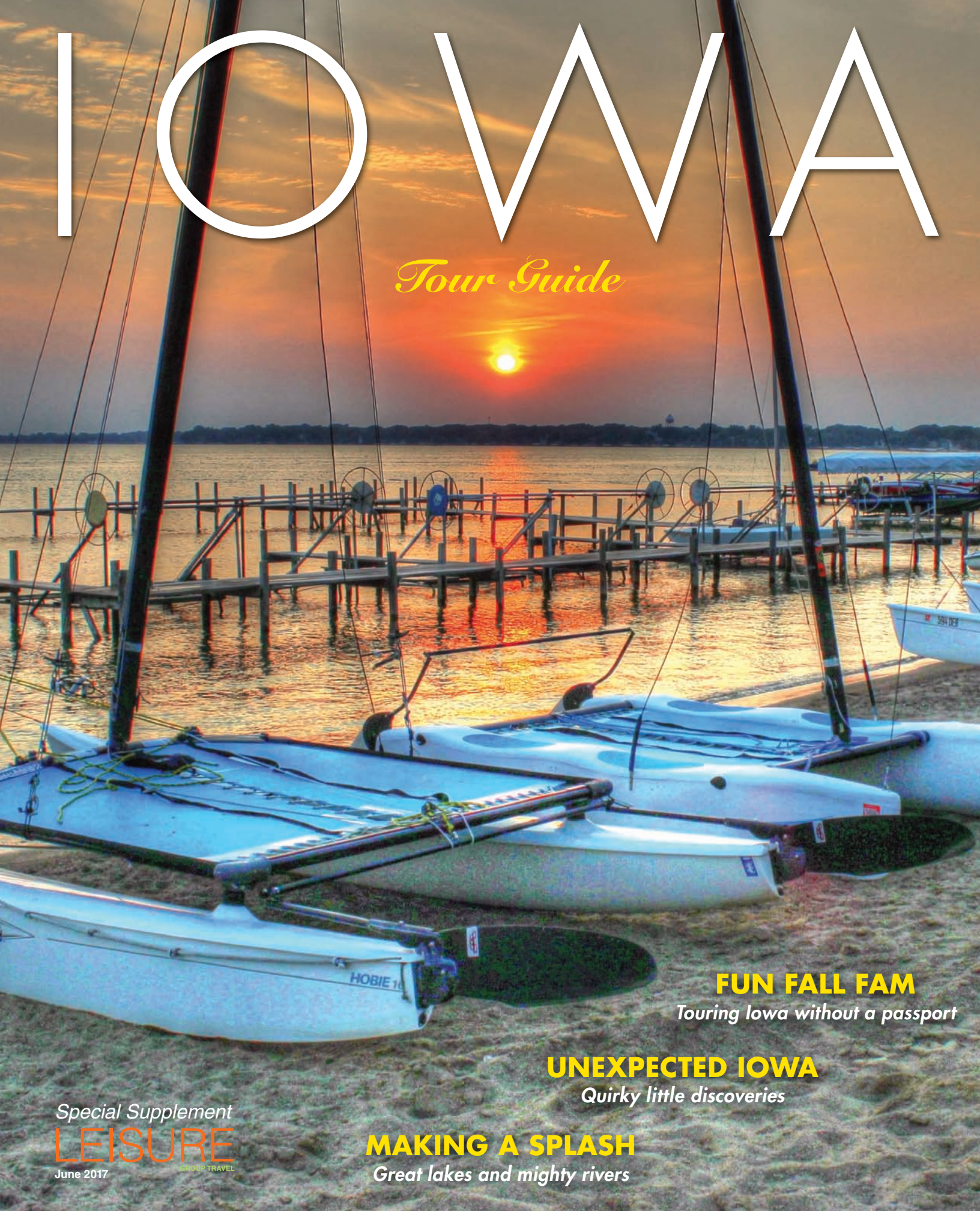


IOWA

Tour Guide



FUN FALL FAM

Touring Iowa without a passport

UNEXPECTED IOWA

Quirky little discoveries

MAKING A SPLASH

Great lakes and mighty rivers

Special Supplement

LEISURE

June 2017

GROUP TRAVEL

Unexpected Iowa

Tour planners are always looking to include places beyond the obvious—unusual attractions their tour members wouldn't expect, small surprises hidden in the clutter of better known attractions. The quirkier or more obscure, the better. Here are a dozen spots in Iowa to put on your radar.

