

# LEISURE

JUNE 2016

GROUP TRAVEL

## *Getting Into Hot Water*

Soothe away your cares  
in the mineral springs of

*Colorado*

## IOWA Tour Guide

Our 3rd annual  
feature highlights the  
state's cultural side

## CRUISE With A Cause

Helping hands in the  
Dominican Republic





Jacksonville beckons active travelers year-round with surfing, boating and fishing options

## Great Activities on the Water in Jacksonville, Florida

**T**he best way to experience **Jacksonville** is on the water. Whether swimming, kayaking or fishing floats your boat, there are thousands of miles of waterways to explore. The wildlife and superb weather year-round make this northeastern Florida city a hot destination for all ages. With **1,100 miles of navigable water**, no other city in the nation boasts as many miles of shoreline, which provides ample opportunities for spotting dolphins and sea turtles, bird-watching and soaking up the sun as you glide along.

Fish like the locals on the city's many waterways. **Jacksonville Beach Fishing Pier** stretches nearly a quarter mile into the sea, and here you'll find flounder and king mackerel, catfish, bluefish, sharks and sheepshead.

There is also a pier featuring fish-cleaning stations, a bait shop and concession area.

Does a beach vacation sound like a good idea this time of year? Jacksonville's **white sandy paradises** are just minutes from the downtown core, and you can easily spend a day or just a few hours walking, swimming and enjoying some classic beach games along the **22 miles of shoreline**. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just want to hit the waves for the first time, Jacksonville is also an **ideal surfing destination**. If you're lucky, you may pass through Jacksonville when pros battle it out at the **Wave Masters** in May and the **Super Grom Surf Festival** in June. And don't miss the area's most famous surf spot - "**The Poles**," located just inside

**Kathryn Abbey Hanna Park**. You may even be lucky enough to spot a dolphin.

There's no end to what you can experience on the water in Jacksonville. If you're looking for a relaxing holiday or to experience a rush of adrenaline, this coastal city never disappoints. With wildlife aplenty, some of America's greatest ecological wonders and weather that's to die for, there are plenty of ways for young and old to have fun on the water.

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### VISIT JACKSONVILLE & THE BEACHES

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Just a short ride away, Jacksonville is the perfect getaway destination. With amazing beaches, a world-class symphony, a vibrant artist series, championship golf and much more, there's something fun for everyone.



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visit  
**Jacksonville**  
and the Beaches





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GROUP TRAVEL

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**S**ki and snowboarding vacations are ideal group gatherings. This sport allows participants to pair up based on ability, and social gatherings are plentiful on and off the mountain. If you're curious about how to plan group ski trips, pick up your copy of *Snowbound*. Features include **9 Tips for Saving Money**, **11 Tips for Bringing the Kids Along**, **Planning a Mixed-Ability Ski Trip** and **How to Book a Winter Vacation with Someone Who Doesn't Ski**.



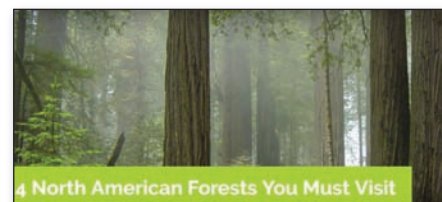
Get the 2016 guide at [BoundForSnow.com](http://BoundForSnow.com)

## ONLY ON LEISUREGROUPTRAVEL.COM

**C**ruising is one of the most popular group vacation options, but with the continual expansion of the cruise industry—more lines, more ships, more port options—planners are faced with a lot to sort out. Our new ***How to Organize a Successful Group Cruise*** is your life preserver.



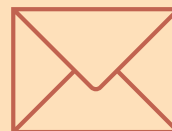
**T**ry as we might, we just can't fit all stories into the print edition. That's where **Online Exclusives** take over, exploring topics in a deeper fashion, providing new insight and planning ideas.



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**ON THE COVER:**  
Hot air balloons ascend over the San Juan River and The Springs Resort & Spa in Pagosa Springs, Colorado.  
(Courtesy Visit Pagosa Springs)





# Can the 800-Pound Gorilla Save Us?

**O**n stage in a packed hotel ballroom in 1998, two prognosticators debate the influence of the baby boomer generation as either A) Savior for the group travel industry or B) Extra-terrestrial invasion that will destroy us all. Nearly 20 years later, is the 800-pound gorilla a savior or space invader?

According to a recent study by Merrill Lynch, there's a bright light ahead for the group travel industry when it comes to baby boomers and it's not coming from a spaceship.

The number of Americans age 65+ will increase 57% over the next 20 years. As 10,000 new boomers retire each day, we are on the front end of what's been coined "time affluence." Flush with cash, free time and keen on experiences over "stuff," boomers represent a budding economic boom for packaged group travel.

## WHAT'S CHANGED?

While previous generations viewed retirement as a brief time to rest and relax before the end of life, with longer lifespans and the rejection of yesterday's model of old age, retirement for boomers has evolved. 88% describe it as an opportunity for new beginnings.

Whether it is a day trip or an immersion experience in a new culture, an extensive cruise or a trip to visit grandchildren, retirees are able to take advantage of off-season rates and make last-minute travel decisions.

Many tour operators assumed that boomers would assimilate to traditional travel styles and destinations, as if at a certain age we flip a switch and our interests change. That certainly hasn't happened, but it doesn't mean that boomers don't enjoy traditional destinations and unique group travel experiences. Consider this:

- Although newly minted retirees enjoy a variety of vacation spots, tried and true destinations such as Hawaii, New York, California and Alaska remain popular, while internationally, traditional stalwarts such as Italy, Australia, England, Ireland and France top wish lists.

- New lodging options pique their curiosity with nearly 1 million Airbnb users over the age of 60.

- Adventure travel is on the rise with companies that cater to mature adventure-seekers such as Overseas Adventure Travel reporting a 67% spike in business over the past decade.

- Nearly 1 in 4 retirees indicate an interest in going on an RV trip.

- Biking rates among people ages 60-79 have jumped an astounding 320% since 1995, and marketers say that biking is replacing golf as a popular option for active holiday goers.

- Americans age 60+ are the most likely to have taken a volunteer trip.

- Educational tours that combine travel and learning are booming.

- Cruising will grow, with 45% of retirees indicating a cruise is very appealing.

- Solo travel (as part of a group) will continue to be a trend. 12 million of the 32 million Americans who live alone are 65+.

- 36% of retirees have gone on a multigenerational trip in the past year. While many say it's the greatest experience of their lives, multigenerational travel can have its challenges—chief among them is aligning activities that appeal to everyone.

As boomers move from being time-constrained to time-affluent, the leisure travel industry is well positioned to grow and prosper. As an example, in the past year retired boomers spent more than any other group on leisure travel. With a two-decade runway, if you successfully position your tour business to appeal to the types of experiences that boomers are looking for, you can grow and prosper well into your own retirement. **LGT**

Happy (retirement) planning,

Jeffrey Gayduk  
Publisher

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Chicago Botanic Garden

## Let the ride take you to an incredible experience.



For an unforgettable group getaway, head to Lake County, Illinois. Enjoy the fresh air and acres of breathtaking foliage at the **Chicago Botanic Garden**. Take advantage of a private, invitation-only tour of the **Wandering Tree Estate**, featuring 6,000 square feet of operating garden railway. Discover the **Volo Auto Museum and Historic Volo Shopping Village**, where browsers and shoppers alike can enjoy hundreds of collector autos for sale, the largest TV and movie car collections ever assembled, plus four unique antique and collectible malls. Wrap up a great day under the stars with a summertime concert at **Ravinia Festival**.

For more group tour ideas and sample themed itineraries, contact your group tour specialist, Jayne Nordstrom at [jayne@lakecounty.org](mailto:jayne@lakecounty.org), or call (800) 525-3669.



Watch Jayne's video, and find helpful planning resources at [VisitLakeCounty.org](http://VisitLakeCounty.org).

Jayne Nordstrom,  
Group Tour Specialist







Choose Chicago

## Your 12-Step Plan for Evaluating Tour Operators

**S**ometimes you see a flyer or brochure of what looks like a fabulous trip. Or, you hear about an operator with an interesting itinerary and a great price. After a cursory look you decide to book with them – either having them custom-design a trip for your particular group or organization or, in some cases, simply selling into one of their group departures with some of your travelers joining theirs.

Whether you board a few of your travelers on to their group tour or have the operator custom-design a trip for your private clientele, do you really check out the operator? If not, you should. Here are a few things to question:

**1** How long have they been in business and what is their reputation in the tourism industry? Check with some colleagues. Also you might like to ask for names of some of their past satisfied customers.

**2** Is the itinerary you're going to sell booked and confirmed? Or is it just a proposal they won't actually book until you've sold it—a no-no.

**3** Does the tour company have all necessary licenses/approvals and insurance depending on the state/country in which it is registered?

**4** Is the company financially sound? You don't want to find at hotel check-in that they won't let your group check in because the company owes back unpaid bills. (This has actually happened to tour leaders. One leader I spoke to some years ago actually had to put up her personal credit card upon check-in or the hotel would not let her group register).

**5** How about the coach driver? Not just a "good driver" in the sense of safety, which is a must, but also someone who is friendly, kind and helpful to your leader and to the trip participants. (See our column on motor-coach safety and drivers in the February issue of this magazine).

**6** Do you have sole occupancy? Or are other organizations selling into this same departure?

**7** Do you have a firm contract and does it indicate specific dates by which you must make first deposit and final payment (or last date to cancel without losing money)?

**8** How is trip publicity going to be handled? Is the company providing a "shell" brochure wherein you simply fill in the dates and name of your organization? Are you paying for mailing/distribution? If you are, then these costs need to be incorporated into the final trip price.

**9** Is the company providing a working tour leader AND one free trip for the leader from your organization? Or is your member receiving the "free trip" expected to be the working leader? And will there be local step-on guides as well?

**10** Do you have a firm understanding as to what is included in the tour price and what is not. Specifically how many meals are included and are they set-menu or customer's choice? Continental breakfast in France is coffee, croissant, butter and jam – period.

**11** Is the company perhaps a member of the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) or National Tour Association (NTA)? These are professional associations for world-wide tour operators that conduct business in North America—not mandatory, but an added sign of their professionalism.

**12** All in all, do you feel totally comfortable working with this company? Don't be blind-sided by a company that gives you smooth talk and vague replies or is not willing to give you specific answers in writing.

While no company is 100% fool-proof, those companies that can satisfactorily answer these 12 points can usually satisfy your most demanding performance and provide a trip for your clients that you can be proud of. **LGT**

Marty is a Certified Travel Counselor (CTC) with a long history in the travel/tourism industry. She has been a tour operator, worldwide trip leader, college tourism instructor and textbook author. Her consulting firm is Sarbey Associates (sarbeyassociates.com).



# The Best of the Midwest



Lake Lawn Resort, one of the premier resorts in southeastern Wisconsin, hosted the annual show sponsored by Circle Wisconsin.

## The third annual Midwest Marketplace shines a bright light on Southern Wisconsin

**T**our operators and bank travel club directors met with over 90 destinations, attractions and hotels spread across Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, South Dakota, Minnesota and Michigan during April's third annual Midwest Marketplace.

Hosted by Circle Wisconsin, the event was held in the southeastern Wisconsin resort community of Delavan at the Lake Lawn Resort. The historic property, dating back some 130 years is located on 250 wooded acres alongside two miles of Delavan Lake shoreline, with a beautiful lake and resort golf course as the backdrop. Its outdoor function space got plenty of use, thanks to mild spring temperatures.

An event like this shows why even during this era of increased connectivity through



technology and social media outlets, face-to-face communication still wins. Wendy Dobrzynski, executive director of Circle Wisconsin, said, "2016 Midwest Marketplace exceeded our expectations. It seemed like everything flowed flawlessly. The resort did a

fantastic job and the appointments went beautifully." During the three-day event, buyers and sellers were matched in six-minute appointment sessions, with nearly 2,800 one-on-one meetings taking place.

The relaxed, intimate setting of Midwest Marketplace lends itself to learning and relationship-building, the two ingredients vital to success in the group travel business. Attendees liked that the event was intimate and casual. "If your business model requires you build a relationship with group travel buyers, this is the show to attend," states Theresa O'Rourke, vice president of Premier Travel Media, a sponsor of the show.

Midwest Marketplace generated an estimated a million dollars in current and future economic impact for the region and in





An Elvis impersonator wowed Midwest Marketplace attendees at Rosewood Dinner Theatre & Entertainment in Delavan, Wisconsin.

the process created a wealth of new life-enriching experiences for group travelers.

Buyers came from across the Midwest and as far away as South Carolina. "I have so many new ideas for trips and tours for 2017," stated Kris Jekel of Wanderlust Tours, commenting on her packed appointment schedule.

Buyers are able to meet with new suppliers that they normally wouldn't see at the large association events. "Part of that is

our price point," said Dobrzynski. "We have quite a few smaller venues that can't afford the larger shows." Attendees agree, with many commenting that they like the "local" Midwest aspect of the show.

While Dobrzynski points out that it's somewhat cliché, friendly is one of the first things that comes to mind when one thinks of the Midwest. "It's true," she said. "When groups come to the Midwest they are going

to visit some very unique destinations and meet some really nice people. The Midwest is the epitome of hospitality."

Alexa Steiner, of the Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, said, "It was a very outstanding show for the cost. We will absolutely be returning." MJ from Door Peninsula Winery added, "Everything was above and beyond what we expected. We made great contacts and new friends."

Amidst the marketplace appointments was a full social calendar and evening events. Attendees raved about the non-traditional Bloody Mary break that added a unique social element to the show and exceptional food and service at the resort.

A newly opened Rosewood Dinner Theatre & Entertainment venue hosted delegates on Sunday night. The group enjoyed dinner and were surprised with an Elvis impersonator, recognized as one of the best in the country. Monday night's entertainment, dinner and cocktail reception at Lake Lawn Resort featured noted country music singer Maggie May.

As follow-up materials are coming in, buyers are reminded again what a great marketplace it was. So much to see and do with so little time. Many are looking forward to the 2017 Circle Wisconsin Midwest Marketplace, set for April 2-4, 2017 at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center in Green Bay. **LTG**

## Trade Show and Conference Calendar Through December 2016

### Spotlight on the Southeast

July 11-13, 2016

Doubletree Hotel, Asheville, NC

Develop new tour itineraries to off-the-beaten path destinations using connections made at this unique regional tourism conference and trade show.

[www.spotlighttravelnetwork.com](http://www.spotlighttravelnetwork.com)

### Inaugural Spotlight on the Northwest

September 18-20, 2016

Albany, OR

The popular regional format of Spotlight makes its debut in the Pacific Northwest. Make new connections, build creative itineraries and grow your product base in a hot sector of the country.

[www.spotlighttravelnetwork.com](http://www.spotlighttravelnetwork.com)



### Adventure Travel World Summit

September 19-22, 2016

Anchorage, AK

Join the adventure community in Anchorage for a world-class experience in one of the world's biggest adventure destinations and learn how boldness can change an industry.

[www.adventuretravel.biz/events/summit/alaska-2016/](http://www.adventuretravel.biz/events/summit/alaska-2016/)

### World Travel Mart

November 7-9, 2016

The leading global event for the travel industry to meet industry professionals and conduct business deals. [www.wtmlondon.com](http://www.wtmlondon.com)

### USTOA

December 5-9, 2016

Scottsdale, AZ

The only U.S. travel industry event that brings together the leading North American travel companies with tourism suppliers and destinations from around the globe in an intimate and exclusive setting. [www.ustoa.com](http://www.ustoa.com)









Specializing in tours for Catholic and Protestant groups, Nick Mancino is a nationally recognized leader in religious travel.



## Nick Mancino's Spirited Journey

**V**eteran religious tour operator Nick Mancino celebrates 47 years serving faith-based groups. Learn his secret to a long career and trends he sees in the religious market in this edition of Take 5.

**Leisure Group Travel: How did you get involved in the travel industry?**

**Nick Mancino:** I went to my guidance counselor and said I needed to get a full-time job. I asked her what did she recommend? She told me since I speak Italian and some Spanish, I should be in some kind of service field. I had no ideas what she meant. She talked about the travel industry, and so I said, "Oh, that sounds interesting." I took a course with Meridian Travel School and they arranged for an interview with a company called Wholesale Tours, which specialized in church groups. That was my first job.

**LGT: What did you do at Wholesale Tours?**

**NM:** I started out with them as a clerk in the old days. I put their files together, put their reservation together. I commanded the

funds, the checks that were received and kept a passenger list. That was my job for a good year. And then I got moved into the operations department. Within a year of that, I became the supervisor of the charters and cruise department, then they moved me into operations manager for the whole company.

Wholesale Tours was the only company that did travel for churches and the Christian market. It was a large company that chartered flights from New York to Cyprus. There, they would pick up a ship that would go from Cyprus to Beirut to Haifa to Ashdod to Alexandria.

**LGT: I understand you were born in Italy. When did you come to the U.S.?**

**NM:** My parents migrated to the States in 1962. At that point I was 14 years old.

**LGT: Do you remember the first time you went back to Europe in your professional career?**

**NM:** Yes, that was in 1970. I could give you the date. It was the year of Oberammergau and I did part of the tour with a church

group from Kentucky, then I flew to my hometown where I was brought up as a child. The experience of traveling, to see my relatives, the hotels, the buses, it was all new. And the passengers on the tour were awesome.

**LGT: How did your current company come together?**

**NM:** I was working for a company called Peltours, which was Israeli. They decided to close their doors in the U.S. and I started Journeys Unlimited with a partner.

In 2000, we were approached by Far & Wide, which was a conglomerate of 22 companies. We eventually sold to them. One of the other companies they bought was IST, owned by a gentleman by the name of Marco Gorn. In 2003, when Far & Wide filed bankruptcy, Marco and I were working together because there were three or four companies that were put together. I said, "I'm too young to retire, what do you want to do?" He said, "Well, why don't we just take this and just move back to Manhattan?"





Holy Land itineraries feature Christian sites like the Church of All Nations in Jerusalem.

“ In Israel, tourism is so important that they’ll do anything to protect the traveler. Tourism is important not only from the economic level but also because once people come back, they become an ambassador for the country of Israel. ”

We decided to call it Group IST – International Specialty Travel. At that point we bought Regina Tours, which specialized in the Catholic market. It was the year that Mother Theresa was beatified and Far & Wide had 250 passengers that were going to be stranded. We felt that we couldn’t let this happen, so we decided we should buy Regina Tours and just operate it at loss.

**LGT: What is the difference between Journeys Unlimited and Regina Tours?**

**NM:** With Journeys, I would say the majority of focus has always been Israel. With Baptists and Pentecostals their focus is more the destination, the Holy Land of Israel where our faith began. With Regina, the focus is more about the shrine, so therefore we go to a place like Fatima and Lourdes and now Guadalupe and the Vatican, of course. So it’s more oriented to say Europe than Journeys, which concentrates on Israel, Greece, Turkey. More biblical-oriented.

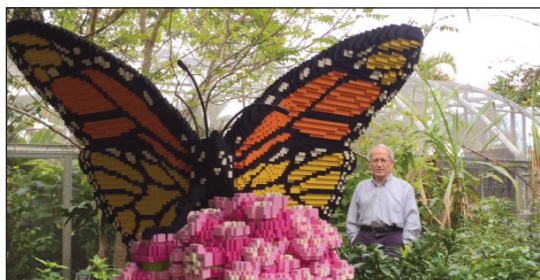
**LGT: With some of the terrorism issues that are facing Europe right now, how does that influence your day-to-day operations?**

**NM:** I’ve been in this business for going on 47 years and I’ve been a lot of places. I tell people, “Look, this is life. If we stop traveling and miss what we want to experience, we lost. They’ve won.”

