

Tour Guide IOWA

JUNE 2022

Roadside Attractions

Wayside wonders await
along historic highways

Iowa's Pop Culture

Historic homes, famous
eateries and movie locations

Soft Excursions

Boat trips, garden trails and birding paths



Special Supplement

LEISURE

GROUP TRAVEL

Greetings!

Charming main streets, sophisticated cities and gorgeous open-air prairies distinguish the Hawkeye State as a terrific option for group tours. Whether your group wants to savor an art gallery, embark on an agritourism adventure or discover centuries of engaging history, our state has activities that will appeal to you. Created in conjunction with the Iowa Travel Industry Partners (iTIP), this guide offers numerous ideas for tour planners tasked with preparing an unforgettable Midwestern itinerary. This is a resource you won't want to skip!

What better way to remember your motorcoach adventure than with a group photograph to bring your happy memories back to friends and family? One of America's crossroads, Iowa features roadside attractions and enormous sculptures that are unmistakably Iowa and make for terrific group photo opportunities. From Mississippi River views atop the Fenelon Place Elevator to the enormous ice cream sculpture in Le Mars, "Quirky Roadside Attractions" showcases unique subjects for your scrapbook. Iowa has also been immortalized in famous films like *Field of Dreams* and *The Music Man*, and its delicious restaurants have been profiled in *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*. Learn about how you can step into the silver screen in "Iowa's Pop Culture," show your group how to step into the canvas at the American Gothic House or walk through the bridges of Madison County.

In "Iowa Soft Excursions," read about the botanical gardens, river cruises and birding trails that will appeal to groups that want to experience the great outdoors without a rigorous workout or the need to walk on challenging terrain. These attractions spotlight Iowa's natural beauty, so whether your group enjoys beautiful flowers or waterside views, there is a soft excursion for you. Finally, in "History Comes to Life," learn about the pioneer homes, Victorian mansions and heritage sites that populate the state and the immersive experiences that will transport your group back to the 19th century.

We hope you enjoy the 2022 *Iowa Tour Guide*, and know that iTIP is committed to creating an authentic and comprehensive group tour experience.

Thanks for reading,



Learn more about Iowa's group travel opportunities!



Field of Dreams Movie Site



John Wayne Birthplace & Museum

4 QUIRKY ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Wayside wonders await your group at these Instagram-worthy destinations

8 IOWA POP CULTURE

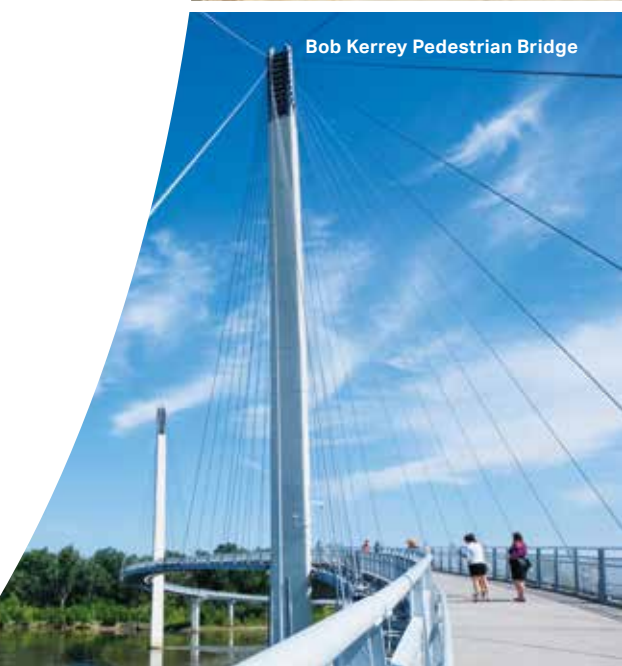
Historic homes, television-featured eateries and film locales for the star-struck traveler

10 IOWA SOFT EXCURSIONS

From unforgettable boat trips to gorgeous garden tours and birding trails, Iowa's finest awaits you for the next adventure

12 IOWA'S HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

Centennial celebrations and ethnic heritage allow for the visitor to become part of Iowa's history



Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge



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Quirky **ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS OF IOWA**

WAYSIDE WONDERS AWAIT YOUR GROUP AT THESE INSTAGRAM-WORTHY DESTINATIONS

Des Moines murals



Iowa brings to mind picturesque rolling landscapes with abundant stretches of cornfields, towering silos and bright red barns looming in the wide-open plains. The Hawkeye

State is one of the best places to capture Mother Nature's natural beauty. But there are also wonderfully weird and unusual hidden gems offering unique photo opportunities that will accentuate

your memories. The perfect snapshot location can make even the most memorable trips epic, so visit these accommodating places in Iowa on your next group excursion.