Off the beaten
tourist paths, great
little discoveries
await group
travelers

Snake Alley, called the "Crooked Street in the World" by Ripley's Believe It or Not, twists and turns up a hillside in the Mississippi River city of Burlington.

Iowa Tourism Office

Field of Dreams Movie Site Dyersville

On a baseball diamond carved from the middle of a cornfield for the 1989 flick starring Kevin Costner, your group can bat balls, play catch, run the bases or just sit in the bleachers and dream. Guided tours of the field and farmhouse portrayed in *Field of Dreams* are available. The surrounding crop, by the way, is feed corn, not sweet corn. (fod-moviesite.com)

Fenelon Place Elevator Dubuque

Dating from 1882, the Fenelon Place Elevator is the world's shortest, steepest railroad. It was the brainchild of banker J.K. Graves, who needed a way to cut the lunch-hour commute from downtown Dubuque to his hilltop house, a long trek up muddy paths or buggy ride around the bluff. (He preferred lunch at home over the greasy spoons near his office.) Neighbors used the conveyance too and soon it became a public funicular for a penny fee. Today the cable cars, rebuilt in 1977, take riders on a nearly vertical, 296-foot trip to a lookout platform that affords views of three states—Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. The original cables have survived with only minor renovations. (fenelonplaceelevator.com)

Snake Alley Burlington

The brave are invited to take a walk down what Ripley's Believe It or Not has called the "Crookedest Street in the World." Rivaling San Francisco's Lombard Street, it was built in 1894 as a shortcut from the cliff-top mansions of Heritage Hill to downtown Burlington, a Mississippi River city with steep hills. With five half-curves and two quarter-curves, the brick-paved street with limestone curbing drops 58 feet over a distance of 275 feet. Snake Alley's design was conceived by three men of German heritage who used their Old World knowledge about how to build on a hill. A sign at the site proclaims that it's "reminiscent of vineyard paths in France and Germany and reflects the city's ethnic heritage." (visitburlingtoniowa.com)

Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad & Museum

Ride in vintage 1920s railcars on a one-hour-and-45-minute trip through the beautiful Des Moines River Valley, crossing a 156-foot-high trestle along the way. Diesel engines or steam locomotives pull the nine-car train on the 15-mile roundtrip excursion. The railroad also offers a dinner train experience, and a 30-minute trolley ride is available, too. This is one of the few railroad museums in the country that operates, steam, diesel and electric equipment. (bsvrr.com)

Traer Salt and Pepper Shaker Gallery Traer

Reportedly the second largest collection of salt and pepper shakers in the world, this treasure trove has more than 16,000 sets that Traer resident Ruth Rasmussen collected over a lifetime, starting with the pair she bought at Brookfield (Illinois) Zoo in 1946. Ruth sold her collection to the city of Traer in 2008 but, at age 93, still visits when large groups are expected. The shakers, in porcelain, glass, ceramic, metal, plastic and wood, range from the pretty to the naughty to the downright strange. Included are shakers depicting Marilyn Monroe, Howdy Doody, the Flintstones and other pop culture icons. (traer.com/saltandpeppershakergallery)

Matchstick Marvels Gladbrook

Since 1977 Patrick Acton has been building large models from ordinary wooden matchsticks, and his works of art are on display at the Tourist Center in Gladbrook's City Center Building. Millions of matchsticks have been glued together to represent planes, trains, ships, buildings and people. A 13-foot-long model of the U.S.S. Iowa battleship took 800 hours and 137,000 matchsticks. Acton's other detailed models include the U.S. Capitol, the Wright Brothers' Kitty Hawk, the Challenger Space Shuttle and Notre Dame Cathedral. Many of his works are in Ripley's Believe It or Not museums around the country. (matchstickmarvels.com)

Field of Dreams



Dubuque Area CVB

Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad



John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park

Des Moines

One of the most significant sculpture parks in the nation covers four acres of Western Gateway Park in downtown Des Moines. Donated by local philanthropists and art collectors John and Mary Pappajohn, the 28 works were created by 22 artists from around the world.

