

# AGRITOURISM STOPS AROUND IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND

# Homegrown



*Courtesy Wausau/Central WI CVB*

BY KRISTY ALPERT

DAIRY AND CHEESE ARE AGRICULTURAL HALLMARKS OF CENTRAL WISCONSIN.

When it comes to getting an authentic and down-to-earth travel experience, Midwest agritourism offers compelling opportunities for groups.

Agritourism is a form of niche tourism that involves traveling to agriculture-based locations. Although the most common places to visit are generally farms, ranches and orchards, this form of niche tourism can also include heritage areas, breweries and pumpkin patches. And because agriculture is such a key part of America's Heartland, there are plenty of great destinations in the region that offer great agricultural experiences.

## WAUSAU, WISCONSIN

Located right in the middle of Wisconsin, Wausau is home to a thriving arts community, wonderful outdoor recreational opportunities, quaint shopping and fantastic dining options, in addition to some of the state's best agricultural sites.

"The Wausau area is very fortunate to have a rich agricultural history that continues today," said Tracy Baltz, director of marketing for the Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention and Visitors Bureau. "There are fantastic hands-on opportunities to see modern dairy production and a number of events celebrating the farming traditions of the past. A few interesting facts that visitors often find surprising are that Marathon County is where both Colby cheese and Wisconsin ginseng call home."

From Wisconsin's iconic cheese curds and whey protein powder from Mullins Cheese, to authentic Wisconsin ginseng and seasonal produce picked from local fields, visitors will find wonderful farm-fresh ingredients to sample and a wide variety of products made in Marathon County.

[WWW.VISITWAUSAU.COM](http://WWW.VISITWAUSAU.COM)

## TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN

Long before agritourism took off, tourists in Traverse City spent many a morning picking cherries and apples at the local "u-picks" or visiting with the locals down on the farm. Known as the Cherry Capital of the World, Traverse City boasts scenic beauty, loads of outdoor recreational opportunities, numerous seasonal festivals and bountiful orchards and vineyards.

Groups can sip wine at Chateau Chantal in Old Mission or one of the many other vineyards, toast to a night spent with local craft beer, "pitch in" with some farm work at Tasty Morsels and more, all in one city.

"In more recent years, agritourism is becoming more deeply intertwined with Traverse City's growing reputation as a major food and wine destination, a reputation built almost entirely on the availability of a large variety of fresh-grown foods and locally grown wines and beers," said Mike Norton, media relations director for the Traverse City Convention and Visitors Bureau. "For many urbanites, especially those who grew up in rural areas, visiting Traverse City is a way to reconnect with their country roots and show their children 'where food comes from.'"

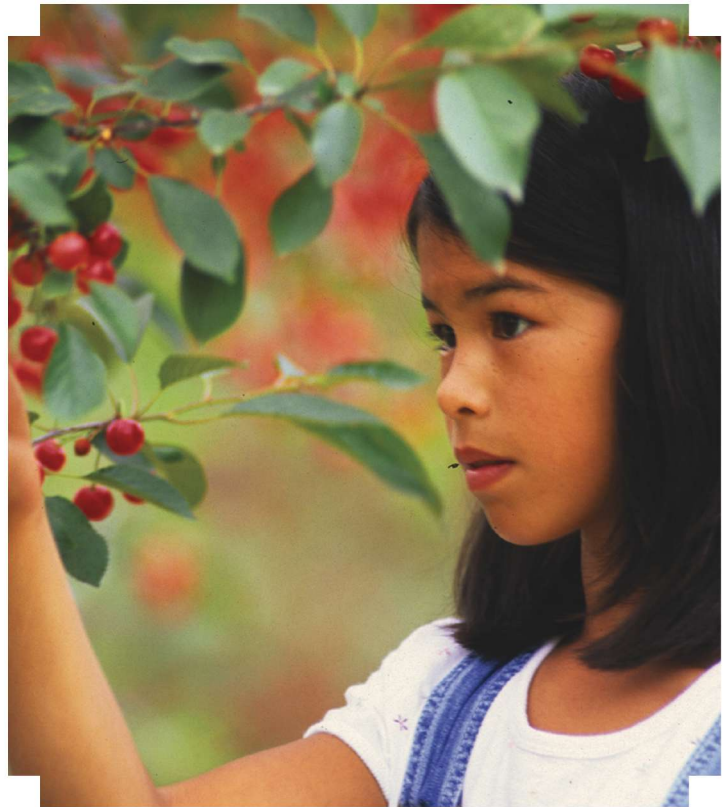
[WWW.TRAVERSECITY.COM](http://WWW.TRAVERSECITY.COM)

## SILOS AND SMOKESTACKS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Waterloo, Iowa

Whether its hand-feeding buffalo at the Hawkeye Buffalo Ranch, sipping wine at any of the local vineyards, touring the fields at one of the many working farms or picking flowers at Miss Effie's Country Flowers and Garden Stuff, everyone can find something they enjoy at the Silos.

The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area covers 37 counties in the northeast region of Iowa and is one of only 49 federally designated



Courtesy Traverse City CVB

CHERRY ORCHARDS HAVE BECOME SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR ATTRACTIONS IN TRAVERSE CITY.

