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TOUR GUIDE

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Special Supplement
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GROUP TRAVEL

June 2016



ON THE TRAIL OF

Grant Wood

Iowa celebrates its most famous artist on the 125th anniversary of his birth



Inspired by the hayfields, rows of corn and barns that blanket the rolling hills of eastern Iowa, the paintings of Grant Wood mirror the natural poetry of Midwestern landscapes and celebrate the values of hard-working rural folk.

Everyone is familiar with Wood's iconic *American Gothic*, but touring the countryside and towns where he lived and worked reveals much more about the man and his art. In observance of the 125th anniversary of Wood's birth, Iowa this year is promoting the legacy of its famous son.

One of the most influential American artists of the 20th century, Wood came to fame during the Great Depression of the 1930s. He is credited with inspiring the Regionalist art movement, which extolled small-town life to the world at large.

The farm where Grant Wood was born in 1891 no longer exists, but visitors to Anamosa (pop. 2,000)

can visit the one-room **Antioch Schoolhouse**, which he attended from the first to fourth grades. The **Grant Wood Art Gallery & Visitor Center**, a Main Street storefront in Anamosa, has historical photos of Wood, a 20-minute video about his life, displays of *American Gothic* parodies and a pose-worthy cut-out of the painting.

Remnants of the **Stone City Artist Colony** that Wood founded can be seen in the little town of Stone City, a few miles west of Anamosa. The town was known for its limestone quarries, the former mansion of a quarry owner being the focal point of the colony, which lasted only two summers

(1932-1933). Visitors will see a medieval-looking stone water tower and can pose in front of a replica of the *American Gothic* house facade.

When Wood was 10, his father died and the family moved to Cedar Rapids, 25 miles southwest of Anamosa. Upon graduating from high school, he went to art school in Minneapolis and also took classes at the University of Iowa and Art Institute of Chicago. After serving in World War I, Wood returned to Cedar Rapids to support his mother and taught art at two junior high schools from 1919 to 1925. It was in Cedar Rapids where Wood painted his most important works, including *American Gothic* in 1930.

The **Cedar Rapids Museum of Art** houses the world's largest collection of Grant Wood paintings and also displays works by those associated with him. One of the most important pieces is Wood's *Woman with Plants* (1929), a portrait of his mother

holding a potted plant. A tour of Cedar Rapids also includes the museum-owned **Grant Wood Studio and Home**, a light-filled space where Wood lived with his mother and sister from 1924-1935.

Fun photo opportunities await visitors to Cedar Rapids this year as the city is sprinkled with 24 sets of life-sized fiberglass statues of the *American Gothic* farmer and daughter. Individually painted by local artists, statues in the exhibit *Overalls All Over* (a reference to the man's bib overalls) will be on view through Sept. 4.

Iowa's classic Grant Wood site is the **American Gothic House Center**, located at



See the house in Eldon that inspired *American Gothic*. Top right: Grant Wood's *Woman with Plants*.

300 American Gothic Street in Eldon, a town of 1,700 southwest of Iowa City. Here at this attraction, just steps from the actual house that Wood chose as the backdrop for the painting that propelled him to national fame, tourists have fun perusing parodies of his painting and striking their own pose in front of the 1881 white frame home. Wood liked the vertical lines of the house and its distinctive Gothic-style window, pairing them with the elongated figures of a farmer and his spinster daughter (usually mistaken for a married couple.) *American Gothic* earned Wood third place in the Art Institute of Chicago's 43rd annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture and today hangs in that museum. Groups can arrange a docent-led tour of the Eldon center's exhibits and see a film; costumes and props are available for photos.

Cover Photo Courtesy of Travel Iowa

A mural of Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, a painting that epitomized the rural Midwest, adorns a barn near Mount Vernon, Iowa.

Travel Iowa



The art of Grant Wood can be seen all over Iowa. The **Des Moines Art Center** displays *The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover*, which depicts the humble cottage in West Branch where America's 31st president was born. In Davenport, check out the two Grant Wood self-portraits at the **Figge Art Museum**. The **Dubuque Museum of Art** has a number of significant works by Wood.