(desmoinesartcenter.org)

Grotto of the Redemption

West Bend

The world's largest known collection of crystals and gems in one location adorn this shrine to the Virgin Mary. Covering a city block and adjacent to Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, the largest manmade grotto in the world was started in 1912 by Father Paul Dobberstein (1872-1954), who for 42 years cemented semiprecious stones in place for Stations of the Cross and other scenes in the life of Christ. He traveled far and wide, to such places as the Black Hills of South Dakota and Hot Springs, Arkansas, to gather rocks, gems, crystals and minerals. Jasper, malachite and amethyst are among the stones used. In 1946 another priest began working with Father Paul for eight years and then put in another 50 years himself. Even the restaurant and restrooms are plastered with polished stones.

(westbendgrotto.com)

Historic Squirrel Cage Jail

Council Bluffs

No, this is not where naughty squirrels got locked up but rather a cylindrical, three-story jail with 10 pie-shaped cells on each level. Creaking mechanical gears would slowly spin the Pottawatomie County Jail so that the guard could stay put as he watched each prisoner's every action. Located inside an 1885 Victorian Gothic-style brick structure, the bizarre contraption (in use until 1969) is one of three rotary cell jails still in existence.

(thehistoricalsociety.org)

Bridges of Madison County

Winterset Area

Madison County boasts the largest group of covered bridges in one area in the western half of the Mississippi Valley. Of the 19 wooden-roofed bridges built from 1855-1885 to preserve the roadways' large flooring timbers, six bridges remain at various locations in and around Winterset, the county seat. All have been renovated and/or moved, and one is a replica of a bridge destroyed by an arsonist. Two bridges were featured in the 1995 movie *The Bridges of Madison County*, which starred Clint Eastwood as a roving photographer and Meryl Streep as a lovelorn housewife. Nearly 100,000 people attend the Madison County Covered Bridge Festival the second weekend in October.

(madisoncounty.com)

National Balloon Museum

Indianola

Artifacts and memorabilia depict the history of hot-air and gas ballooning from 1783 to the present. Videos in the theater spotlight various aspects of ballooning, and the U.S. Ballooning Hall of Fame honors those who have made significant contributions to the sport. The building resembles two inverted balloons. **(nationalballoonmuseum.com)**

Grout Museum District

Waterloo

One of Iowa's great cultural treasures, this cluster of museums is a magnet for group travelers. The Sullivan Brothers Iowa Veterans Museum honors the sacrifice of all Iowa veterans from the Civil War to the present. Named after five brothers who died aboard a Navy cruiser in World War II, it includes 35 interactive exhibits and an electronic Wall of Honor. The Grout Museum of History & Science focuses on regional history, flora and fauna, while the Bluedorn Science Imaginarium features hands-on exhibits that demonstrate how science affects everyday life. The district also includes the Rensselaer Russell House Museum, an 1861 Victorian brick mansion. **(groutmuseumdistrict.org)**

Grotto of the Redemption



Pappajohn Sculpture Park



Iowa Tourism Office



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While the concept of water may not flood your mind at the first thought of Iowa's geography, smart travel planners are aware that many tours and activities take advantage of the state's multitude of lakes and rivers, some better known than others. Everyone is familiar with the mighty Mississippi and has probably heard of river towns like Dubuque and Davenport, but some lake resorts popular with generations of Iowans are virtually unknown outside the state.

In the state's northwest corner, the **Okoboji** area attracts more than a million visitors a year to the Iowa Great Lakes, a chain that consists of Spirit Lake, the state's largest natural lake, and five interconnected lakes with nearly 70 miles of shoreline. The summer vacationland abounds with resort lodges, cottages, campgrounds, marinas and family fun attractions. Boating, fishing, sailing and other water sports, even parasailing, are popular activities. The less active can choose to sit back on a narrated cruise on West Lake Okojobi aboard the Queen II, which departs from historic Arnolds Park Amusement Park.

The north-central Iowa town of **Clear Lake** is home to a natural, spring-fed lake of the same name. One of the top sailing lakes in the Midwest, Clear Lake also is a

playground for a variety of other water sports, including stand-up paddle boarding. Clear Lake City Beach and the beach at Clear Lake State Park invite sunbathers to dig their toes into the sand, while Clear Lake Aquatic Center features an outdoor pool with waterslides. For a narrated, 90-minute sightseeing excursion, book your group on the Lady of the Lake sternwheel paddleboat.

