

# Southfork Ranch

Welcome to the legendary Southfork Ranch, made famous by the Ewing Family in the television series Dallas! Southfork Ranch is a premier special events venue and meeting destination in the Dallas Metro Area. With 63,000 square feet of event space, we host hundreds of events annually, including weddings, reunions, holiday parties, corporate meetings, concerts, company picnics, and more. Whether you are hosting a group of just 10 or 10,000, Southfork Ranch provides a beautiful backdrop for any occasion. Often called "The World's Most Famous Ranch," the setting, facilities, and service will make your next event truly unforgettable.



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## Southfork Ranch

**E**mbark on an unforgettable journey through the iconic Southfork Ranch, where the legacy of the Ewing family comes to life in a captivating tour experience. Our adventure begins at the Ranch Round-Up Visitors Center, a bustling hub of excitement, where a tram eagerly awaits to transport you to the legendary Ewing Mansion.

As you cruise towards the mansion, our expert tour guides will regale you with fascinating tales of the Ranch's rich history, providing a backdrop to the glamour and drama that unfolded within its storied walls. Along the way, marvel at the majestic Texas Longhorns and graceful American Quarter Horses, immersing yourself in the true spirit of the Lone Star State.

Arriving at the Ewing Mansion, you'll step into the "most famous White House west of D.C.," guided by a storyteller who will unveil the secrets of decades of filming history. Dive into the captivating world of the Ewing television characters, with behind-the-scenes insights that will deepen your appreciation for this cultural phenomenon.

As you bid farewell to the Mansion, the sprawling ranch grounds await your explo-



ration. Wander freely amidst the beauty of Southfork, making a special stop at Lincoln's and Longhorns, home to Jock Ewing's original 1978 Lincoln Continental—a nostalgic relic frozen in time.

Before concluding your adventure, make your way back to the Southfork Ranch Round-Up Visitors Center, a treasure trove of Dallas-inspired memorabilia.

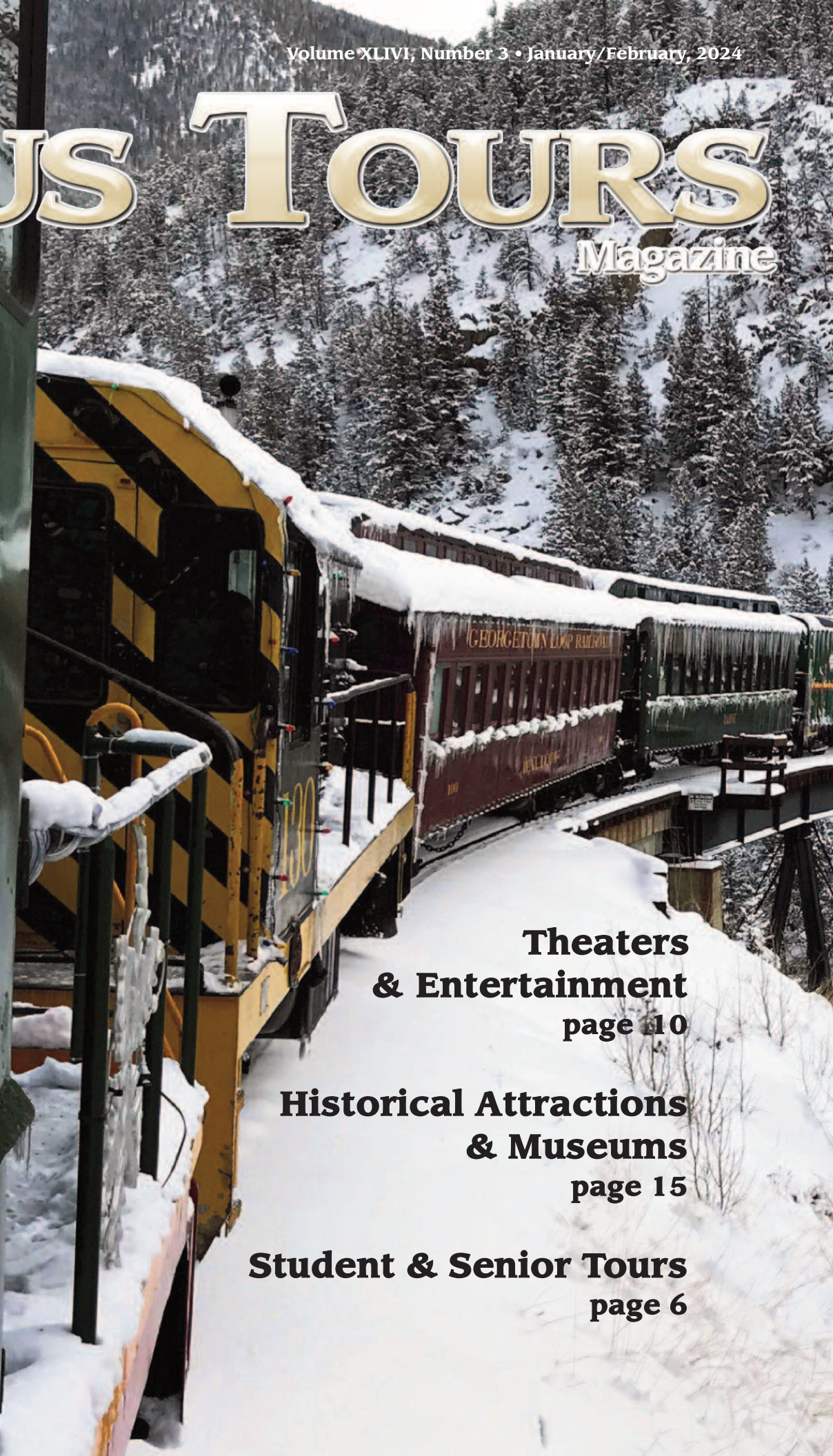
Immerse yourself in the allure of Southfork Ranch, where every step is a brush with television history and Texan charm. Unearth the magic of the Ewing legacy, creating memories that will linger long after your visit. For more information visit us online at: <https://bit.ly/sfr-tours>