DES MOINES

Murals are sprinkled all throughout Iowa. The Des Moines murals mesmerize visitors with eye-catching designs that climb building facades, sneak around parked cars and soar above pedestrians.

The otherwise hard industrial landscape is softened with larger-than-life murals of vivid imagery depicting Des Moines' artistic culture. Local artists create colorful masterpieces turning the cityscape into a welcoming metropolis brimming with photo opportunities. Have your camera handy on your next trip to Des Moines.



Le Mars

BURLINGTON

The Burlington business district was built in a natural amphitheater surrounded by hills. With all commerce situated in this valley, transportation was extremely difficult for the residents living on the steep hills surrounding the downtown. Burlington citizens realized that a new and improved form of road system was needed for travel to and from the residential area and the business district. Thus, **Snake Alley** was constructed in 1894. It was devised by three Germans who replicated the vineyard paths in France and Germany.

With its many twists and turns, *Ripley's Believe It, Or Not!* named Snake Alley unbelievably crooked and one of the most unbelievable, curious spots in America. Visitors are encouraged to travel to this Burlington landmark by foot, bicycle or motorized vehicle.

LE MARS

Le Mars is known as the Ice Cream Capital of the World as it is home to Wells Blue Bunny. Not only can you enjoy your favorite Blue Bunny flavors of ice cream, but you can also pose with 55 six-foot-tall **ice cream sculptures** throughout downtown. Each sculpture is painted by a Midwest artist. Be sure to grab a map of all the ice cream sculpture locations so you don't miss out on your favorite one!



Snake Alley





Iowa 80 Trucking Museum

WALCOTT

Every group tour needs to make a rest stop every once in a while, to fill travelers' bellies and allow time to move around a bit. You've never seen a truck stop like the **World's Largest Truck Stop**, on I-80 just outside of the Quad Cities. It's part convenience store, gas station, restaurant and more – and even has its own dentist office and barbershop! On the same property is the **Iowa 80 Trucking Museum**. See trucking treasures dating back to 1910, with nearly 100 vehicles on display, antique gas pumps, vintage signs and more.



Fort Dodge Grain Silo Mural

DUBUQUE

When you get to the top of the **Fenelon Place Elevator** in Dubuque, you'll be able to see THREE states, including Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin! Which makes the trip to the **SHORTEST** and **STEEPEST** scenic railway in the world a must-see. The historic cable car runs 296 feet in length and rises 189 feet from Fourth Street to Fenelon Place. This unique attraction is open April – November each year.



Fenelon Place Elevator (historic cable car)

FORT DODGE

Iowa's largest mural stands 110 feet tall on the side of a Fort Dodge grain silo and spans the circumference of three silos. The **Fort Dodge Grain Silo Mural** was created to depict residents who are part of the community's industrial and cultural fabric. Tying these portraits together are pieces of Fort Dodge-made pottery showcased at the Fort Museum and Frontier Village.

ADAIR COUNTY

Each year, **The Freedom Rock**, north of Greenfield in rural Iowa, is repainted with a new homage to the brave women and men who fought and are still fighting for America's freedom. Artist Ray "Bubba" Sorensen II was inspired at 19-years-old to craft a 60-ton granite boulder into a patriotic heartfelt memorial, the first of many.

