

A place where people stay.

Brainerd International Raceway, Crow Wing County, Minnesota.

Aerial imagery: USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program, via USGS The National Map (Public domain)



One property, several racing worlds.

The quarter-mile dragstrip is laid on the front straight of the original road course. A 2.5-mile Competition Road Course, added in 2008, lets road racing run apart from it.

Aerial imagery: USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program, via USGS The National Map (Public domain) · Track lines: OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL)



THE ENTRANCE · 1997

1968
Opens as Donnybrooke Speedway. Drag racing in July, road racing in August.

1973
Renamed Brainerd International Raceway.

1982
First NHRA national event.

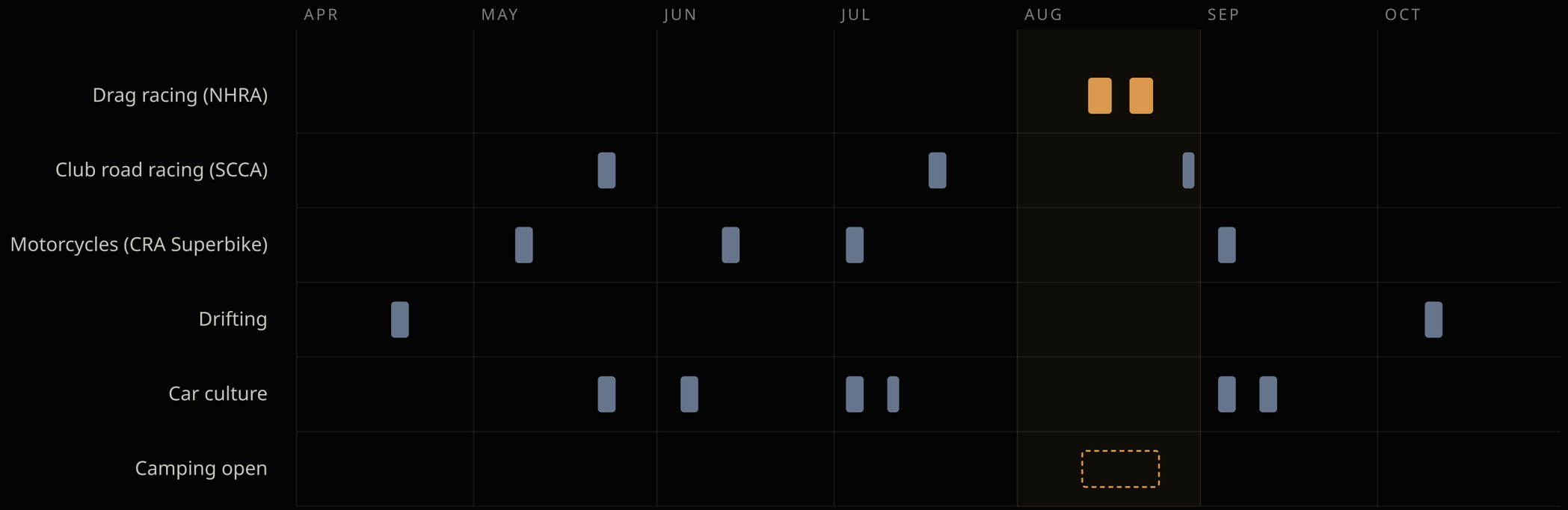
2006
Today's owners, the Copham family.

2008
Competition Road Course added.

How it became Brainerd.

Built as Donnybrooke in 1968, with road and drag racing from its first summer.

Raceway entrance sign, May 1997: Royalbroil, via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.5)

