

## POTENTIAL GETAWAYS FOR SHORT VACATIONS

JOEY AGUIRRE JAGUIRRE@DMREG.COM

Iowa isn't just full of cornfields. As Spring approaches and the summer gets closer we put together a list of under-the-radar landmarks that are nearby, and accessible from anywhere near the metro. Each spot on our list could be an adventure with the right mindset and company. Our goal was to put together a list of places where visitors could travel and still return home in the same day.

### The Covered Bridges of Madison County Madison County via Winterset 37 miles from downtown Des Moines

The Covered Bridges Capital of Iowa neighbors Polk County, with six of the original nineteen covered bridges of Madison County remaining. Tours are available that provide visitors with information about the construction and history of the bridges, movie production and local historical information.

The Welcome Center at 73 Jefferson Street in Winterset is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. from November to April and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. from May through October. Prices vary per person depending on the number of people in the group but tickets are no more than \$10 per person.

### Grant Wood Murals, Ames 39 miles from downtown Des Moines

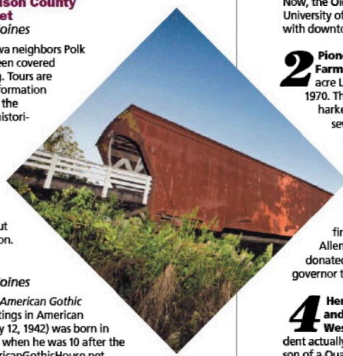
Iowa's most famous artist painted *American Gothic* in 1930, one of the most famous paintings in American history. Wood (Feb. 13, 1891 - February 12, 1942) was born in Anamosa and moved to Cedar Rapids when he was 10 after the death of his father, according to [AmericanGothicHouse.net](http://AmericanGothicHouse.net). Wood died of cancer when he was 50. The murals hang in the University Library on the Iowa State campus. They hang on the walls of the staircase leading to the Upper Lobby of the original building in the Grant Wood Heritage Area.

### Elwood, World's Tallest Gnome inside Reiman Gardens, Ames 39 miles from downtown Des Moines

Perfect for selfies, the 15-foot gnome is secluded inside Reiman Gardens on the Iowa State University campus. The 17-acre garden serves as an entrance to the campus and provides students studying horticulture an opportunity to learn by gardening. Members of the public are able to schedule a variety of classes from photography for adults to a youth program. Prices vary. The garden is located near Jack Trice Stadium and Hilton Coliseum at 1407 University Blvd. in Ames.

### The Field of Dreams, Dyersville 189 miles from downtown Des Moines

Iowa's most famous farm sits in Dubuque County near Dyersville with a two-story farm house, red barn and a baseball field tucked next to cornfields. Reservations for tours must be made 48 hours in advance. Every other Sunday, starting from Independence Day through August, 90-minute family-friendly comedy routines are held at the field. A "Team of Dreams" event is scheduled for Sept. 3-4 when former Major League Baseball players play a celebrity game with an autograph session afterwards. The field is located at 28995 Lansing Road in Dyersville.



ZACH BOYDEN-HOLMES/REGISTER FILE PHOTO  
Stars shine over the Roseman covered bridge, built in Madison County in 1883.

# Iowa's great landmarks

THESE 17 STOPS WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH MORE THAN 170 YEARS OF IOWA HISTORY AND CULTURE

THE REGISTER

**1 Old Capitol Museum, Clinton**  
Street and Iowa Avenue, Iowa City: Framers met in convention here in May 1846 before President James K. Polk on Dec. 28 signed the bill making Iowa the 29th state. Now, the Old Capitol is a centerpiece of the University of Iowa campus that intertwines with downtown Iowa City.

**2 Pioneer Farm, Living History Farms, Urbandale:** The entire 500-acre Living History Farms didn't open until 1970. This open-air agricultural museum harkens back to when families farmed several dozen humble acres apiece of modest corn, potatoes and wheat.