When you look at all of the news, groups aren’t affected. That’s why you use good DMCs locally; that’s number one. Number two, you have good escorts who know how to maneuver the situations if they exist.

Whatever we do in life, without that faith, we can’t really function. When people want to go somewhere, they just do it because there is a power above. There is God that protects us at the end of the day.

In addition to that, tourism is very important in most countries that we work with worldwide. For example, in Israel, tourism is so important that they’ll do anything to protect the traveler. Tourism is important not only from the economic level but also because once people come back, they become an ambassador for the country of Israel.



**LGT: So if you’re working with a church for the first time, based on history are they able to go from not having any sort of travel program to having a successful Europe or a Holy Land trip?**

**NM:** Absolutely. Once church leaders make a commitment that they want to go, their followers to go with them, their parishioners will follow them.

**LGT: What destinations seem to be selling well for you right now?**

**NM:** Believe it or not, Israel. For the Protestant denomination that’s still our number one destination. For Catholic groups, it’s Italy. Especially with Pope Francis; he’s very charismatic and very beloved by people. We have quite a bit of interest in Luther 2017. It is going to be big for us, and believe it or not, we just got a request for Oberammergau in 2020.

I like the fact that there’s more destinations opening up. One example is Ethiopia for

African-American church groups. Poland is another new destination place for Catholics. This year we did something we’ve never done before: Quebec Shrines in Canada. The churches in Montreal and Quebec are wonderful sites. Another example is California Missions; I think it’s underdeveloped.

Also, if you want to go to Argentina to follow Pope Francis’ footsteps in some ways—where he was brought up, where he was raised, where he got ordained - you can now do that.

Finally, this year we had a group of Presbyterians go to Cuba. That doesn’t really have anything to do with the faith base, but it did have in some ways because we connected the group with the local community in Cuba.

**LGT: How are you finding customers these days?**

**NM:** That’s a very difficult thing to say because it’s hard to tell what really works well. So we have to try to do a bit of everything. There’s some traditional marketing, like mailings. We do a lot of AdWords, e-blasts and so forth. The other thing that also works for us is to attend local events held for pastors or priests. That’s where we can connect with decision makers. We also have a sales force in different parts of the country that works directly with churches.

**LGT: How do we grow the religious travel market?**

**NM:** I think all of us in this faith-based world will just have to work together and just keep growing it and keep it moving. Because it makes a major difference. We get letters from people that come from a trip and they’ve become more worldly; they became a stronger, faithful person. **LGT**



# Discover the Ancient Waters of Israel

By Denise Bossert

**C**ERTAIN WORDS ECHO IN THE TRAVELER'S EARS WHILE VISITING ISRAEL, AND THE WORDS CONJURE UP IMAGES OF WATER. THEY SPEAK OF ANCIENT WATER SOURCES: EIN GEDI. EIN KEREM. EIN PRAT. EIN AVDAT. EIN Yael.

**Ein:** A spring. Water gushing forth...in the Judean Desert, at the site of a nature reserve, in the Negev, near the Old City of Jerusalem.

One's guide speaks of the *wadi* and points here and there. *Wadi:* A dry riverbed—until it rains and then the waters flow, filling the valleys and cisterns.

From the springs (*ein*) to the riverbeds (*wadi*) to the running streams at Banias in the Golan Heights, to the water trail of the Ein Kelt in Nahal Prat, water is *the lifeblood of the land*.

The cruise ports of **Haifa** and **Ashdod** welcome travelers from ports throughout the **Mediterranean Sea** to Israel's beaches, which rank among the best in the world. At the beach, a traveler's thirst for this water is quenched. Pedicured toes sink into the warm sand and breezes whisk across the water's surface, catching a man's shirt, a woman's hair or a child's toy. A lady scans the shore for shells.

Young people surf.

A drive from the cruise ports takes travelers to **Caesarea Maritima**, the ancient city and harbor built by King Herod the Great and adjacent to his Circus where he

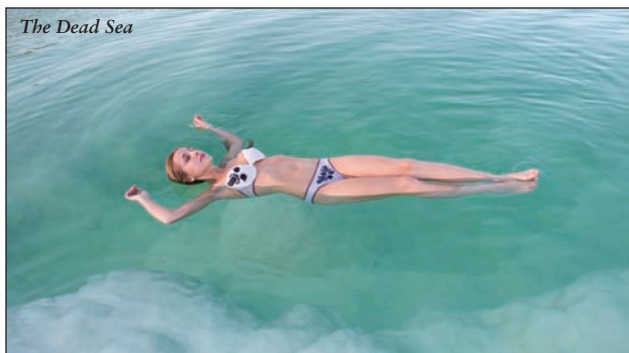
scapes and natural vistas. As one approaches Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the beachfront promenade reveals luxury hotels, the new **Opera Tower** and miles of shops and cultural centers.

Farther north along the coast,

visitors discover the gardens of Haifa and the majestic mountain range of **Carmel** overlooking the Mediterranean. Ashdod wishes them well and sends them on to **Jerusalem**.

Haifa prepares travelers for the ancient Mediterranean port of **Akko**, where they encounter Crusader-era sites, and **Galilee**, a smaller sea where the feeling is spiritual. Some would say *holy*. They step onto their hotel balconies and listen to voices of fishermen, authentic voices that could

be a thousand years old, voices riding the sea-wind. And the visitors contemplate childhood stories from sacred scriptures. They simply must go down and walk among the rocks and climb into boats of the Kin-



hosted gladiator fights and chariot races.

From **Herzliya** to **Tel Aviv-Jaffa**, travelers enjoy the Mediterranean portion of the Israel National Trail. This six-to-eight-hour trail is an easy journey along gorgeous land-





The Mediterranean Sea laps fortifications surrounding the Old City in the port of Akko.

*All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place where the rivers flow, there they repeatedly go. (Ecclesiastes 1:7)*

neret, where they sense the lifeblood that changes them. Old couples hold hands. Lost faith is rediscovered. And fishers still throw out nets and draw them up again.

Travelers don't follow the roads as much as they follow the water. They pass through the **Jordan River Valley** until they see the salt and know they have found the earthly spa that surpasses all others. This is the **Dead Sea**. They float and come out with new skin. The salt is rinsed away, and they marvel at the change. Restoration. Rejuvenation. Regeneration. They laughed when their bodies floated. Now, they laugh again and dash off to the mud for a facial or full-body treatment. Tonight, they will sleep in the spa hotel, and it will be the best sleep of their lives.

Some travel south to the **Red Sea at Eilat**, where they scuba dive with the dolphins and explore the reefs. Then these waters transport the visitor back north, to the ports that take them home again.

Israel may seem to be the land of desert

and heat, dry sands and rock formations, but coursing throughout the land is its lifeblood. It is the ancient seas—the Mediterranean and Galilee, the Dead and the Red.

The heavens feed the seas, as do the underground springs. And the waters of Israel feed the human soul as well. Just as the Book

late. Our luggage was somewhere in Toronto. But these are the trials every traveler experiences at one time or another.

We climbed into the car and made our way for a Jaffa beach, where we pulled off our shoes and ran to the water. Instantly, I was healed. The lifeblood surged through

me as the waves splashed against my rolled-up pants. I opened my arms to the wind and renewed my vows. I will come every year.

Do you need a day at the spa? The Dead Sea tops them all.

Do you need a spiritual encounter? The Sea of Galilee heals the soul.

Do you need an underwater adventure? Eilat beckons.

And if you need to feel alive again, the shoreline from Tel Aviv to Carmel awaits.

Come, discover the ancient seas of Israel.



of Ecclesiastes suggests, the waters flow repeatedly. And as long as that truth remains, the soul will long to return again and again.

I made this journey last month. We missed our connecting flight and arrived four hours

*For travel information from the Israel Ministry of Tourism, visit [goisrael.com](http://goisrael.com).*





Wittenberg stages a re-enactment of Luther's wedding every June.

## Celebrating Everything Martin Luther

Travelers from around the globe are flocking to Germany as the 500th anniversary of the Reformation approaches

**G**ermany has been marching toward the Luther Decade for nearly 500 years and now is marking the final chapters in this once-in-a-lifetime event that has attracted millions worldwide.

Thousands more, many as part of group tours and pilgrimages, are planning to visit Luther Country before the 10-year celebration ends in 2017. Celebrating the Reformation movement, which started in Wittenberg when Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the Castle Church door in 1517, Germany

has moved into high gear to welcome visitors on this special occasion.

"As a tourist destination, Germany is internationally renowned for its cultural treasures and sits right at the top of international rankings for favorite cultural tourism destinations," explains Petra Hedorfer, chief executive officer of the German National Tourist Board. "Spiritual travel and cultural travel are thus important sectors of our activities promoting Germany as a destination for foreign markets."

### REFORMATION EFFECTS

The Reformation not only revolutionized spiritual life worldwide, but also provided the impetus for wide-ranging social and political developments. Economic life was accelerated, the Bible was translated into German and the printing press helped disseminate the translation. Today more than 817 million Protestants the world over owe their spiritual and religious existence to the events of the Reformation.

Few tour themes have such a rich and historic meaning as the Reformation. And though few men or women have changed the history of the world, Martin Luther did just that.

How would you like to stand inside the room where the "Father of the Reformation" translated the New Testament from Greek into German? Or admire the pulpits from which he preached, or even taste his favorite beer? Luther's influence on Germany's cities and towns is significant, and from religion and music to art, cuisine and even lifestyle, his footprint can still be found in many segments of daily life.

The area in which Luther traveled during his lifetime, mostly in the German states of Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, are rolling out the red carpet, as is all of Germany, for groups that wish to take part in the special festivities, programs and tours. Saxony-Anhalt alone is home to more than 60 places with links to Luther, including houses, monasteries,



A statue of Katharina von Bora, Luther's wife, in Wittenberg



churches, cathedrals and castles in 33 towns and districts.

Groups can visit the "Mother Church of the Reformation" in Lutherstadt Wittenberg and Luther's birthplace in Lutherstadt Eisleben. At the impressive 1277 Augustinian monastery in Erfurt where Luther lived as a monk, you can see his room as part of a guided tour.

No tour of Luther Country is complete without a visit to Eisenach's 11th century Wartburg Castle, where Luther translated the New Testament in 1521; you can visit his study. Both Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach are honored sons of Eisenach; Bach was a passionate Lutheran and shared many of Luther's beliefs. Eisenach's historic market square and centuries-old, half-timbered houses are a special experience for visitors. The Luther House there re-opened in 2015 with a new multimedia exhibition entitled *Luther and the Bible*.

In 2017, Berlin, Eisenach (Wartburg Castle) and Wittenberg will provide the backdrop for a series of National Luther Exhibitions. From April to November 2017 at The Luther House in Wittenberg, the exhibition entitled *Luther! 95 People – 95 Treasures* presents 95 people and their individual relationships with Martin Luther and his work.

Stephan Dorgerloh, Saxony-Anhalt's minister for culture, sees the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 as a unique opportunity to present, on a national and international level, the state where the Reformation originated. The events allow Saxony-Anhalt to show that it is a land of culture with "an incredible amount to offer and where important contributions to history have been made," he says.

## EVENTS GALORE

In Wittenberg, a Festival of Light will be celebrated in October of 2017 on the meadow surrounding the Elbe River in the shadow of the Castle Church and St. Mary's Town Church. A festival service on Sunday will be the highlight of the German Protestant Kirchentage or "church day" celebration. And every June, Wittenberg celebrates Luther's marriage to Katharina von Bora



An altar painting by Lucas Cranach, a friend of Martin Luther, graces Wittenberg's Town Church, where Luther preached.



Medieval costumes and festival swords are displayed in Halle, which will sponsor a young people's Luther exhibit in 2017.

with upwards of 100,000 visitors, many dressed in medieval costumes. A giant parade, re-enactment of the wedding feast and dozens of special activities are scheduled.

Other Luther festivals and programs in 2017 include Reformation Day activities in Wittenberg on October 31; Luther's First Day at School celebration at Mansfeld Latin School on April 22; the August 30 Walk Along the Luther Trail to Eisleben; and Advent in Luther's Courtyard on December 1, also in Eisleben.

St. Mary's Church library in Halle, with the oldest and one of the largest Protestant church libraries in Germany, founded in 1522, will present a special Luther exhibition from October 31, 2016 through February 28, 2017. Visitors will find a collection of historical artifacts from the first printed documents dating from the Reformation to Luther's drinking mug.

The permanent exhibition in the Luther House in Wittenberg will reopen after extensive restoration work over the festival weekend of March 4-5, 2017. And from May 20 to September 10, 2017, the World Reformation Exhibition in Wittenberg invites groups to visit the seven "Gates to Freedom." Each gate serves as a vantage point for a good view of the town while focusing on various Reformation topics.

In March 2017, a conference will be held in Halle focusing on hymns of the Reformation, and a special Reformation Walk will take place between Lutherstadt Mansfeld and Lutherstadt Eisleben on October 1 that year.

With so much planned in 2016 and 2017 and so many German cities and towns participating in the Luther Decade, tour groups will find the welcome mat out throughout this history-filled region. **LGT**





## 6 Must-See Cities Along the Danube During Christmas

**F**or groups planning to spend the Christmas season in Europe, a river cruise is the best way to see these magical destinations:

### Vienna

The capital of Austria, Vienna is a metropolis filled with charm, vibrancy and history. During the holidays, Vienna lights up with “Christkindlmarkets” all over the city. One of the largest can be found in the square in front of City Hall. You can stroll amid elaborately decorated trees while picking up some traditional Christmas keepsakes and sipping on a mug of Glühwein, hot sweet wine.

### Emmersdorf

Located in the Wachau Valley of Austria, Emmersdorf is a picturesque town dotted with colorful homes, towering churches and historic structures. This charming town is a joy to explore, with small boutiques for Christmas shopping and lovely restaurants where you can refuel and enjoy some local wine.

### Durnstein

A short distance from Emmersdorf, Durnstein is known for being the home of Melk Abbey. The magnificent and colossal monument is a true symbol of the region. Built on the foundations of a medieval monastery, Melk Abbey is filled with artworks from famed Baroque artists. Visitors can admire the library, which boasts hundreds of thousands of volumes, many of which are not accessible to the public.

### Passau

Located at the confluence of three rivers (the Danube, the Inn and the Ilz), Passau is a 2,000-year-old city with Gothic and Baroque architecture that will transport you back in time. The main attraction here is St. Stephen's Cathedral, built by Italian architect Carlo Lugo.

**Many Collette river cruises include Nuremberg's famous Christmas market.**

### Regensburg

A jewel of the Danube, Regensburg is one of Germany's best-preserved medieval cities. It features nearly 1,400 historic buildings, and some of the architectural highlights include the first stone bridge built over the river, the Old Town Hall and the Porta Praetoria, one of only two remaining Roman gates in Germany. The Christmas Market here has been described as one of the loveliest in the country.

### Nuremberg

Located on the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal, Nuremberg is the second largest city in Bavaria. This culturally significant German city features incredible sites, including Nuremberg Castle, St. Laurence Church, Old Town and the 900-year-old ramparts that surround the city.

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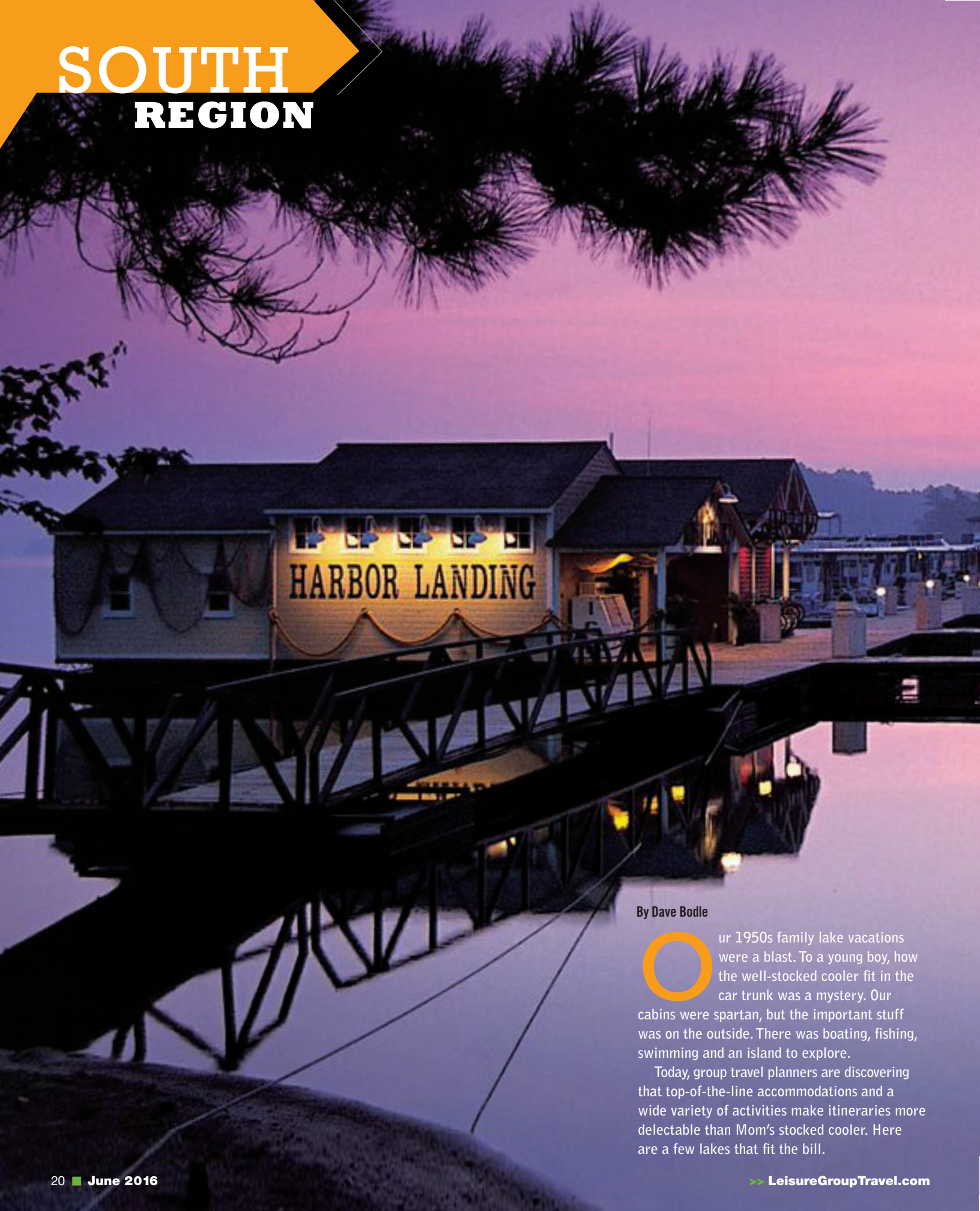
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# SOUTH REGION



By Dave Bodle

Our 1950s family lake vacations were a blast. To a young boy, how the well-stocked cooler fit in the car trunk was a mystery. Our cabins were spartan, but the important stuff was on the outside. There was boating, fishing, swimming and an island to explore.

