

# Tour Guide IOWA

JUNE 2021

## Historic Byways

Venture through history and culture on these famous roads

## Artistic Iowa

Galleries, museums and studios to unlock your creativity

## Sophisticated Cities

Architecture, art and dining await

JOHN WAYNE  
Born Marion Robert Morrison  
in Wichita, Iowa  
Mar 26, 1907  
Sculpture donated to the  
People of Madison County  
By the John Wayne Family

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# Greetings!

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

Iowa's 14 byways intersect the entire state and are a great option to consider if you're planning a regional itinerary. In "Iowa's Historic Byways," we spotlight three routes and the incredible attractions you can find on them. Learn how local culture was shaped by the Mighty Mississippi along the Great River Road, discover Eastern European heritage on the Lincoln Highway and photograph the iconic covered bridges of Madison County. While on your motorcoach trip, be sure to enjoy the state's hundreds of art galleries, studios and live music venues. Popular group tour stops include the Surf Ballroom (where Buddy Holly famously played his last concert), the American Gothic House and the Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum. Discover even more creative attractions in our "Artistic Iowa" feature.

Iowa has developed a strong agricultural legacy and continues to innovate with cutting-edge farms, delicious restaurants and educational centers that explain the harvesting process to visitors. In "8 Exceptional Agritourism Experiences," we profile the historic reenactments at Living History Farms, the bison herd that lives on the Hawkeye Buffalo & Cattle Ranch and the tasty dairy treats available at the Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor in Le Mars. More memories await in the state's metro areas, which we explore in "Iowa's Sophisticated Cities." Enjoy craft beer and hip nightclubs in Des Moines, admire classic Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in Mason City and learn about railroad history in Council Bluffs.

We hope you enjoy the 2021 *Iowa Tour Guide*, and know that IGTA is committed to creating an authentic and comprehensive group tour experience.

Thanks for reading,



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*Diverse landscapes and group-friendly attractions unfold on journeys along Iowa's byways*

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*Unlock your inner creativity*

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*Authentic homesteads and delectable tastings await*

## 14 IOWA'S SOPHISTICATED CITIES

*Art, dining and architecture define these group-friendly cities*



Iowa Quilt Museum



Charles City



Hawkeye Buffalo Ranch





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# IOWA'S *Historic Byways*

## DIVERSE LANDSCAPES AND GROUP-FRIENDLY ATTRACTIONS UNFOLD ON JOURNEYS ALONG IOWA'S BYWAYS

**G**etting off the beaten path, avoiding interstates where possible, is a magical element worth considering in planning a group trip to Iowa.

The state's 14 byways, two of them nationally designated, will captivate your travelers with slices of small-town America, glimpses of urban areas, and inspiring vistas of farmlands, forests

and river valleys. Outdoor recreational opportunities abound, and vestiges of Iowa's cultural heritage loom at every turn.

Here is a look at three of Iowa's alluring byways:

### Downtown Dubuque



## GREAT RIVER ROAD NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Winding 328 miles along Iowa's eastern edge, this portion of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway takes visitors to blufftop overlooks, riverfront parks and historic river towns.

What better place to learn about the nation's most famous waterway than the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in **Dubuque**, Iowa's oldest city? Occupying a 10-acre downtown campus, the Smithsonian affiliate boasts 12 aquariums, an otter habitat, a stingray pool, history exhibits, a 4D theater and working blacksmith and boat-building shops.

Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens, landscaped with waterfalls, a lake and nature trails, contains a Japanese garden with koi fish, plus rose, hosta and formal English gardens. The cable cars of Dubuque's 1882 Fenelon Place Elevator, the world's shortest, steepest railway, take riders on a nearly vertical, 296-foot trip to a lookout platform that affords views of three states—Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.

Some of the most spectacular Mississippi River views are had from the towering bluffs of Bellevue State Park in Bellevue. The park's butterfly garden attracts some 60 species, with best viewing from late July to early September. In downtown Bellevue, groups can explore Lock and Dam No. 12 and prowl specialty shops housed in century-old buildings.