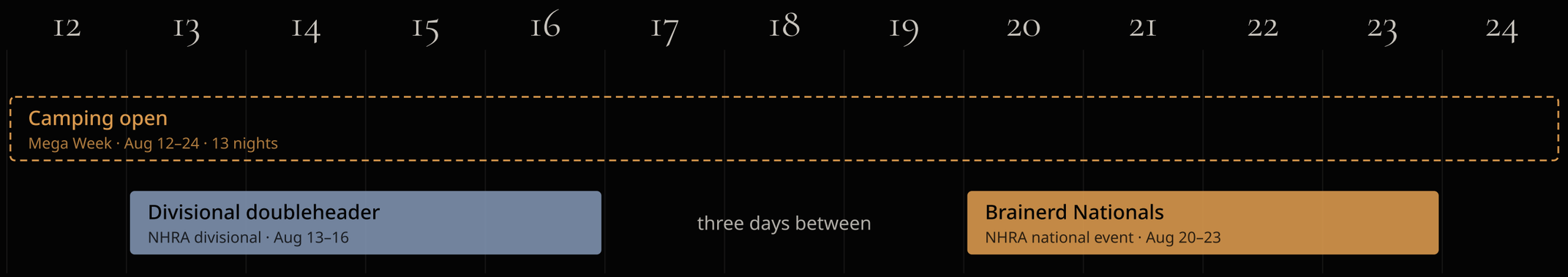


One venue. Many ways to participate.

The 2026 season, April to October, as announced.

2026 event calendar as announced: Brainerd International Raceway schedule, accessed 2026-10-26 (Study data)

AUGUST 2026 · AS ANNOUNCED



August at Brainerd.

A divisional doubleheader, then the Nationals. Camping stays open across both.

2026 event calendar as announced: Brainerd International Raceway schedule, accessed 2026-10-26 (Study data)



The Zoo.

The open campground of the Nationals, a staple for more than thirty years.

> One camper has kept the same spot since 2011.
>
> Local newspaper, 2024 Nationals