Today, group travel planners are discovering that top-of-the-line accommodations and a wide variety of activities make itineraries more delectable than Mom's stocked cooler. Here are a few lakes that fit the bill.





# 7 Southern Lakes Making a Splash with Groups

*Always popular as places for family vacations, reunions, youth outings and faith-based retreats, lake destinations appeal to traditional senior groups as well*

## Lake Martin, Louisiana

Convenient to Lafayette and Breaux Bridge accommodations and restaurants, Lake Martin offers a wealth of daytime options for both the outdoor enthusiast and laid-back traveler. For the adventurous, a kayaking experience is waiting.

Local favorite **Pack & Paddle** will provide lessons for beginners and advanced paddlers. An early morning Lake Martin tour can be scheduled for groups. If you're more interested in the sights on land, a waterfall hike at Clark Creek can be organized. ([packpaddle.com](http://packpaddle.com))

Leisurely, guided swamp tours are available on eco-friendly boats. Both **Champagne's Cajun Swamp Tours** and **Cajun Country Swamp Tours** specialize in tours that feature low-wake boats. ([champagnesswamptours.com](http://champagnesswamptours.com) and [cajuncountryswamptours.com](http://cajuncountryswamptours.com))

Nearby, the **Cypress Island Visitor Center** and boardwalk is a must for birding enthusiasts. The rookery view from March through June is remarkable. Along the 2.5-mile walking levee visitors can experience all types of wildlife viewing.

## Lake Lanier, Georgia

Just 45 minutes north of Atlanta, it's as easy as a gentle lake breeze to build a Lake Lanier itinerary. It all begins on the water.

From stand-up paddleboards and kayaks to canoes and even pontoon boats, **Fishtales Watersports** provides rentals for every mode of lake exploration. The **Lake Lanier Olympic Venue** was home to the 1996 Olympic rowing, sprint canoe and kayaking competitions. Along with a boat ramp and beach, the 26-acre park has an amphitheater and picnic areas. Great fishing is found throughout the lake.

Off the water, the Lake Lanier area offers ziplines and canopy tours along with trails for hiking and biking. The **Stables at Lanier Islands Resort** features scenic trails for horseback riding along the lake.

More than a half dozen flag hotels, bed & breakfast inns and numerous lakeside cabins serve the area. **Don Carter State Park**, Georgia's newest and first on Lake Lanier, features well-equipped, comfortable cabins. The **Legacy Lodge & Conference Center** welcomes groups with lakefront accommodations and a full list of in-room and on-site amenities. Start planning at [discoverlakelanier.com](http://discoverlakelanier.com).

Georgia's Lake Lanier offers everything from fishing and paddleboarding to beach relaxation and waterfront dining. Or rent a pontoon boat for a lazy day afloat.





Explore Louisiana's Lake Martin with Pack & Paddle.

## Fontana Lake, North Carolina

Hardly a North Carolina secret, the 230-mile shoreline of Fontana Lake is nestled in the Great Smoky Mountains. The lake is a popular destination for fishing, boating and swimming. The 480-foot Fontana Dam, the highest east of the Rockies, is crossed by hikers on the Appalachian Trail.

**Fontana Guide Service Tours**, the perfect place to begin exploring the options at Fontana Lake, offers half- and full-day tours that feature the waterfalls, rivers and wildlife. Fall leaf tours are a distinctive way to experience foliage. If sight-seeing isn't your thing, try their guided fishing or swimming trips.

Bordering Great Smoky Mountains National Park, nearby **Bryson City, North Carolina** makes a good headquarters for your Fontana Lake experience. **Great Smoky Mountains Railroad** offers regular departures from Bryson City. The Nantahala Gorge trip crosses the historic Fontana Lake trestle. Gem mines, a heritage museum, biking, hiking, birding and nearby Cherokee will fill any Fontana Lake/Bryson City itinerary. Area restaurants serve family or buffet style; ambience ranges from sidewalk casual to white tablecloth. ([greatsmokies.com](http://greatsmokies.com))



Experience the Smokies on horseback at Fontana Lake.

## Dale Hollow Lake, Tennessee

Located in Byrdstown-Pickett County, Tennessee's smallest populated county, it's a popular getaway for both Knoxville and Nashville vacationers. Trophy fishing and tournaments and boating options are certainly features of a lake with 620 miles of shoreline. But much more awaits groups on the lake and in the surrounding area.

Leisure groups, from family reunions to outdoor enthusiasts, will find exactly what they need on Dale Hollow, one of America's best lakes for houseboating. Houseboat rentals that sleep from eight on the 50-foot Family Cruiser to 12 on the 84-foot Bigfoot II are available. Pick your pleasure at [houseboating.org/dale-hollow-lake-houseboat-rentals](http://houseboating.org/dale-hollow-lake-houseboat-rentals).

Off the lake there are scenic trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding. If shopping is on your itinerary, the **World's Largest Yard Sale** on the 127 Corridor (Aug. 4-7) passes through Pickett County. If history is your interest, include the **Cordell Hull Birthplace Museum and State Park**. The Nobel Peace Prize recipient was the longest-serving U.S. secretary of state and founder of the United Nations. The Borderline exhibit in the **Welcome Center at Pickett CCC Memorial State Park** is not to be missed. Start your planning at [dalehollow.com](http://dalehollow.com).

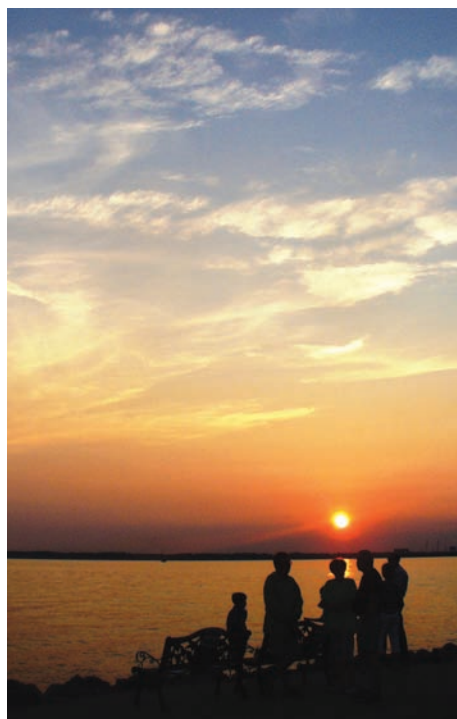


## Land Between the Lakes, Tennessee/Kentucky

When the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers were impounded, the ensuing lakes created the Land Between the Lakes (LBL). The area became the largest inland peninsula in the United States. That useful piece of information is surpassed by everything that's available to the more than two million annual visitors.

For the fishermen in the group, if one lake is good fishing, two must be great. This has to be an angler's paradise. Everything that floats, from jon boats to pontoon boats, are available for rent at a half dozen LBL marinas. The fish might not stand a chance. When you have your limit, there's still plenty to explore.

There are beaches, hiking, horseback riding and even an AVA track for the energetic. For those desiring a more leisurely pace, a visit to the 3.5-mile loop at the **Elk & Bison Prairie** shows the native habitat of these magnificent creatures. There's a little astronomer in all of us and that comes out at **Golden Pond Planetarium**. Recreating a 19th century Tennessee farm, **The Homeplace** has living history throughout the property.



There's an accommodation that's right for your group and plenty of other attractions to explore in the area.  
([landbetweenthelakes.com](http://landbetweenthelakes.com))

## Summerville Lake, West Virginia

This popular vacation lake has a light-house. Enough said! Convenient to Mt. Nebo, West Virginia via I-79 North, I-64 East or West and I-77 South, Summerville Lake has become a favorite of reunions and faith-based travelers. Regardless of the season you'll find the scenery spectacular.

Maybe the best way to enjoy the view is to kick back in a rented pontoon boat at **Summerville Lake Retreat**. These 10-passenger, family-friendly watercraft offer spacious, comfortable seating. Generous decks make swimming and diving and boarding effortless. You might even want to jump off and do a little hiking. Whitewater rafting is available year-round with scheduled dam releases.

Summerville Lake Retreat's A-Frame cabins, comfortable and fully equipped, are complete with satellite television and Wi-Fi. Camping areas are scattered throughout the lake area.

The Jetty at Grand Rivers, Kentucky overlooks Kentucky Lake in Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.












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## Lake Murray, South Carolina

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There must be something special about fishing Lake Murray. FLW

Outdoors has brought the "Super Bowl of Fishing," the Forrest Wood Cup, presented by Wal-Mart, to Lake Murray Country twice in the last decade. Choose a fishing guide or just rent a boat at **Aqua-Fun Boat Rentals and Tours**.

The 130-passenger **Spirit of Lake Murray** is a popular and relaxing way to explore scenic Lake Murray.

Off the water, Lake Murray Country offers much to see and do. There's plenty of history to experience in Columbia's historic house museums and gardens. Civil War buffs will certainly enjoy the **SC State Museum Confederate Relic Room**. The **Columbia Museum of Art** houses a distinctive collection of fine and decorative art. In the evening visitors can enjoy a Broadway show at the Kroger Center for the Arts or a performance at the historic **Newberry Opera House**. Discover itineraries at **lakemurraycountry.com**.



Groups at Lake Murray enjoy stand-up paddleboarding (above) and scenic sightseeing cruises.





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# TOP SIGHTSEEING CRUISES

**W**hether it's a tall ship adventure off the coast of Virginia or an old-time riverboat with fluted stacks and a cherry-red paddlewheel, cruising options abound in all parts of the South. The following boat trips will make a delightful addition to any group itinerary.



General Jackson  
Showboat

## Savannah Riverboat Cruises Savannah, Georgia

The Savannah River Queen and Georgia Queen, docked in Savannah's historic district, ply the Savannah River. Options include the 1½-hour "Harbor Sightseeing Cruise," which spotlights the city's history and its role as a modern port. On the two-hour "Dinner Entertainment Cruises," the buffet includes shrimp and grits, a carving station with beef top sirloin and much more. After dinner, guests can dance to tunes performed by one of the riverboat's own entertainers. ([savannahriverboat.com](http://savannahriverboat.com))

## Belle of Louisville Louisville, Kentucky

With a history going back to 1914, the oldest operating steamboat in the world offers sightseeing, lunch and dinner cruises on the Ohio River, departing from downtown's 4th Street Wharf at Waterfront Park. Meal cruises have live entertainment or a DJ. The Belle can accommodate up to 650 guests. A National Historic Landmark, the boat has a concession cafe, full-service bar and a calliope that belts out tunes that can be heard as far as four miles away. ([belleoflouisville.org](http://belleoflouisville.org))

## General Jackson Showboat Nashville, Tennessee

With a passenger capacity of 1,037, the General Jackson is one of the largest and grandest showboats ever built, its lacy filigree and stately design reminiscent of the Victorian era. The four-deck vessel offers mid-day, dinner and Sunday brunch cruises from Gaylord Opryland's Cumberland River dock. Evening and mid-day trips feature country music shows, while Sunday brunch includes old-time gospel and contemporary Christian music. ([generaljackson.com](http://generaljackson.com))

## Belle of Cincinnati Newport, Kentucky

Take a relaxing Ohio River cruise on this 1,000-passenger boat that boards right behind Newport Aquarium at Newport on the Levee, a dining/entertainment complex across the river from downtown Cincinnati. Cruise in ultimate comfort surrounded by lavish Victorian décor. One-hour sightseeing cruises, plus lunch, brunch and dinner cruises, are available. Each climate-controlled deck includes a full bar and dance floor. BB riverboats' smaller River Queen also cruises the Ohio. ([bbriverboats.com](http://bbriverboats.com))



## Steamboat Natchez and Creole Queen New Orleans, Louisiana

Two-hour cruises aboard the Steamboat Natchez depart from the heart of the French Quarter and feature commentary on local history and today's dynamic port activity. Passengers on the last authentic steamboat plying the Mississippi enjoy live jazz and a calliope concert, and they can tour the steam engine room. A Creole lunch buffet is optional. The 1,000-passenger Creole Queen paddlewheeler offers a three-hour "Historical River Cruise" to Jean Lafitte National Historical Park's Chalmette Battlefield, scene of the Battle of New Orleans, with narration by a costumed re-enactor. A one-hour shore excursion at the battlefield features a guided tour and talk by park rangers. The Steamboat Natchez and Creole Queen offer a jazz dinner cruise as well. ([steamboatnatchez.com](http://steamboatnatchez.com), [creolequeen.com](http://creolequeen.com))

## Yorktown Sailing Charters Yorktown, Virginia

In Virginia's Historic Triangle, not far from Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown, set sail on a tall ship adventure from the Riverwalk Landing Pier on the York River. Aboard the 49-passenger Schooner Alliance or 26-passenger Schooner Serenity, cruise past Yorktown Battlefield, sight dolphins or osprey, observe working watermen and even lend the sailors a hand. Pirate cruises feature cannon firings and crew in pirate costumes; kids have a chance to man the helm and raise the sails. Private charters are available. ([sailorytown.com](http://sailorytown.com))



Memphis Riverboats





Steamboat Natchez

## Memphis Riverboats Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis Riverboats' three-deck, 110-foot-long Memphis Queen III offers two-hour BBQ dinner cruises with buffet featuring Memphis-style pulled pork, grilled marinated chicken, coleslaw, baked beans, a vegetable and dessert. There's a dance floor and a house band that plays R&B, jazz and blues. The décor is classic Victorian riverboat style, complete with gingerbread trim and a main salon with twinkling lights, elegant drapes and flowered carpeting. The Island Queen, a 100-foot paddlewheeler, does narrated, 90-minute sightseeing cruises on the mighty Mississippi. Boarding is at the new Beale Street Landing. ([memphisriverboats.net](http://memphisriverboats.net))



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## Looking Ahead To Our August Issue

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## Fort Smith, Arkansas

# Fort Smith: A True Western Town!

## Day 1

Arrive in beautiful **Fort Smith** and then experience a one-of-a-kind prelude to the adventures waiting.

**Afternoon:** A guided tour through **Miss Laura’s Visitor Center** – the first former bordello to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Out of seven houses of ill-repute on “The Row” of Fort Smith’s red-light district during the early 1900’s, Miss Laura’s is the only one still remaining. With prior arrangements, Miss Laura will be in costume to greet the group and give the tour. Refreshments of sarsaparilla and peanuts are available, by request.

**Fort Smith Museum of History** – 150 years of Fort Smith history and its role in the early frontier, Civil War and lawlessness of the Old West. Experience the Darby Room and discover Fort Smith’s famous son and **World War II hero William O. Darby** and “**Darby’s Rangers**.” Enjoy an old-fashioned soda at the working drug store and soda fountain.

**Evening:** Barbecue dinner served on the banks of the **Arkansas River** at the River Park Events Building. **Miss Laura’s Players** will perform **The Medicine Show on Hanging Day**, an original comedy skit.

## Day 2

**Morning:** Driving tour of **Downtown Mural Art & Historic Fort Smith** with a step-on guide. You’ll learn more about the rough and tumble days of early Fort Smith, view the awe-inspiring murals painted by world-renowned mural artists along downtown’s Garrison Avenue and see the 22-square block **Belle Grove Historic District**, spanning 150

years of architecture. The entire area was added to the National Register of Historic Places in the 1970s. Some blocks are still paved with the original bricks. Tour the **Clayton House** (circa 1850s), which was the home of Judge Parker’s prosecuting attorney.

**Fort Smith National Historic Site** – tour Hangin’ Judge Isaac C. Parker’s Courtroom, the old jail known as “hell on the border,” and see a replica of the famed gallows where 79 men met their fate.

**Afternoon:** Lunch will be at **Taliano’s Italian Restaurant**, in the restored J. M. Sparks home built in 1887. This Romanesque Victorian-style home includes hand-carved fireplaces and original chandeliers.

Following lunch, it’s time to shake things up, Elvis Presley style. Visit the **Chaffee Barber Shop and Military Museums**. Learn the history of Fort Chaffee, built in 1941 to train World War II recruits. See the restored barber shop where many got their “buzz” cut, including Elvis Presley in 1958.

**Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center** – sitting on 170 acres of land that was once a part of Fort Chaffee, the center focuses on the wide variety of animals and birds that call the area home. In addition to resident Canada geese and small mammals and turtles that can be viewed here year round, colorful songbirds stop by on their journeys to and from wintering grounds farther south.

**BrickCity Emporium** – laidback atmosphere. Over 160 unique shops in one building, including: artisans, crafts, gifts, food & specialty items, and a cafe with sitting area.

**Evening:** Dinner at **Calico County** – a landmark of the Fort Smith area where you’ll enjoy tastes of down-home Southern cooking served in an environment with nostalgic ambiance.



### FORT SMITH CVB

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## Savannah, Georgia

# The Jewel of the South

## Day 1

**Take a Tour:** Get to know Savannah by experiencing a city tour, either on our period-style trolleys or with one of our highly trained step-on guides. The tour lasts about two hours and will help your group get better acquainted with our genteel Southern beauty. It will also give them a sample of the attractions they may want to explore later on their own. Be sure to stop at **The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist** along the tour route. It's free.

**Step Back in Time:** Savannah's past is told in the many house museums and cultural centers that populate the area. Visit the **birthplace of Juliette Gordon Low**, founder of the Girl Scouts; the **Owens-Thomas House**, featuring one of the few intact slave quarters in America; or the **Davenport House**, a fine example of Federal architecture. As an added activity, have breakfast or a wine & cheese reception in the Davenport House garden.

**Eat, Drink and Be Merry:** Your group covered a lot of ground on their first day and they may want to have a casual bite to eat before retiring for the evening. Savannah's historic River Street has all types of casual and upscale dining options. Seafood, steaks and light fare can all be found in the restored cotton warehouses that are home to some of Savannah's favorite restaurants and pubs. We can help you determine which restaurants are particularly group-friendly.

## Day 2

**Tybee Time:** Just 20 minutes from Savannah lies **Tybee Island**, a uniquely charmed island that offers a change of pace and taste. While there, take your group to the **Tybee Light Station**. Dating back to 1773, the lighthouse is one of America's most complete historic light stations. After the lighthouse, take the group to the nearby **Fort Pulaski National**

**Monument.** Built in 1829, the fort, which was under Robert E. Lee's command, came under a 30-hour siege by Union forces. You can still see the holes from that long-ago bombardment.

**Rolling on the River:** After lunch on Tybee, make your way back to the historic district to explore the Savannah River's natural beauty on the **Savannah Riverboat**. This two-hour excursion shows you the city from a unique perspective. You might even spy playful dolphins swimming alongside.

**Fright Night:** Discover why Savannah has repeatedly been named "America's Most Haunted City." There are numerous touring options to choose from, making this a great evening event for your group.

## Day 3

**Military Might:** Visit one of the world's most powerful museum experiences, the **National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force**. Located only minutes from historic downtown Savannah, where the Eighth Air Force was activated in 1942, the museum is dedicated to preserving the history of the "greatest air armada of all time." Hear stories of bravery, experience a bomber mission and briefing, and see the ongoing restoration of the World War II B-17 Flying Fortress "City of Savannah" in the Combat Gallery.

**Fun at the Forts:** From its beginning, Savannah has been fortified to protect its residents and strategic port. This morning, there are several exciting forts to visit including **Old Fort Jackson** and **Fort Pulaski**. Your group won't want to miss the afternoon cannon firings at each.

**It's Showtime!** Your group's final night in Savannah is sure to be a memorable one as they experience one of the city's theater presentations. They will be amazed by the abundance of talent that prevails in our small city.