The artist also was involved in public art initiatives during the Depression and was the Iowa director of the government's Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). The murals Wood designed for Iowa State University's Parks Library in Ames were executed by a team of PWAP artists. The *Corn Room* murals that Wood did for several hotels are displayed in the **Sioux City Art Center** and **Pottawattamie County Courthouse** in Council Bluffs.

Clearly, Grant Wood showcased the noble simplicity of life in rural Iowa. Reflecting an affinity with the common man, Wood said, "I want to reach everyday people, not just the artists and art critics of the world."

Decades after his death, he continues to loom as a giant in the art of 20th century America—in the eyes of gallery-goers and scholars alike.

Arts & Architecture

Museums, mansions and more await your group in Iowa's cities

From the cosmopolitan museums and theaters in large cities to community festivals and galleries in small towns, Iowa is full of cultural excursions sure to please any group.

Des Moines, besides being Iowa's largest city and state capital, is home to artistic treasures in the historic downtown and Capitol Park neighborhood. Founded in 1979 and now the premier performing arts center in the state, **Des Moines Performing Arts** features everything from Tchaikovsky to Broadway. For those interested in visual arts, the **Des Moines Art Center** provides exhibits, classes and tours. Artists ranging from Georgia O'Keeffe to Roy Lichtenstein adorn the walls of this stylish Art Nouveau building, while you can see exclusive exhibits highlighting Iowa artists.

The **Des Moines Architecture Tour** will provide you with a guide and hours of fascinating walkthroughs of buildings dating back to the 1840s. Highlights include the **Polk County Courthouse**, in the French Beaux-Arts style; the gold-domed **Iowa State Capitol**, which features Renaissance-inspired murals in its interior; and pioneer business establishments in the **East Village** neighborhood. Also revel in the splendor of the **Salisbury House**, a Tudor manor modeled after an English abbey, or **Terrace Hill**, an 1869 Victorian Second Empire mansion built by Iowa's first millionaire and now the residence of Iowa's governor.

Some of Iowa's smaller cities also feature architectural gems, or in this case, jewels.

Merchants National Bank in Grinnell is one of eight Midwestern "jewel box" banks designed by noted architect Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright's mentor. Another Sullivan bank, now housing the local chamber of commerce, can be found in **Algona**.

Wright's Chicago home base allowed him to work in neighboring Midwestern states, and his work dots the Iowa landscape, most notably in **Mason City**. Here your group can tour the **Stockman House**, a modern masterpiece that features many of Wright's signature elements, such as large verandas and a cantilevered roof. In nearby downtown you can stop by the **Historic Park Inn**, the only surviving Wright-designed hotel.

One of western Iowa's grandest buildings is the **Historic General Dodge House** in Council Bluffs. The lavish, three-story Victorian home was built in 1869 by Grenville

M. Dodge, a Civil War general, railroad builder and banker.

Those interested in contemporary art will want to spend some time at the **Figge Art Museum** in **Davenport**. Museumgoers can see the work of 20th century masters Andrew Wyeth, Jasper Johns and Jackson Pollack as well as the imposing Mississippi River just a block away. An exhibition of 150 rare *Wizard of Oz* books, posters and artifacts, including items from the classic 1939 movie, will run through Sept. 25, 2016. Downtown's **River Music Experience** is a combination of bar, school and performance spaces in the historic **Redstone Building**, with concerts almost nightly and programs for your group



Travel Iowa



Take time to explore Pappajohn Sculpture Park in downtown Des Moines.

Travel Iowa




In Iowa's capital city, discover the Des Moines Art Center and Terrace Hill, the grandiose governor's residence.

Iowa Group Travel Association

to learn the basics of rock, blues or country music. For more traditional performances, the **Adler Theatre** presents comedians, ballet and the Quad City Symphony Orchestra in a space that originated as an RKO Pictures movie house in 1931.

