



As summer comes to a close in Iowa, beautiful fall brings an abundance of her own bounties with pumpkin patches, corn mazes and hot apple cider. It's the perfect time of year to get excited about agritourism.

Agritourism in Iowa:

What is it? ...And Have You Been Missing Out?

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Agritourism



Although most Iowans aren't familiar with the term agrotourism, ironically it happens to be an Iowa pastime. Agritourism, is defined by the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University as "...the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation to enjoy, be educated or be involved in activities."

Agritourism is a destination activity comprised of varying layers that serve different purposes for different operations. An operation can be anything from a farm to a winery. Some operations focus on entertainment or 'agritainment' while other operations focus on education or 'agrieducation.'

Agritainment, which seems to be the most popular of the two in Iowa, especially during fall time, serves to entertain by way of pumpkin patches, corn mazes, hay rides, petting farms and haunted houses; while agrieducation's purpose is to teach visitors via tours or hands-on activities about agricultural production. Agrieducation may involve helping out with tasks on a farm or touring a winery.

County fairs, which showcase agricultural displays unique to a county's specific region, are

another great example of agritourism. Iowa fairs are rich with cooking, produce and livestock competitions often submitted by 4-H'ers, while being intertwined with talent and art competitions. The Iowa State Fair, known for its over-the-top fried foods on a stick and turkey legs, is nationally recognized as one of the best state fairs in the nation.

The underlying goal of agritourism is to build support for agriculture and educate the public while providing a supplemental income to farms and other operations. Most farms involved in agritourism are small to medium sized farms that are growing food for people.

The Journal of Extension writes, "According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, the number of farms that sold agricultural products directly to individuals for human consumption increased by 17% nationally, while the number of farms in Iowa showed an increase of 22%, rising from 2,455 farms in 2002 to 2,987 farms in 2007."

2012 Census of Agriculture

Counties	Number of Farms in the Southern Iowa RC&D region
Union	648
Adair	726
Adams	467
Clarke	627
Taylor	639
Ringgold	651
Decatur	711

Examples of Agritourism from NC State University:

U-Pick operations or pick your own (PYO)

Visitors are allowed to harvest (pick) their own fruits, vegetables, and other products. U-Pick operations can include pumpkins, apples, strawberries, peaches, grapes, blackberries, Christmas trees, and more.

On-farm produce stand

Rather than have visitors pick their own fruits and vegetables, on-farm produce stands provide harvested fruits, vegetables, or value-added products (such as jams, salsa, canned fruits and vegetables) for retail.

On-farm restaurant, dinners, bakery

Some farms may choose to offer food and beverages to guests visiting the farm. Another option is to offer on-farm meals several times a year where visitors are served food straight from the farm.

Educational farm tours and demonstrations

These types of tours and demonstrations are often interactive and provide hands-on education. Tours and demonstrations can be given on an individual basis to the visiting public and to school groups or other organizations. Examples include cheese production, milking demonstrations, picking cotton, how-to classes (such as canning), and discussions on the history of farming.

On-farm activities

Many farms offer a variety of on-farm activities for kids and adults. For example, corn mazes, U-Pick, wagon/hay/sleigh rides, petting zoos, pig races, horseback riding, hunting, and fishing

What You Can Do

Individuals:

Explore Iowa Agritourism destinations on your next weekend get-away or vacation.

Community:

Sponsor a farm crawl in your community in which people visit a variety of farms in one day to learn about farm life and how foods are grown/raised.

Municipality

Partner with other governmental agencies to promote agritourism.

Corning Winery and Vineyards



Corning, Iowa, is forever stamped on the map for being the birthplace of the late television personality Johnny Carson. This quaint Midwestern town has other attractions which include The Corning Opera House Cultural Center, Lake Icaria, Icarian Village, Adams County Speedway and now Corning Winery and Vineyards that make it a town worth visiting.

Corning Winery and Vineyards sits on five acres of land directly off of U.S. Highway 34.