With the help of generous donations, Sorensen paints new "thank you" tributes throughout Iowa on Freedom Rocks in each of the 99 counties as well as in other participating states. Visit www.thefreedomrock.com for a complete list of all 99 locations throughout Iowa, a printable Freedom Rock checklist and a locations map. Add the Freedom Rocks to your photo-op bucket list for a patriotic complement to your pictures. ■

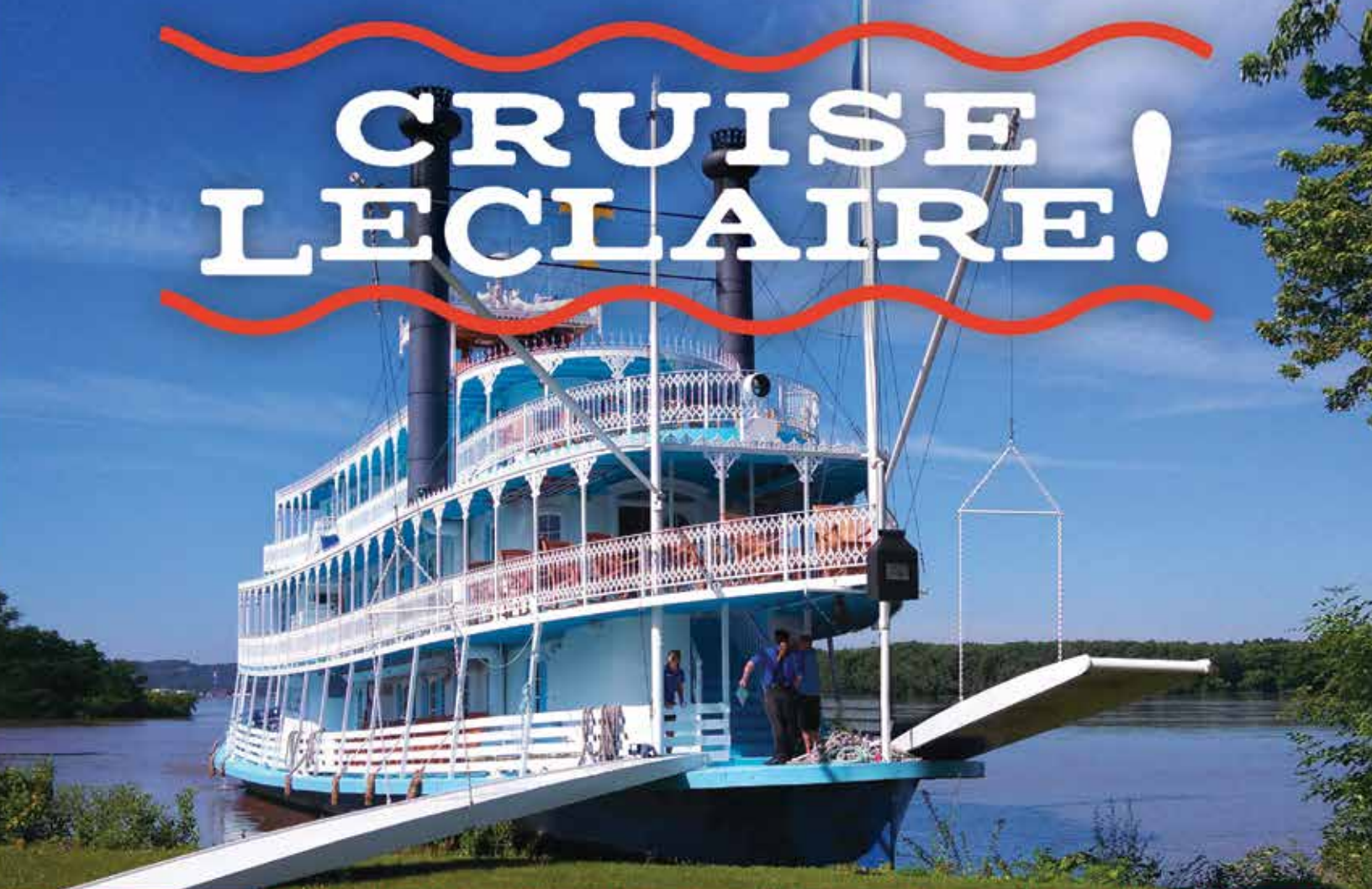
PELLA

Iowa is home to several beautiful, historic windmills. One of the tallest working windmills in North America can be found in Pella: the **Vermeer Windmill**. Originally built in the Netherlands, the mill was de-assembled, shipped to Iowa and re-assembled in Pella in 2002. When you visit the Vermeer Windmill, you'll tour five floors, from the base of the mill where grain would have been brought in, to the top floor where grain is milled. Take in the giant blades and the superb view of Pella from the deck!