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# BUS TOURS

Magazine



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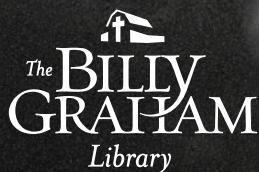


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## COVER PHOTO

The Georgetown Loop Railroad was one of Colorado's first visitor attractions. Open air rides are available April through January. The train ride with a mine tour and gold panning runs from the end of April through October. Steam rides operate May to October. GEORGETOWN LOOP MINING AND RAILROAD PARK.

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The editorial staff at BUS TOURS MAGAZINE are always looking for news items and editorial material on places that want bus tour groups to stop. Please phone (815) 946-2341 or send material to [editorial@busmag.com](mailto:editorial@busmag.com).



# Buzz on the Bus

*News and notes for bus tour planners*

## **Elvis's Birthplace**

### **Tupelo, Mississippi**

Two construction projects have been going on at Elvis's Birthplace to make your visit even more enjoyable.

On the hillside at the east end of the pond Reflections, a water feature has been constructed including a babbling brook feeding into a koi pond, then flowing into Reflections.

Created primarily of native stone, the koi pond is located at the north end of the Bridge Over Troubled Waters.

Always with fans in mind, bus parking with a turnaround behind the statue, Becoming, is available. Now you can ride in your motorcoach to the top of the hill to view Tupelo just as Elvis did as a boy.



## **The African American**

### **Travel Conference**

#### **Chesapeake, Virginia**

Visit Chesapeake Virginia announced that it will host The African American Travel Conference, creating awareness of its tourism destination to the diversity group travel industry.

Travel planners from 25 states will attend the event on April 16-18, 2024 to experience Chesapeake and discover why they should return with their groups.

The AATConf24 will feature diverse travel planners who take more than 25,000 overnight travelers a year on \$20 million of packaged tours.

Readers of this publication are invited to attend by contacting Cassandra Blankenship at (800) 628-0993 or registering online at [aatconline.com](http://aatconline.com).



## **Bellingrath Gardens & Home**

### **Theodore, Alabama**

Bellingrath Gardens & Home has been honored as the only garden in the United States to receive the prestigious "Gardens Worth Traveling For in 2024" award in the 2023 International Garden Tourism Awards.

Nestled in the heart of Alabama, Bellingrath Gardens & Home has long been celebrated for its unparalleled beauty, captivating landscapes and rich horticultural heritage. This esteemed recognition is a testament to the tireless dedication and vision of the individuals who have nurtured this botanical gem, making it a must-visit destination for garden enthusiasts and travelers alike.

The International Garden Tourism Awards are globally recognized as the pinnacle of excellence in the realm of garden tourism. Bellingrath Gardens & Home's achievement as the sole representative from the United States in the "Garden Worth Traveling For in 2024" category highlights its exceptional standing among the world's most captivating and immersive garden experiences.

## **Walt Disney Family Museum**

### **San Francisco, California**

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of The Walt Disney Company, The Walt Disney Family Museum will be showcasing rare and unique objects from the museum's collection, which highlight important milestones in Walt's career and his company's early history. These artifacts, which include recent acquisitions and fragile materials that have never been publicly displayed, will be on view for free in the museum's Awards Lobby and will rotate periodically throughout the next year.



In July 1923, Walt Disney's initial foray into film production ended in disappointment with the collapse of the Laugh-O-gram Films studio. However, before the studio filed for bankruptcy, Walt, Ub Iwerks and his team had been able to complete production of *Alice's Wonderland* – which would later become the pilot cartoon for the Alice Comedies series, combining a live-action young actress with animated backgrounds and characters.