With its galleries, green spaces and buildings rich in history, Iowa showcases the best of American architecture and culture. Your group will find everything from a small artist's studio to first-rate museums, and friendly Iowans will show you the rich culture of the state.

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Old World Charm

The flavors of Europe enchant groups touring America's heartland

Tivoli Fest takes place Memorial Day weekend in Elk Horn and Kimballton, the Danish Villages. Elk Horn's Danish Windmill is a major attraction.



Iowa Group Travel Association

The 19th century saw waves of European immigrants flood into Iowa seeking a new life. Fleeing poverty or persecution in the Old Country, or just hungering for a fresh start in the New World, these hard-working folks—from places like Germany, Holland, Denmark, Norway and France—established communities across the state, bringing along their traditions, languages and religious beliefs. Even today, several generations later, reminders of their cultural contributions linger in towns and farming communities. Restaurants, shops, museums and historical attractions all lend a taste of Europe to Iowa itineraries. And lucky is the group whose visit coincides with a rousing ethnic festival.

Pella is most famous for its **Tulip Time Festival** the first weekend in May, but the central Iowa town of 10,000 offers groups a Dutch touch year-round. You'll find gabled, red-brick buildings, shops that sell Delftware and wooden shoes, a canal and even a working windmill built in the Netherlands. Some of the 20 original and replica buildings at **Pella Historical Village** display furnishings, art and artifacts that belonged to early Dutch settlers. Another downtown crowd-pleaser is the **Klokkenspel** clock with mechanical figures that perform several times a day to the music of a 147-bell carillon. And don't miss Jaarsma Bakery, known for its cinnamon rolls, windmill cookies and Dutch letters (a flaky "S"-shaped pastry with almond paste filling).

In Northwest Iowa, **Orange City** also imparts a Dutch flavor. Downtown's **Windmill Park** features six replica windmills, plus flower gardens, a canal, and Dutch bridge and water pump. On the third weekend in May the park hosts the annual **Tulip Festival**.

Groups will find a slice of Denmark in the western Iowa farming communities of **Elk Horn and Kimballton**, considered the largest rural Danish settlement in the country. Elk Horn is home to the 60-foot-tall **Danish Windmill**, which was built in Denmark in 1848 and reconstructed by volunteers in 1976 to honor the area's Danish heritage. The complex includes the largest Danish import gift shop in the U.S. Other attractions in Elk Horn are the **Museum of Danish America** and **Bedstemor's House**, a restored 1908 Danish immigrant home. The Danish Villages, as the twin southwestern Iowa towns are known, celebrate Old World traditions during **Tivoli Fest** in May and **Julefest**, a Christmastime event, in late November.

Scandinavian culture also thrives in northeastern Iowa. **Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum**

Travel Iowa

and Heritage Center in Decorah boasts the most comprehensive collection of Norwegian-American artifacts in the world. Its open-air section features 12 historic buildings, including pioneer houses and a Lutheran church. Decorah's three-day **Nordic Fest** attracts 10,000 people on the last full weekend in July.

French Icarian Village, a living history museum three miles east of **Corning** in southwestern Iowa, tells the story of the longest-lived communal experiment in the U.S. The museum can arrange a group lunch in the 1878 refectory (dining hall) along with visits to the cemetery and 1860 one-room schoolhouse. The Icarians, known for their passion for the arts and education, established the utopian colony in 1852 and lived in the area until 1898.

The Germans were the dominant non-English-speaking group to settle in Iowa in the 1800s, and about half the state's population can trace its roots back to Germany. The **Amana Colonies** in east-central Iowa, a collection of seven tidy villages settled by a German religious community in the mid-1800s, offers a peaceful slice of yesteryear for groups interested in history, handicrafts, dining and small-town life. Walking tours of the village of Amana are available, and step-on guides for an area tour can be arranged. Amana's main street abounds with shops offering the creations of local artisans. Ronneburg Restaurant and

Ox Yoke Inn dish up hearty German fare like sauerbraten and wienerschnitzel. Oktoberfest brings a bit of Bavaria to Iowa the first weekend in October.