Historic Vermeer Windmill

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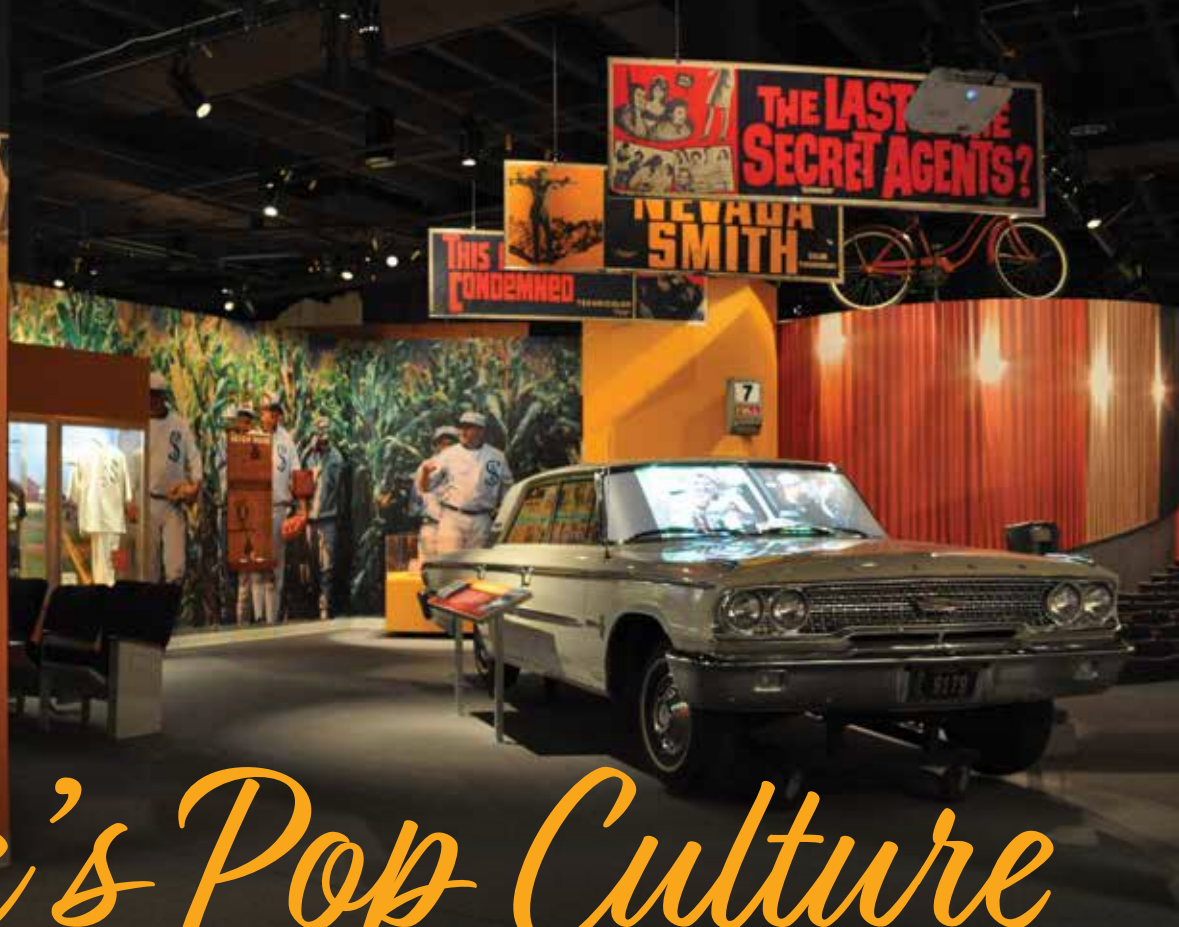
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For a sample or customized tour itinerary:

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Iowa's Pop Culture

PUT THESE DESTINATIONS ON THE MAP

HISTORIC HOMES, TELEVISION-FEATURED EATERIES AND FILM LOCALES FOR THE STAR-STRUCK TRAVELER

A true agricultural staple of the Midwest, Iowa offers much more than miles of cornfields and picturesque countryside. It's the birthplace of movie stars like Elijah Wood and Cloris Leachman. Iowa's landscape provided the perfect backdrop for the 1984 horror classic *Children of the Corn* and the 1996 tornado-fueled thriller *Twister*. Pop culture attractions are prevalent throughout the Hawkeye State, inviting visitors from all over to explore and satisfy their fascination with the famous.