With the encouragement of his older brother Roy, and with the pilot reel in hand, Walt sold his film camera and put the money towards a one-way, first-class

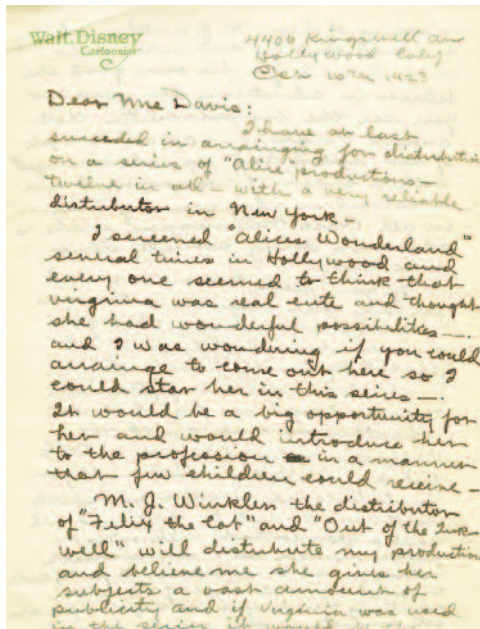
train ticket to Los Angeles, California. After arriving in "Hollywood," he set about finding a distributor for the Alice Comedies. Just a few months later, Walt and Roy went into business with M.J. Winkler Productions, the company of pioneering film producer Margaret J. Winkler, to develop a new series of short

films featuring the live-action Alice and her adventures in the animated world of "Cartoonland." The contract with Winkler Productions marked the founding of the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, which we know today as The Walt Disney Company, on October 16, 1923.

Beginning Thursday, October 19, the first object the museum will place on temporary display is an original letter Walt penned to Mrs. T.J. Davis, dated October 16, 1923—the same day he and Roy signed the distribution contract with Winkler Productions. Davis was the mother of Virginia Davis, the first child actor to portray the titular character in the Alice Comedies series.

In negotiating their agreement, Winkler specified that she wanted the same actress to portray Alice in subsequent installments of the Alice Comedies series. As a result, Walt implored Davis to allow her daughter to star in the series, praising Virginia's talent and vouching for Winkler's ability to promote the shorts. Virginia's parents soon agreed to move the family to California, and she became the studio's highest-paid employee at the time. While a facsimile of this letter is exhibited in the museum's main galleries, the original document has previously never been on public view due to its highly fragile nature.

The museum continues to host *Disney Cats & Dogs*, a traveling exhibition originally presented in 2021 by the Walt Disney Animation



Research Library, Walt Disney Archives, and Disney Japan at Matsuya Ginza – the historic department store in Tokyo – before traveling to additional destinations in Japan. In conjunction with this year's celebration of The Walt Disney Company's 100th anniversary, this unique and exciting exhibition is now on view for the first time in the United States in the museum's Diane Disney Miller Exhibition Hall.

Due to its popularity, the museum recently announced that the run of *Disney Cats & Dogs* has been extended through June 2, 2024. For more information contact (415) 345-6800.

### White Horse Black Mountain Black Mountain, North Carolina

Nestled in the picturesque town of Black Mountain, North Carolina, White Horse Black Mountain is not just a venue; it is a haven for music enthusiasts and a thriving center for community connections with a vision for the future. The listening room began in November 2008 and celebrated its 15th Anniversary on November 4 with a concert featuring a line-up of seven artists. White Horse has survived recessions, pandemics and remains resolute in their determination to serve the local, regional and global community through the power of live music.

The community venue became a non-profit in April 2023 and has plenty of exciting updates planned for this historic space in 2024. With the addition of a rooftop deck, a full kitchen and a jazz bar with wine tasting room expansion, the organization has big plans for the future and looks forward to improving what has served as the "living room" of Black Mountain for the last 15 years.

### Toronto

Scotiabank Arena has revealed details of a multimillion-dollar face-lift ahead of the venue's 25th anniversary. The multi-phased renovation represents the arena's largest changes for the facility since its opening in 1999. Groups can look forward to state-of-the-art technological innovations designed to further enhance the fan experience at "The Vault."

The Well is a brand new development that has 320,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor retail space, with some set to open throughout 2023 and early 2024. A perfect location for groups that want to experience a taste of local art, cuisine and downtown living. Featuring a mix of both indoor and outdoor space, The Well is Toronto's latest hotspot for visitors and locals to eat, play and enjoy. It also features a massive sustainable art exhibition *Arcadia Earth*.

Hockey Hall of Fame opens the Boston Bruins Centennial Exhibit that will run through the 2023-24 hockey season and into the 2024-25 hockey season with December 1, 2024, marking their 100th anniversary. With specially curated artifacts ranging from 1926 to 2018, the display outlines the story of the first US-based NHL team to reach its Centennial.

For more information view [DestinationToronto.com](https://www.destinationtoronto.com). □





Clinton, Iowa

# Student & Senior Tours

## Clinton, Iowa

Clinton, Iowa and Fulton, Illinois offer something for everyone. This unique bi-state community is large enough to offer a myriad of things to do, but small enough to guarantee personal attention.

### Delicious Destinations

Make dinner and drinks about more than simply food – make it an experience:

- Great Revivalist Brewery – Incredibly reimagined space, this brewery was originally a grand church. It has been lovingly and impeccably restored into the hottest new dining spot in Clinton. Want the ambiance but

with privacy? The lower level can be reserved for even large groups.