Not to be confused with the Amanas are the Amish, another separatist society that spoke German and landed in southeastern Iowa at about the same time. You won't see horse-drawn buggies or plows in the Amana villages, but you will see them in **Kalona**, an Amish enclave about 30 miles south. A day in Kalona might include a tour of the countryside, a meal in an Amish or Mennonite home, and **Kalona Historical Village**. In **Manning**, a western Iowa community founded by German immigrants in 1881, the main attraction is the **German Hausbarn**, a reconstruction of an authentic 1660 thatched-roof barn that housed families and their animals. The museum is part of Manning Heritage Park, which includes a restored 1915 farmstead and 1913 church. Groups can enjoy a German or American lunch in the dining hall.



Travel Iowa

Save room for pie at Ox Yoke Inn in the village of Amana.

The **National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library** in **Cedar Rapids** spotlights another ethnic group and its odyssey from the Old World to mid-America. Groups can have a catered Czech meal at the museum or dine at the Village Meat Market, known for its Czech goulash.

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Irresistible Iowa

The Iowa Group Travel Association has developed some inviting sample itineraries. Summaries of four trips, all with a cultural theme, are featured here.

THE PRAIRIE AS HIS PALETTE: GRANT WOOD

Eastern and Central Iowa—2 days

Cedar Rapids, Jones County, Amana Colonies, Fairfield, Eldon



American Gothic House Center

In Cedar Rapids, tour the museum that houses the world's largest collection of Grant Wood's works and visit the studio where the Iowa native lived and painted *American Gothic*. As a side trip, travel to Jones County to visit the site of Wood's Stone City art colony. Learn about Czech and Slovak culture in the Cedar Rapids museum and library that hosts

noteworthy exhibits; enjoy fresh-baked kolaches and coffee or have a traditional Czech meal. In the Amana Colonies, one of America's longest-lived communal societies, tour the seven villages visiting historical sites and meeting artists and artisans. Have lunch at the Ox Yoke Inn, a German-American restaurant. Recently named by Smithsonian Magazine as one of America's best small towns, Fairfield is big on culture and thrives on an eclectic scene of entertainment, shops and eateries. Finally, tour Eldon's American Gothic House, which served as the inspiration and backdrop for Grant Wood's most famous painting. Costumes and pitchforks are available to create your own memorable portrait.

THE ART OF PRAIRIE SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE

Central and Eastern Iowa—2 days

Algona, Mason City, Charles City, Decorah



Visit Mason City

In Algona see the "jewel box" bank building designed by renowned architect Louis Sullivan, whose most famous pupil was Frank Lloyd Wright. It's one of only eight such masterpieces in the Midwest. Browse the architectural interpretive center at Mason City's Stockman House, the first and only Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Prairie School house in Iowa.

Next we'll tour an art museum, formerly a gracious 1920s Tudor Revival home, which houses a collection of American art, including works by Regionalists Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood. Take a guided tour and enjoy dinner at the Historic Park Inn Hotel and City National Bank building, the last remaining hotel designed by Wright and a classic example of Prairie School architecture. Explore a gallery in Charles City that contains 77 prints from masters like Dali, Rembrandt, Picasso, Durer and Grant Wood. Towering limestone bluffs and cascading springs offer a picturesque backdrop in Decorah and Winneshiek County. Visit the nation's most comprehensive museum dedicated to a single immigrant group - the Norwegians.

IOWA'S HERITAGE: FOOTSTEPS OF TIME

Central and Eastern Iowa—2 days

Des Moines, Pella, Kalona

Marvel at 27 sculptures from celebrated artists at Des Moines' downtown sculpture park. Then take a "Nooks and Crannies" tour of a house that an early 1900s family turned from dream to reality. At Des Moines Performing Arts take a backstage tour and, if available, do a meet-and-greet with the cast; enjoy a show after dinner. Start the next day with delicious Dutch letter pastries in Pella. Visit



Pella Historical Village

the Pella Historical Village and tour the Scholte House and Gardens, the home of Pella's founder. A Pella Opera House tour includes a short organ concert. At Kalona Historical Village have a cup of coffee or tea and fresh doughnut holes from Kalona Bakery as you learn about the Amish and Mennonite people. Travel the scenic backroads to get a sense of their way of life. View the magnificent Amish quilts at the Kalona Quilt & Textile Museum and watch a noodle-making demonstration at Kalona Bakery. Have a hearty lunch at a conservative Mennonite home, savoring treats like home-baked bread and Amish tapioca pudding.