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Virginia Beach, Virginia

## Live The Coastal Life

### Day 1

#### Cape Henry Lighthouses

**PM** – Begin your adventure by exploring **First Landing State Park** and the **Cape Henry Lighthouses**. Your senses will come alive taking in the scenic view where the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean meet. Climb the lighthouse, then journey through the park and learn how to catch a crab in the bay. Have dinner as the sun sets over the Chesapeake Bay at the **Lynnhaven Fish House**, **Bubba's** or **Chick's Oyster Bar** for some fresh catch of the day. Or, for the freshest of eats, pull your dinner right from the Lynnhaven Inlet on a Waterman's Oyster Tour with **Pleasure House Oysters**. If you have some left over energy, head back to **First Landing State Park** for a night owl hunt in the park.

### Day 2

#### Outdoor Adventure and Military Aviation

**AM** – Start your day right with a delicious breakfast at **Doc Taylor's**. Then embark on a kayak adventure in **Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge** with **Surf and Adventure Co.** Stick around for a guided tour and the *Eco-Wildlife Safari*. Don't forget your picnic lunch provided by **Black Angus Grille**.

**PM** – It's **SwingTime in the Skies** with a trip to the **Military Aviation Museum**. Enjoy a WWII period tour and meet Rosie the Riveter or a Mustang Fighter Pilot. Spend some free time on the boardwalk before heading to dinner at the oceanfront.

**Rockafeller's, Waterman's Surfside Grille or Catch 31** — there are so many great restaurants, it's hard to choose.

### Day 3

#### Explore the Oceanfront by Bike

**AM** – Meet your guide with **Chesapean Outdoors** at **King Neptune's Statue** at 31st Street and Atlantic Avenue. Bring your energy and quest for adventure — they'll supply the bikes and the tour.

**PM** – Grab lunch at **Rudee's** overlooking Rudee Inlet and head for the **Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center** to learn all about the local marine wildlife on a *Marine Mystery*. Challenge yourself with an Aerial Adventure on the ropes course at **The Adventure Park**. Then it's time to choose your favorite: stand up paddleboard, hop in a kayak or hang ten with surf lessons. Or maybe you want to relax at the **Edgar Cayce's A.R.E. Spa** with a two-hour massage. Either way, it won't be an easy choice.

### Day 4

#### Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel

**AM** – What will it be this morning – a dolphin cruise, sea kayaking or a relaxing morning on the beach? Before going home, visit one of the seven engineering wonders of the modern world, the **Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel**, and enjoy lunch right in the middle of the Bay at the **Chesapeake Grill**. Don't forget to pick up a gift at **Virginia's Originals**.



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**N**orfolk is host to the annual festival favorite, Harborfest. Each June Norfolk celebrates nautical history by displaying tall ships, along with maritime events, entertainment, delicious food and a spectacular fireworks display all along the downtown waterfront. Itinerary highlights include the Parade of Sails, tall ship tours, Chrysler Museum of Art and Norfolk Botanical Garden.

## Norfolk, Virginia

# Tall Ships, Entertainment & Food - Enjoy Norfolk's Annual Harborfest®

## Day 1

The **Hampton Roads Naval Museum** introduces you to over 200 years of naval history in Hampton Roads. Located next to Nauticus is the **Battleship Wisconsin**, the largest and last battleship ever built by the U.S. Navy.

Come aboard the **Spirit of Norfolk** for the **Parade of Sails**. Watch tall ships sail down the Elizabeth River in a spectacular two-hour parade. You will have the best view of the harbor, with 200 boats and vessels to see, as well as several tall ships.

Afterwards, come explore an outdoor festival on the water at **Harborfest**. Enjoy live music and great food accompanied by art and educational programs. Tall ships are open for tours after the Parade of Sails for visitors to explore the decks and talk to sailors.

## Day 2

Stroll through the streets of Ghent, a National Historic District and one of Norfolk's most charming neighbors. Explore Ghent's unique blend of locally-owned boutique stores, fine restaurants and cafés. Tucked into Ghent is Virginia's first urban winery. Taste a flight of wines at **Mermaid Winery**, where you can view the winemaking process from the tasting bar.

Tour the **Douglas MacArthur Memorial** and discover the compelling story of General Douglas MacArthur, a five-star general of the Army, and the millions of Americans who served our nation through five wars. Located in downtown Norfolk's restored 1850s City Hall, the complex contains a museum, theater and special exhibit galleries.

Stroll over to **Granby Street**, just one block

walking distance from Harborfest. Experience over 30 locally owned and operated restaurants from American bistro to tapas to Mexican.

Head back over to **Town Point Park** for **Harborfest** and enjoy over 50 food vendors, live concerts on three stages and fireworks along the downtown waterfront. Do not forget you can jump aboard the **Victory Rover** or **Spirit of Norfolk** for the best seats in the house for the fireworks!

## Day 3

Take a fun-filled boat ride at **Norfolk Botanical Garden** and explore the waterways or stroll the gardens and discover a variety of plants from the cultivated to the wild. Shop till you drop and enjoy a leisurely lunch at **MacArthur Center** with over 70 retailers anchored by Nordstrom and Dillard's.

Head to **Hermitage Museum and Gardens**. Formerly home to the Sloane family, the Hermitage is "home to the arts" with a nationally recognized art collection spanning 5,000 years. Art includes contemporary exhibition galleries, working artist studios and 12 acres of gardens and grounds.

## Day 4

Before you depart for home, head to **Chrysler Museum of Art**, recently expanded and renovated with new galleries and engaging programs to bring the collection to life. Enjoy 5,000 years of art in one of the country's most impressive museums, featuring a newly expanded restaurant, library, gift shop and theater.

Please see our website for a list of newest itineraries at [www.visitnorfolktoday.com](http://www.visitnorfolktoday.com)

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**T**aste the best of Fredericksburg with visits to a fun winery, cool distillery, top brewery and great restaurants. Sip and see how good wine, beer and whiskey are made, and meet winemakers, master distillers and brewers. Learn to pair Virginia wines with food. Stroll and shop historic downtown filled with boutiques, antiques and confections. Take a trolley tour in one of America's most historic small towns. Take a candlelight tour of a Colonial tavern.

## Fredericksburg, Virginia

# Sip and Savor Fredericksburg

## Day 1

**Fredericksburg** is not only one of America's most historic small towns, it's one of the most fun and tasty. What better way to start your visit than **Potomac Point Winery** where you will taste award-winning wines and get a special guided tour. Dinner this evening is downtown at **Kybecca**, specializing in craft cocktails, wine and modern Virginia cuisine. We'll end our day with a candlelight tour of an authentic Colonial favorite, **Rising Sun Tavern**, where the tavern wench will acquaint us with the meaning of early colloquialisms such as "sleep tight" and "don't bite off more than you can chew."

## Day 2

We'll start the day freewheeling on a fun **trolley tour** of the historic downtown. A major Civil War battle was fought here and George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe and even Abraham Lincoln walked its streets. Bring your appetite along to **Capital Ale House** where we will have a private cooking demonstration and lunch. Afterwards you can stroll off a few calories **downtown** browsing the boutiques, antique shops and art galleries. It's back on the bus for a quick ride into the country for a wine tasting and tour at **Mattaponi Winery** before coming back to town for dinner and a show at the **Riverside Center for the Performing Arts**.

## Day 3

Craft breweries are springing up all over Virginia creating a demand for a key ingredient, hops. We begin our morning with a visit to an area **hops farm** and learn how this blossom is cultivated. Naturally, we want to see how hops are used so our next stop is at **Spencer Devon Brewery**. Tours and flighted tastings will be available and we'll also have a delicious and fun lunch specially prepared by head chef Justin Cunningham. George Washington grew up right across the river from Fredericksburg. We'll tour his homestead, **Ferry Farm**, and learn what archaeologists are discovering about what the Washington family grew and ate. Mid-afternoon calls for refreshment at **Carl's Ice Cream**, a National Historic Landmark serving old-fashioned frozen custard. Next up is a fascinating look at how premium spirits are made at **Bowman Distillery**. A tour with the master distiller will be followed by a tasting of some of his outstanding product. Save room for a bountiful German dinner at the **Bavarian Chef**, housed in the historic Fredericksburg Train Depot.

*Fredericksburg*  
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# IOWA



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GROUP TRAVEL



ON THE TRAIL OF

# Grant Wood

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



**I**nspired 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*

**F**rom 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*



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.



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

*Travel Iowa*



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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.

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 wiener schnitzel. 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.

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.

For a taste of Europe in the Midwest, Iowa offers all the right ingredients.



Travel Iowa

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

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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

**I**n 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

**I**n 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*

**M**arvel 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

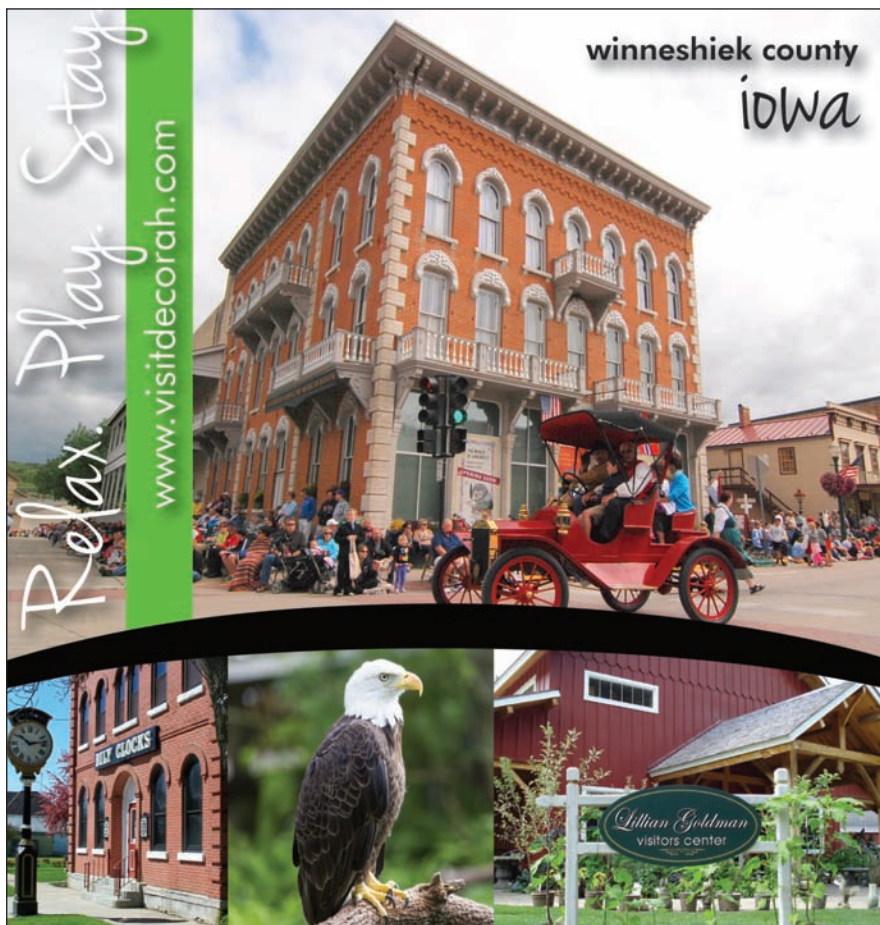
In Council Bluffs, tour the beautifully restored home of Civil War veteran and railroad builder, General Grenville M. Dodge. Then travel to Adams County where we'll learn about the French immi-

grants' 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.



Manning Hausbarn Heritage Park



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# IOWA ARTS AND MUSIC FESTIVALS

**W**ill 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://newboartfest.com))

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

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# CENTRAL REGION

The Milwaukee RiverWalk provides access to some of the city's best restaurants, brewpubs and nightlife.

## MIDWEST RIVER WALKS

### RIVERSIDE PROMENADES OVERFLOW WITH POSSIBILITIES FOR URBAN TOUR ITINERARIES

By Miles Dobis

**N**o matter how many group trips you've planned or how organized your party is, it's always a challenge to budget time. You want to experience everything a city has to offer while simplifying the logistics of transportation and meals. River walks often combine historical landmarks, museums, public parks and easy access to downtown.

Happily, most of the riverside sight-seeing is free. Simply park in one location and your group can spend hours exploring the culture and history of great cities built on commerce—and get in some exercise while they're at it!

Here are nine Midwest cities with exceptional river walks filled with surprises around every bend.

Visit Milwaukee



Scioto Mile riverfront park in downtown Columbus, Ohio



Experience Columbus

Stone Arch Bridge, a pedestrian pathway in Minneapolis



Meet Minneapolis

## Chicago

Spanning six blocks along the Chicago River with views of the city's famous bridges, this river walk features bars, restaurants and leisure activities with a new theme for each block. Walk along the south side of the river and admire famous landmarks like the **Wrigley Building** and **Tribune Tower**. Rental bikes are available for riding along the river and nearby Lake Michigan shoreline, and river kayaking tours are growing in popularity. Docent-led architecture cruises, another hot ticket, showcase internationally renowned buildings that stud Chicago's skyline. Dining options on the water include **O'Briens**, a tribute to Chicago's Irish heritage with pub fare and hearty ales, and **City Winery**, a relaxed Italian trattoria with Mediterranean specialties and cheese plates in addition to wines from around the world.

## Davenport, Iowa

Dozens of acres of recreation space are included in Davenport's Mississippi riverfront area. Community bike and hiking trails can take your group through the Quad Cities on both shores of the Mississippi River, with stops for nature spotting in **Sunset Park** and **Credit Island**. For a trip on the water, take a cruise on the **Channel Cat Water Taxi**. Captains will guide your group through Davenport's history as a riverboat city and through the choppy waters once known as Rock River Rapids. On the river's north shore is **LeClaire Park**, a dedicated recreation area over 100 years old and host to festivals and athletic events throughout the year. Even if your group is in town when there are no festivals, be sure to stop by the park's **W.D. Petersen Music Pavilion**, an imposing concrete band shell with Mediterranean architectural touches, and **Modern Woodmen Park**, home to the minor league Quad City River Bandits. For spectacular views of the entire region, your group should experience the **Skybridge**, a kaleidoscopic tunnel in the air with thousands of LED lights to create a unique color scheme for each visit.

## Indianapolis

Looking to enjoy a gondola ride that sails under Venetian-style bridges without the flight to Italy? **Indianapolis Canal Walk** features waterside cafés, public parks and live concerts that replicate a European metropolis with Midwestern hospitality. Dug 200 years ago as an offshoot of the White River, the canal is now bordered by a 3-mile stretch of pedestrian walkways. Kayaks, paddleboats and other watercraft are available to rent, and bicycle and Segway tours are available for groups to explore the nearby **Ransom Place** neighborhood. Follow the canal farther south and your group will find a variety of activities in **White River State Park**. Here you'll find an entire campus full of activities, such as **Eiteljorg Museum** and its collection of Native American artifacts, the historic civil war camp of **Military Park** and the internationally renowned exhibits of the **Indianapolis Zoo**.

## Minneapolis/Saint Paul

The Mississippi River begins in Minnesota and makes its first major stop by creating the border between the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and Saint Paul. On both sides your group will find plenty of riverside activities in the cities' acclaimed public parks and culinary scene. Those interested in French colonial history and Victorian architecture should explore **Nicolett Island**, home to preserved frontier inns and horse-drawn carriage rides. Foodies in your group will want to make a stop in the **Mill District** neighborhood, where they can sample pasta hand-made in the historic Chase Building and a taste of Minnesota's Scandinavian heritage with pastries and breads. To burn off all the calories, walk over the **Stone Arch Bridge** and through **Saint Anthony Main**, once a milling district and now a revitalized riverfront street with brew pubs, boutiques and a movie theater. Farther upstream is **Boom River Park**, which features spectacular views of Minneapolis' skyline and famous miniature lighthouse.



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## Milwaukee

Walk along the same shores Native American and French fur traders did on this nearly 2-mile route that winds along the Milwaukee River. Stops along the water include the city's theater district, where your group can see Milwaukee's symphony, ballet company or a children's show. Take time to pose with the statue of Fonzie from TV's *Happy Days*. The **Historic Third Ward** has become a hub for artists and musicians, and here your group can stop in nearly 20 galleries and studio spaces. Farther north along the river is **Brewer's Hill**, the site where Pabst, Schlitz and Blatz used the river water in their beer. Your travelers will find brew pubs with stunning water views such as **Wolf Peach**, which features European comfort food and house microbrews.

## Detroit

A tributary between Lake St. Clair and the much larger Lake Erie, the Detroit River forms the shoreline for the Motor City and is home to miles of pedestrian walkways that straddle the river and downtown. Your group will pass by **William G. Milliken State Park**, originally a wetland and now a restored greenspace with sailboat marinas, and **Hart Plaza**, home to the renowned Detroit Jazz Festival. The must-see attraction on the river, however, is **Belle Isle**, an expansive 982-acre island park where the city's 19th century upper class would walk through the botanical gardens and boat through the canals. Now open to everyone and just a ferry boat trip away, the island has enough historic sites and activities to fill an entire day, including an aquarium, yacht club and forest for hiking.

## Columbus

Cutting through the heart of Ohio's thriving capital, the Scioto River is surrounded on both sides by the ever-expanding **Scioto Mile** riverfront park. The 145-acre promenade, which stretches over a mile through Columbus' historic neighborhoods, features sculptures to admire, benches to rest on and interactive fountains to explore, all for free. **Bicentennial Park**, located on the Mile's southern edge, has a permanent band shell and riverfront café perfect for al fresco dining, and **Genoa Park** offers stunning views of the downtown skyline ideal for group photos. Placed at the scenic bend of the river and overlooking the entire Mile is **COSI Columbus**, an interactive science museum with over 300 exhibits designed for younger learners.

# TOP SIGHTSEEING CRUISES

**D**oes your group want an outing with food, scenery and music all with one reservation? Sightseeing cruises are great ways to explore a region, and offerings can be as relaxed or energetic as your group prefers. Consider these cruise options on the rivers and lakes of the Midwest.