In early 2000, Barbara Corey and her late husband Ron flirted with the idea of planting a vineyard on their property to sell grapes and possibly craft and sell wine. With very little wine knowledge, the couple started doing their homework. Ron attended seminars learning as much as he could about the business of winemaking. Soon after, their idea became a reality and wine was being crafted, bottled and sold from their garage.

Eventually, they built a pond in their front yard and constructed a building. Once completed, Ron pushed the building into the pond with his John Deer tractor, thus erecting the first floating winery in Iowa.

Corning Winery and Vineyards opened Labor Day weekend of 2013. Sadly, Barbara lost Ron to cancer in 2014.

The floating winery is a cozy get-away accented with a charming wrap-around deck overlooking the pond and vineyard. Inside, a rectangular tempered glass floor lights up, daring curious visitors to stand over it for a first-hand glimpse into the pond below.

The vineyards contain 2,700 grape plants which include six different varieties of grapes. After they were initially planted, the grapes took three years to mature before they could be harvested. The wines, which are made from the previous year's crop, range from sweet to dry.

As sole proprietor, Barbara wears many hats at the winery. She does everything from booking the parties to serving the drinks to preparing the food.

She hires Amish workers to prune and pick the grapes and has retired medical doctor Steven Gruba make the wine.

Barbara credits Iowa State University Extension's Horticulture Department as being a great resource for her business.

In addition to the winery, Barbara continues to work full time as surgical technician at the hospital in Corning where she has been employed for 22 years.

Although her plate is full, Barbara says she enjoys her job at the winery so much, she doesn't feel like she's working.



Barbara says the winery benefits Corning because it's a tourist attraction that brings people to the community.

"This is a destination people come to," said Barbara. "I get a lot of people off the highway traveling by. I get people from Omaha, Des Moines, Council Bluffs."

During the summer months, many of her customers spill over from Lake Icaria.



The winding road that has led to the winery's opening has been a journey says Barbara, from the loss of her husband, to other challenges that have come her way. After all that Barbara's been through, she finally experienced a moment of Zen that allowed her to slowly exhale.

Barbara recalls Fourth of July, 2014 when she hired her first band to perform. While walking from her house to the winery, the band was warming up. Hearing their music nearly brought tears to her eyes.

"I thought to myself," 'yes, that's why we built this building,' said Barbara. "It almost made me cry."

It was at that moment she felt everything she had worked towards had come to fruition, from the planting of the grapes eight years prior to the winery finally opening.

"My greatest reward is seeing people enjoying the wines and the music coming out of the building," said Barbara.



Corning Winery is open to the public and is available for parties and weddings (there is an outdoor gazebo). Patrons can stop by to enjoy a glass of wine or beer while watching the big game on television. Hot food can be ordered when booking a party in advance, otherwise light snacks and appetizers are available for purchase. Caterers can be brought in for special events. The winery hosts special classes like yoga and 'Paint and Wine,' where customers attend a painting class while enjoying a glass of wine. 'Like' Corning Winery and Vineyards on Facebook.

Agritourism Resources:

Visit Iowa Farms-Iowa State University Extension

<http://www.visitiowafarms.org/>

Market Maker

<http://webapps.foodmarketmaker.com/marketmaker/#IA/food/productsearch/22390/19>

Association of Iowa Fairs

www.iowafairs.com

Iowa Cooperative Extension:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/>

Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture-Iowa State University:

<http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/>

Beginning Farming Center:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>

Travel Iowa

www.traveliowa.com

Iowa Group Travel Association

<http://www.iowagrouptravel.com/>

Other Amazing Resources:

Farm stays around the country

<http://www.farmstayus.com/>

The Maize

<http://www.themaize.com/>

Trade labor for lodging: Worldwide opportunities on organic farms: Linking volunteers with organic farmers and growers:

<http://www.woof.net/>

Webinar: Hosting Safe, legally-secure on-farm events:

<https://farmcommons.org/>

This publication is part of a larger document called “Food Connections: Southern Iowa Local Foods Initiative Community Food Profile” written by local foods coordinator, Alexi Groumoutis. The full document can be found [here](#).

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