**3 Terrace Hill, 2300 Grand Ave., Des Moines:** The 18,000-square-foot mansion was built in 1869 as a private residence by Iowa's first millionaire, Benjamin Franklin Allen. The Hubbell family in the 1970s donated the home to the state. The first governor to move in was Robert Ray in 1976.

**4 Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, 210 Parkside Drive, West Branch:** Hoover is the only president actually born here — on Aug. 10, 1874, the son of a Quaker blacksmith in West Branch. He was elected in 1928 to a single term and had the misfortune of presiding over the 1929 stock market crash and the slide into the Great Depression. But he also was a great humanitarian, helping address famine in Europe during World War I and its aftermath and traveling the world to assess food needs on behalf of President Harry Truman after World War II.

**5 Iowa State Capitol, 1007 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines:** Iowa's gleaming democratic centerpiece with a 23-karat gold-leaf dome was dedicated in 1884. As a tourist, it's hard to spend a day or two in Des Moines without a native boasting to you on the street that Iowa has the most beautiful Capitol building in the nation.

**6 Snake Alley, 600 block of Washington Street, Burlington:** Three German immigrants engineered the winding clay-brick street with a 12.5 percent grade in 1894, trying to better connect shopping and business districts. In 1940, Ripley's Believe it or Not declared it "the crookedest street in the world," a designation that stuck. Now there's a Snake Alley Criterium bicycle race each Memorial Day weekend.

**7 John Wayne Birthplace Museum, 216 S. Second St., Winterset:** The most iconic actor of the 20th century was born in Iowa on May 26, 1907, in a cozy four-room house. He left three years later, but Winterset opened a new 6,100-square-foot museum in 2015. It holds more than \$2 million in artifacts from the Western star's career.

**8 Villisca Axe Murder House, 508 E. Second St., Villisca:** On June 10, 1912, a couple and their four children and another pair of young sisters staying with them all were brutally murdered in their beds. The grisly unsolved crime has festered through the decades and evolved into a macabre tourist trade. Now you can visit, for a price.

**9 Backbone State Park, 1347 129th St., Dundalet:** It was the first state park in what are now some 53,000 acres of steep bedrock ridge cut by the Maquoketa River. Its 2,100 acres include trout fishing and 21 miles of multiuse trails. Bicyclists also can roam among 130 miles of county highways that connect Backbone with other state parks.

**10 American Gothic House, 300 American Gothic St., Eldon:** Artist Grant Wood lived in Cedar Rapids in 1930 when he painted what became one of the world's most famous portraits. A man and woman stand in front of a tiny white house with its centerpiece arch window. The house still stands in this tiny town of 900.

**11 Des Moines Art Center, 4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines:** Iowa's flagship art museum itself is an artwork. Its flat, U-shaped gallery with a flat roof hugs the landscape and surrounds a courtyard with a reflecting pool. More important, this place has become a community cultural hub with art classes, live bands, lectures, its own revered lunch spot (Baru at the Art Center) and more.

**12 Buddy Holly crash site, north of Clear Lake:** The fabled "Day the Music Died" (thanks, Don McLean) was Feb. 3, 1959, when proto-rockers Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper died in a plane crash in a frozen field north of Clear Lake. They had just performed at the Surf Ballroom.

**13 Iowa 80 Truck Stop, 755 W. Iowa 80 Road, Walcott:** What's now "the world's largest truck stop," at Exit 284, opened in 1964. Today, its campus of more than 200 acres is so sprawling and well-lit that it almost resembles an airport. It boasts its own trucking museum as well as 2.5 million cups of coffee served and all the truck parts you can buy. There's a 60-seat movie theater.

**14 Fairfield:** No other town in Iowa has seen such cultural transformation in 40-something short years. Many communities have been shaped (ultimately for the better) by fresh waves of immigrants, largely driven by employment needs. But Mahatma's followers and devotees of transcendental meditation have made the Fairfield shift more broadly cultural and not tied to any particular ethnicity. The town has become an international multicultural oasis of vegan food, sustainable architecture and agriculture, and filmmaking (with a David Lynch-sanctioned graduate program).