> Families plan their year around it. Children who grew up attending come back as parents.
>
> The raceway's own description

Aerial imagery: USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program, via USGS The National Map (Public domain) · Zoo location: Brainerd International Raceway, 2026 Nationals facility map (Operator map, location only)



Capps Corner.

Racers describe walking out to the campground to meet fans. One corner of the Zoo carries a Funny Car champion's name.

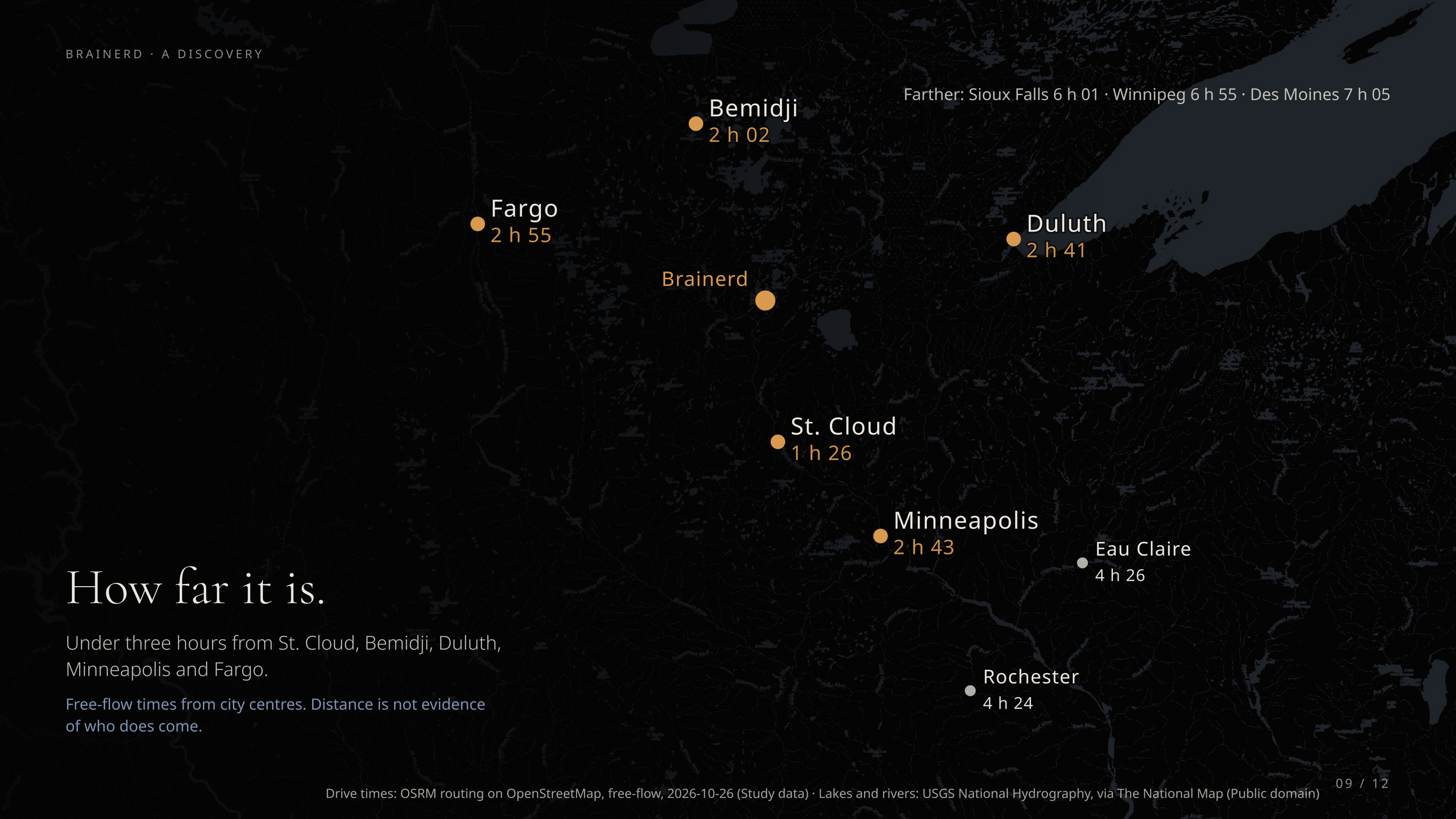
2017 Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals at Brainerd: David Kryzaniak, via Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Among the lakes.

