line and is situated between 4 hotels, making travel arrangements and off-shift activities a breeze to arrange. It's convenient to a number of really cool tourist destinations, however, off-site food is mostly located out of range for lunch-time travel. For those of you from warmer climates, it may be a bit chilly; average highs for that time of year are in the low to mid 60's, so pack appropriately.

Arrivals

Accommodations

Food

Activities

Local Gaming Stores

Arriving to the Venue

Via the Dane County Regional Airport:

The airport is located on the north side of town, approximately 8 miles from the venue on the south side. Most Madison hotels offer a free shuttle to and from the airport with various hours of operation. It's a good idea to check with your hotel as to the availability of a shuttle for your flight. While both the airport and the venue are on the bus line, travel from the airport to the venue via city bus would be a lengthy journey involving multiple transfers and is not recommended for visitors. However, if you wish to bus from the airport, the Madison Metro website (<http://www.cityofmadison.com/metro/>) has a trip planner that you can use.

Via bus (Greyhound/Megabus):

For long distance buses, the Madison stop is located at 4 Collins Court, 5 miles from the venue. The Greyhound/Megabus stop is also located on the Madison Metro bus line.

Via car:

From the Airport: Upon leaving the airport, follow International Ave. South, and look for signs pointing towards Downtown. Turn left at Hwy 113/Packers Ave. It will turn into Pennsylvania Ave., and then merge with Johnson St. Shortly after this, turn left on First St. to follow Hwy 113. After a couple-three blocks, turn right onto E. Washington Ave. (locally known as East Wash). A few blocks before the capitol, turn left onto Blair St. After a couple-three blocks, you'll be faced with a rather convoluted intersection. Go straight through, veering off to the right to follow John Nolan Drive. After a mile and a half of lovely lakefront driving, the venue will be on the left.

From Minneapolis: Take I-90/I-39 to Madison, and exit at US Hwy 12/18 West. After about 4.5 miles, take the John Nolan Drive exit. The venue will be on the left shortly thereafter.

From Milwaukee: Take I-94 to Madison. Follow I-90 towards Janesville/Chicago, and take the exit for US Hwy 12/18 West. After about 4-5 miles, take the John Nolan Drive exit, and the venue will be on the left shortly thereafter.

From Chicago/Rockford: Take I-39/I-90 to Madison, then take the US Hwy 12/18 West exit. Drive for 4.5 miles, then take the John Nolan Drive Exit. The venue will be on the left shortly thereafter.

From Dubuque: Take US Hwy 151 towards Madison and exit onto US Hwy 12/18 East. Exit at John Nolan Drive, and the venue will be on the left shortly thereafter.

Accomodations

There are 4 hotels all within walking distance of the venue. The closest is the Clarion Suites, which borders the parking lot for the Alliant Energy Center. On the other side of the Alliant Energy Center across the street are 3 more hotels, the Holiday Inn Express, the Sheraton and the Comfort Inn.

If you cannot book a room at one of these hotels for some reason, there are several hotels downtown that offer shuttles to and from the venue.

Clarion Suites	Holiday Inn Express	Sheraton Hotel	Comfort Inn
2110 Rimrock Rd	610 John Nolen Dr	706 John Nolen Dr	722 John Nolen Dr
Madison, WI 53713	Madison, WI 53713	Madison, WI 53713	Madison, WI 53713
(608) 284-1234	(608) 709-5050	(608) 251-2300	(608) 255-7400

Eats

Madison is home to many great restaurants. While options within walking distance of the venue are limited, there are tasty choices available within a short cab or bus ride. In particular, the downtown area is host to foods of every nationality, as well as some choice American cuisine. My personal recommendations include:

Badger Bowl (506 E. Badger Rd): Badger Bowl is a bowling alley serving up standard bar fare with typical bar fare prices (mostly \$8-\$12 range). It's nothing special, but it's walking distance from the venue and provides a relaxing place to grab a bite and maybe play a few frames after a long shift at the GP.

Rossi's Pizzeria and Vintage Arcade (4503 Monona Dr): Rossi's is that little hole in the wall pizzeria that every decent city has. It's not flashy, but it's good, cheap, and has a great atmosphere. They serve up single slices for \$3 or you can order a whole pie starting at around \$12. If you want to munch on gooey, greasy pizza while jamming the controls of Centipede, Rampage, Mario Bros, or any of a couple dozen other classic arcade games, this is the place to go.

Red Rock Saloon (322 W. Johnson St): Serving up barbecue that I would proudly put up against Kansas City or Memphis, Red Rock provides a casual atmosphere and reasonable prices, with \$10-\$20 entrees. Be warned that on Friday and Saturday nights, the college crowd moves in and the place will be filled with drunk 20-somethings.

Takara Japanese Restaurant (315 State St): Located downtown in the State St shopping district, Takara has excellent sushi and hibachi at decent prices (mostly \$15-\$25 range). If sushi is your thing, Takara (or the nearby Red Sushi) serves up some of the best Madison has to offer.

Parthenon Gyros (316 State St): Right across the street from Takara is the Parthenon Gyros. In addition to the eponymous meat and pita concoction that gyro places are best known for, Parthenon has excellent spanakopita and a tasty souvlaki, as well as several other dishes in the \$8-\$12 range.

Tornado Steak House (116 S. Hamilton St): The Tornado Room is a bit pricey, weighing in with entrees in the \$30-\$60 range, so it's not casual dining. However, they have been consistently rated as Madison's top steakhouse, beating out more expensive competition like Delmonico's or the Wonder Bar. If you've got cash to burn, there's no better way to celebrate the land of cows than by eating a top-notch steak.

Activities

Madison is a great city to visit. Downtown Madison boasts an impressive array of shopping during the day and an active nightlife in the evenings. Most of the downtown tourist activities center around State St, which starts at the capitol building and runs to the UW Madison campus. State St offers an eclectic collection of small shops, restaurants, and bars.

The Olbrich Gardens in Monona have an art display planned for Friday, October 9th, with live music, local art and a cash bar. Even if you're not there for the art, Olbrich is a great place to visit. It's an indoor garden with exotic plants and flowers from around the world. The city also has several museums worth visiting, including the State Historical Museum and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The Vilas Zoo, while not as impressive as locales like San Diego or St Louis, still makes for a fun day trip (and it's free to visit!).

For those of you interested in judge karaoke, Friday night there will be karaoke at Reverend Jim's Roadhouse, a short cab ride away from the venue and again on Sunday at the Come Back Inn. The Come Back is attached to the Essenhaus, a German restaurant and bar near downtown Madison.

Local Gaming Stores

Madison is host to 3 major shops and a few smaller stores. If you want to check out the local scene while you're in town, here are the places to go:

Misty Mountain Games and Diversions (4672 Cottage Grove Rd): Misty is Madison's longest running Magic hot spot. Formerly part of Legion Games, Misty is still a large part of the Madison MtG community and runs nightly events.

Mox Mania (6649 Odana Rd): Mox is a relative newcomer to the Madison scene, but has taken off like a rocket. They've generally got the best prices on singles and a fun and welcoming atmosphere that makes them a favorite for competitive and casual players alike.

Netherworld Games (334 W Mifflin St): Netherworld is located in the heart of downtown Madison and is the brick and mortar for Dan Bock, a major internet seller best known for his all basic land deck at PT: Tokyo in 2001.

I'm Board Games and Family Fun (6917 University Ave): I'm Board isn't a Magic shop, per se, but they do run FNMs and Prereleases and they have a small, casual crowd.

Pegasus Games (6640 Odana Rd): Pegasus sees more traffic for its figurine games and board games, but has a play area next door where they host drafts