Before making it to Hollywood, John Wayne had his humble beginnings in Madison County, Iowa. The quintessential cowboy of Hollywood's Golden Age was born in 1907 in the quaint town of Winterset, which celebrates the Duke and his accolades at the **John Wayne Birthplace & Museum**. Since its establishment in 1982, the John Wayne Birthplace Society has hosted more than a million visitors from around the U.S. and abroad. Eager tourists get a glimpse into the American legend's early life in the home he was born in. Adjacent is a 6,100-square-foot museum housing the most eclectic collection of John Wayne memorabilia anywhere in the world. Discover personal effects, movie wardrobes, scripts, artwork, original film posters and much more. The museum and home are open seven days a week for a nominal fee and are handicap-accessible. Stop in the gift shop for John Wayne merchandise and souvenirs.

Madison County is also home to the historic covered bridges

from the 1995 Academy Award-nominated film *The Bridges of Madison County*, starring Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep. Eastwood's photojournalist character travels to rural Iowa in 1965 to photograph the historic bridges, a photo opportunity you'll also have on your trip. Out of the original 19 covered bridges throughout Madison County, six stand today. Five of these structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and you can tour all six on your next Iowa group excursion. The two bridges featured in the film are the Roseman Bridge and the Holliwell Bridge. If your group is passing through in October, the county celebrates its venerable bridges during the Covered Bridge Festival, an event chock full of food, music and re-enactments. During the festivities, the Winterset Rotary Club offers two-hour bus tours of the bridges, so you can sit back and simply enjoy their grandeur while snapping pictures.

An iconic Midwest location listed on the National Register of Historic Places is the **American Gothic House & Center**. For artist Grant Wood, inspiration came in the form of a large Gothic-style window adorning the second floor of an old farmhouse. When he passed through the small rural town of Eldon in 1930, something about the window captured him. Upon his return home to Cedar Rapids, he began his work on the iconic *American Gothic* painting, one of the most famous pieces of American art. Your group will learn about the origin of the windows (plural, because there are

actually two) and have a photo opportunity to recreate the scene with pitchfork props in front of the authentic farmhouse.

In 1989 small-town Iowa, America's favorite pastime catapulted Dyersville and a century-old farm into the Hollywood spotlight. The Academy Award-nominated film *Field of Dreams* brought rural Iowa and the magic of baseball to families across the country. Today, the **Field of Dreams Movie Site** offers groups a unique opportunity to stay at the famous Kinsella farmhouse with room for seven or rent the ballfield for games. The movie site also offers a 30-minute guided farmhouse tour full of stories about the Lansing family, the original homestead owners from the early 20th century, and how their farm became the coveted film location. They welcome charter bus tour groups of 20 people or more for a visit to the Field of Dreams led by one of the Ghost Players. Stop in their onsite Baseballism store or shop online for memorabilia like canvas prints, mugs, baseball caps and more.

In the heart of Mason City is an entire square dedicated to Meredith Willson, the creative genius behind *The Music Man*. Stroll through **The Music Man Square** and explore the Meredith Willson Museum, where you'll glimpse Willson's life, his famous works and many celebrated accomplishments. Tour the 1912 Warner Brothers studio Replica Streetscape straight out of his 1962 award-winning film. Visit Willson's boyhood home in downtown Mason City, where he was born and raised in the early 1900s. In Madison Park, marvel at the grand mural depicting the park as portrayed in the film and the ceiling display featuring "76 Trombones" dangling from above. On your way out, be sure to pick up a souvenir or two at Mrs. Paroo's Gift Shop for a Music Man keepsake.

Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives' Guy Fieri on the Food Network has featured many restaurants and unique eateries across the country. If your group is craving authentic South American cuisine like empanadas and seco de pollo, stop in **Mi Patria Ecuadorian Restaurant** in West Des Moines and relax in the Latin atmosphere with courteous staff and phenomenal food that will not disappoint. If barbecue is your jam, head over to **Smokey D's BBQ** in Des Moines, another *Triple D*-featured restaurant. Smokey's plump wings are smoked before they're smothered in sweet, tangy or spicy house sauces. If wings aren't your thing, try one of their staple comfort food options like smoked meatloaf or country-fried steak.