North of Brainerd and Baxter, in Minnesota's lake country.

Lakes and rivers: USGS National Hydrography, via The National Map (Public domain)

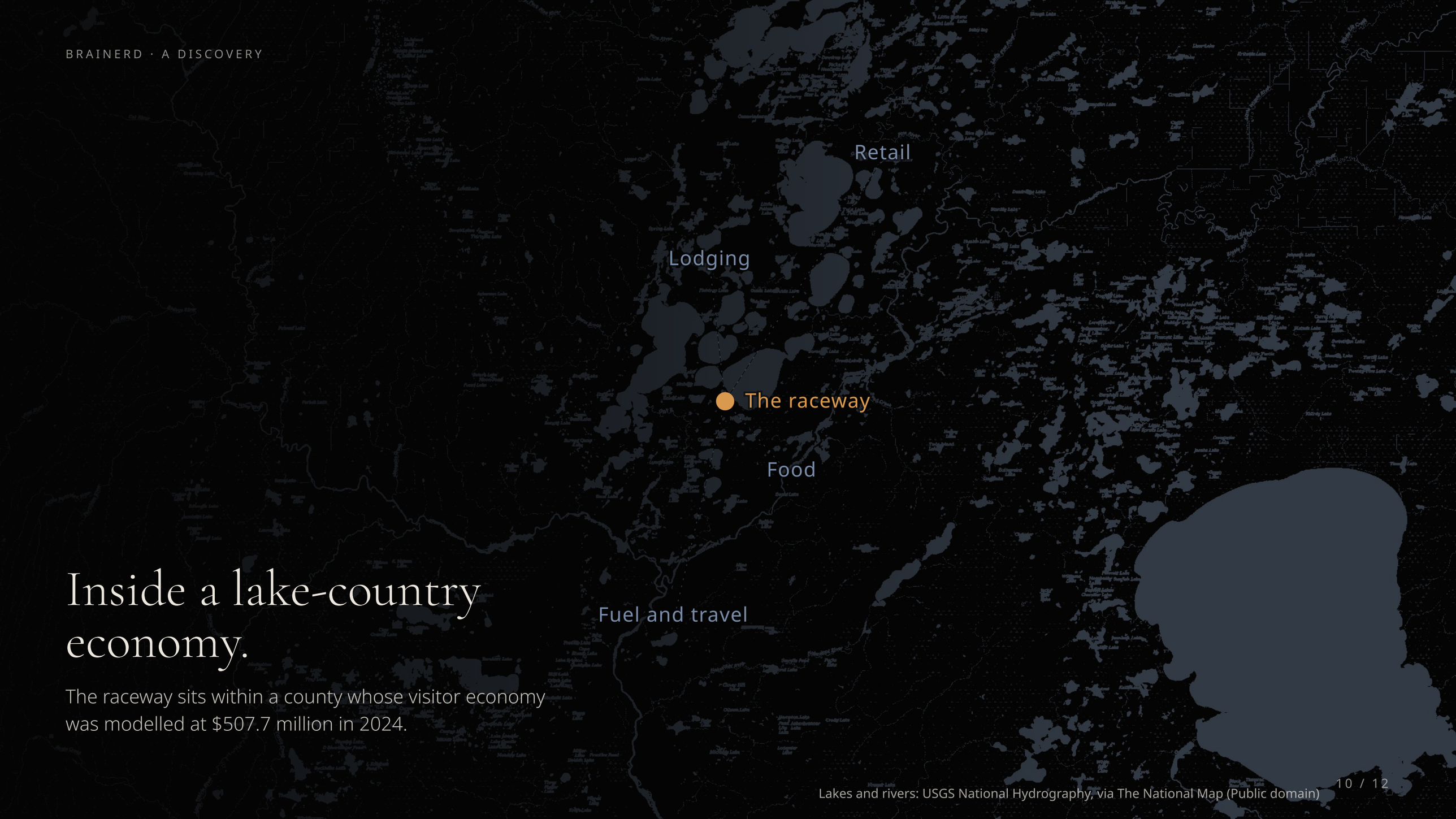


How far it is.

Under three hours from St. Cloud, Bemidji, Duluth, Minneapolis and Fargo.

Free-flow times from city centres. Distance is not evidence of who does come.

Drive times: OSRM routing on OpenStreetMap, free-flow, 2026-10-26 (Study data) · Lakes and rivers: USGS National Hydrography, via The National Map (Public domain)



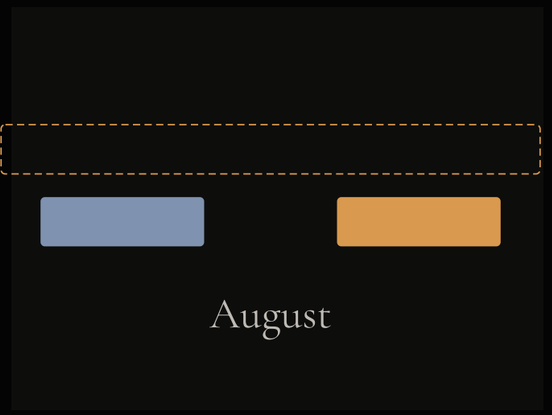
Inside a lake-country economy.

The raceway sits within a county whose visitor economy was modelled at $507.7 million in 2024.

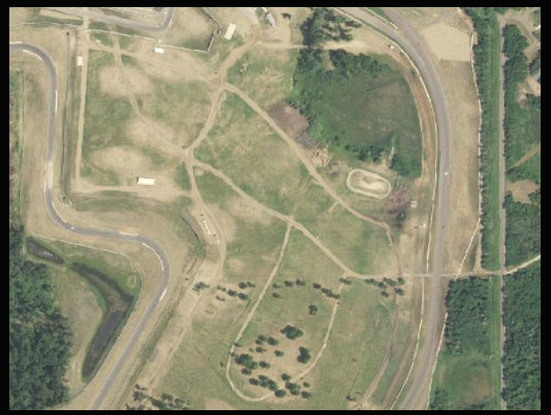
Lakes and rivers: USGS National Hydrography, via The National Map (Public domain)