Groups have a choice of several companies that offer relaxing cruises on the Mississippi River. **Riverboat Twilight**, a pretty replica of an ornate Victorian steamboat, sails from LeClaire to Dubuque on two-day roundtrips highlighted by views of wildlife (including eagles), scenic bluffs, commercial barges, locks and dams, and historic towns. After spending the night at the riverfront Grand Harbor Resort in

Making a Big Splash in Iowa

Bodies of water throughout the state offer plenty of group opportunities for exhilarating recreation and pure relaxation



Charles City Whitewater Park

Iowa Tourism Office



West Lake Okojobi

Iowa Tourism Office



Dubuque, passengers have time in the morning for shopping and sightseeing (admission to the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium is part of the cruise package). Live entertainment and onboard meals and snacks are also included. Besides this signature cruise offered between May 30 and October 31, the Twilight has one-day trips from LeClaire to Guttenberg and 90-minute sightseeing excursions on selected dates.

Dubuque's **American Lady Yacht Cruises** operates lunch, dinner and happy hour cruises on the Mississippi, with catering provided by Catfish Charlie's River Club. The yacht's main salon has seating for up to 90 guests, while the upper deck's Admirals Quarters seats 24.

Your group can also tour the mighty Mississippi on the **Celebration Belle**, a 750-passenger paddlewheeler that offers trips

out of various cities. Sightseeing, lunch and dinner cruises depart from Moline, Illinois, part of the Quad Cities area of Illinois and Iowa. Live bands come onboard for dinner cruises including themed outings that feature Big Band sounds, Broadway and movie tunes, classic oldies, and gospel and country music. On selected dates, all-day cruises go from Dubuque to Moline, Dubuque to Prairie du Chien (Wisconsin) and LeClaire to Dubuque, among other combinations.

Perhaps the best way to live out Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn fantasies is to hook up with **Maiden Voyage Tours** in McGregor. On a 1½-hour trip aboard his 49-passenger boat, Captain Robert C. Vavra will enlighten and entertain your group with river lore as you cruise the backwaters of the Mississippi. Learn about the river's history and wildlife from a man who grew up on the river in Iowa and did commercial fishing, clamming and trapping after high school.

On the Maquoketa River, 40 minutes west of Dubuque, kayaks, tubes and canoes can navigate the rapids at the six-drop **Manchester White Water Park** in downtown Manchester. Each drop is 18 inches, and the ride spans over 800 feet. Admission to the park is free, and local outfitters offer equipment rentals. There is a paved trail to walk back to the start of the course, or you can continue to float along the river as far as you'd like and

make arrangements for pick-up with friends or outfitters

Charles City Whitewater at Riverfront Park, a paddling trail on the Cedar River in downtown Charles City, also is free, open 24/7 and accommodates kayaks, inner tubes and stand-up paddle boarding (local rentals available). The one-quarter-mile rodeo course is rated at Class II and Class III levels with three distinct features for paddlers of all abilities.

For an underground boat tour, consider the 35-minute guided tour of **Spook Cave** near the Mississippi River town of McGregor. As the boat enters the base of a 90-foot bluff along Bloody Run Creek, your guide describes the discovery of the "haunted" cave and how early settlers referred to strange noises coming from it. The cave, a constant 47 degrees year-round, is adorned with stalactites and other examples of nature's handiwork.

In south-central Iowa, **Honey Creek Resort State Park** rests on Rathbun Lake, Iowa's second largest lake with 150 miles of shoreline. Situated amid pristine wilderness in a natural prairie setting, Honey Creek offers luxury accommodations in a 105-room lodge and 24 cottages. Watercraft rentals range from jet skis and stand-up paddle boards to kayaks and pontoons. Other resort amenities include Buccaneer Bay Indoor Water Park and an 18-hole golf course.

The Lady of the Lake is a popular option for groups in Clear Lake.

Colleen Thompson/Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce



Iowa Without a Passport

Tour planners will explore the state's diverse history and heritage on this fall's FAM trip



Downtown Pella

The Iowa Group Travel Association's 2017 National Group Travel Planner FAM, titled "Iowa without a Passport," invites tour operators to sample the state's rich ethnic heritage from Oct. 29 to Nov. 2. Immersing themselves in many countries without leaving the state of Iowa, participants will have a chance to visit the Dutch town of Pella, Amish and Mennonite communities in Kalona, and the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids.

As a bonus, the last stop will be the Travel Iowa Marketplace, co-sponsored by IGTA and Central Iowa Tourism Region, with more than 70 exhibitors showcasing destinations, attractions and accommodations from throughout the state.