### Spirit of Peoria, Peoria, Illinois

Evoking the style of vessels from the Mark Twain era, this paddleboat takes travelers down the scenic Illinois River watershed. Groups looking for extended journeys can try the multi-day cruises, which include visits to historic Springfield, the hiking trails of Starved Rock State Park and Mark Twain's hometown of Hannibal, Missouri. Those looking for a shorter excursion can opt for the murder mystery dinner or late-night moonlight trip. ([spiritofpeoria.com](http://spiritofpeoria.com))



### Riverboat Twilight, LeClaire, Iowa

Sail the same waters plied by French traders and American explorers on the boat's signature cruise, a 2-day trip from LeClaire to Dubuque with meals, scenic narration and time to take in Iowa's Mississippi River shoreline. Captain Kevin Stier is nationally regarded and can show your group aquatic wildlife and historical landmarks. Overnight is at the riverfront Grand Harbor Resort in Dubuque. One-day cruises also are available. ([riveboatstnight.com](http://riveboatstnight.com))

### Celebration Belle, Moline, Illinois

Want to twist the night away on a summer evening? This vessel offers the Classic Oldies Cruise, with '50s rock 'n' roll classics and line dancing, among many other themed events. Evenings based on Oktoberfest, Broadway and country music are all available for your group to enjoy as they glide down the Mississippi River on this immense three-story boat. There's ample space for dancing, dining and admiring the riverfront on a cruiser that offers everything from afternoon scenic trips to multi-day excursions through the Mississippi wetlands. ([celebrationbelle.com](http://celebrationbelle.com))

### Goodtime III, Cleveland, Ohio

Sail along Lake Erie and past the C-Town skyline on the city's largest excursion ship. Favorite cruises include the Dance Under the Stars, where your group can party to rock and pop with a full-service bar, and the Saturday City Lights Cruise, where a DJ can provide the soundtrack for gorgeous views of Cleveland's illuminated skyscrapers. Private charters are available for large groups, and morning brunches are a great way to pack in both a meal and a view. ([goodtime3.com](http://goodtime3.com))



### Odyssey Cruises, Chicago

Launching from Chicago's Navy Pier, this fleet of triple-decker yachts offers journeys for any time frame and budget. Picture windows and decks on every floor provide views of Chicago's stunning skyline, while dance floors and lounge areas inside can make your voyage as intimate or raucous as you'd like. Specialty events include the Craft Brew Cruise, which focuses on Illinois beer and liquor, and voyages perfectly timed to view Navy Pier's fireworks. ([odysseycruises.com](http://odysseycruises.com))





## Omaha

Famed explorers Lewis and Clark passed through what is now known as Omaha while traveling to the Pacific coast, and the Missouri River's shore has several museums and parks named in their honor. While walking along Omaha's pedestrian paths, your group can pass through Lewis and Clark Landing, which features an expansive boardwalk perfect for picnic lunches and views of Council Bluffs, Iowa from across the river. Nearby is the **National Lewis and Clark Historic Trail Visitor Center**, featuring artifacts from the pair's expedition and exhibits on westward expansion. Farther south along the river is **Heartland of America Park**, a 31-acre space filled with biking and hiking trails and boat trips on the General Marion, which takes visitors to the center of **ConAgra Lake** to watch resident swans named Romeo and Juliet by day and spectacular fountain light shows by night.



Omaha CVB

## Cincinnati

Along the shores of the Ohio River lies a cluster of facilities perfect for families and sports fans. **Paul Brown Stadium** and the **Great American Ballpark**, home to the Cincinnati Bengals and Reds, bookend **Smale Riverfront Park**, a new area designed with families in mind. Interactive art installations, labyrinths and fountains will occupy children for hours, while adults in your party can admire Cincinnati's famed suspension bridges or play a game of chess on an enormous board. Straddling the two stadiums is **Freedom Way**, a restored block filled with restaurants to watch the game and spacious decks to look at the neighboring Kentucky shoreline. **LGT**

From Heartland of America Park in Omaha, catch a dazzling light show featuring the fountain's 320-foot-high water jet. Right: Cincinnati's Smale Riverfront Park overlooks the Ohio River.



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McHenry County, Illinois

## Boards, Bonbons and Brew

### Day 1

#### Crystal Lake – Fox River Grove – Wonder Lake

The adventure begins at The **Quarry Cable Park & Grille**, a 32-acre cable wake park in Crystal Lake with a full loop course for experienced riders, plus two straight courses primarily for beginners. Attracting wake boarders of all skill levels, the Quarry has the most water features in North America and the longest ride of its shape in the United States. Additionally, The Quarry was selected, along with 13 of the best cable parks in America, as a host location for Liquid Force's 2016 Free For All cable series. Plan group lessons or watch all the action in their private event space. Full restaurant is available.

Looking for more adrenaline-filled excitement? Schedule a tour and demonstration at the **Norge Ski Club**. The ski jump, towering 150 feet above the Fox River in Fox River Grove, is the only year-round facility of its kind. Indoor viewing area and clubhouse are available for private lunches and dinners.

For dinner, fuel up at **Georgio's Chicago Pizzeria & Pub** in Crystal Lake. Georgio's was voted the best pizza in McHenry County and selected as one of the top 100 independent pizzerias in the country.

End the day with a performance by the **Wonder Lake Water Ski Show Team**. Four-time National Champions, the team has placed in the top five in the nation every year since 1996. See free performances on most Fridays at 7 p.m., Memorial Day through Labor Day. Or book a private performance (pricing varies).



#### VISIT McHENRY COUNTY

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### Day 2

#### Woodstock – McHenry – Algonquin – Richmond – Cary

Heart-racing excitement also begins with chocolate! Begin the day at **Ethereal Confections** in Woodstock. Ethereal is a bean-to-bar chocolatier, meaning the chocolate is prepared in-house, right from the cocoa bean. The cafe features a full beer, wine and spirits menu, as well as locally roasted coffees, artisanal cheeses and pre-defined pairings. For groups of 25 or more, part of the group may tour the 1889 **Woodstock Opera House** and enjoy boutique shopping on the **Historic Woodstock Square** while the others sample the chocolates.

Enjoy lunch at **The Public House**, located on the bottom level of the Old Courthouse Arts Center on the square in Woodstock. The building served as the McHenry County Courthouse until 1972 and houses an art gallery. An original jail cell remains in the restaurant.

Board the motorcoach and head to **Chain O'Lakes Brewery** in McHenry for a sampling of craft brew. This brewery is housed in the historic building where McHenry County's first brewery got its start in 1868. Or plan a stop at **Scorched Earth Brewing Company** in Algonquin. Plan a tour of their production brewery, then sample what's on tap.

Time for more sweets! Stop in **Anderson's Candy Shop** in Richmond, a family-owned chocolate shop that began creating sweet treats in 1919.

Hungry for more? Wrap up the day at the **Village Vintner Winery and Brewery** in Algonquin. With great beer and even better wine, the Village Vintner also offers a complete dining menu.

Or, plan a dinner at **Cary Ale House and Brewing Company** with locally-sourced menu items, homemade sauces and some of the best fried cheese curds around.





**W**isconsin Dells has long been a destination for group tours looking for exciting activities and incredible accommodations. With the largest concentration of waterparks in the world, Wisconsin Dells has earned its reputation as “The Waterpark Capital of the World!®” From gorgeous scenery to exciting activities, scenic tours, live entertainment, dining, and shopping, Wisconsin Dells is one place everyone will agree on. Itinerary highlights include the famous Tommy Bartlett water ski show, scenic boat tours on the Wisconsin River, magic shows, theatrical performances and Circus World.

## Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

# Family Fun in “The Waterpark Capital of The World!®”

## Day 1

They don’t call us “The Waterpark Capital of the World!®” for nothing. Here you’ll find Wisconsin’s largest indoor waterpark (**Kalahari Resorts & Conventions**), America’s largest outdoor waterpark (**Noah’s Ark Waterpark**), the nation’s largest combination indoor/outdoor waterpark resort (**Wilderness Hotel & Golf Resort**), and the highest concentration of waterparks on the globe. And be sure not to miss out on the expansive indoor/outdoor waterparks at resorts like **Chula Vista Resort** and **Mt. Olympus Theme Park & Water Park**. In the Dells, you’ll find every kind of water ride and slide there is – from extreme plunge slides to racing speed slides, and massive wave pools to lazy rivers – more than 200 waterslides in all. There’s no doubt, when it comes to putting the biggest splash in family fun, no place compares to Wisconsin Dells.

## Day 2

A great way to relax after a day at the waterparks is to take in one of the area’s entertaining live shows. The famous **Tommy Bartlett Show** is a must. It’s been entertaining families – rain or shine – for over 60 years with its daredevil skiers, death-defying acrobats, and hilarious stage acts. Another favorite is the 90-minute, family-friendly magic extravaganza at the **Rick Wilcox Magic Theater**. Other entertainment options include live music, lumberjack show, wildlife parks and the newly opened **Palace Theater in the Dells**, which plays host to nationally recognized comedians, musical acts and Broadway-quality plays.

## Day 3

Get in on the action at one of the Dells’ many interactive attractions. The **Tommy Bartlett Exploratory – Interactive Science Center** features over 150 hands-on exhibits, including the Original Russian Space Station MIR and NASA’s Mercury Space Capsule. Or experience **Wizard Quest**, an interactive fantasy game where you search for clues to free Wizards. Another family favorite is **MagiQuest/ShadowQuest at Great Wolf Lodge**, a full-size adventure game that sends participants straight into a mythical Renaissance world. Other interactive attractions include historic and eclectic museums, game centers and paint-it-yourself pottery shops.

## Day 4

No Dells vacation would be complete without a land and water tour on one of the “Ducks,” amphibious WWII vehicles that showcase the beautiful sandstone bluffs that made the Dells famous. The photographs taken of these bluffs by 19th century photographer H.H. Bennett are what first brought visitors to this area over 150 years ago. Tour his 1875 photography studio, now a Wisconsin Historical site with 6,000 feet of interactive exhibits, at the **H.H. Bennett Studio** in downtown Dells. History buffs will also need to consider **Circus World** in nearby Baraboo a must see. Once home to the Ringling Bros. Circus, this Wisconsin Historical Site still has original Ringling Bros. buildings packed with memorabilia. End your trip on a relaxing note at **International Crane Foundation**, a must for nature enthusiasts of all ages, as it’s the only place in the world to see all 15 species of cranes.



### WISCONSIN DELLS VCB

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**I**n Wisconsin, a state surrounded by two great lakes and a mighty river with 15,000 lakes in between, exploring the waterways is easy with cruises on pontoons, sightseeing boats, paddle wheelers and the original WWII amphibious “DUCK” rides. You’ll find world-class museums, amazing architecture and beautiful scenery from rolling rural vistas to urban surprises. Craft breweries, distilleries and wineries abound. And Wisconsin has some of the best Native American casinos in the nation.

## Great Lakes and Rivers

# Wisconsin Waterways

## Day 1:

Begin your trek around the state exploring the **lighthouses** along Lake Michigan. Visit one of the lighthouses of Kenosha, Milwaukee and Racine, including Wind Point, the oldest and tallest working lighthouse on the lake. Over 300 **shipwrecks** are documented in the Great Lakes, and Manitowoc County has about 50 of them. Head to the largest cattail marsh in the world – **Horicon Marsh** – and enjoy an informative birdwatching and wildlife-infused pontoon ride. Enjoy a beautiful sunset and dining at an iconic Wisconsin supper club.

## Day 2:

Head north to the resort area of Green Lake to enjoy the historic Main Streets, including a visit to the **birthplace of the Republican Party** in Ripon. Continue on to Wisconsin Rapids to explore one of the many **cranberry marshes**. Your group will enjoy a stop at **JuRustic Park** in Marshfield, with over 250 folk art sculptures displayed in one man’s yard. Tonight catch a performance of the **nation’s oldest waterski show team** in Minocqua.

## Day 3:

The morning begins with a visit to walk among the deer, feed the animals and, coming soon, a safari ride through the northwoods of Wisconsin.

**Option A:** Continue north and cruise on over to **Madeline Island** to experience island life on Lake Superior. Tonight take in some gaming at the northern tip of the state.

**Option B:** Head southwest for your final destination, the Mississippi River. Enjoy a scenic train ride in Spooner, an area that highlights the **Namekagon River**, which is part of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Continue south to Eau Claire, the Kubb Capital of the U.S.

## Day 4:

**Option A:** Explore the region with a visit to the Great Lakes Visitor Center and to the city of Ashland.

**Option B:** Travel the Great River Road along the Mississippi. Enjoy this scenic drive as you head to the **Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe**, located on one of the many bluffs along the river. End your day with a tour of **Prairie du Chien**, the oldest European settlement on the Upper Mississippi River.

CIRCLE  
**WISCONSIN**

### CIRCLE WISCONSIN

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CircleWisconsin.com





**T**his is a foodie lover's dream trip to the heart of America, where new and seasoned talented chefs, bakers and brewers create dishes and spaces that instill travelers with the sweetest of experiences. This tour combines learning firsthand how independent establishments from three areas of Western Illinois create their goods, with sampling and consuming a delightful palate of signature sweet and savory offerings.

## Quincy Area, Illinois

# Curated Culinary & Shopping Tour

## Day 1:

Begin at **Underbrink's Bakery**, where Leroy entertains with a behind-the-scenes tour of his working German bakery, which opened in 1929. Many of the original "formulas" are still in use today, as well as some of the antique equipment. The Quincy bakery is beloved for its Angel Food Cupcakes, Nut Rolls and Radio Rolls—all made with buttercream icing. Enjoy a trio sampler fresh from the oven.

Continue to Quincy's historic "Calf Town" to the **Quincy Steamboat Company**, a well-stocked kitchen accessories store equipped with a complete teaching kitchen. Stock up on specialty ingredients and gifts before gathering around the prep area for an interactive cooking hour, followed by a light brunch.

Now to the local "greasy spoon," the **Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop**, a Quincy icon since 1928 and home to the loose meat sandwich, crispy crinkle-cut fries, homemade milk shakes and cream pies. Food Network's Alton Brown learned the ropes in the kitchen here in 2007.

Relax on the scenic drive to **Nauvoo, Illinois** along the winding **Great River Road**, following the curve of the upper Mississippi. Nauvoo is recognized as a National Historic Landmark District. Shop the quaint venues of Mulholland Street, including a hand-blown glass shop, homemade fudge at **The Fudge Factory** and **The Red Brick Store** in the "Flats." See the sights on a complimentary horse-drawn wagon ride through town before feasting at the **Hotel Nauvoo**. The bountiful buffet features Southern fried chicken, carved roast beef and the inn's signature wild rice dressing.

Enjoy a nightcap at Illinois' oldest winery, **Baxter's Vineyards & Barrel Room**, before returning to Quincy to retire for the evening.

## Day 2:

Fun start at **Krazy Cakes** with a bacon-topped French toast muffin, or the cafe's house-made biscuits and gravy. Walk to Maine Street and peruse the vintage shops before arriving at **Grown-N-Gathered**, an indoor farmer's market and foodie paradise.

Head to **O'Griff's Grill & Brew House** across from Quincy's historic Washington Park, the home of the sixth Lincoln-Douglas Debate of 1858. O'Griff's is Quincy's only micro-brewery and offers a behind-the-scenes tour. Imbibe in a sampler flight of their signature flavors.

Stroll to Jail Alley and **Bittersweet Confections**. Chef Michael conjures the most delectable truffles bearing names such as "The Prime Minister" - smoky cigar leaves steeped in cream and dark chocolate ganache.

Make a quick stop at **Winking's Market**, Quincy's corner mom & pop grocery and deli since 1948. Choose from a traditional selection of cold cuts, or their signature hot roast beef or barbecue sandwiches. Enjoy on the road to Pike County.

Arrive at the historic **William Watson Hotel** in Pittsfield, Illinois, where Abe Lincoln slumbered. The restored boutique hotel lies in the heart of this historic little town, one of the 15 stops on the **Lincoln Talking House Tour**. Shop the quaint spaces surrounding the square and drive the tour, culminating at **Nucci's Pasta House**.

Retire for the night at the William Watson and rise to fine coffee and pastries in the adjacent **Free Press Coffee House** before returning to the road.



## QUINCY AREA CVB

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SeeQuincy.com





**W**elcome to the Central Nebraska Flyway where you'll experience the majestic sound of more than 500,000 Sandhill cranes as they rest before continuing on their migration. It's an amazing spectacle you'll remember for years. Central Nebraska also has thousands of acres of farmland making it the "breadbasket to the world." Taste delicious foods prepared using fresh, locally grown ingredients and be sure to experience the many varieties of microbrews that'll leave you wanting more.

**Visit Nebraska.  
Visit Nice®**

#### VISIT NEBRASKA

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VisitNebraska.com/group\_travel

## Central Nebraska

# We're All Seeing Cranes!

## Day 1

We begin in Grand Island with lunch at **The Chocolate Bar**. Afterward, we'll spend a leisurely afternoon exploring **historic downtown Grand Island** and its many specialty shops. Next stop is our hotel where we'll freshen up before the evening's Sandhill cranes program given by an experienced guide at the **1937 Art-Deco Grand Theatre** followed by a tour of the historic building. Afterward, we'll dine in one of Grand Island's many fine restaurants before returning to our hotel.

## Day 2

Today starts off with a hearty "to go" breakfast and a sunrise tour at **Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center**, where a trained guide will accompany us to a prime viewing area along the Platte River. We'll learn about the Sandhill cranes and the Crane Trust's programs to protect and study migratory birds. Afterward, we'll return to the visitor center to explore its art gallery and gift shop before heading to the viewing tower and river bridge. Make sure not to miss the bison herd. Back in Grand Island our first stop will be at **Fonner Park**, where **Raising Nebraska**, a new museum, connects consumers with farmers by explaining the steps from "farm to fork."

After lunch we head to north Grand Island to visit **Nebraska Mushroom**, a business that specializes in gourmet and medicinal mushrooms. A delicious glass of Nebraska wine awaits us at **Moonlight Ridge Vineyard**. Our last stop in Grand Island is **Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer**, a living history museum that takes us back to the early settlement days of Nebraska. We depart Grand Island for Hastings where we'll check into our hotel before dinner.

## Day 3

We start off our morning at the **Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History**. Meet the Kool-Aid Man and learn about the drink's Nebraska roots before exploring the universe in the museum's Planetarium.

A costumed guide will regale us with stories of Hastings' past as we make our way to the historic downtown district. The **Fountain to Fountain** tour includes 27 historic sites along Lincoln Avenue. We'll enjoy a private lunch, demonstration and tour at the **Back Alley Bakery**. After lunch, we'll taste an array of wines and craft beers at **WineStyles**. No visit to Hastings is complete without a stop at **Eileen's Colossal Cookies**. Before heading out of Hastings, we'll stop at **First Street Brewing Company** to taste locally made craft beers.

We depart Hastings and head to **Rowe Sanctuary and Iain Nicolson Audubon Center** for a light snack and guided tour before preparing for our sunset crane viewing along the Platte River. Afterward, we'll head to Kearney for dinner and our hotel for the night.

## Day 4

After breakfast, our first stop is **Classic Car Collection** with more than 140 vintage automobiles from the early 1900s to the 1980s. No birding or outdoor tour is complete without a stop at **Cabela's**, the World's Foremost Outfitter. Next we visit the **Nebraska Firefighters Museum** and **The Archway**, an interactive museum that commemorates the nation's westward expansion.

After lunch we explore works by Nebraska artists at the **Museum of Nebraska Art**. We continue the "grain" part of our tour by visiting **Thunderhead Brewing Company** and **Platte Valley Brewery**.





**A**cross the southern region of Minnesota you will find a variety of activities and landscapes. The Mississippi River and many small, quiet streams wind their way through scenic valleys nestled among tall, wooded bluffs. The Minnesota River reaches across rich farmland. Here and there are patches of prairie, remnants of the grasslands that once blanketed this land. The spirit and traditions of the Dakota Indians and early pioneers are recalled at numerous historic sites. Southern Minnesota communities are known for their antique shops, historic architecture and ethnic festivals.

## Explore Minnesota

# Discovering Southern Minnesota

## Day 1

Fly into Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (MSP) and take advantage of the many complimentary shuttles from nearby hotels. Enjoy your evening at the Mall of America. Overnight at a hotel in Bloomington.

## Day 2

Pick up the **River Road-Highway 61** and enjoy the breathtaking views of the Mississippi River as you travel south.

**Red Wing** - Visit antique and gift shops, the historic **St. James Hotel** and the complex of **Red Wing Boots**, with a small museum. At **Red Wing Pottery**, you can watch artists at work.