- Candlelight Inn – Fine dining on the riverfront. Every table has a view of the Mississippi River, or you can enjoy your dinner on the beautiful deck. Try the Chicken George.

- Rusty Barrel Lounge – Enjoy evening libations in this new downtown lounge. Full bar plus cocktail slushies, means everyone can find something to drink.

### Attractions and Activities

We have fun things to do for each type of tour group:

- Wild Rose Casino & Hotel – Gaming is always a fun pastime.

- The Showboat Theatre – Professional theater in a unique setting

- Delmigrant Windmill–Authentic working Dutch windmill

- Personalized Experiences – Murder Mystery Dinners, wine and chocolate tastings, art talks. If you have an idea for it, we can probably make it happen!

### Shop Til You Drop

Two distinct shopping districts in Clinton plus the Fulton downtown means you will



## Guide: Student & Senior Tours

find unique spots you will wish you could come back for:

- Jewelry Stores – Fine jewelry and gems are available at Albert's Jewelry downtown or Don's Jewelry in the north end Lyons District.
- Boutiques – Lulu Jo's, Blessings, the Freckled Frog, and more offer great gifts and fun finds.
- Vintage Treasures – From music, to antiques, to high end consignment, it is here.

Get your favorite classic candies plus hand-made truffles at Grandma's Goody Jar.

### Take a Tour

Get the full tour of any of the fantastic attractions. Here are only a few:

- George Curtis Mansion
- Martin House Museum
- St. Boniface Catholic Historical Center
- Windmill Cultural Center



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Contact Lesley Webster  
Email: [lwebster@growclinton.com](mailto:lwebster@growclinton.com)  
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St. Louis Symphony Orchestra  
Stéphane Denève : Music Director



## Guide: Student & Senior Tours

We cannot wait to show you what Clinton and Fulton have to offer. Group rates for hotels and/or Showboat Theatre are available.

Book your bus tour through Grow Clinton CVB, and receive \$50 in River City Gold to be used at your choice of more than 70 area businesses, including restaurants, hotels, jewelry stores, gift shops and more.\*

\*Tour Operator Incentive Guidelines: Tours must be groups of 17+, originating from a destination 30 or more miles away. \$50 River City Gold certificates will be given to one group tour operator and one driver per commercial bus.

### St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

#### St. Louis, Missouri

Celebrated as a leading American orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra is the second-oldest orchestra in the country, marking its 144th year with the 2023/2024 season and its fifth with Music Director Stéphane Denève. The SLSO is committed to artistic excellence, educational impact and community collaborations – all to enrich lives through the power of music. In addition to the Grammy Award-winning orchestra, the roster of talent also includes the St. Louis Symphony Chorus, the IN UNISON Chorus and the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Experience live music in the best way – by sharing it with others. From classical repertoire to the collaborations with the leading artists



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of the time, and from iconic films with live score to beloved holiday specials, the SLSO's versatile programming makes the orchestra a must-visit destination for groups of all interests. You are invited to share the power of live orchestral music with your group and receive special benefits designed to enhance your experience with the SLSO.

For the 23/24 season, we will perform at Stifel Theatre in downtown St. Louis and Touhill Performing Arts Center on the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus, as our historic Powell Hall undergoes an extensive renovation and expansion. These "home-away-from-home" venues will showcase the unparalleled artistry of our orchestra and choruses in new and exciting ways.

In addition to thrilling musical experiences and incredible surroundings, your group can expect outstanding hospitality from the entire SLSO team – from the ticket booking experience until the final bow. When you come to one of the concerts, you are part of the SLSO family. Groups enjoy personalized service,

priority seating, free bus parking and waived ticket order fees, as well as special rates for students, seniors, tour groups and more.

Visit [slso.org/groups](https://slso.org/groups) or contact Susan Roberts, group sales manager, at (314) 286-4155 or [susanr@slso.org](mailto:susanr@slso.org) □



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# Theaters & Entertainment



Sarasota Ballet

## **Sarasota Ballet**

Sarasota, Florida

Embark on a mesmerizing journey into the enchanting world of dance with The Sarasota Ballet. Let yourself be captivated by the

timeless allure, breathtaking elegance and awe-inspiring virtuosity that define each performance.

As the Gulf Coast of Florida's sole professional ballet company, The Sarasota Ballet stands as a testament to artistic excellence. The Sarasota Ballet is a beacon of cultural richness in the region. Today,





# 23/24 SEASON

## PROGRAM 4 - GRAZIANO CELEBRATED

January 26 - 29, 2024 | FSU Center

Ricardo Graziano's *Sonatina*

Ricardo Graziano's *In a State of Weightlessness*

Ricardo Graziano World Premiere

## PROGRAM 5 - BALLET HISPÁNICO

March 8 - 11, 2024 | FSU Center

The Sarasota Ballet Presents

Ballet Hispánico

## PROGRAM 6 - PORTRAITS OF EXPRESSION

April 5 - 6, 2024 | Sarasota Opera House

George Balanchine's *Emeralds*

Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Las Hermanas*

George Balanchine's *Who Cares?*

## PROGRAM 7 - INSPIRATIONS

April 26 - 27, 2024 | Sarasota Opera House

Christopher Wheeldon's *The American*

Jessica Lang's *Lyric Pieces* (Company Premiere)