In Clinton, **The Sawmill Museum** tells the story of when logs ruled the river and lumber filled the rails. One of Iowa's best Great River Road interpretative centers, it focuses on the lumber industry's heyday in the late 1800s.

Celebration River Cruises' 750-passenger **Celebration Belle**, a favorite with groups, offers sightseeing, lunch and dinner cruises that sail out of the Quad Cities (Moline, Illinois), from April through October, with some departures from Dubuque. Themed music lunch cruises on the largest non-gaming boat on the Upper Mississippi



**Riverboat Twilight**

include "Classic Oldies" (1950s and '60s), "Hits of the Decades" and "Broadway & Movie Tunes."

Groups also can tap into the rhythms of the river on **Riverboat Twilight**, a Victorian-style steamboat replica that offers a two-day cruise roundtrip from LeClaire (just north of the Quad Cities) to Dubuque. The package, available from early June to late October, includes meals, live entertainment, a hotel overnight in Dubuque and admission to the National Mississippi River Museum.

Tours of **Isabel Bloom Studio** in Davenport spotlight production of the company's cement-cast sculptures. Handcrafted by skilled artisans, the sentimental and whimsical pieces portray subjects ranging from angels and gnomes to children and animals.

In **Muscatine**, the National Pearl Button Museum at the History & Industry Center explains how harvesting clam shells in the Mississippi River made this town the world's capital of pearl-button manufacturing. Groups in Muscatine also enjoy visiting the 1848 Pine Creek Grist Mill in Wildcat Den State Park and Muscatine Art Center.





## LINCOLN HIGHWAY HERITAGE BYWAY

The Lincoln Highway, America's first improved continental highway, travels 460 east-west miles across the heart of Iowa. Completed in 1913, it transformed the role of the automobile and today offers reminders of the classic road trip. Old gas stations, vintage cafes, interpretive signs and roadside sculptures and murals recall a bygone era in dozens of small towns and some of the state's largest cities.

In Cedar Rapids' Czech Village neighborhood, groups gravitate to the **National Czech and Slovak Museum & Library**. A Smithsonian affiliate, it features videos, oral histories, artwork and artifacts pertaining to Czech and Slovak culture, with a strong focus on the lives of immigrants who journeyed from the Old World to mid-America at the turn of the 20th century. Exhibits also showcase the Velvet Revolution, the 1989 popular uprising that ended Communist Party rule in Czechoslovakia. For a taste of Central Europe, the museum can arrange a buffet-style Czech lunch or a coffee with kolaches.

Grimes Farm and Conservation Center in **Marshalltown**, a combination nature preserve and working farm, encompasses prairie, forests, wetlands and agricultural areas. Groups can book a guided interpretive program, peruse educational displays, go up the observation tower and tackle the hiking trails.

At Shady Oaks Campground just east of Marshalltown, groups can tour the Big Treehouse. The hobby of Mick Jurgensen and his family since 1983, the 12-level structure encompasses more than 5,000 square feet of floor space. It has electricity, running water, a telephone, piped-in music, 13 porch swings and a spiral stairway from top to bottom.

In Gladbrook, northeast of Marshalltown, **Matchstick Marvels** dazzles visitors with detailed sculptures made from millions of ordinary kitchen matchsticks by local craftsmen Patrick Acton. Scale models on display include

the U.S. Capitol, Challenger Space Shuttle and a 13-foot-long rendition of the U.S.S. Iowa battleship.

**Reiman Gardens**, a 17-acre horticultural wonderland on the campus of Iowa State University in Ames, is ideal for strolling and relaxing. Enhanced by a lake and other water features, it has 26 distinct gardens, including rose, herb, vegetable, edible flower and home demonstration gardens. A tropical conservatory houses seasonal displays and a wing with hundreds of live butterflies representing 80 species.



National Czech and Slovak Museum & Library





Holliwell Covered Bridge, Madison County



## COVERED BRIDGES SCENIC BYWAY

Highlighting the 82-mile Covered Bridges Scenic Byway in south-central Iowa are the classic wooden spans made famous in the novel and movie *The Bridges of Madison County*. Two of the red-painted structures appeared in the 1995 romantic drama, which was filmed in and around Winterset.