**Wabasha** - The **National Eagle Center** is home to non-releasable bald and golden eagles.

**Kellogg** - **LARK Toys** is one of the largest independent specialty toy stores in the country.

**Winona** - **Minnesota Marine Art Museum**, located on the riverfront, is home to major works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet, O'Keeffe and many more. **Winona Boat Tours** offers a narrated tour of the Mississippi. **Pointour Historic Walking Tours** will help you discover the heart of historic Winona. Overnight in Winona.

## Day 3

**Forestville** - **Mystery Cave** is a guided tour of Minnesota's longest known cave.

**Austin** - The **SPAM Museum** tells the story of Hormel Foods Corporation. The **Hormel Historic Home** is the stately 14-room home of the George A. Hormel family. Get involved in a hands-on project at **Austin Artworks Center**. Overnight in Austin.

## Day 4

**Worthington** - **Spomer Classics** is one of the finest automotive collections in the upper Midwest.

**Luverne** - **Brandenburg Gallery**, named after noted wildlife photographer Jim Brandenburg, features over 100 Brandenburg originals. **Blue Mounds State Park** features a Sioux quartzite cliff, bison herd, and a sea of prairie grass and flowers.

**Pipestone** - **Pipestone National Monument** is home to the historic Pipestone quarries, beautiful tallgrass prairie and majestic Winnewissa waterfall. Overnight in Pipestone.

## Day 5

**Walnut Grove** - The **Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum** features a series of buildings including an 1898 depot, chapel and little red schoolhouse, plus memorabilia from stars of the *Little House on the Prairie* TV series.

**New Ulm** - The **Lind Home** was erected in 1887 by Minnesota's 14th governor, John Lind. Also see the monument depicting **Herman "The German" Arminius**, a chieftain who negotiated an alliance to defend Germania from Roman conquest. **Schell's Brewery**, the second oldest family-owned brewery in the country, offers one-hour tours that end with beer and root beer sampling in the Rathskeller Tap Room. Overnight in New Ulm.

## Day 6

**Owatonna** - Relive history at the **Orphanage Museum** through pictures, artifacts, and personal stories of children housed here from 1886 to 1945.

**Faribault** - Established in 1865, the **Faribault Woolen Mill** is a living testament to American craftsmanship; tours available.

**Northfield** - **Northfield Historical Society's Bank Museum** is the site of the infamous James-Younger Bank Raid. Overnight in Northfield.

## Day 7

**Minneapolis-St. Paul Area**



### EXPLORE MINNESOTA

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**Y**ou'll be fascinated by the historic gems tucked along Chicago's North Shore including the only remaining temple of its kind in North America and the grand homestead of a former U.S. vice president. "The Spice Boss" works his magic hand-mixing boutique blends, you'll "ooh" and "ah" over imported olive oils and enjoy boutique shopping at its finest. Take in a live show or concert and Presto! You get to be Picasso!

## Chicago's North Shore

# Historic Jewels Along Lake Michigan

## Day 1:

### Historic Jewels, Incredible Edibles & Art Awareness

Begin your day along the sparkling waters of Lake Michigan where you'll be dazzled by the grandeur and beauty of the **Baha'i House of Worship**, one of only seven Baha'i temples in the world and the only one in North America. Marvel at its lace-like ornamentation and dome rising 135 feet above the main floor, and linger a little longer outside to wrap yourself in the unsurpassed beauty of the exquisite gardens and fountains that surround the temple.

Next, you'll walk in the footsteps of a former U.S. vice president when you tour the **Charles Gates Dawes House**, his majestic namesake mansion that overlooks Lake Michigan. This National Historic Landmark, which captures Evanston's rich history and boasts original furnishings and artwork, also serves as the proud home of the **Evanston History Center**.

After lunch, treat your senses to a culinary world tour at **The Spice House**, where second-generation spice merchants import the most dazzling array of sweet and savory spices from their countries of origin. Try their "Saigon" cassia cinnamon, which boasts a sweet spicy heat like red-hot candies and is so popular, they grind about a hundred pounds each week. The tasty tour continues at **Old Town Oil**, "a playground for your palate" that works with small-batch producers from around the world and invites you to sample, mix and match their premium olive oils and vinegars to find the flavors you're craving.

Customize a great night out for your group at two lively venues for fabulous music, comedy, dance and theater: **The North Shore Center for the Performing Arts**, a soaring two-theater complex that's home to the award-winning **Northlight Theatre** and **Skokie Valley Symphony**, as well as host to the best in music, comedy and dance in their main stage theater.

## Day 2

Step back into 19th century America and tour the **Frances Willard House**, home to one of the most prominent social reformers of her time. Willard, a long-time resident of Evanston, Illinois, was arguably one of the generating influences in America's long history of social justice and activism as she bravely rallied for woman's suffrage, woman's economic rights and labor reforms.

**The American Toby Jug Museum** is home to the world's largest container collection. Featuring over 8,000 Toby and Character jugs from around the globe, the museum leads you through 20 countries over 250 years to the latest 21st century productions.

Evanston's prestigious Northwestern University is home of the renowned **Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art**. This fine arts museum is dedicated to the study and exhibition of reproducible art forms, including prints, photographs, film, video and computer-mediated art.

The art appreciation continues just a few blocks away at **The Levere Memorial Temple**, a tribute to Sigma Alpha Epsilon members who lost their lives in the war. Marvel at this stunning architectural treasure that contains a custom-designed collection of Tiffany stained glass.

Since day one, **Bottle & Bottega** has proven that "inside everyone is a master artist just waiting to be uncorked." A perfect way to wrap up your art-filled afternoon, an artist will lead your group in painting your own masterpiece while you snack, enjoy fine wine and create a treasure to take home.



### CHICAGO'S NORTH SHORE CVB

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CNCsvb.com/GroupItineraries





**Y**our group will come to Expect the Unexpected during this 3-day Mystery Tour that will keep them guessing and entertained and includes historic sites, a theater production, model railroads, unique lodging, dinner cruise on a paddlewheel boat and lunch at a biker bar.

Northwest Illinois

## Expect The Unexpected Northwest Illinois Mystery Tour

### Day 1 Dixon

A tour of the **Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home** in Dixon is a glimpse back in time at the Reagan family residence of the 1920s. Check out the Visitor Center and Gift Shop, which features books and gifts highlighting the Reagan legacy.

The **Northwest Territory Historic Center** is a history, research and learning center housed in President Reagan's grade school. The center is proudly affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution and houses exhibits of Native American life, early American farming, a research library, historical exhibits, an art gallery and museum store.

A local step-on guide gives a narrated tour of **Dixon's historic sites** including stops at the **Dixon Welcome Center and Gift Shop** and the riverfront location of the bronze, life-size statue of a young Ronald Reagan on horseback entitled **Begins the Trail**.

Enjoy dinner at local fine dining restaurants offering a variety of choices including Italian, Thai or locally grown organic cuisine.

### Day 2 Fulton – Savanna – Mt. Morris

Fulton's deep roots are in the Netherlands, where "De Immigrant," an authentic **Dutch Windmill** was pre-assembled and erected by Dutch craftsmen for the town's Mississippi River dike. It is open for tours with millers giving demonstrations. The **Windmill Museum & Cultural Center** is across the street and features models of 22 European windmills, education area and gift shop.

Fulton's **Heritage Canyon** is a 12-acre area featuring numerous buildings that take the visitor back to the 1800s on self-guided walking tours. Travel along the Mississippi River Road to Savanna for a unique

lunch experience at **Poopy's Pub & Grub**, one of Illinois' best-known biker bars. Not a traditional restaurant or typical biker bar, instead it has great food and drinks served in a relaxed, laid-back atmosphere.

Continue the afternoon at the **Swamp Bottom Railroad** and view steam and diesel model trains from the late 1800's to the present time running on the tracks of this outdoor garden railroad featuring both freight and passenger trains. The **Savanna Museum & Cultural Center** features 80 mannequins in authentic Civil War uniforms, railroad artifacts and an extensive running model railroad layout.

Travel to **White Pines State Park** and check in to full-amenity cabins followed by dinner at the historic **White Pines Inn** log lodge. After dinner relax around a campfire and enjoy the peace and quiet of the surroundings deep in the heart of the **White Pines State Forest**.

### Day 3 Mt. Morris - Oregon

Entering the **Barnacopia Farm Museum**, visitors are greeted by a 1950s-era diner and a replica of a bygone downtown. Many antique farm machines and equipment, classic cars and more are on display including an antique tractor that rotates in the cupola at the top of the barn.

Lunch features a home-cooked, three-meat buffet with all the trimmings followed by a live theatrical performance at the **White Pines Dinner Theatre**. After the production browse the unique gift shop. After the show head to **Conover Square Mall**, a restored piano factory offering a unique shopping experience including the **Blackhawk Model Railroad Club**. Your evening will be highlighted by a dinner cruise on the panoramic Rock River aboard the **Pride of Oregon**, an authentic, 102-foot paddlewheel boat.



**BLACKHAWK WATERWAYS CVB**

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# WEST REGION

By Vicky Nash

**T**hermal springs flow abundantly throughout the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Five premier hot springs destinations in the western part of the state—Chaffee County, Pagosa Springs, Ouray County, Glenwood Springs and Steamboat Springs—have come together to form the Colorado Historic Hot Springs Loop, offering 19 unique facilities.



## *Getting Into Hot Water*



Soaking in super-heated water saturated with minerals offers many wellness benefits. Practiced for thousands of years, balneology is the art and science of baths and bathing in natural mineral waters for health and wellness. This type of therapy helps to revitalize the skin, calm nerves and detoxify the body. It has been known to reduce the symptoms of arthritis, fibromyalgia and depression, as well as

locomotor and circulatory diseases. The high mineral content absorbs into the body, helping to eliminate toxins, increase blood flow and circulation, and boost metabolism. The warmth has a relaxing, soothing effect on muscles and the mind. Ultimately, the goal is rejuvenation and spending time with friends and family.

The five hot springs destinations will enhance your next trip to western Colorado.



On tours of western Colorado, travelers can recharge their batteries with a good soaking or two

Relax in 104-degree mineral water at Strawberry Park Hot Springs in Steamboat Springs.



# SEEING ALASKA BY BOAT

**W**hen it comes to sightseeing, it does not get any better than Alaska. These day cruises will leave your group in awe.

## Kenai Fjords Tours

Departing from Seward, Kenai Fjords Tours offers a number of day cruises that showcase Alaska's natural beauty. The four-hour Gray Whale Watch tour includes lunch and will let your group witness the annual migration of gray whales, humpbacks and orcas. If your group wants to take a longer excursion, choose the nine-hour Northwestern Fjord Tour that cruises into Kenai Fjords National Park. Other options include the National Park Tour and Fox Island Dinner Cruise. ([kenaifjords.com](http://kenaifjords.com))

## Riverboat Discovery

This 3-5 hour cruise on the Chena and Tanana rivers is more than just a boat ride. It's an interactive Fairbanks attraction that will take your group into the lives of a family for an authentic Alaskan experience. Your group will go on a walking tour of an Athabaskan Indian village and explore what life is like in the Arctic. Then see a bush pilot demonstration from the boat, explore trading posts on the Steamboat Landing and visit the kennels of a dogsled team. ([riverboatdiscovery.com](http://riverboatdiscovery.com))

## Lu-Lu Belle Tours

Get up close and personal with the colossal Columbia Glacier with Lu-Lu Belle Tours in Valdez. Your group will get closer than they ever have before to whales, eagles, seals and other Alaskan wildlife. See local fishermen harvesting Alaskan salmon. Enjoy gracious hospitality and fresh baked goods aboard this cruise. ([lulubelletours.com](http://lulubelletours.com))



## Phillips Cruises & Tours

Phillips Cruises & Tours provides an assortment of Prince William Sound glacier cruises from Whittier. The 26 Glacier Cruise features 26 different glaciers, Esther Passage and College Fjord. The Glacier Quest Cruise features seven named glaciers, Shotgun Cave and Passage Canal. The Sunset Glacier Cruise explores glaciers in the evening. Your group will see waterfalls, glaciers and wildlife. All cruises feature a hot meal and a no-seasickness guarantee. ([phillipscruises.com](http://phillipscruises.com))

## Stan Stephens Glacier & Wildlife Cruises

From Valdez your group can take a seven-hour Columbia Glacier Cruise through Prince William Sound and view the Columbia Glacier as it recedes back into the Chugach Mountains. View local wildlife and learn about the area's mining, oil shipping, earthquakes and fishing. If your group is looking for a longer tour, take the nine-hour Meares Glacier Excursion. At the glacier, you will see wildlife like seals, orca whales and puffins. ([stephenscruises.com](http://stephenscruises.com))



## CHAFFEE COUNTY

Buena Vista, Nathrop, Salida



## PAGOSA SPRINGS



Pamper yourself at Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort (top) or The Springs Resort and Spa.

Visit [PagosaSprings.com](http://PagosaSprings.com)

>> [LeisureGroupTravel.com](http://LeisureGroupTravel.com)





**M**ount Elbert, the highest point in Colorado at 14,433 feet, towers over Chaffee County. Fifteen “14ers” (14,000-foot peaks) dominate this area along the Continental Divide, creating prime terrain for the eruption of hot water from the earth. The same topography formed the Arkansas, the state’s most popular whitewater rafting river. Outside of Buena Vista, **Mount Princeton**

**Hot Springs Resort** is a full-service retreat with five geothermal pools, a spa and club, 30 log cabins and 40+ hotel rooms. Wade into Chalk Creek to access the natural hot pots.

The rock-lined pools at **Cottonwood Hot Springs Inn & Spa** first opened in 1878, historically noted for their medicinal and therapeutic value.

One of the largest indoor hot spring pools

in the country, **Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center** features clear, aroma-free water in the zero-depth-entry pool, lap lanes and private baths.

For a completely private hot springs experience, make reservations at the cozy **Alpine Hotsprings Hideaway, Antero Hot Springs Cabins** or **Creekside Hot Springs Cabin**. ([colorfulcolorado.com](http://colorfulcolorado.com))



**A**ccording to Guinness World Records, the Great Pagosa Hot Springs is officially the World’s Deepest Geothermal Hot Spring. This mother spring not only supplies the resorts but is also a heating source for downtown sidewalks and several businesses, including a brewery.

Terraced along the bank of the San Juan River are the 23 mineral pools of **The Springs**

**Resort & Spa**. Each spot is a different size and temperature. The Lobster Pot sizzles at 110°F. Mineral deposits have built up for centuries, creating huge iron-colored formations. The rope bridge over the pond allows close inspection. Hotel guests can take a dip any time with 24-hour access.

For a hip vibe, go to **Overlook Hot**

**Springs Spa**. Inside, ornate architectural moldings and soaring ceilings surround large soaking tubs and a cold plunge. Rooftop tubs set this spa apart from all others.

**Healing Waters Resort & Spa** offers a large pool, tub and indoor baths for concentrated mineral immersion. Affordable motel rooms are onsite. ([visitpagosasprings.com](http://visitpagosasprings.com))



# OURAY COUNTY

Ouray, Ridgway



Ouray Chamber Resort Association

**O**uray is a Switzerland look-alike. Brightly painted Victorian buildings line Main Street. Lodges resemble chalets. Ouray has earned the title of Jeeping Capital of the World. And the Ouray Ice Park offers the best ice climbing in Colorado.

Odorless, sulfur-free thermal waters bubble up everywhere. The iconic **Ouray Hot Springs Pool & Fitness Center** provides family fun. This 90-year-old facility is about to undergo a

major renovation and will unveil the modern improvements in 2017.

Underneath the **Historic Wiesbaden Hot Springs Spa & Lodgings** is a vaporcave where water pours over a large mineral deposit formation into a shallow soaking pool deep inside an underground chamber. For complete solitude, rent the Lorelei outdoor enclosure. In the 1800s, Ute Indian Chief Ouray used these waters for their curative powers.

Guests of **Box Canyon Lodge & Hot Springs** have exclusive access to wooden tubs that stair-step the hillside. **Twin Peaks Lodge & Hot Springs** also provides steamy pools for its guests.

**Orvis Hot Springs** in nearby Ridgway has created an oasis with lush landscaping. Several ponds and waterfalls are strategically positioned throughout the property; clothing optional. ([ouraycolorado.com](http://ouraycolorado.com))

## GLENWOOD SPRINGS



Glenwood Hot Springs

**W**hether it's cold or hot, water is central to Glenwood Springs. The Colorado River runs directly through town.

At two blocks long, **Glenwood Hot Springs** is considered to be the world's largest mineral hot springs pool. The source, Yampah Spring, flows at 3.5 million gallons of water daily. The award-winning spa and 107-room lodge are geothermally heated.

The new **Iron Mountain Hot Springs** boasts 16 naturally shaped pools, all varying in temperature and size. **Yampah Spa & Vapor Caves** has naturally-occurring mineral steam baths, a rare underground feature.

Doc Holliday came for the healing vapors to treat his tuberculosis. Fans pay homage to the dentist/gunslinger by making the trek to his memorial in Linwood Cemetery or by sip-

ping a beer under the Doc Holliday Saloon neon gun sign.

The mountain-top Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park combines spectacular cave tours and thrill ride amusements with panoramic views. For live entertainment, the Glenwood Vaudeville Revue keeps visitors in stitches with its hilarious comedy show. ([visitglenwood.com](http://visitglenwood.com))



# STEAMBOAT SPRINGS



Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association

**T**here is a true Western vibe here so channel your inner-cowboy. Hang your hat at the **Old Town Hot Springs** multi-use complex with numerous hot pools, two water-slides, a climbing wall, massage therapists and a fitness center. In summertime, add a party deck, cabana rentals and kids' water activities.

For a rustic wilderness setting, soak at the creekside **Strawberry Park Hot Springs** built using unique stone masonry. Stay in a cabin or campsite right on the property.

Fish Creek Falls is an easy quarter-mile walk. Clear, fresh high alpine water roars

down Fish Creek Canyon, spilling over the magnificent 280-foot waterfall. Continue up the trail to view the second falls for a 5-mile roundtrip adventure.

Float downstream on an inner-tube along the refreshing Yampa River. Festivals celebrate hot air balloons, rodeos, eats, libations and tunes. Wintertime brings famous Champagne Powder® to Ski Town, USA®. Howelsen Hill is the largest natural ski jumping complex in North America and Colorado's oldest ski area in continuous use for over 100 years.

([www.steamboatsummer.com](http://www.steamboatsummer.com))

## WELCOME TO WESTERN COLORADO

This region is quintessential Colorado. Each town is surrounded by national forests with majestic mountain ranges and cascading waterfalls that provide gorgeous scenery year-round. There are hundreds of miles of trails for hiking, biking and four-wheeling. Fly fishing, tubing, kayaking, standup paddling, and whitewater rafting are popular pastimes on the many rivers. Brilliant fall colors lure leaf-peepers. Snow sports like alpine and Nordic skiing, snowboarding, ice climbing, and snowmobiling are just a few of the winter activities. Every Colorado ski area is within close proximity of a hot springs.

All four national parks in Colorado—Rocky Mountain, Great Sand Dunes, Mesa Verde and Black Canyon of the Gunnison—are located in this part of the state. There are also six notable national monuments: Browns Canyon between Buena Vista and Salida, Chimney Rock by Pagosa Springs, Canyons of the Ancients and Hovenweep in the Four Corners area, Colorado National Monument west of Grand Junction and Dinosaur in the northwest corner.