Sir Frederick Ashton's *Sinfonietta*



941.359.0099 | [SarasotaBallet.org](https://SarasotaBallet.org)

Marijana Dominis | Photography by Matthew Holler





## Guide: Theaters & Entertainment

it proudly holds a distinguished national and international reputation. Graham Watts from London's international magazine *Bachtrack* had this to say about The Sarasota Ballet, "The company has established a significant international reputation during Iain Webb's 17-year tenure as director. Together with Margaret Barbieri, he has created something akin to The Royal Ballet of Florida."

What sets The Sarasota Ballet apart is its steadfast commitment to a diverse repertoire, featuring rarely performed ballets that push the boundaries of tradition. Each performance showcases the integration of integrity and artistry, earning accolades that reverberate far beyond the stage. Alastair Macaulay of The New York Times wrote on the talent and mastery of our performers, "The Sarasota dancers are terrific. They show — beautifully, musically and often more vividly than Ashton's own Royal Ballet — how Ashton reveled in movement in every part of the body: rhythmic hops on point, jumps large and small, long-stretched lines, luxurious twists of the upper torso, urgent bendings of the entire spine, chugs of the pelvis, flourishes of the wrists, elegant turns of the head and harmonious configurations of limbs and thorax."

The Sarasota Ballet aims to enrich lives, captivate emotions and strengthen the community through the art of dance. They passionately work to infuse the community with the highest quality and diversity of dance in America.

Come, be part of something extraordinary. Immerse yourself in a cultural tapestry where grace, passion and innovation converge. The Sarasota Ballet invites you to embrace the beauty of dance, becoming a vital thread in the intricate fabric of our community. Your presence contributes to an immersive and inclusive dance experience that transcends the ordinary, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of all who witness it.

View [sarasotaballet.org](http://sarasotaballet.org) for more information.

### Historic Rabbit Run Theater Madison, Ohio

Historic Rabbit Run Theater, with its quaint and rustic surroundings, has been an entertainment mainstay in northeast Ohio for generations. Its charm and pastoral setting irresistibly draw patrons each summer from the end of May through the end of August.

Rabbit Run is located in the heart of the Grand River Valley Wine District near the shores of Lake Erie in picturesque Madison, Ohio, and is one of the few original barn theaters still in operation. Rabbit Run offers outstanding live theater in its productions of blockbuster musicals, comedies and dramas.

The theater has a rich history dating back to the 1800s when the barn was built. The main crop on the farm was broccoli, which attracted numerous rabbits. So many rabbits, in fact, that they beat down paths or "runs" throughout the property. The rabbits seemed so pleased with their home, they remained long after the



broccoli. Hence, the name Rabbit Run Theater dubbed by Will and Rooney Klump, who opened the barn as a theater in the late 1940s.

Throughout the years the Rabbit Run stage has been graced by the appearances of many well-known actors and actresses. Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy appeared in *The Fourposter* to sell-out

A promotional graphic for Rabbit Run Theater. At the top is the logo, which features a stylized white rabbit silhouette above the text "Rabbit Run Theater" and "Live Entertainment Since 1946". Below the logo is a large photograph of a theater production with several women in gold sequined dresses on stage. The text "Ohio's Premier Barn Theater" is written in a white serif font across the middle. At the bottom, there are two smaller inset photos: one of the exterior of the barn and one of the interior stage. To the right of these photos is the text "Outstanding theater every summer in picturesque Madison, OH". At the very bottom, there are logos for "Ohio Arts" and "Remarkable Lake County, OH", along with the website "rabbitrun.org" and phone number "440-428-5913". The address "Madison, OH 44057" is also listed.



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*The Elixir of Love* Illustration  
by Benedetto Cristofani





crowds in 1952 before taking the show to Broadway. Dustin Hoffman performed throughout the 1962 season. Jim Backus and Charles Grodin have also appeared at Rabbit Run.

Groups are the specialty, and several pre-show winetasting/dinner theater packages are available with area wineries and attractions, including Grand River Cellars, The Winery at Springhill and the Steele Mansion.

Historic Rabbit Run Theater is known for group amenities, including the services of a hostess who greets the group and talks about the history of the theater, as well as large complimentary cookies offered to group guests during intermission.

Whether visiting the many wineries in the area or taking in the natural beauty of northeast Ohio, a stop at the unique and beautiful Rabbit Run Theater is the perfect end to a perfect day.

Visit [rabbitrun.org](http://rabbitrun.org) or phone (440) 428-5913 for more information.

### Atlantic City, New Jersey

Atlantic City welcomes one and all to the seaside destination, where local spirits are connected and the celebrations are unforgettable.