For bus groups, the **Madison County Chamber of Commerce** can provide a step-on guide who talks about the bridges' history and their role in the Academy Award-nominated Clint Eastwood/Meryl Streep movie. Tour members have a chance to walk through several of the six covered bridges that remain in the county.

Winterset Courthouse Square, a National Historic District, is surrounded by inviting shops and eateries. **The Iowa Quilt Museum** presents an impressive display of vintage and new American quilts.

Group itineraries also feature Winterset's **John Wayne Birthplace & Museum**, a shrine to the movie actor who was born Marion Robert Morrison in a modest white house in 1907. The modern museum, located on the same block, is a treasure trove of Wayne artifacts—original movie posters, film wardrobe items, letters, photos, artwork, a customized car—and shows a documentary film about The Duke's career.

Another group option in Winterset is a behind-the-scenes tour of the 1913 Iowa Theater, which includes popcorn, soda and a short video about movies made in and about Iowa. The area's past comes alive at the 18-acre Madison County Historical Complex, a village with 14 buildings, including a country church, one-room schoolhouse, train depot, 1856 mansion and a barn full of antique farming equipment. ■



# JOHN WAYNE

## Birthplace & Museum

The only museum in the world dedicated to John Wayne! You'll be fascinated as you linger and learn about the actor, the private citizen and the American legend.



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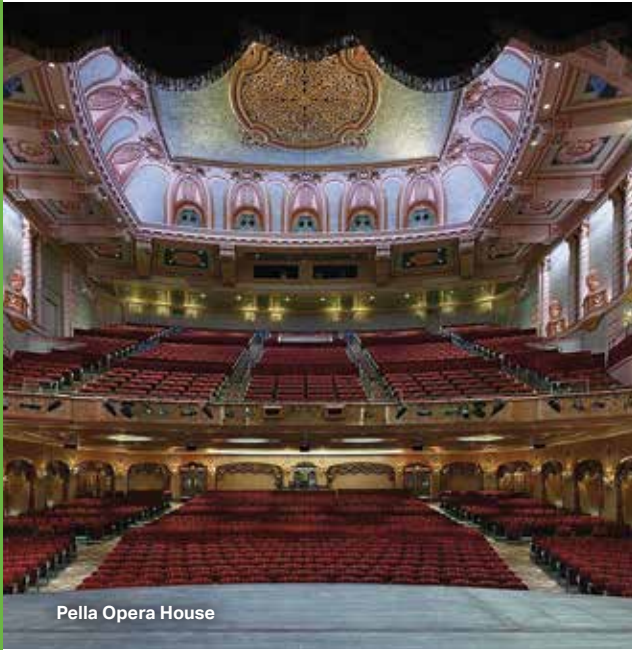
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Pella Opera House