## HISTORIC HOT SPRINGS LOOP

The ultimate hot springs itinerary is a 722-mile route along several roads designated as Colorado Scenic Byways. Starting from any of the five resort towns, take a week to 10 days to really experience these special places. From Denver, begin the trip in Chaffee County, the communities of Buena Vista, Nathrop, and Salida, along the Top of the Rockies and Collegiate Peaks byways. Then travel 140 mountainous miles south to Pagosa Springs. After weaving through the San Juan Skyway and the Million Dollar Highway, in 130 miles Ouray and Ridgway are the next stops. The West Elk Loop goes 175 miles through wine country, fruit stands, orchards, and organic farms on the way to Glenwood Springs. Finally, 114 miles of canyons and ranchlands to Steamboat Springs completes the journey.

## ONE IS NEVER ENOUGH

Every one of these 19 hot springs is different so it's like a treasure hunt. Two are in the record-books. Usually a swimsuit is required, but not always. A few are fun-filled, others calm and serene. Some cater to kids, others attract individuals or couples. All focus on happiness and wellbeing.

([colorado.com/hotspringsloop](http://colorado.com/hotspringsloop)) **LGT**





**O**klahoma City's rugged Western past and recent urban renaissance have created a modern metropolis that's still rich in cowboy culture.

## Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

# Best of Oklahoma City

## Day 1

**Morning** – Begin at the **National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum**. It's home to one of the most comprehensive collections of Western art in the world, with more than 28,000 Western and American Indian artifacts and artworks by artists such as Charles Russell and Frederic Remington. The museum complex also contains Prosperity Junction, a full-scale replica of a turn-of-the-century Western town, and galleries dedicated to Western performers, cowboys and rodeos. (Allow 1.5-2 hours)

**Lunch** – Enjoy lunch at **Kamps 1910**, an Oklahoma City favorite with sandwiches, soups and salads, or try some Oklahoma BBQ at **Iron Star Urban Barbeque**. There's also the historic **Cattle-men's Steakhouse** in the Stockyard City area.

**Afternoon** – Next is the **American Banjo Museum** in the Bricktown Entertainment District. The museum is a world-class facility containing more than 300 instruments — the largest collection on public display in the world. You can also enjoy a special performance just for your group. (Allow 1.5 hours)

**Evening** – Before dinner, jump on a Bricktown Water Taxi and learn more about the history of Bricktown and points of interest along the canal (allow 50 minutes for taxi ride). Enjoy dinner at one of the many local favorites in Bricktown.

## Day 2

**Morning** – Begin at the **Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum**, which honors the 168 lives lost and those that were changed forever by the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995. Wander the Outdoor Symbolic Memorial, then enter the interactive learning museum to hear the story of the tragedy and its aftermath (allow 2 hours). When booking your tour, be sure to ask

about the "First Person" experience.

**Lunch** – Head back to Bricktown for a casual lunch at **Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill**.

**Afternoon** – Enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour of the **Boathouse District**, including the OKC National High Performance Center where Olympic hopefuls in rowing and canoe/ kayak train. More adventurous groups can "challenge the dragon" with dragon boating on the Oklahoma River. Groups paddle to the beat of a drummer while learning what it takes to move the boat across the water as a team (allow 1.5 hours – more if you participate in any of the activities).

**Evening** – Dinner on your own in the Bricktown Entertainment District, with more than 20 restaurants.

## Day 3

**Morning** – At **Blue Sage Studio** a demonstration of glass blowing will show you the process of transforming molten glass into art (allow 1.5 hours). Next, see world-class art at the **Oklahoma City Museum of Art**, including a comprehensive collection of glass sculptures and 55-foot glass sculpture tower in the museum's atrium by American artist Dale Chihuly. (Allow 1.5 hours)

**Lunch** – **Iron Star Urban Barbeque** offers a tasty spin on comfort foods. Try items on Oklahoma's official State Meal such as BBQ pork, okra and cornbread. Be sure to try their Double Chocolate Bread Pudding!

**Afternoon** – Explore Oklahoma's adventurous past at the **Oklahoma History Center** (allow 1.5-2 hours).

**Evening** – Stop by **Cattle-men's Steakhouse** and soak in the rich history of Oklahoma City's oldest restaurant. Perfectly aged steaks, legendary breakfasts and classic desserts will please the hungriest of groups.



### OKLAHOMA CITY CVB

Sandy Price, CTA  
Vice President of Tourism Sales  
405-297-8913  
sprice@visitokc.com  
VisitOKC.com/groups



OKLAHOMA CITY

# START OUT ON A COACH

*End up on a boat*



From whatever direction your tour approaches OKC, you'll find the intersection of I-44, I-40, I-35 and Route 66 is a modern metropolis with loads of group-friendly attractions like the Bricktown Canal, the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. If OKC isn't already on your list, it's time to stop and OKC what you've been missing.

WANT TO OKC MORE? EXPLORE

VISIT **OKC**.COM

FOR VIDEOS, EVENTS & INFO.

#SeeOKC



AdventureRoad.com  
Travel Partner





© Courtesy Cheyenne Area CVB/Matthew Idler



**T**his truly authentic Western city, the capital of Wyoming, abounds with tour-worthy sites that bring back the wild 'n' woolly days of yesteryear. Groups will enjoy shopping for Western gear at downtown stores and stepping back in time at attractions like the **Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum** and **Nelson Museum of the West**. See a herd of bison and check out the world's largest steam locomotive. Western entertainment in summer includes the **Cheyenne Gunslingers**, **Bit-O-Wyo Horsebarn Dinner Theater** and the **Old-Fashioned Melodrama**.

## Cheyenne, Wyoming

# The Old West Lives In Cheyenne

## Day 1

Go downtown to the newly restored Cheyenne Depot. A National Historic Landmark, the depot has been restored to its original glory and is once again a center of activity in the community. Tour the Art Deco lobby and visit the **Cheyenne Depot Museum**, which chronicles the railroad and its relationship to Cheyenne.

In the depot, purchase tickets for the **Cheyenne Street Railway Trolley** (307-778-3133), which provides a 90-minute overview of the community, its history and attractions. The tour includes stops at various attractions, allowing riders to disembark for the attraction and then reboard the next trolley 90 minutes later. Stops include the **Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum** (307-778-7290), **Nelson Museum of the West** (307-635-7670), **Wyoming State Museum** (307-777-7022), **Historic Governors' Mansion** (307-777-7878), **Wyoming Capitol** and **Cheyenne Botanic Gardens** (307-637-6458). (Trolley drivers are available as step-on guides for motorcoaches.)

Enjoy one of Cheyenne's new nightlife options – **Freedom's Edge Brewery**, **Suite Bistro Martini Bar**, **Morris House Bistro**, or the **Cadillac Ranch Bar**.

## Day 2

Spend some time downtown shopping at a couple of true Western stores. Try the **Wrangler** (307-634-3048) for jeans, boots, hats and other Western apparel or **Wyoming Home** (307-638-2222) for its unique Western furniture and artwork. Or catch

a ride on the free downtown carriage rides.

Head south nine miles to the **Terry Bison Ranch** (307-634-4171) for a horseback ride or a train ride into the middle of the bison herd that calls the ranch home. Back in town, be sure to check out **Big Boy 4004**, the world's largest steam locomotive (1.2 million pounds). It was designed especially for the rugged Cheyenne to Ogden, Utah run.

End your day watching the Western skits and escapades of the **Cheyenne Gunslingers** at 6 p.m. in downtown Cheyenne (June-July). Then enjoy the **Bit-O-Wyo Horsebarn Dinner Theater** in the beautiful mountains west of town (July-August). Or catch the **Old-Fashioned Melodrama** (307-638-6543) at the Historic Atlas Theater where you can cheer the hero and hiss the villain (July).

**CHEYENNE**  
WYOMING  
*Live the Legend™*

### VISIT CHEYENNE

Darren Rudloff  
darren@cheyenne.org  
800-426-5009 or 307-778-3133  
Cheyenne.org







**P**lanning your Mount Rushmore vacation is easy with this Rapid City Monumental Day itinerary. Spend a day visiting our nation's Shrine of Democracy, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, celebrating the 75th anniversary of its completion in 2016.

Rapid City, South Dakota

## A Monumental Day At Mount Rushmore

### Morning

Morning is one of the best times of the day to see and capture the faces of **Mount Rushmore**. The rising sun casts a golden glow on the mountain and the lack of large crowds gives you uninhibited views. Get to the monument early to beat the crowds and see the Memorial bask in the early morning glow. After your morning photo shoot, have breakfast with the presidents. The only 3-star Certified Green Restaurant in South Dakota, **Carver's Café at Mount Rushmore**, is open year-round (winter and summer hours vary) offering breakfast, lunch and dinner service with presidential views of the Grand Terrace.

Get up close with the faces on the half-mile **Presidential Trail**. Learn even more about the history and stories of Mount Rushmore by participating in a free ranger walk on the trail or consider the **Audio Tour** rental. The Audio Tour is a multi-lingual handheld wand, acting as a tour guide providing narration, music and interviews.

On your tour of the park, do not miss the **Sculptor's Studio** (open seasonally, May-September) to see sculptor Gutzon Borglum's true vision for Mount Rushmore. Inside the studio, you'll find plaster models and many of the tools the carvers used for the fine detailing of the faces.

A visit to Mount Rushmore is not complete without touring the **Lincoln Borglum Visitor Center and Museum**. See exhibits about each president, hands-on history displays and a theater that features a short film about the carving and the people instrumental in creating Mount Rushmore.

### Afternoon

The parking pass you purchased for Mount Rushmore is good for an entire year! Take the opportunity to return to Rapid City for more monumental attractions. Tour the **City of Presidents**, life-size bronze statues of each president, in **downtown Rapid City**. On your tour, be sure to step-inside the lobby of the historic **Hotel Alex Johnson**, a residence of presidents or the home-away-from home for six of our nation's past leaders.

The patriotic fun continues as you learn more about the leaders who founded this great country at **Independence Hall: Founding Fathers Black Hills**.

### Evening

After recharging in Rapid City, return to Mount Rushmore to end the Monumental Day. Enjoy a cool treat at the **Memorial Team Ice Cream** shop, named to honor the Mount Rushmore baseball team and carvers, and pick up your last-minute souvenirs at the gift shop or bookstores.

At dusk, head to the outdoor amphitheater for a moving patriotic tribute and memorial lighting ceremony. Throughout the summer months, park rangers present a program, including the historic film depicting the creators, the carvers and the four famous faces, as well as recognizing military personnel and veterans before the dramatic illumination of the faces. The patriotic lighting ceremony is the perfect way to end a monumental day at **Mount Rushmore National Memorial**.



#### RAPID CITY CVB

Julie Jones-Whitcher, Lindsey Beasley  
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tours@visitrapidcity.com  
TourRapidCity.com





**S**tart your adventure in Elko and experience the raw majesty of the Ruby Mountains to the rugged canyon streams. Itinerary highlights include the **California Trail Center**, **Chinese Gardens Nature Study Area**, **Trail of the 49ers Interpretive Center**, **Angel Lake Scenic Drive**, **Northeastern Nevada Museum**, **Lamoille Scenic Byway** and **Western Folklife Center**.

## Northeastern Nevada

# Experience the Unexpected in Elko, Nevada

## Day 1

Check in at your Elko accommodations and enjoy a manager's reception. Dinner tonight is on the property or at one of Elko's group-friendly restaurants.

## Day 2

Wake up to breakfast and the beauty of this Northeastern Nevada community, framed by the splendor of the Ruby Mountains. Our adventure begins at the **California Trail Center**. This new, \$20-million facility depicts the life-and-death experiences of pioneers who made the grueling 2,000-mile journey to the West. Return to Elko for lunch on your own at any of the 50 area restaurants with cuisine to please any palate. Spend the afternoon shopping in the downtown historic district. Tonight enjoy a dinner experience at one of Elko's many restaurant options. From Japanese and Mexican to Italian and American, there is an abundance of group-friendly restaurants.

## Day 3

This morning's journey takes us west to Carlin and the **Chinese Gardens Nature Study Area**. Carlin's history is all about the Gold Rush and railroad construction. Chinese immigrants played a major role in the latter. Nature trails with interpretive signs share the story. Next it's on to **Carlin Canyon Historical Wayside**. This was a travel route for Native Americans, mountain men, pioneers and eventually the **Central Pacific Railroad**. Interpretive signs share the history of the 3,000-year-old geographical formations. Return to Elko for a leisurely lunch on your own.

Our first stop this afternoon is a visit to Wells and the **Trail of the 49ers Interpretive Center**. An intriguing collection of artifacts reinforces the hardships early travelers experienced on the California

Trail. Right outside Wells we'll begin our 11-mile **Angel Lake Scenic Drive**. This spectacular tour presents a panoramic view of the **Humboldt Mountains** and **Lake Angel**. Back in Elko we'll have lunch on our own and finish a busy day with a tour of the **Northeastern Nevada Museum** and the new mining exhibit. Tonight we'll enjoy dinner at one of Elko's casino restaurants followed by an evening of gaming action.

## Day 4

This morning our travels take us to the quaint town of Lamoille and the breathtaking beauty of the **Lamoille Scenic Byway**. Filled with unusual rock formations, this spectacular drive takes us through the glacially carved **Ruby Mountain Wilderness**. Next stop is the historic **Little Church of the Crossroads**, which has hosted more than 600 weddings. A tasty lunch at **O'Carrolls** is an absolute must when visiting Lamoille.

Returning to Elko, let's get serious about getting our "cowboy on" with a tour of the **Western Folklife Center's Wiegand Gallery** and 20-seat **Black Box Theater**. If time allows, cross the street to **J.M. Capriola** and watch a master saddle maker display his skills. Enjoy dinner at one of Elko's famous **Basque restaurants**. Elko-area Basques take pride in the culture of their homeland, Northern Spain/Southern France. Bring your appetite because we're going family-style and nobody leaves hungry.

## Day 5

Enjoy breakfast and set out your luggage. We'll be saying good-bye to Elko with a promise to return.

**Day 5 option:** Northeastern Nevada is the nation's largest gold producer. **Newmont Mining Corporation** provides mining operation tours April-October in Elko/2nd Thursday, Battle Mountain/3rd Thursday and Winnemucca/4th Thursday.



### ELKO CVA

Tom Lester  
775-738-4091 or 800-248-3556  
tom@elkocva.com  
ExploreElko.com



# EAST REGION

## 7 CLASSIC EAST COAST RESORT TOWNS FOR TRIPS FILLED WITH SUMMER FUN



The Cliff Walk affords views of the coastline and Gilded Age mansions in Newport, Rhode Island.

Discover Newport

By Elissa Gilbert

**E**very town along the Atlantic coast from Maine to Maryland offers its own take on summer fun at the shore. Whether your group members want to experience a quaint New England fishing village or a lively town filled with amusements, there's a beach town to give them the summer of their dreams. Here's a look at seven of the best East Coast resort towns:

### Bar Harbor, Maine

In this Down East part of Maine, the harbor and ocean still dominate the life, and lobster dominates the dinner plates. See the morning sunrise before anyone else in the country at Cadillac Mountain in Acadia National Park. Guests can hike and climb in the park, or walk or drive the carriage roads. Head out to sea by boat or even foot, by walking to Bar Island at low tide.

Back on land, the center of town offers unique products in boutiques and craft breweries. The town used to attract some of America's wealthiest on vacation; the Rockefeller Garden opens to visitors one day a week during summer.

The earliest residents of the community, of course, were Native Americans, and the Abbe Museum features the Wabanaki tribe's culture. Other museums in town explore local history and the area's natural history.



Watersports like windsurfing are king in Ocean City, Maryland.



Clark Vandergriff, OTD

## Hyannis, Massachusetts

Hyannis Port and Cape Cod lure Kennedys and commoners during the summer season. Walk the Hyannis Kennedy Legacy Trail and visit the John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum in town. Enjoy the cliffs, sand dunes and beaches in the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Follow the Walkway to the Sea from downtown Hyannis, past artists' studios and public art displays, to reach the harbor. You

can get glimpses of the Kennedy Compound from a boat tour, which offers the possibility of spotting wildlife as well.

The Hyannis harbor is also home to ferries heading to Nantucket Island and Martha's Vineyard. On the Vineyard, enjoy a whirl on the Flying Horses carousel and take pictures of brightly painted cottages. Nantucket is quieter; rent a bike to explore its cobblestoned streets and three lighthouses.

Take a ferry from Hyannis to Martha's Vineyard and visit towns like Menemsha.



MOTT

## Newport, Rhode Island

The Gilded Age lives on in the glorious mansions of Newport. There's no mistaking the wealth behind the "summer cottages" of the Astors, Vanderbilts and others who built these cliffside homes. Several mansions offer guided tours that show off rich finishes like platinum walls. You can also glimpse the homes from the Cliff Walk that runs for 3.5 miles along the coast.

Those aren't the only historic buildings to explore in town; Touro Synagogue is the oldest Jewish house of worship in the country. The White Horse Tavern is America's oldest restaurant and dates back to 1673.

The wealthy still bring their yachts to Newport, where the America's Cup sailing competition was hosted for more than 50 years. Visitors can enjoy a sailing trip on America's Cup contenders and winners. Land-based sports include tennis, polo and golf. Tennis fans will want to check out the International Tennis Hall of Fame Museum.

The town is home to two major music festivals, the Newport Folk Festival and Newport Jazz Festival.

## Montauk, New York

An easy drive from New York City, Long Island's attractions extend past the Hamptons all the way to the town at the tip of the island. Montauk has the same sandy beaches



and fresh fish without the exclusiveness and snobbery of the towns preceding it on the drive.

Beachfront activities go beyond sunbathing here. Ditch Plains Beach and Turtle Cove draw surfers, while stand-up paddlers and kayakers head to Fort Pond Bay. At low tide, beachcombers have their pick of shells and beach glass. You can even explore the beach on a horseback ride leaving from the country's oldest working ranch.

The Montauk Lighthouse, authorized by President George Washington, still offers navigational aid to boaters. Visitors can climb to the top for 360-degree views of Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean.

Charter a boat for whale watching or fishing; the catch might include cod, pollock, bass and even edible sharks. Those who don't enjoy fishing—or come back empty-handed—will find plenty of fresh seafood in the town's restaurants.



Victorian homes lend charm to the resort town of Cape May, New Jersey.

## Cape May, New Jersey

The raucous reputation of the Jersey Shore doesn't apply to quiet, quaint Cape May. Known for its Victorian homes, the town retains an old-fashioned charm; the entire town is a National Historic District. Take a boat ride in search of dolphins, or climb to the top of the lighthouse to take in the ocean view. Turn your eyes to the sky at the Cape May Bird Observatory, which has programs featuring both sea birds and forest birds.

Visitors can explore the unique shops of the Washington Street Mall or take a tour of the town by trolley or horse-drawn carriage. The carriage is romantic at sunset, while the trolley takes a spooky turn for the nighttime ghost tour.

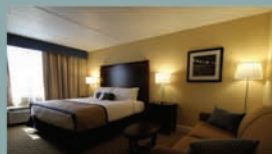
The beachside promenade draws visitors for strolling or biking. Cape May "diamonds," a polished quartz found along the beach, make treasured mementos. Any of the local beaches will delight during the day, but head to Sunset Beach for an end-of-day spectacle.



Visit the region where freedom began – scenic guided tours of historic Lexington and Concord MA, guided boat tours through Lowell's hand dug canals that powered the mills in the 19th century, award-winning Broadway shows, cultural cuisine, premiere shopping and New England charm await you in the Greater Merrimack Valley! For the latest itineraries, immersion tours, educational adventures and packages designed for groups, call 978.459.6150 or visit [www.merrimackvalley.org](http://www.merrimackvalley.org).