Nestled between the land and sea, experience Atlantic City's unique location. Located within one-third of the nation's population, Atlantic City's convenient location allows for visitors and attendees to travel in the comfort of a motorcoach, car or fly directly to the Atlantic City International Airport, which is within 12 miles of Atlantic City or the Philadelphia International Airport, which is within 60 miles of Atlantic City. Once arrived, hop on the Atlantic City Jitney. Powered by compressed natural gas, Jitney's are Atlantic City's most convenient and affordable mode of transportation. With a variety of transportation options, Atlantic City aims to make your next visit easily accessible.

With more than 17,500 first-class hotel rooms, Atlantic City is an exceptional place to lodge. Whether in the Marina District or



situated on the world-famous Atlantic City Boardwalk, a stay at one of the nine casino resorts will guarantee a memorable experience. Along with precise guest services and waterside elegance, each casino resort showcases panoramic views of Atlantic City from every angle.

Enhance your Atlantic City experience with the support from the Atlantic City community. Throughout the eclectic 48 blocks, visitors can discover Atlantic City's diverse neighborhoods, each rich with art, culture and a history of its own. The Atlantic City locals continue to lead in the ever-changing destination with missions to celebrate Atlantic City's authenticity, which is reflected in locally-owned businesses and culturally-filled events.

From group-bonding opportunities to evening adventures, Atlantic City is ready to celebrate life's greatest moments with thrilling year-round events and attractions. Gather your group and try a throw at West-cunk Axe Throwing for your group to experience the sport of axe throwing in a safe, comfortable and modern open space setting. For live entertainment, score front row seats at Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall as entertainment's biggest and most suc-

cessful acts take the stage. Endless excitement continues at Atlantic City's casino resorts where nightlife and late-night experiences are always celebrated.

With constant excitement and endless entertainment, a variety of services for the ultimate well-being recharge can be found at one of Atlantic City's world-class spas. Treat yourself and your group to the illuminating spa services for a journey of peace and relaxation. Being pampered at one of Atlantic City's spas is not only a luxury, but a necessity to recharge and enjoy the many energetic events during your Atlantic City experience.

Known for its thriving culinary scene, Atlantic City welcomes all to explore the city's famous dining establishments. Ranging from celebrity chef restaurants to locally-owned eateries, Atlantic City's restaurants are well equipped to accommodate special events for large or small groups, served in unique spaces. When visiting Atlantic City, come hungry because the diverse cuisine selections will surely satisfy those tastebuds.

View at [visitatlanticcity.com](http://visitatlanticcity.com) or phone (609) 318-6062 for more information. □



## George Bush Presidential Library and Museum

### Texas A&M University

The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum at Texas A&M University is a premier destination for visitors from around the world.

George H.W. Bush had already garnered an impressive list of titles before his election as the nation's 41st President. Bush served as a U.S. Congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations, Republican Party chairman, Chief Liaison to China, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Vice President. This illustrious past, his term as president, his military service during World War II and his successful business career are detailed throughout the exhibitions and archives of the Bush Library and Museum.

Museum highlights include actual film footage of Bush's submarine rescue after his plane was shot down over the island of Chichi Jima in September 1944; an interactive study of the timeline leading up to the Gulf War; examples of gifts given to President Bush when he met with foreign heads of state; replicas of both the Oval Office and the office at Camp David and much more. The museum also features temporary exhibits on a variety of topics, providing repeat guests a new experience every time.

The highly anticipated exhibit *A Spirit can Ne'er Be Told...A Century of Aggie Football* is on display in the Ansary Gallery of American History until April 28, 2024. For more than a century, Texas A&M football has shaped traditions, forged camaraderie for generations of fans and embodied a spirit that even Presidents of the United States embraced, especially George H.W. Bush. From its humble beginnings in the 1890s, Aggie football has been a driving force for the university, the region and the state. This exhibit explores the development of Texas A&M University's football program and its important role to Texas A&M's vibrant history. It also provides a glimpse of why President Bush loved Aggieland and what it truly means to be a part of the 12th Man.

This year marks the 41@100: A Celebration of George H.W. Bush honoring the 100th anniversary of his birth. A three-day celebration will commence from June 11-13, 2024 that will highlight his extraordinary life and achievements. The centennial runs through December 31, 2024, and will feature a schedule of events as well as an exhibit for the community to celebrate. Visit the Web site at [Bush4.org](http://Bush4.org) for details added as they become available.

For information about all these events and exhibits visit [Bush4.org](http://Bush4.org) or phone (979) 691-4000.

### Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum Sugarcreek, Ohio

The Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum in Sugarcreek, Ohio is a time capsule of North America's steam railroading era. The collection was compiled by museum founder, Jerry Joe Jacobson who once was the owner of the Ohio Central Railroad System.



## Historical Attractions & Museums

After retiring from running his railroad, Jerry commissioned the construction of the roundhouse complex to facilitate the safe housing, restoration, interpretation and operation of his steam locomotive collection for the benefit and education of the public. Schedule a tour through this fantastic collection and facility by reaching out to [info@ageofsteamroundhouse.org](mailto:info@ageofsteamroundhouse.org). Please mention if you saw them in *BUS TOURS MAGAZINE*.