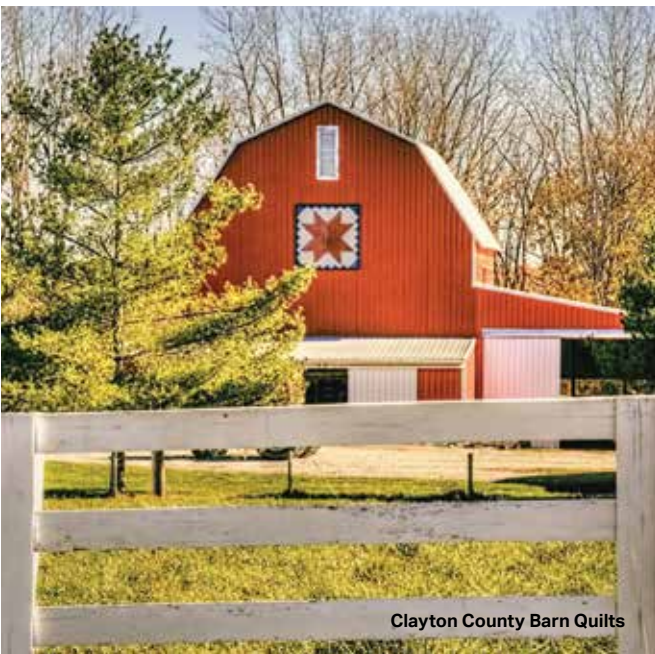
Surf Ballroom



Figge Art Museum, Davenport







Clayton County Barn Quilts



Archset, Charles City

# Artistic IOWA

## UNLOCK YOUR INNER CREATIVITY

**A**rtistry abounds in Iowa, from public murals that are free to admire to the state's rich contributions to music, painting and handicrafts. Do-it-yourself workshops, live performances and galleries are all excellent additions to a group itinerary, and these attractions showcase the very best of Iowa's artistic spirit.

### IOWA'S LEGENDARY MUSICIANS

Step into rock 'n' roll history at the **Surf Ballroom**, the Clear Lake venue where Buddy Holly, the Big Bopper and Richie Valens performed before a tragic plane crash marked the event as "The Day the Music Died." Groups can step into a space that still resembles a 1950s ocean-themed dance club with nautical wall art, bamboo furniture and island décor. The property includes a wall of fame that commemorates all of the famous artists who have performed there, a museum of memorabilia and a souvenir shop. Your group can learn more about this important era in music at the **Iowa Rock 'n' Roll Music Association Hall of & Fame Museum** in Arnolds Park. Signed guitars, rare LPs and vintage recording equipment line the exhibit walls in a space dedicated to the state's contributions to rock history.

Glenn Miller (a big-band trombonist and most popular musician of the swing era) was born in Clarinda, and the city honors his legacy with the annual Glenn Miller Festival. Visitors can learn about the bandleader's childhood, rise to stardom, service in World War II and musical legacy at the **Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum**. You can also tour his modest childhood home, which is decorated with authentic 1904 furnishings. While in Clarinda, stop by the **Carnegie Art Museum** to see an expansive collection of international works housed in a renovated 1908 library.



## HISTORIC MUSIC VENUES

Visitors enjoying the Dutch heritage of Marion County will want to explore the **Pella Opera House**, which was built in 1900 and restored to its former glory in the 1980s. Tours can include a demonstration of the 1928 Barton theater organ or group seating for the concerts and touring musicals that perform at this landmark. During Tulip Time, the Opera House offers tours, concerts, a play on the founding of Pella and films with audience participation.

Groups can enjoy Branson-style entertainment at **Browns Century Theater** in Le Mars. Housed in a renovated bank building, this venue stages revues of patriotic, country, Celtic and Christmas music staged by the talented Brown family. Buffet meals are served in the Browns' newly renovated Central Event Center across the street.

## COLORFUL VISUAL ART

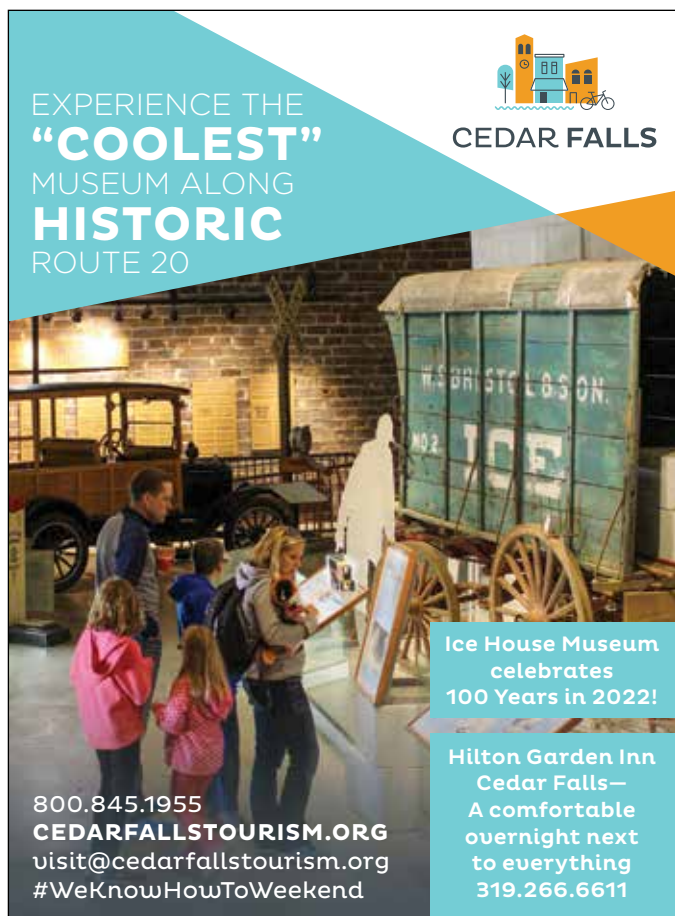
Public art tours are an excellent way for groups to absorb the local character and artistic richness of Iowa's communities, especially in **Charles City**. An innovative sculpture collection of "Art you can sit on" comes in whimsical shapes, with installations found along both sides of the Cedar River. Additional pieces including "Wheels of