**15 Iowa Rock 'n' Roll Music Association and Hall of Fame, 91 Lake St., Arnolds Park:** Iowa's version was founded in 1997, and the museum opened in 2003. The nonprofit pays tribute to Iowa's homegrown first wave of musicians and industry. While the national museum is situated on the shore of Lake Erie, the Iowa Rock Hall gives you an excuse to cart in our state's official summer water resort playground, the Iowa Great Lakes.

**16 Pappajohn Sculpture Park, 1330 Grand Ave., Des Moines:** The \$30 million, 4.4-acre park opened in September 2009 draws nearly universal acclaim. The alphabet man of a "Nomade" sculpture has become synonymous with the Des Moines skyline. This place is a crowning symbol for downtown revitalization that took root in the last 20 or so years in Des Moines, as in other cities nationwide.

**17 High Trestle Trail Bridge, just west of Madrid:** Where once trains pulled freight across the Des Moines River, thousands of bicyclists and pedestrians now stop and gawk at the valley view. Riders pass through a series of sculptures (lit at night) made to look like a mine shaft in tribute to what once was Madrid's big industry.



## THESE IOWA RENTALS ARE PERFECT SPOTS TO ESCAPE

KATELYN CHEEK SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

No matter what aspect of nature you enjoy, there's a cabin for that.

Here are 8 cabins that are sure to leave a lasting impression, and you won't experience cabin fever in these Iowa retreats. Whether you're looking for a family destination, a romantic weekend, or the perfect spot to escape with friends, look no further than these unique home rentals.

### Lorelei Cabins DUBUQUE

Enjoy more than 400 acres to hike and explore nature with two ponds to fish or water activities. Lorelei Cabins are a good place for family reunions, honeymoons, or just a getaway with or without the kids. 563-599-9916, [LoreleiCabins.com](http://LoreleiCabins.com)

### Neptune Waterfront Vacation Rental Home LAKE PANORAMA

Neptune is a unique and luxurious waterfront vacation rental home located one hour from Des Moines. It's ideal for family vacations, reunions and corporate outings, and it offers year-round accommodations at Lake Panorama. 515-321-1789, [www.interaproperties.com](http://www.interaproperties.com)



SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER  
Serenity Valley B&B, Ossian.

### Serenity Valley B&B OSSIAN

Serenity Valley B&B is set in a secluded valley surrounded by woods, a creek, two ponds and beautiful gardens. From the home-made country-style breakfasts to a homey getaway, guests get to relax, renew and reconnect with friends and family. 563-532-9322, [serenityvalleybb.com](http://serenityvalleybb.com)

### CR Station Train Caboose DECORAH

While this might not technically be a cabin, it was too unique to leave off the list. You'll feel like you've stepped back in time when you stay in this completely restored train car caboose. This train car is set in the peace and quiet of the country, just a short drive from Decorah. You can even take a ride through town in their horse-drawn carriage. 563-380-6403

### Heritage 1865 PROMISE CITY

Heritage 1865 is a hunter's paradise. This full-service accommodation gives you exclusive access to more than 6,500 acres of prime, privately owned upland hunting preserve. The lodge is spacious and can accommodate a variety of events. [www.heritage1865.com](http://www.heritage1865.com)

### Paint Creek Lodge HARPERS FERRY

This rustic, log home features an A-frame, open floor plan that is surrounded by 8,000 acres of the Yellow River State Forest, making it ideal for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Painted Creek Lodge is secluded and private with Top-notch trout fishing is just steps from the front doorstep. Bonus: This cabin is pet-friendly. 205-978-3715, [www.IowaCabinRentals.com](http://www.IowaCabinRentals.com)

### Trout Lodge WATERVILLE

Trout Lodge is a true outdoorsman's haven or the perfect destination for a quiet family getaway. Nestled in a valley surrounded by towering bluffs of the Yellow River Forest, this peaceful log home has more than a half-mile of frontage on the famed Paint Creek. Although quaint, it's definitely one to keep on the list. [www.IowaCabinRentals.com](http://www.IowaCabinRentals.com)