## Guide: Historical Attractions & Museums

### Gallup, New Mexico

Gallup, New Mexico is America's Most Patriotic Small Town. This designation was given to the community in 2013 through Rand McNally's Best of the Road contest. Gallup residents, known as Gallupians, have earned this well-deserved title long before the contest through patriotic acts in the armed forces and public service.

The rich history of patriotism in Gallup is a major point of pride for Gallupians. Many of the Navajo Code Talkers who bravely served in World War II are from the Gallup region. Korean War veteran and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Hiroshi "Hershey" Miyamura was also from Gallup and is memorialized on murals, installations and buildings across the community.

The Gallup Cultural Center, 201 E. Historic Route 66, is a great location to learn more about why Gallup is America's Most Patriotic Small Town. Even if you are not

a history buff, the Navajo Code Talker exhibit should not be missed. It is joined by other artifacts, art and important pieces of Gallup's history from the development of the transcontinental railroad to Route

66 creating a new spirit of freedom across the country.

Be sure to also check out the Rex Museum, also on Historic Route 66, for a deeper dive into the past and how it has shaped modern life. This building also fea-



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Tri-State Museum

tures an original neon sign illuminating its façade similar to the others dotting the historic Mother Road.

To learn more, plan your trip and book a hotel room, go to [VisitGallup.com](http://VisitGallup.com).

### **National Museum of Nuclear Science & History** **Albuquerque, New Mexico**

The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History was established in 1969 as an intriguing place to learn the story of the Atomic Age, from early research of nuclear development through today's peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Visitors can explore how nuclear science continues to influence our world. The museum strives to present, through permanent and changing exhibits and displays, the diverse applications of nuclear science in the past, present and future along with the stories of the field's pioneers.

The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History is a Smithsonian Affiliate and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

The Museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed only on Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day and Easter. Visit at [nuclearmuseum.org](http://nuclearmuseum.org).

### **Tri-State Museum & Visitor Center**

#### **Belle Fourche, South Dakota**

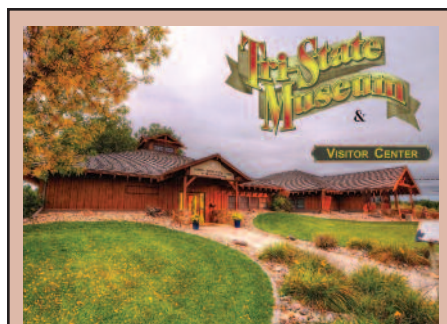
Smack-dab in the middle of the United States is Belle Fourche, South Dakota – and

that is where you will find the Tri-State Museum and Visitor Center. The complex includes not just the museum and visitor center but also the beautiful granite compass rose Center of the Nation monument, noting the town's distinctive status, and the fully furnished Johnny Spaulding Cabin, one of the few two-story pioneer cabins to have survived since the 1870s.

Surrounded by lawns dotted with flower gardens and only steps away from the city's

River Walk in front of the historic Belle Fourche River, the Tri-State Museum and Visitor Center is a great place to stop on the road between Mt. Rushmore and Devil's Tower, for a tour of sites as well as a picnic lunch.

The museum proper includes exhibits on pioneers, ranching, rodeos, the sheep industry and local business history. Natural history exhibits include geologic and archaeological finds, as well as some dinosaur fossils



### **Smack dab in the middle.**

The Tri-State Museum and Visitor Center in Belle Fourche, SD is at the middle of the nation – and we have a spectacular monument to prove it! Visit us for exhibits on rodeos, ranching, pioneer life, band robbers, dinosaurs and more.

Take a photo at the Center of the Nation compass rose monument; step back in time with a visit to our Johnny Spaulding Cabin; shop in our store full of books, jewelry, western memorabilia, puzzles, smart toys and games. Then have a picnic on our spacious lawns!

Meet us in the middle, in Belle Fourche!

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## Guide: Historical Attractions & Museums

unearthed from nearby paleontological dig sites.

Significant exhibits include photos and information on Belle Fourche WWII hero Don Smith, one of the pilots in the Doolittle Raid. The museum also includes the less than heroic story of the most bungled bank robbery ever, which occurred in 1897 and involved an extremely inebriated Tom O'Day.

In addition to permanent collections, the museum also features three temporary exhibits and three mini exhibits which change throughout the year. Exhibits for the 2024 season include those on clubs and societies, menus, the police force, maps, libraries, fairy houses and the world of bats.

The town of Belle Fourche is a little one big in history. The name comes from the river that flows here, visited by the famed French fur trappers of the early 1800s. The town itself was founded by Seth Bullock, a larger-than-life western character who was featured in the TV series, *Deadwood*. It soon became the

place for the internationally-known Black Hills Roundup, now in its 104rd year of showcasing classic rodeo action.

The Old West lives on in the middle - and at the Tri-State Museum and Visitor Center.