Change" (enormous gears resting on each other), "Almost Neon" (abstract shapes that represent window browsers) and "Archset" (a gate constructed from recycled gears and wheels) are installed in Central Park. More pieces can be found scattered throughout the community and make for an invigorating outdoor activity.


At the **American Gothic House & Center** in Eldon, your group can pose for a photograph in front of the building immortalized by Grant Wood's 1930 masterpiece. The painting, which depicts a father and daughter modeled after Wood's sister and dentist, can be replicated by positioning group members against the structure's signature Gothic-style window. Groups can tour the museum and nearby prairie gardens and can watch educational films on Wood's legacy. Further art history awaits at the **Figge Art Museum** in Davenport. This collection of nearly 3,000 works houses American Regionalist, Mexican Colonial and Haitian art in a stunning Modernist building along the Mississippi River.

Motorcoach groups can also admire the uniquely Midwestern tradition of barn quilts. These enormous geometric paintings replicate the patterns of hand-sewn quilts and often adorn barns, commercial buildings and even residential garages. You can spot over 30 of these creations during a drive through **Clayton County** in the northeastern corner of the state. Group members can even purchase a block design to craft their own quilt modeled after the murals.

Make-and-take studios are an excellent way for group members to create their own art in a relaxed setting and bring the handiwork back to friends and family. Popular with large parties is **Studio Fusion** in Fort Dodge. Budding artists can create simple pottery, Christmas ornaments and jewelry with the assistance of a friendly local artist or purchase a gift in the storefront. Groups are also welcome at the **Blenden Memorial Art Museum** in Fort Dodge's Oak Hill Historic District. The museum's permanent collection includes European paintings, African sculptures and Japanese prints in addition to rotating exhibits that showcase contemporary artists. ■



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American Gothic House & Center



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# 9 *Exceptional* IOWA AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES

AUTHENTIC HOMESTEADS AND DELECTABLE TASTINGS AWAIT

**F**or Midwesterners, there's nothing better than fresh squeaky cheese curds, smooth sweet ice cream and supporting local family-run farms and educational sites. Iowa is brimming with interactive and educational places that will leave you filled with cultural, local and historical knowledge of the area, and full from sweet and savory dairy products too!

## DELICIOUS DAIRY PRODUCTS

**WW Homestead Dairy** in Waukon started in 2011 with three farmers that had a mission to provide fresh, great-tasting and natural dairy products for their community. Their dedication to their craft has allowed for quality products like ice cream, milk and cheese to come from cows that are maintained with care and deliberation. While

visiting, customers are encouraged to tour the creamery and farm to learn about the process of making dairy products and view the cows. You might even get the chance to bottle-feed a calf or milk a cow! Make sure to pick up some award-winning dairy products at the retail store, grab a scoop of ice cream at the ice cream parlor and try locally roasted coffee at the coffee bar.



Hansen's Dairy





**Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor**

Call WW Homestead Dairy to reserve a tour time during their tour season, which is April through October.

**Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor**, previously named Blue Bunny Ice Cream Parlor, was founded in 1913 by Fred H. Wells. What started out as a milk delivery service grew into the world's largest family-owned ice cream producer, helping Le Mars be named the Ice Cream Capital of the World. When you visit the Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor, you won't just be getting a delicious scoop of ice cream, you'll have the opportunity to participate in interactive activities like a flavor personality quiz, photo booth and learn about the process of making ice cream with their virtual production line. Sample as many flavors of ice cream as you'd like and customize your order to get the most out of your time at the ice cream parlor. Enjoy your sweet treat overlooking downtown Le Mars from the second-story rooftop. Wells Visitor Center & Ice Cream Parlor offers a theatre show of the history of their business and of Le Mars.

**Hansen's Dairy** is a seventh-generation dairy farm that serves and sells its products locally. You'll get a chance to view the animals up close, bottle feed calves, milk a cow by hand and pet and feed the kangaroos. The trolley will take you around the farm showing you the facilities where the dairy products are produced. Ever wonder how butter is made? You'll get the chance to learn and make some yourself.

## ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

The **Manchester Trout Hatchery** has functioned as a broodstock station where trout are spawned, incubated and hatched since 1976. The hatchery produces over 600,000 rainbow, brook and brown trout for stocking every year. The Manchester Trout Hatchery offers guided tours, public presentations and educational class assistance.

**Hawkeye Buffalo & Cattle Ranch** have been producing quality and ethically raised meat products as a family since 1854. Their farming philosophy is to create an even balance between nature and nurture when it comes to their herds while connecting old-fashioned farming techniques to new innovations. The ranch's priority of a high-quality diet and environment for their stock ensures the best quality in their meat products, all while encouraging purchases from a family-run farm. Take a tour of the ranch and hand-feed buffalo and cattle while learning about the ranch's history.

## AGRICULTURAL ADVENTURES

**Living History Farms** creates an interactive learning environment that educates, entertains and connects people to Midwestern rural life experiences. The outdoor museum's interpretations of over 300 years of a farming lifestyle will paint a picture of the advances and changes that Midwesterners saw throughout the centuries. With the museum's goal of connecting people to the rural way



**Hawkeye Buffalo & Cattle Ranch**

of life, visitors will get the chance to experience three working farm sites and learn from costumed museum staff through demonstrations of the time period each farm focuses on.

Enjoy a hayride, pick your own pumpkins and browse the Apple Market Store at **Center Grove Orchard** in Cambridge, which can accommodate groups with a cozy campfire and access to the hay maze.



**Manning Hausbarn**

In **Manning**, a 350-year-old authentic German hausbarn was brought over from Germany in 1996. Manning is home to a large German-American population, and the Manning Community Foundation's Heritage Park works hard to preserve the cultural and traditional atmosphere in the community. The German Hausbarn gives visitors a glimpse into life on a German homestead with the well-preserved features and architecture that has survived centuries, wars and traveling from across the Atlantic. While visiting the German Hausbarn, see the Manning Hausbarn Heritage Park's other attractions like the 20th century bungalow, Trinity Church and gift shop.

The **National Farm Toy Museum** in Dyersville is a collection-based museum that preserves and educates people on the history of agriculture through toy models. The museum offers group reservations, birthday parties and field trips. There are many showcases and events to take part in, including the Summer Farm Toy Show. ■



# Iowa's SOPHISTICATED CITIES

ART, DINING AND ARCHITECTURE DEFINE THESE GROUP-FRIENDLY CITIES



Downtown Davenport

Iowa is defined by its cosmopolitan cities as much as its expansive prairies and charming small towns. Groups looking for world-class dining, live entertainment and diverse cultural districts should include a stop in Iowa's metropolitan communities to add urban flair to an itinerary.

## DAVENPORT

The largest community in the Quad Cities boasts spectacular river views and a variety of entertainment options that are easily walkable from downtown hotels. A few of many group-friendly attractions include the Figge Art Museum (which houses works by contemporary masters like Jasper Johns and Jackson Pollack), Vander Veer Botanical Park (where a year-round skylight garden displays tropical plants) and Modern Woodmen Park (home of the Quad Cities River Bandits).