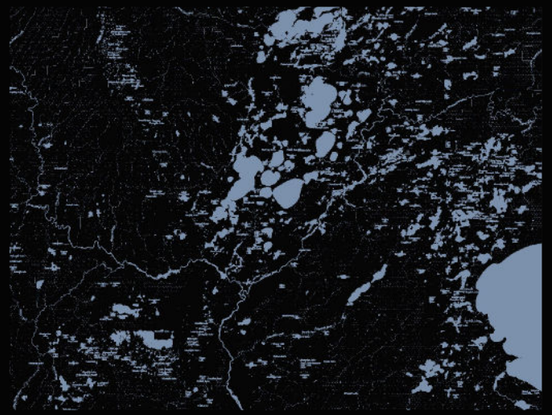
A racing ground



A season that returns



A camping tradition

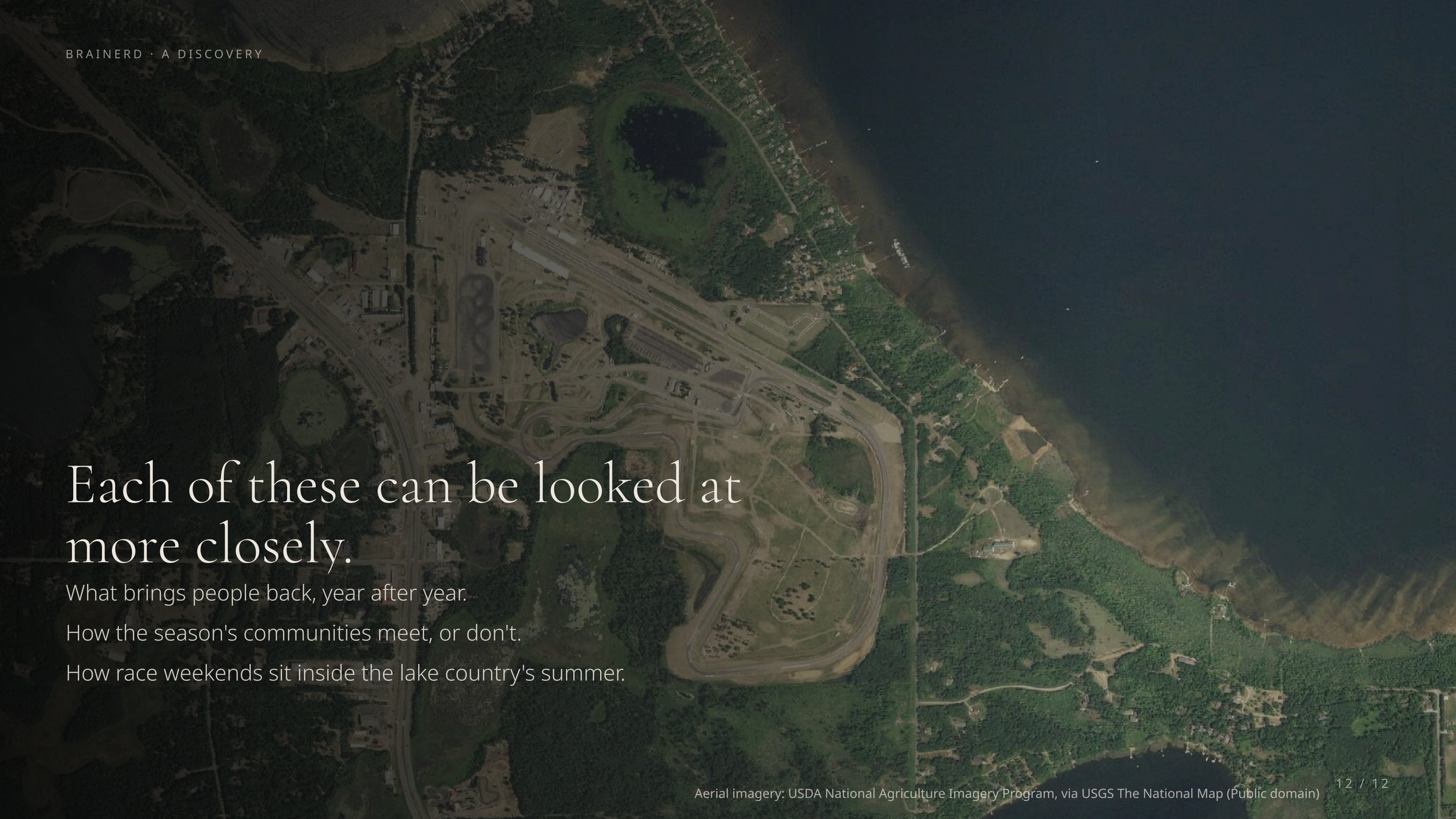


A place in lake country

What Brainerd is.

A racing ground. A season that returns. A camping tradition. A place in lake country.

Aerial imagery: USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program, via USGS The National Map (Public domain) · Lakes and rivers: USGS National Hydrography, via The National Map (Public domain)



Each of these can be looked at more closely.

What brings people back, year after year.

How the season's communities meet, or don't.

How race weekends sit inside the lake country's summer.

Aerial imagery: USDA National Agriculture Imagery Program, via USGS The National Map (Public domain)