

THE AMISH, THE IRISH & THE NATIVE AMERICANS Tuscola Tourism & the Heritage Corridor CVB

DAY ONE

Begin your treasure hunt in Tuscola – The gateway to the Amish”

First we visit the Raggedy Ann Museum. What a treat! The museum is operated by the grand daughter of Johnny Gruelle (creator of Raggedy Ann). Relive the years of your favorite red head!

Next we browse the great shops at the Tanger Outlet Mall in Tuscola for a while and visit the Amishland Barn for some crafty shopping as well.

Before we embark on our journey through Amish territory, we will lunch at the 1871 Luncheonette in downtown Tuscola. We will have a few minutes to stroll down the cobblestone sidewalks and step inside the quaint shops.

After lunch, we begin our tour in Illinois Amish Country. Our first stop is the Illinois Amish Interpretive Center where we pick up our step on guide for the day. Here we will view a short video about the Amish and tour the museum, which is solely dedicated to the Old Order Amish Community.

Then it's a drive through the countryside while our step on guide tells us how the Amish live and worship in this Central Illinois County. We arrive in Arcola, and spend the late afternoon at Rockome Gardens. Here you can see how the Amish carry out their daily chores, see demonstrations of farm life, and how they live the simple and peaceful lifestyle they are known for.

We can stroll through the Gardens and Rock formations that Rockome is famous for! Originally constructed in the 30's the rockwork is surrounded by beautiful floral gardens. Take a ride in the buggy through the park and on the train as it winds back through the fields and woods that border the east side of the park. The many shops also provide an interesting array of products. From dried flowers to beautiful hand made Quilts, Rockome Gardens give visitors the opportunity to simplify things for a while. We will have our Dinner here served family style and will leave with a peaceful thought of how it used to be, still is.

Overnight in Tuscola.

DAY TWO

We spend some time this morning at the Harris Ag Museum in Atwood. Enjoy coffee cake and fresh coffee in this delightful museum. Leave late morning for the Heritage Corridor. We travel through some of the richest farmland in the country. The Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor is the nation's first of its kind. You have now entered Irish Heritage country. Built primarily by Irish immigrants, the I & M Canal changed the Midwest forever. Paying tribute to the historical people, places and accomplishments of the 1800's, this 97 mile long corridor has much to offer.

We arrive in the Corridor just in time for lunch at the Public Landing Restaurant located in the historic Gaylord Building. The Gaylord Building is adjacent to the Illinois & Michigan Canal where Irish immigrants worked to dig the canal that changed the nation when it opened in 1848 making shipping possible all the way from New York to New Orleans and created Chicago as the nation's greatest inland port. We will visit with the

“cannallers” who tell us the story of the canal in its heyday. After lunch, can walk down the old tow path to the Norton Building which houses the Illinois State Gallery for a view of their current exhibits, visit the Will County Historical Society or some of the quaint shops on State Street.

Our next stop for the day will be the renowned Rialto Square Theatre located in Joliet’s City Center. This beautifully restored 1920’s Vaudeville Theatre will have you in awe as you walk through the halls of a palace, stand under the dome of gold cherubs and take in every twinkle of the 22 foot Czechoslovakian hand cut crystal chandelier.

We leave for Morris, where we find yet more remnants of the famous old canal. Here we see the canal port plaza and a replica of a packet boat used on the canal. Take a city tour of nostalgic old homes and spend some time strolling through this wonderful town’s boutiques and antique stores. We have our dinner tonight at “R” place. This truck stop restaurant is unique with antiques, toys and a gift shop.

Overnight in Morris.

DAY THREE

After breakfast, we continue our journey through Canal Country. We head for Ottawa and learn about the largest aquaduct that crossed the Fox River to allow the packet boats to continue along the canal. We take a short city tour of this city, complete with pre-civil war homes, Scouting museum and the site of the first Lincoln-Douglas Debate. Our next canal quest is in Utica, where we visit the LaSalle County Historical museum and after spending some time shopping, we lunch at Canal Port in an original bar/eatery with faux tin ceilings and friendly smiles.

After lunch, we stop at the Waterway Visitors Center to view barge traffic as it locks through on the Illinois River. We enter Starved Rock State Park and visit the visitors center for a myriad of exhibits and interpretations. Stroll along the Lodge’s exquisitely landscaped ground and discover carvings all throughout the grounds. Get a massage or visit the gift shop.

We finish off our day with a short river ride on the Belle of the Rock. This small paddlewheeler passes by the famous sandstone bluff known as Starved Rock. Hear the legends and folklore of the rich Native American life in this Illinois River Valley.

We return to the Lodge for Dinner before we leave the Heritage Corridor