### Jamaican Farm JAMAICA

Check out this Jamaican vacation — no passport required. This modern home sits on several acres with beautiful views, a large fireplace and much more. Fury family members are allowed. And while they don't make you breakfast, they do provide eggs from their free-range, organic-fed chickens. [www.airbnb.com/rooms/11091249](http://www.airbnb.com/rooms/11091249)

# 10 road trip-worthy restaurants in the heartland

**MOLLY LONGMAN** [MLONGMAN@DMREG.COM](mailto:MLONGMAN@DMREG.COM)

Many Iowans know Des Moines to be a "foodie city," but what about the rest of Iowa? John Naughton, a self-proclaimed foodie, traveler and the Register's high school sports writer, has traveled to each of Iowa's 99 counties, testing restaurants across the state and nibbling on everything from pork tenderloins the size of his head to sweet, peach-flavored ice cream.

"I see food as being part of an area's culture, and, across Iowa, we have a lot of different communities that incorporate food into their lifestyles," Naughton said. "Part of the travel experience is encountering things that may be new to you or may be things that bring up memories for you. Food is part of that."

Naughton had a hard time selecting just 10 of his favorite restaurants in Iowa, but narrowed it down into a guide of the 10 best road trip-worthy restaurants in the state.

## Breitbach's Country Dining

Balltown, 563 Balltown Road; 563-552-2220

**What to expect:** The view of the Mississippi River at the overlook down the road from Breitbach's is just as impressive as the Iowa Pork Producers Association award-winning breaded pork tenderloin. Since 1852, the restaurant has survived two fires and been operated by five generations of Breitbachs. "The atmosphere is very relaxed, casual dining, where you can chat with familiar neighbors," Assistant Manager Mike Breitbach says.

**Must try:** Though the James Beard Foundation award-winning restaurant is known for its tenderloins, be sure not to miss out on the homemade pickled carrots and macaroni salad at the restaurant's salad bar.

## Archie's Waeside

224 4th Avenue Northwest, Le Mars; 712-546-7011

**What to expect:** If you like aged beef, head to Le Mars. Another James Beard Foundation award-winning restaurant, the meat is hand-cut and dry-aged in a 1963 meat cooler built by original owner Archie Jackson himself. Current Owner Bob Rand described the restaurant as a throwback to a 1950s supper club, with a casual twist. "If you have a shirt and shoes on you can come in," Rand says. "You can get done mowing your yard and walk over, or you might be celebrating an anniversary or have people on business from a law firm in Chicago at the next table."

**Must try:** The 18-ounce center cut filet pairs well with wine—and there's a vast anthology to choose from. Rand says the restaurant boasts a selection of fine Cabernets you won't find anywhere else in Iowa.

## Blue Bunny Ice Cream Parlor

115 Central Ave. Northwest, Le Mars; 712-546-4522

**What to expect:** This old-fashioned soda fountain boasts an assortment of malts, sundaes, and 39 flavors of Blue Bunny ice cream. As children (and playful adults) climb on a giant ice cream cone figurine out front, history buffs can head upstairs and check out historical Blue Bunny memorabilia, including drawings of the original 1913 bunny that started it all.

**Must try:** Senior Manager of Corporate Communication Lesley Bartholomew says the turtle sundae, a fusion of vanilla ice cream buried in hot caramel, hot fudge and pecans, and topped with whipped cream and a cherry is a fan favorite at this sweet tooth's paradise.

## Kathmandu Restaurant

4121 SE 14th St., Des Moines, 515-207-1463

**What to expect:** When it opened in January, this family-owned restaurant was the new kid on the block in Des Moines dining scene—but it's already made a name for itself. Owner Thakur Neupane greets customers with a smile and a "Namaste" before serving up a combination of Nepalese and Indian dishes.