IGTA's "Bring the Whole Herd" FAM tour last fall brought in group tour planners from around the nation and offered "a fresh take on Iowa's booming agricultural scene through hands-on and experiential touring opportunities," said Whitney Sanger, sales manager of the Dubuque Area CVB, one of the hosts. "We are looking to have some of these planners back in the community in the next couple of years. There is so much of Dubuque that was left unseen, and we look forward to showcasing our great community."

Erin Schmitz of the Waterloo CVB said the FAM was "a great opportunity to share Iowa's hidden treasures with the planners." Sharing local German heritage with the group, Fredda Daman of the Manning Hausbarn-Heritage Park said, "It was a lot of fun.... and an easy way to give the Hausbarn

experience to a large number of people who will bring more people back."

Here is what tour planners can expect on this fall's FAM:

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29

Afternoon: CIT Signature Transportation coach departs from Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines, for Gladbrook. At **Matchstick Marvels** see the detailed models created from more than five million wooden matchsticks by wood craftsman Patrick Acton. Next stop is **Marshalltown**, where visitors can enjoy miles of recreational trails, explore prairies and wetlands, climb a 30-foot tower, view a post-war Impressionist art collection, and see museums and a one-room schoolhouse.

Evening: Dinner and overnight in Marshalltown.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30

Morning: Depart for Atkins and **Bloombsbury Farms**, a family-fun place with 1,200-foot zip lines, corn mazes and a unique dining experience—Cuisine in the Corn. In Cedar Rapids visit the **National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library**, located in historic Czech Village. Then tour the mansion, estate and beautiful gardens of **Historic Brucemore**. Next stop is the **Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Birthplace**, the final resting place of Herbert Clark Hoover, the 31st president of the United States (1929-1933).

Afternoon: Depart for the Quad Cities, where a hot lunch buffet is served aboard the **Celebration Belle Riverboat** as she cruises

the Mississippi River. Return to the dock and depart for the **John Deere Pavilion & Store**. Educational, fun and free, the Pavilion showcases the company's machines, history and technological innovations.

After checking in to the **Radisson Quad Cities Plaza**, head to the tropical atrium for drinks and light appetizers beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Evening: At the **Putnam Museum and Science Center**, grab your popcorn before settling into your seat in the National Geographic giant-screen theater for a short welcome video featuring Quad Cities group-friendly attractions, accommodations and restaurants. Then enjoy **Taste of the Quad Cities**, a dinner and networking event with representatives of QC attractions in a casual grab-and-go setting, with appetizers, micro-brews and wines. Meet Alice Loff, group sales manager, for a behind-the-scenes or hands-on tour of the museum.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31

Morning: Tour **Kalona Historical Village**, then travel through the scenic countryside viewing the Amish way of life and visiting several country shops. Enjoy a home-cooked meal served family-style in a conservative Mennonite home.

Afternoon: The **Welcome Home Soldier Monument** in Albia is where every soldier can be honored and given a proper welcome back home. The stop will include a White Dove Release from Duey Alpaca Farms. Albia's Victorian Lady will guide you through

Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum & Home



John Deere Pavilion & Store



all of the town's Victorian treasures, including the **Opera House**. Enjoy a taste of Albia at **Inspire U Bakery** and **Albia Brewing Company**. Travel to Indianola and walk through over 200 years of history of ballooning aviation at the **National Balloon Museum**. Next is Winterset, the seat of Madison County, famous for the covered bridges featured in *The Bridges of Madison County* movie and for the **John Wayne Birthplace Museum**, the only museum dedicated to the legendary actor.

Evening: Dinner and overnight in Winterset

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Morning: After a tour of Winterset, depart for Clarinda. Visit the newly restored **Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum**, which features the extensive international art collection of Robert and Karen Duncan among other collectors.

Afternoon: After lunch at **Garrison Coffee House**, depart for the **Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum & Home**. Honoring the legacy of Alton Glenn Miller, the museum reveals the impact of this famous bandleader on the Big Band Era and military bands. Visit the Birthplace Home to experience the early life of the Miller family.

In Pella, tour the **Klokkenspel**, one of just a handful of carillon clocks with its 147-bell computer-driven chimes, music and four-foot animated figures. Next stop is **Vermeer Mill**, the largest working grain windmill in the United States. The 126-foot-tall mill grinds grain into flour used at Pella's Dutch bakeries. It is part of the 23-building Pella Historical Village complex, which tells the story of the early immigrants from the Netherlands. Then explore the **Molengracht**, which replicates an authentic Amsterdam canal with working drawbridge running through the European-style architectural complex.