AN ETHNIC TOUR OF WESTERN IOWA

Western Iowa - 2 days

Council Bluffs, Adams County, Elk Horn, Manning, Orange City, Sioux City

In Council Bluffs, tour the beautifully restored home of Civil War veteran and railroad builder, General Grenville M. Dodge. Then travel to Adams County where we'll learn about the French immigrants' egalitarian community and have lunch in the 1878 communal dining hall.

Tour the Danish Windmill in Elk Horn and learn about the area's Danish heritage.

In 17th century Germany, it was common practice for a house to be shared by families and their livestock. Go inside an authentic hausbarn built in 1660 that was moved to Manning and today is a museum dedicated to the community's German heritage.

Next is Orange City, founded by Dutch settlers and famous for its annual Tulip Festival. In Sioux City, we'll see the Corn Room mural and some of Grant Wood's other work. Enjoy a Broadway show at the beautifully restored Orpheum Theatre or live entertainment at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sioux City.



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IOWA ARTS AND MUSIC FESTIVALS

Will your group be in Iowa and looking for something festive to do this summer? These crowd-pleasers are sure to entertain the entire gang.

Iowa Arts Festival

Iowa City, June 3-5

Experience the best of art at the Iowa Arts Festival. Take your group on a tour of the Art Fair and view local art. Then stop at Culinary Row and the Beverage Garden to satisfy your cravings. Join in the carnival parade through downtown on Friday evening, enjoy live music and witness artists at work at Art Goes LIVE! demonstrations. (summerofthearts.org)

America's River Festival

Dubuque, June 10-11

Country and classic rock musical acts from around the world flock to Dubuque to perform for crowds on the Mississippi River. Friday is dedicated to all country music. Saturday is all about classic rock legends such as REO Speedwagon and Cheap Trick. Kick off the festival with The Tappening, a celebration of craft beers. Sample beer from one-of-a-kind breweries from around Iowa and the Tri-State area. (americasriverfestival.com)



Des Moines Arts Festival

Des Moines, June 24-26

There is something for everyone at the Des Moines Arts Festival in Western Gateway Park. See dance, musical theater, acrobatic and live music performances. Engage with art at various booths and the Creative Family Zone. Enjoy everything from jazz to rock to gospel at the Hy-Vee Main Stage. The Interrobang Film Festival screens films throughout the day in the Downtown Library. Visit the 26 food booths and trucks and drop by the Iowa Craft Beer Tent. (desmoinesartsfestival.org)

Iowa City Jazz Festival

Iowa City, July 1-3

This three-day weekend is packed with live jazz performances and delectable food. Four stages showcase well-known artists as well as newcomers. End the weekend with a bang and watch the fireworks show over the University of Iowa's Pentacrest lawn. (summerofthearts.org)



Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival

Bettendorf, Aug. 4-6
Held at the Quad-Cities Waterfront Center and Isle of Capri Hotel and Convention Center, this festival delivers a lineup of the best traditional jazz in the country while celebrating the life and work of Davenport musician Bix Beiderbecke. Fifteen jazz bands will perform at three different venues. Enjoy food and refreshments during the performances and leave with one-of-a-kind souvenirs and CDs. (bixsociety.org/festival)

NewBo Arts Festival

Cedar Rapids, Sept. 4

This premier art show focuses on the talents of Midwestern artists. Take your group to the New Bohemia neighborhood where you will find a mix of music, art, theater, dance and food. (newboartfest.com)

Tour groups in Iowa City will enjoy the Iowa Arts Festival (top left) and Iowa City Jazz Festival.

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