**Must try:** Naughton recommends checking out the lunch buffet, which boasts a variety of dishes such as vegetable samosas filled with soft potato, spinach and green peas.

## Newton's Paradise Café

128 East 4th St., Waterloo; 319-234-0280

**What to expect:** This diner-style restaurant was launched in a former jewelry shop and is known for their large portions and a famous plate-sized breaded pork tenderloin that is freshly cut, tenderized and hand-breaded every day.

**Must try:** Although Naughton says the café is known for its tenderloin, General Manager Krystal Gronowki says locals flock to the spot for their stacked bloody marys, which she describes as a dangerous amalgamation of tomato juice, vodka, celery, fire-roasted baby bell peppers, Italian pickles, bacon, asparagus and olives.

## Sykora Bakery

73 16th Ave., Cedar Rapids; 319-364-5271

**What to expect:** The history of this Czech Village bakery is just as rich as the sweet treats. Located near the National Czech & Slovak Museum, the cultural Cedar Rapids shop is known for its kolaches, fruit-topped pastries baked with homemade dough. Sykora serves up to 20 flavors of kolaches at a time, including cherry, lemon, berry and poppy seed, Owner John Rocarek says.

**Must try:** Naughton recommends ditching your typical sticky bun for a kolach at the bakery. Rocarek says that cherry-flavored kolaches consistently sell out, so grab them while the sweet treats are available.

## The Irish Shanti

17455 Gunder Road, Gunder; 563-864-9289

**What to expect:** This small town treat is the home of the mammoth Gunderburger, a two-pound hamburger with all the fixings. Though you may have a bit of a wait while the cartoonishly large burgers sizzle on the grill, but owner Kevin Walsh says the pub-like atmosphere and hometown feel in the dark eatery make diners feel like they're part of a community. "I have a saying that people come in as strangers and leave as friends," Walsh says.

**Must try:** Get lucky with the "Luck of the Irish" burger, topped with corned beef, melty Swiss cheese, Jameson caramelized onions and Guinness mustard.

## Galleria de Paco

622 Commercial St., Waterloo; 319-833-7226

**What to expect:** You don't have to go all the way to the Vatican to experience

the breath-taking views of Michelangelo's "Sistine Chapel." Paco Rosic recreated the work in an abandoned building turned Italian restaurant in Waterloo using only spray paints.

**Must try:** Owner Jacky Rosic says people come to the "Sistine Chapel of Iowa" for the ambience, but stay for the four-course menu. He recommends the grilled and roasted rack of New Zealand Lamb Chops.

## Popoli Ristorante & Sullivan's Bar

101 3rd Ave. Southwest, Cedar Rapids; 319-363-1248

**What to expect:** This Italian steakhouse was imagined in a converted Louis Sullivan-designed bank in the heart of downtown Cedar Rapids. The 107-year-old bank building has stood the test of time with original murals, stained glass and chandeliers, and is known for its high quality meat.

**Must try:** Naughton recommends testing out dishes such as the pan-seared rib eye steak before walking a few blocks to the Paramount Theatre for a show if you're looking for a fun night out.

## Ross' Restaurant

2297 Falcon Ave., Bettendorf; 565-355-7573

**What to expect:** This 24-hour diner-style restaurant has been frequented by varied levels of celebrity, from Styx to President Barack Obama. Most visitors come to sample the famous Magic Mountain open-faced sandwich. Manager Melissa Freidhof-Rodgers says the restaurant prides itself on doing things the old-fashioned way, freshly baking buns and gargantuan cinnamon rolls daily.

**Must try:** Naughton says the Magic Mountain open-faced meat sandwich is a sight to see. Freidhof-Rodgers describes the sandwich as grilled Texas toast topped with loose ground meat and French fries or hashbrowns. Cheddar cheese sauce is poured over the heap, and it can be topped with optional chopped onion "snow." Want to make it a "volcano?" Add homemade spicy chili.



From top:  
Ross' Restaurant;  
Sykora Bakery;  
Galleria de Paco.