Evening: Enjoy a **traditional Dutch meal**, with an array of Dutch foods from hutspot to rodekool and Dutch Mess. The **Dutchesses** will do a song/dance performance in Dutch folk costumes.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Morning: The **Travel Iowa Marketplace** at the Vermeer Global Pavilion in Pella will afford the opportunity to explore 60-70 locations to incorporate into your future group tours to Iowa. Lunch will be provided.

Afternoon: After lunch, depart for the Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines. Plan to arrive back to vehicles around 2:00 p.m.

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Iowa Festivals



National Balloon Classic



Pella Tulip Time

The World Food & Music Festival will bring hungry crowds to downtown Des Moines in mid-September.



Glenn Miller Festival

Clarinda, June 8-11, 2017

On the second weekend in June, visitors and entertainers from around the world converge in Clarinda, site of the Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum & Home, to celebrate the music of Alton Glenn Miller, the top bandleader during the Big Band era. Hear bands from around the world and the World Famous Glenn Miller Orchestra.

(glennmiller.org)

National Balloon Classic

Indianola, July 28-Aug. 5, 2017

Iowa's largest ballooning event wows visitors with more than 100 hot-air balloons, including eye-popping special shapes. Enjoy musical entertainment, an open-air market, fireworks and the Nite Glow Extravaganza. (nationalballoonclassic.com)

Iowa Irish Festival

Waterloo, Aug. 4-6, 2017

Celebrate Irish culture with activities like a rugby tournament, whisky tasting, and soda bread and Irish stew competitions. All three days are packed with live entertainment on six stages. Gaelic Storm is the headliner this year. (iowairishfest.com)

World Food & Music Festival

Des Moines, Sept. 15-17, 2017

Enjoy food from all over the world in one place. Featured food includes Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Caribbean, Bosnian and Greek—and that's just a handful of the offerings. Also featured is live music from many cultures. Chefs will be holding cooking demonstrations throughout the weekend.

(worldfoodandmusicfestival.org)

Nelson Pioneer Farm Fall Festival

Oskaloosa, Sept. 16, 2017

With over 30 exhibits and demonstrations of pioneer living, this festival is sure to entertain the whole group. Participate in hands-on activities like butter churning and rope making. A parade, country dinner and old-fashioned children's games are some of the other activities offered. The Old-Fashioned Fiddle Contest will take place and attract fiddlers from all over Iowa. (nelsonpioneer.org)

Oktoberfest

Amana Colonies, Sept. 29-30 & Oct. 1, 2017

Celebrate fall the German way at Oktoberfest with live entertainment and plenty of beer. The festival kicks off on Friday with the official keg-tapping ceremony, where free beer is served until the keg is empty. The weekend starts with a parade and continues with ample opportunities for games, art activities, and live music and entertainment.

(festivalsinamana.com)

Pumpkinfest

Anamosa, Oct. 7-8, 2017

Anamosa, the pumpkin capital of Iowa, hosts the annual Pumpkinfest. Food, crafts, games and giant pumpkins are aplenty. The festival is home to one of the largest parades in Iowa. The Pumpkinfest 5k run, giant pumpkin weigh-off, pumpkin recipe contest and pumpkin carving exhibit are among the many exciting activities. (anamosachamber.org)

Harvest Festival

Decorah, Oct. 14, 2017

Celebrate fall at the Harvest Festival. Hayrides, cider pressing, soup cook-offs, food storage workshops and children's activities are among the activities. (visitdecorah.com)

Madison County Covered Bridge Festival

Winterset, Oct. 14-15, 2017

Winterset, home of the John Wayne Birthplace Museum, spotlights the Madison County bridges made famous in the novel and 1995 Clint Eastwood/Meryl Streep movie. Guided bus tours stop at some of the six bridges. In addition, there are foods, crafts and live music, plus cannon-firing and sheep-shearing demonstrations. (madisoncounty.com)

Pella Tulip Time

Pella, May 3-5, 2018

Parades, quilt and flower shows, Dutch foods and tours of Pella Historical Village and Pella Opera House bring busloads to town every spring. Also enjoy demonstrations of wooden shoe making and other crafts. The Grandstand Show features street scrubbing, Dutch dancing and a Dutch cheese market reenactment. (pella.org)



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