## The Greater Merrimack Valley: Inside & Out.

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### Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center

In the heart of the Merrimack Valley, the Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center is conveniently located off of Interstate 495 and near to all major points. Offering 192 guestrooms, your guests will delight in old New England charm and luxurious modern day amenities.

219 Littleton Rd,  
Westford, MA 01886  
[www.westfordregency.com](http://www.westfordregency.com)  
978.727.8753



### Wamesit Lanes

The Merrimack Valley's newest state of the art Family Entertainment Center, Wamesit Lanes features candlepin and ten pin bowling, golf simulators, family arcade, full service restaurant and outside patio dining including fire pits and regulation bocce courts.

Wamesit Lanes  
434 Main Street  
Tewksbury, MA 01876  
[www.wamesitlanes.com](http://www.wamesitlanes.com)



### Lowell National Historical Park

Discover the continuing revolution. Lowell's water-powered textile mills catapulted the nation – including immigrant families and early female factory workers – into an uncertain new industrial era. Nearly 200 years later, the changes that began in Lowell make it a living monument to the dynamic human story of the Industrial Revolution.

978.970.5000  
[www.nps.gov/lowe](http://www.nps.gov/lowe)



### The UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center

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# TOP SIGHTSEEING CRUISES

**A**s smart tour planners know, scheduling a scenic cruise can add a fresh dimension to any group itinerary. Whether it's on a river or lake, in a harbor or on the open sea, waterborne outings give travelers a different take on the destination and provide a welcome break from the "road routine."



Essex Steam Train and Riverboat

## Essex Steam Train and Riverboat Essex, Connecticut

This rail-river duo spotlights the unspoiled Connecticut River Valley, designated by the Nature Conservancy as "one of the last great places on earth." The 2½-hour journey starts the historic 1892 Essex Station with a 20-mph steam train ride through picturesque countryside and the classic New England towns of Deep River and Chester. At Deep River Landing, passengers are escorted onto the Becky Thatcher riverboat for a 1¼-hour cruise that glides by a shoreline with coves, inlets, marshes and wildlife. Just as impressive are the historic sights, including Gillette's Castle and Goodspeed Opera House. ([essexsteamtrain.com](http://essexsteamtrain.com))

## City Sightseeing New York

The 90-minute Skyline Cruise is a fully-narrated harbor cruise and sightseeing tour of NYC and its famous waterways. Unbeatable views of the Manhattan skyline include the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, Freedom Tower, Brooklyn Bridge and Statue of Liberty. The cruise can be combined with City Sightseeing New York double-decker bus tours. Or book the Hop-on, Hop-off Sightseeing Ferry, with four hop-off locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn. The full ride, without stops, is 90 minutes. ([citysightseeingnewyork.com](http://citysightseeingnewyork.com))



City Sightseeing New York

## Spirit Cruise to Mount Vernon, Washington, D.C.

Getting there is half the fun on Spirit Cruises' Potomac River excursion from Washington, D.C. to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate in Virginia. The voyage is 90 minutes each way, with a 3½-hour stopover to tour the first president's stately home, outbuildings and gardens. Sights from the Spirit of Mount Vernon include the Jefferson Memorial, Reagan National Airport and Old Town Alexandria. One-way excursions are available. The Spirit of Washington does Potomac River lunch and dinner cruises. ([spiritcruises.com](http://spiritcruises.com))

## Gateway Clipper Fleet Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

For the perfect introduction to Pittsburgh, book your group on a one-hour sightseeing cruise that touches all three of the city's rivers, starting from Station Square on the Monongahela and continuing to the Allegheny and Ohio. Passengers enjoy views of the Pittsburgh skyline, landmarks like baseball's PNC Park and the historic incline railways running up the cliffs. Lunch and dinner-dance cruises also are available. The fleet's five boats range from the 600-passenger Gateway Empress to the 150-passenger Gateway Countess. ([gatewayclipper.com](http://gatewayclipper.com))

## Spirit of Ethan Allen III Burlington, Vermont

Vermont's largest cruise ship, the 363-passenger Spirit of Ethan Allen III, offers narrated 1½-hour cruises on Lake Champlain, the largest freshwater lake in the country after the five Great Lakes. Guests learn about Indian lore, the Revolutionary War and Vermont hero Ethan Allen himself as they take in the majestic beauty of the Adirondack and Green mountain ranges. The 120-mile-long, 12-mile-wide lake encompasses Vermont, New York and Quebec province. Lunch and dinner cruises also are available. ([soea.com](http://soea.com))

Enjoy a cruise in the Connecticut River Valley (above) or take in the skyline from New York Harbor.



Delaware Tourism Office

A stop at Dolles for salt water taffy and other treats is one of the many pleasures awaiting tourists on the Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk.

## Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

Leave room in your suitcases when you head to Rehoboth Beach; tax-free shopping in the town's funky boutiques or nearby Tanger Outlets offers plenty of opportunity to fill that empty space. There's plenty of empty space on the sandy beach as well, with room to spread out a blanket and enjoy the sun.

If there's not enough water in the ocean, head to the waterpark at Jungle Jim's for the lazy river, water slides and bumper boats equipped with water guns. There are dryer amusements at Funland, with gentle rides for the littlest travelers and thrill rides for those with more daring.



Town of Ocean City

Arcades, rides and other amusements are a key part of the experience in Ocean City, Maryland. Don't leave without trying some crab cakes.



## Ocean City, Maryland

Ocean City, Maryland is all about fun in the sand, salt, and surf. With 10 miles of beach, there's room to stretch out; strolling to your spot via the 3-mile boardwalk is half the fun. The boardwalk's been called the best in America, and your stroll will be slow because of all the tempting taste treats along the way, including ice cream, funnel cakes, and traditional salt water taffy and cotton candy. You can also glide along the boardwalk via bike, rollerblades, or skateboards.

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### Day 2

#### Learn Something, Be Amazed and Go Cultural

**Morning:** Start your day amid the pathways, plants, flowers and ginkgo trees of the **Civil Rights Garden**. This amazing garden features 11 granite columns and sculptures with inscriptions related to the history, events and people of the civil rights movement. Located on the Boardwalk across from the Civil Rights Garden by Brighton Park, the **New Jersey Korean War Memorial** features a thoughtful tribute to the men and women lost during the Korean War and the dedicated service they provided. During the summer season, take a free tour

of New Jersey's first commercial wind farm, located on Route 30 in Atlantic City. No appointment is necessary to tour. **Historic Boardwalk Hall**, located on Mississippi Avenue and the Boardwalk, houses the largest musical instrument on earth. The Midmer-Losh Organ is more powerful than a dozen orchestras, it can both whisper and thunder into the 5.5 million cubic feet of air space in the main arena. A second Organ by W. W. Kimball is also part of the Adrian Phillips Ballroom. Both of these incredible machines were included as part of the original stage equipment for the building and can be seen and heard in operation free every weekday for half-hour concerts and tours May-October at noon, as well as played for several events including silent films and the Miss America Pageant

**Afternoon:** End your stay in Atlantic City with a little culture. The **Atlantic City Arts Garage** and **African American Historical Museum at the Wave Garage** feature free exhibits by local artists, who create art in their studios and make it available for purchase. Take a look at the city's African American history at the museum. Both sites are free and within walking distance of the Boardwalk. During the summer season be on the lookout for the **Chicken Bone Beach Jazz Concert Series** taking place in Brighton Park at the Boardwalk. Enjoy cool jazz featuring some of the most renowned jazz artists around paired with emerging local artists to make for a memorable experience. These concerts are free to the public. ([www.chickenbonebeach.org](http://www.chickenbonebeach.org))



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#21



#9



#4



#24

# My Bucket List

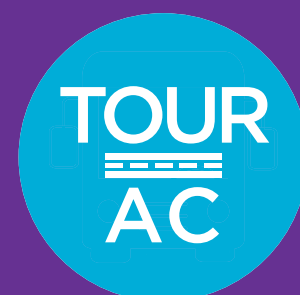
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Fathom passengers can teach English and spread a little love in the Puerto Plata area.

# Making an Impact

**A new cruise venture in the Dominican Republic provides hands-on opportunities to help people in need**

By Randy Mink

**O**n a hilly, unpaved street in the little town of Monterico, about a half hour's drive from the cruise dock, I found myself on the front porch of a humble home shaded by a huge mango tree. Motorbikes buzzed by, and neighborhood dogs lounged at the doorstep, oblivious to the animated conversations between residents and American tourists seated in plastic chairs that took up almost every square inch of the cozy space.

The Thursday afternoon English tutoring session, led by three ship passengers and attended by eight eager Dominicans from kids to grandmas, was hardly a typical shore excursion, but those who had signed on to the concept of the brand new cruise line didn't expect to be spending idle hours at the beach or sipping daiquiris poolside.

The cruise industry is always coming up with new wrinkles and novel twists, but the brand that Carnival Corporation rolled out in

April is a real game-changer. Called Fathom, the pioneering line is committed to making a difference in the places it visits.

Every other week Fathom's freshly refurbished, 704-passenger Adonia departs Miami for Amber Cove, Carnival's spiffy, \$85-million development on the Atlantic coast of the Dominican Republic, near Puerto Plata. For two full days and parts of two others, Fathom passengers have a chance to fan out into the countryside to volunteer in



educational, economic and environmental projects coordinated by two established aid organizations—Entrena and IDDI. The 7-day Dominican sailings alternate with cultural cruises to Cuba. (In May, Fathom became the first cruise line in more than 50 years to sail from the U.S. to Cuba.)

The Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic, located 700 miles from Miami, occupies two-thirds of Hispaniola, the island it shares with French-speaking Haiti. It's the second-biggest Caribbean island, exceeded in size only by Cuba, which we passed on the way there.

Puerto Plata was a popular resort area in the 1980s, and many cruises called there regularly. But when ships stopped coming and the resort action shifted to Punta Cana and other locales to the east, Puerto Plata and the north suffered from the decline in tourism. The influx of hundreds of Fathom volunteers every month is expected to help boost the region's fortunes. Knowing English is a stepping stone to getting a good job in the tourist industry, which has shown a recent uptick in the north, partly fueled by the Amber Cove development.

Promoting a philosophy that sets it apart from other lines, Fathom has introduced a category it calls "social impact travel," a term that officials say implies an ongoing commitment and differentiates it from "voluntourism." Others might call it "philanthropic travel." (I referred to it as a "humanitarian cruise" when telling people about my upcoming trip.)

With a goal of transforming communities, Fathom intends to harness its resources for "large-scale, systematic, long-term impact, to forge partnerships with organizations that are on the ground every day, week after week, all year round," says Tara Russell, the line's president.

Russell says she loves the nautical term "fathom," which implies delving below the surface to make "deep connections with communities and fulfill dreams of what is possible." The line's hashtag is TravelDeep. Furthermore, she hopes Fathom travelers will "be inspired to unleash their superpowers by doing more after the cruise, even starting their own programs at home."

The state of volunteer travel, Russell says, is now "fragmented," with a lot of churches and local organizations doing "one-off" trips. She mentions that her own Idaho church, which has a mission trip to Africa once or twice a year, always has to figure out who will lead it and handle the logistics. With Fathom, she asserts, it's "pre-organized, with all the pieces in place."



Helping lay concrete floors in homes is one of the more strenuous community projects tackled by Fathom travelers.



Randy Mink

Groups of American volunteers work alongside local women at RePaper, a recycled paper and crafts enterprise.



The Adonia calls every other week at Carnival's Amber Cove development in the Dominican Republic.



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It's obvious that Fathom cruises would be a natural for groups of many types, especially religious travel groups.

"There's been an enormous volume of interest from faith-based groups, and yet most of them don't even know we exist," Russell says. "We've got faith groups every week through 2016."

She says Fathom could tailor a group program through its contacts with faith-based organizations in the Dominican Republic, just as it could a program for groups interested exclusively in English tutoring. Fathom expects to be welcoming a variety of affinity groups, including university groups. It also is targeting the millennial, family and multigenerational markets.

My fellow passengers included retirees, teachers and families with home school kids. Because this was the inaugural sailing, there were many press and travel industry professionals onboard as well. There seemed to be a common bond and sense of purpose among us, and we got to know each other in practical and motivational workshops held throughout the cruise. The sessions were designed to open us up to new experiences and connect with each other as well as the local people we would meet. Through quizzes, games and discussions in small groups led by young "Fathom guides," the idea was to get out of our comfort zones in preparation for on-ground "impact activities," the core of the whole endeavor.



In my first orientation session at sea, our guide said the made-up word "alongsidedness" best describes the Fathom approach—working one-on-one to empower people and developing empathy to see things from their perspective. I also attended classes in Dominican culture, basic Spanish, English tutoring and one called "The Curiosity Advantage."

My first impact activity—at a paper recycling/arts and crafts initiative called RePapel—had us working alongside the women who run this cottage industry. After our two busloads arrived, some of us went to work at a station where we sat in a circle shredding paper (from banks, offices, hospitals) with our hands and tossing it into plastic barrels. The paper was then put through a washing machine and refined in a kitchen blender. We helped format the gray goop into sheets of paper using mesh screens, pressing out the water before letting it dry on racks. At RePapel we also got crafty, making jewelry (threading seeds and coffee beans), twine napkin holders, cardboard coasters and scented candles. The ladies didn't know English and most of us couldn't speak Spanish, but it was a festive time,



and at one point dancing broke out amidst the racks of drying paper.

Besides community English tutoring and recycling, I signed up for half-day slots in reforestation (planting mangrove seedlings in a nature park) and teaching English to school children. I wanted to help at Chocal, a women's organic cacao cooperative—sorting cacao bean shells from the nibs, molding liquid chocolate, and wrapping and boxing the artisanal bars bound for high-end shops—but those slots were all filled. Other volunteer projects involved making ceramic water filters and laying concrete floors—both vital needs in a country with clean water challenges and homes with dirt floors.

Everywhere the people seemed genuinely glad to see us and appreciated our modest contributions. In some cases, though, it seemed like the work was too light or there were too many volunteers with too little to do.

Excessive introductions, pep talks and bonding activities ate up time that could have been used for the task at hand. But this was the first cruise, and hopefully these issues are being addressed.

In addition to impact activities, Fathom passengers have time to play and relax—at sea and on shore. My “Best of Puerto Plata” shore excursion included a

rum factory visit and a 16th century Spanish fort overlooking the Atlantic. Snorkeling, zipline, deep-sea fishing and Playa Dorada Beach outings also were available. Amber Cove, a pristine, village-like complex with vendor kiosks and pastel buildings housing shops, has its own zipline, plus a spacious pool with lazy river and swim-up bar, waterslide and thatched cabanas for rent. Diversions onboard the Adonia included dance bands, merengue and salsa classes, a dominoes tournament, Dominican folkloric shows, scavenger hunts, big-screen movies at the pool and a Wine & Paint Night in the Glass House wine bar. Meditation, yoga, pilates and fitness sessions were offered as well.

The ship itself, plusher than I had expected for a “working” cruise, sports some beautiful Edwardian public rooms paneled with dark wood—clubby British country house interiors left over from its past life. (Built in the late 1980s for Renaissance Cruises, the Adonia until recently was part of P&O Cruises, one of Carnival's 10 brands.) Food in the restaurants included a lot of Dominican and Cuban dishes.

A Fathom trip may not be for everyone, but these weeklong cruises to the Dominican Republic present a golden opportunity for the right groups to touch lives by opening their hearts and lending a hand. **LGT**

**The state of volunteer travel is now “fragmented,” with a lot of churches and local organizations doing “one-off” trips. With Fathom, it’s “pre-organized, with all the pieces in place.”**

**Tara Russell**  
President of Fathom

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## How to Fulfill Your Passion and Purpose with Group Travel

**W**hat is your passion? For some people, answering this question is easy. Yet for others, it can be difficult.

Since becoming a part of the travel industry, I've answered this question by stating that I am most passionate about group travel. But while group travel was my *passion*, and I had a successful group travel business that targeted travelers wanting to attend music festivals and sporting events, I wasn't feeling fulfilled and found myself questioning my *purpose*.

Let me explain the difference. *Passion* and *purpose* are sometimes used interchangeably, but they have two totally different meanings. Passion is a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement about something, which in my case was group travel. But purpose is the reason *why* something is done or exists. It was clear to me that my passion was group travel, but I had no idea of my purpose or how to use my passion for group travel to fulfill my purpose. After a lot of soul-searching and internal reflecting, I realized that my purpose is to inspire entrepreneurship and self-empowerment. So I set out to rebrand my group travel business into a reflection of that purpose.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself to help you fulfill your passion or purpose with group travel.

### WHAT ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT?

If you're anything like me, travel is on the brain most of the time. But there is likely something else that you feel passionate about in life. If you really give it some thought, I promise you it is sitting right under your nose. Perhaps you're a foodie or you love photography. Maybe you have a thing for politics or physical fitness. For example, I met a lady who loves the concept of investing in real estate but she never quite had the financial means to become a real estate investor. She also loves planning group travel. She's currently in the process of building her group travel business around coordinating group travel and tours for real estate investors to up-and-coming investment areas. Not only is she establishing herself as an expert on the real estate investment industry, but she is also staying close to her passion, while using group travel to fulfill her purpose.

### WHAT GETS UNDER YOUR SKIN?

I believe that sometimes in life, the universe allows us to get angry, annoyed or frustrated about something just so that we will want to take a stand and make a difference. Someone has to do it, right? Why not you? I recall having a travel client a few

years ago who was disappointed that she could no longer travel as much as she liked because of her mother's diabetes and need for dialysis. She and her mother were "travel buddies" and she explained to me the complexity of arranging dialysis when they traveled. I remember thinking, "Wow! That would be a great travel business." How great would it be to give the gift of travel back to people who feel that they cannot travel anymore?

### WHERE DO YOU PROVIDE VALUE TO OTHERS?

Sometimes it's difficult for us to see just how much we impact the lives of others. But once it's brought to our attention, it makes us want to be even more impactful. Think about how you positively impact the lives of others. What do others think you do exceptionally well? What do they ask you for guidance with? In what areas do they value your opinion? If you can't think of anything yourself, try emailing 5-10 of your trusted clients, family members or friends to ask them to identify your areas of strength and how you might be able to use those strengths to help others. Once you hear back, see where there are any overlapping observations about the value you provide to others. You might be pleasantly surprised!

### COMBINING PASSION AND PURPOSE

While I had more clients than I could handle coordinating group travel to music festivals and sporting events, it wasn't something I was truly passionate about, nor did it fulfill my desire for purpose. Now, the focus of my group travel business surrounds two areas that I have always been very passionate about - entrepreneurship and self-empowerment. I plan group travel retreats for business coaches, life coaches and their clients. I found a way to couple my passion for group travel with my passions of self-empowerment and entrepreneurship. How can group travel help you fulfill your passion and purpose? **IGTA**

Tamika C. Carter is the owner of Caribbean Mastermind Retreats, executive director of the International Group Travel Agents Association (IGTAA) and creator of the *Create a High Profit Group Travel Business* 8-week virtual boot camp. For more information, visit [4grouptravel.org](http://4grouptravel.org).





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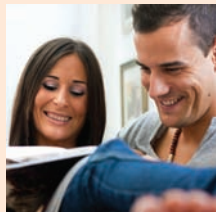




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