Cheers from Des Moines Mural

## DES MOINES

From one of the largest farmer's markets in the country to Selfie WRLD (a venue that features over 27 Instagrammable rooms and spurred a TikTok video that was viewed over 1.3 million times), Des Moines has an itinerary for you. Groups can enjoy the gold-domed State Capitol, State Historical Museum or the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates. Or try something out-of-the-box like local sunflower fields or a historical cemetery tour. Whether you're a new group or a repeat visitor, Des Moines' itineraries will introduce you to both the greatest hits and the hidden gems.





Bayliss Park

## COUNCIL BLUFFS

Situated across from Omaha on the Missouri River, Council Bluffs was a crucial city during America's westward expansion. Learn about this vital history at the Union Pacific Railroad Museum, which chronicles the history of the Union Pacific Railroad and explores the city's role as a transportation hub. Other historic sites include the Lewis & Clark Monument Scenic Overlook (where the Corps of Discovery met local Otoe and Missouri tribes) and the General Dodge Home, an opulent mansion that belonged to Civil War general and railway industrialist Grenville Dodge.

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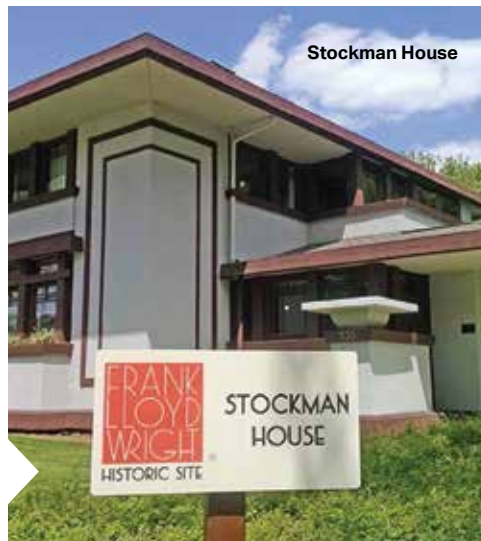
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## MASON CITY

Distinct architecture abounds in Mason City, which is home to the largest concentration of Prairie School buildings in Iowa and the only surviving Frank Lloyd Wright-designed hotel. Learn about Wright's career at the Stockman House & Interpretive Center before you join a Prairie School tour through the Rock Crest-Rock Glen Historic District. Groups can also celebrate Broadway composer and Mason City native Meredith Wilson with a visit to Music Man Square—an indoor 1912 streetscape that houses an old-fashioned ice cream parlor.



Stockman House

## CEDAR FALLS

Cedar Falls and surrounding Black Hawk County offer plenty for groups. Barn quilts—folk art designs that adorn outbuildings throughout the county—are easily visible from public roads, and many families welcome groups with advanced notice. Notable museums include the Ice House Museum (where you can admire rare ice harvesting tools), the John Deere Tractor & Engine Museum (which explains the company's history with rare artifacts and interactive stations) and the Sullivan Bros. Iowa Veterans Museum. You can also enjoy live entertainment at the Cotton Theatre. ■



Cedar Falls dining



## *Living the Dream* Dyersville, Iowa

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Catch a thrill on the Charles City Whitewater course

Revel in the history at the Manning German Haus barn

Find the romance at the Bridges of Madison County

Relive the music in Mason City's Music Man Square

Play on the ball field from The Field of Dreams in Dyersville

Sweet treats at the Wells Visitor Center in Le Mars

Admire Dubuque's incredible murals

Shop til you drop in downtown Cedar Falls

Visit Des Moines, the state capital - a special city with lots of attitude

Cruise the Mississippi River aboard the Celebration Belle in the Quad Cities

Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum

**IOWA**  
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ASSOCIATION

# Where Memories are Made

From family farms to vibrant metro areas, Iowa offers safe activities that engage travelers of any age. Enjoy Midwest hospitality and tranquility as you explore a range of authentic Iowa experiences that take you off the beaten path into America's heartland.

Plan your trip at [iowagrouptravel.com](http://iowagrouptravel.com).