While in Des Moines soaking in the pop culture of Iowa one must not skip the **State Historical Museum of Iowa** and its *Hollywood in the Heartland* exhibit. From silent films in the early 1900s to today, Iowa's presence on the silver screen is notable. Discover how film studios brought the work of Iowa-born writers to theaters across the country. Guests will enjoy the exhibit highlights of African American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's Iowa connection, view early 20th century film projectors, sit in authentic 1950s-era theater seats, and enjoy film clips on how Hollywood has depicted Iowa in iconic films.

James T. Kirk, captain of the Starship Enterprise, will be born in **Riverside**, on March 22, 2228. An engraved monument sits next to city hall to mark the future birth spot. The *Star Trek* reboot movie (May 2009) officially identified Riverside, Iowa as Kirk's hometown. Be sure to join the fun "Where the trek begins" at the annual summer Trek Fest. ■



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IOWA SOFT

Excursions

FROM UNFORGETTABLE BOAT TRIPS TO GORGEOUS GARDEN TOURS

Known for its rolling hills and farmland, Iowa features a variety of lakes, creeks, rivers and parks that make for excellent excursions in the Midwest. Don't let the open prairie landscape fool you, as Iowa is full of hidden gems meant to be seen, so step outside and let the journey begin!

PARKS AND NATURE

If your group is itching for a taste of history, check out **Cedar Rock State Park** in Independence. This park features the historic home of Lowell and Agnes Walter, designed by the famous American architect of the late 1800's into the mid

1900's, Frank Lloyd Wright. Visitors can take in the beauty of the gardens and trails that surround the center of interest that is the Walter House. To learn more and get an inside look of Wright's work, visitors are welcome to free seasonal tours from the park staff.

While offering extraordinary vistas of woodland hills, **Maquoketa Caves State Park** is by far one of the most unique places in Iowa due to the number of caves just waiting to be explored. There are about 13 caves in the park, which is more than any other state park. Six miles of trails will lead you to cave entrances, some of which can be explored by walking. Don't forget to take in the beauty at the scenic overlooks

from atop the bluffs and look for the 17-ton "Balanced Rock" just along the trail.

Situated in Ames at Iowa State University, **Reiman Gardens** offers 17 acres with 26 distinct garden areas and several structures, along with an enchanting Butterfly Wing, the Conservatory and Gift Shop. Something is always new with ever-changing landscapes, unique displays, and annual themes.

In the heart of downtown Des Moines is the **Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden** that is unlike anything else. Wander through one of the many gardens and see more than the beautiful flowering plants, with magnificent art and sculptures that bring the beauty of



Charles City
Whitewater

the Midwest to life. The water garden is for certain a site to be seen with over 100 waterlilies, three islands of tropical plants and an extraordinary backdrop of the Des Moines skyline. From May through October, catch the **Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market**. Enjoy home-grown, home-made, and hand-made products in an entertaining and lively atmosphere.

FROM THE WATER

For a different view of Iowa, take to the water. Rivers and lakes make up a large part of Iowa's natural beauty, offering numerous opportunities for visitors to explore. From the Missouri River on the west coast, to the Mississippi River on the east coast, the state is abundant with nautical options.

The **Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge** in Council Bluffs spans 3,000 feet over the Missouri River. A popular site for tourists, the bridge named 'Bob' is a favorite stop. Newly opened over the Mississippi River is the **I-74 River Bridge**, connecting Iowa to Illinois. Be sure to look at the river through the Glass Oculus.

One of the best ways to take in Iowa's scenery is from the deck of a riverboat. The **Queen II** in Okoboji and the **Lady of the Lake** in Clear Lake both offer relaxing lake cruises. If an unforgettable Mississippi River tour is more what your group is looking for, then don't miss the **Celebration Belle** and the **Riverboat Twilight**. The river cruises offer a variety of delicious lunch or dinner experiences as well as overnight options. From the deck of a cruise ship is a great way to take in the magnificent birds of **The Great River Birding Trail**.

The stunning waterfall at **Dunnings Spring Park** in Decorah is a favorite stop. While there, visitors can explore the Decorah Fish Hatchery and Trout Run Trail for more outdoor experiences. Those wanting even more can hop into a canoe or kayak to paddle among the bluffs of the Upper Iowa River.