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-Freddy

*Greetings from*  
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Pulaski County, MO

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[GroupsinPulaski.org/GTL](http://GroupsinPulaski.org/GTL)

Pulaski County Tourism Bureau - St. Robert, MO



**877.858.8687**





Courtesy Silos & Smokestacks

VISITORS CAN INTERACT WITH HERITAGE FARM ANIMALS AT SILOS AND SMOKESTACKS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA.

national heritage areas in the nation. The area seeks to preserve American history by telling the story of early American agriculture, from dairy farms and museums to vineyards and tractor assembly tours.

Each year, the area welcomes groups to its more than 100 sites, where all of the attractions have a connection to agriculture, and a number of them offer hands-on farm experiences or other unusual agriculture-related experiences.

“There’s so much to experience, it’s hard to focus on just one thing while you’re here,” said Aaron Steinmann, marketing and communications manager for the area, who made a point to note that many of the attractions offer incentives, such as the free ice cream at the end of the Hansen’s Dairy tour.

[WWW.SILOSANDSMOKESTACKS.ORG](http://WWW.SILOSANDSMOKESTACKS.ORG)

### SIKESTON, MISSOURI

The town of Sikeston has a rich history in cotton production that dates back to the early 1900s, but today’s tourists can experience everything from the peach, apple, melon or potato harvests to visiting rice patties or watching cotton being picked and then ginned.

“I would suggest tours start at the Sikeston Depot Museum and the Southeast Missouri Agricultural Museum for a great overview of our history, from forested swamplands in the 1800s to one of the largest drainage engineering projects in the world [completed in the 1900s] to the present, where the Bootheel has some of the richest farmland in the world,” said Linda Lowes, director of the Sikeston Convention and Visitors Bureau.



## Cleveland: Palette meets palate

From artistic culinary creations by world-class chefs to an amazing variety of ethnic eats, Cleveland will be a feast for your foodie group tour. There’s the incomparable Fabulous Food Show, plus delectable and history-rich guided tours of multi-cultural cuisines, a brewery and a chocolate factory. Give Cleveland a taste and you’ll be back for second and third helpings!

UNEXPECTEDLY

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The tight-knit community not only farms and lives together, but also loves to celebrate together. Each year, that community comes together for rodeos, weekly farmers markets and the not-to-be-missed Beggs Family Farm Fall Harvest Festival, beginning each October.

[WWW.VISITSIKESTON.COM](http://WWW.VISITSIKESTON.COM)

## FAIR OAKS FARMS

Northern Indiana

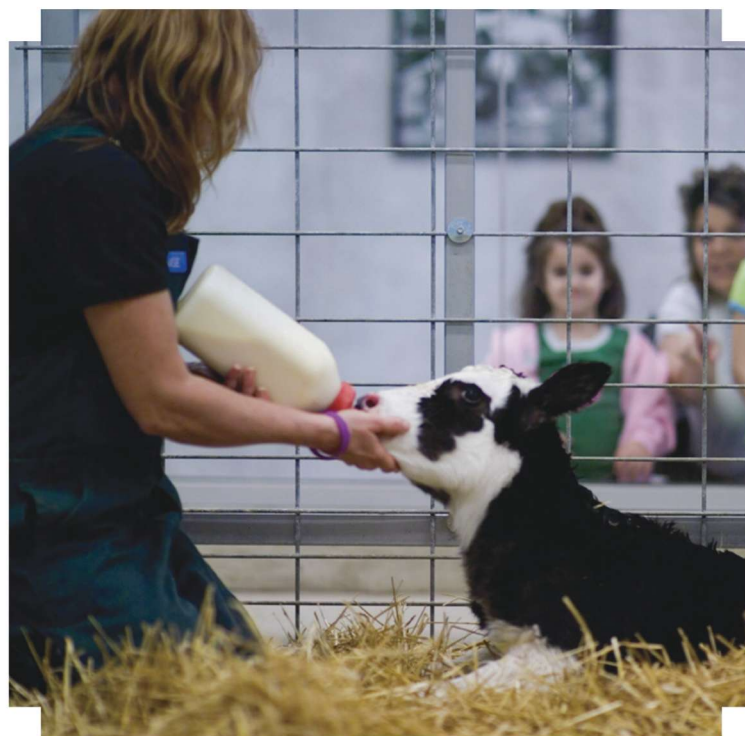
You could call a visit to the fields and barns of Fair Oaks Farms an "extraordinarily dairy" experience. The entire idea behind the farm is to educate society about modern farming efforts in a fun way, and the staff there does just that every day.

"We're here basically to create a destination for families and groups to come and enjoy themselves and also get that education," said Leslie Rusk, marketing director at Fair Oaks Farms in northwest Indiana, whose favorite thing to do on the farm is go to the nursery and see the newborns. "It never gets old."

Fair Oaks Farms is a family-owned, environmentally sensitive dairy farm set among thousands of acres brimming with herds of cows. Groups can take part in the Dairy Adventure, the main attraction of the farm that takes guests behind the scenes of dairy production, from a 4-D movie experience to visiting the birthing barn and touring the largest working dairy farm in the country.

Other great stops for groups at the farm include a cheese factory, a cafe, a garden, a gift shop and Mooville, an outdoor play area for children that's open weekends from Labor Day to Oct. 28. In 2013, the farm will be adding two new adventure areas that focus on pigs and fish, so groups can choose one, two or all three animal lifecycle experiences.

[WWW.FOFARMS.COM](http://WWW.FOFARMS.COM)



*Courtesy Fair Oaks Farms*

TOURS AT FAIR OAKS FARMS INCLUDE A TRIP THROUGH CATTLE STALLS AND THE BIRTHING BARN.