For the more adventurous group, a trip to **Charles City's Whitewater Park** might be on the itinerary. The park offers kayak and tubing opportunities on the Cedar River for visitors of all ages and abilities. Adjacent Riverside Park has covered picnic shelters, a labyrinth, public art sculptures, and a walking trail. ■

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Iowa's

HISTORY COMES ALIVE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS AND ETHNIC HERITAGE ALLOW FOR THE VISITOR TO BECOME A PART OF IOWA'S HISTORY

Iowa's Native American heritage, crucial role in 19th century pioneer life and continued impact on modern pop culture make it an excellent state for history buffs and anyone interested in America's past. The state is home to 27 National Historic Landmarks that include Victorian mansions to iconic rock n' roll venues, and sites range from the Mines of Spain Recreation Area near the Mississippi River to the Historic General Dodge House in Council Bluffs. These engaging and group-friendly historic sites can also schedule customized tours with advance notice, so be sure to add them to your Iowa itinerary.



AMANA COLONIES

Step into a world of authentic German ambiance that was created by our ancestors and preserved today. Experience the unique culture that has its roots in Germany and flourished in the USA during a communal era for over 90 years. The scenic seven villages feature authentic, amazing food and homemade wines and beers. The quality handcrafted products, art, and variety of quaint shops that line the streets are sure to be a delight. The ambiance shines in the light of the architecture, and the numerous festivals that take place in each season bring the German heritage to life.

ICE HOUSE MUSEUM'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

The only museum in the United States dedicated to the story of ice harvesting is celebrating its centennial in 2022. This circular structure once housed a thriving ice business that utilized fresh water from the nearby Cedar River for ice and cold storage throughout the year. Today, your group can learn about how this important business brought fresh food to the region, and you can admire a collection of tools and interactive displays to learn how technology rapidly impacted early 20th century Iowa life. An in-depth exhibit on the history of the Ice House and industrial development along the Cedar River is on display at the Victorian House Museum through mid-December, and the house also welcomes group tours to admire the brilliantly preserved Italianate architecture.



KALONA HISTORICAL VILLAGE

Travel the scenic back roads of Kalona to learn the simple life of Iowa's pioneers and Amish and Mennonite communities. Iowa's oldest town was established in 1846 and remains one of the largest Amish settlements west of the Mississippi River, with over 1,200 permanent residents. View farming from a horse and buggy, appreciate the dairy goat industry, discover what goes into the construction of a custom created Amish buggy, and relive the 1800's when you visit 13 authentically restored buildings. Be sure to leave additional time to shop in the shops and businesses of the locals.

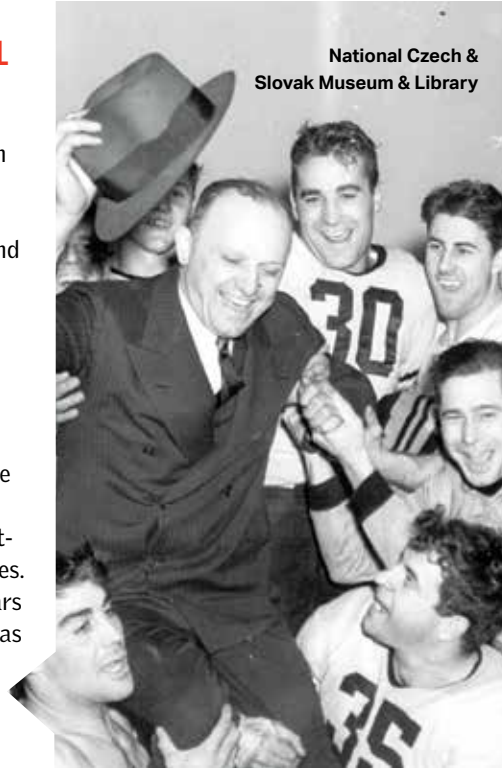
MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS REUNION & MUSEUMS

Step back into the past of our deep agricultural heritage – a time spent on steam engines, whether tractor or train. Climb aboard one of the many traction steam engines, including the largest steam engine. Sit behind the wheel of an antique tractor or take a look at the Stationary Steam Engines display. Each year during the week leading up to Labor Day soak in the memories – from steam engines, antique cars and trucks, tractors, gas engines, and horses. Or stop in and view the museums year round.



GRIDIRON CHAMPS: GEORGE HALAS & THE CHICAGO BEARS AT THE NATIONAL CZECH & SLOVAK MUSEUM

If you are visiting Cedar Rapids' Czech Village neighborhood, spend some time in the National Czech and Slovak Museum & Library. A Smithsonian affiliate, it features videos, oral histories, artwork and artifacts pertaining to Czech and Slovak culture, with a strong focus on the lives of immigrants who journeyed from the Old World to mid-America at the turn of the 20th century. Exhibits also showcase the Velvet Revolution, the 1989 popular uprising that ended Communist Party rule in Czechoslovakia. For a taste of Central Europe, the museum can arrange a buffet-style Czech lunch or a coffee with kolaches. George Halas, the legendary Chicago Bears coach and founder of the modern NFL, was a proud child of Bohemian immigrants. The museum's new film spotlights his vast impact on football and will run until November 6.



HISTORIC HOTELS

Do you and your guests like to sleep within the history? Both the Warrior Hotel and Hotel Millwright opened their Iowan doors in 2020. True to the spirit of the community-focused settlers of the Amana Colonies, Hotel Millwright is designed as a one-stop destination with everything you need on-site. Make plans to order a picnic lunch in their secluded outdoor space, stroll through the historically rich community, or take a break at the whiskey bar.

Constructed during the "the new era", The Warrior Hotel has been a fixture in the skyline of Sioux City, Iowa for well over ninety years. After a complete renovation, this architectural landmark reimagines its luxurious Art Deco history. A grand staircase and ornate architectural elements have been restored to their original glory and complement the consciously modern design. The hotel also houses an upscale steakhouse, deluxe spa and retro chic bowling alley War Eagle Lanes on the lower level. ■

TASTE WHERE Iowa STARTED

From a restaurant fueled by ingredients grown in urban gardens to restaurants that have stood the test of time, the Dubuque area food scene is one your group won't want to miss.

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New in '22

LOST ISLAND THEME PARK

The popular Lost Island Water Park in Waterloo will debut a companion theme park this year. Continuing the Polynesian theme of its sister park, the new area contains over 30 attractions spread across five themed "realms" that are distinguished by their architecture and characters that correspond to a classical element found in nature. The Muara (fire) realm will feature thrill rides in the shadow of a volcano, Awa (water) will host an ocean battle attraction, Udara (air) will be populated with swings and spinners that harness the power of the wind. Group discounts will be available for groups over 20, with plentiful motorcoach parking and pavilions for meals and breaks.

BIG GROVE BREWERY TAPROOM

Looking for a group-friendly nightcap when you visit the Des Moines area? The popular Big Grove Brewery has transformed the Crescent Chevrolet building in the city's Sherman Hill neighborhood into the focal point of a new "eatertainment" hub that contains plentiful seating and beautiful skyline views from the 12,000-square-foot patio. The brewery will offer a diverse menu created by executive chef Benjamin Smart, with a particular emphasis on healthy meals that pair well with beer, and your group can sample delicious creations like the Iowa City Lager, Arms Race Pale Ale and 1939 Red Ale.

SUGAR FREAKSHOW

Did you catch one of Netflix's latest crazes? "Is It Cake?" brought a host of America's top bakers to make creations in an attempt to trick the judges into thinking the item was realistic and not cake. Iowan Andrew Fuller, and winner of season one, is opening a new studio in Des Moines. Unlike typical bakeries, Sugar Freakshow will still function primarily as a commissioned cake business, but Fuller plans to host customers and fans on live sculpting days. On one side of his shop he has installed a stage and old movie theater seating where people will be able to watch him create his hyper-realistic masterpieces.



Big Grove Brewery



Andrew Fuller



Wells Blue Bunny Ice Cream Parlor, Le Mars



Mississippi River, Burlington



Lake Red Rock Balloon Fest, Knoxville



Cedar River Whiteoak Park, Charles City



Historic General Dodge House, Council Bluffs



Fong's Pizzeria, Des Moines



Grain Silo Murals, Fort Dodge



John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum, Waterloo



Field of Dreams, Dyersville

HEAVEN? NO, IT'S IOWA!

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