### National Duncan Glass Society Washington, Pennsylvania

The Duncan & Miller Museum and Gift shop welcomes guests to the sparkling world of glass produced from the Civil War through the Victorian Age, Art Deco, Mid Century periods by the Duncan glass companies.

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## Guide: Historical Attractions & Museums

art glass jewelry.

The Museum and Gift Shop are easily accessible, all on one floor with ample free parking. For appointment year-round phone (724) 225-9950.

### Martinsburg, Berkeley County West Virginia

Shoppers and history enthusiasts find hours of entertainment in Martinsburg, Berkeley County, West Virginia. The area's rich history links to events from before the Revolutionary War through the Civil War. Martinsburg is surrounded by historical sites and provides the perfect picturesque downtown for hub-and-spoke tours or good old-fashioned shopping sprees.

It is time to park the bus and let tour passengers explore. The peaceful and delightful town of Martinsburg has great finds at every turn. With innumerable shopping opportunities, the quaint Norman Rockwellesque downtown will charm visitors. The store win-

dows shine with artisan décor, unique finds, spa-worthy luxuries and antiques only avail-

able in such a historic place. Word to the wise: pack an empty suitcase to carry all the



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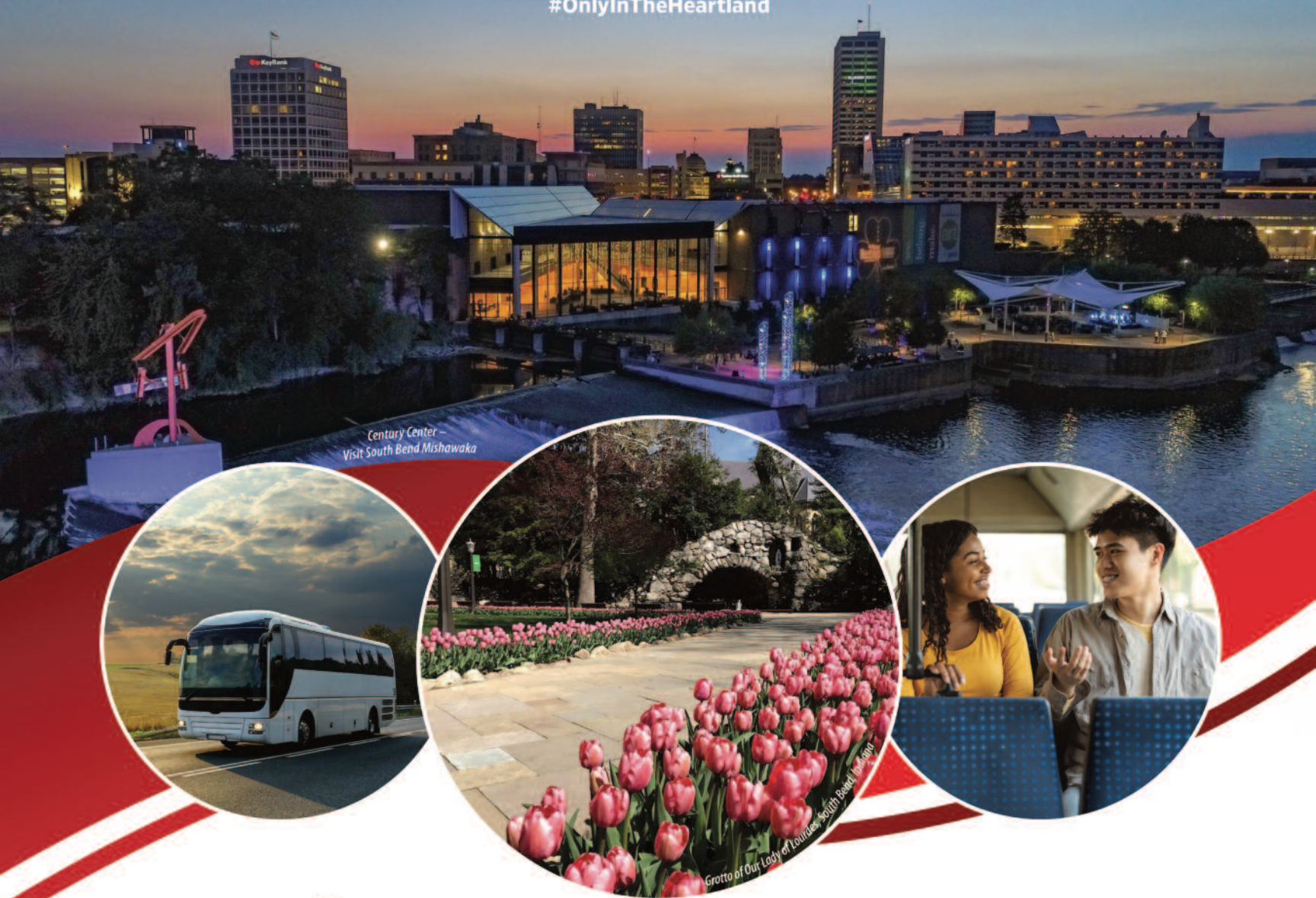


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## Guide: Historical Attractions & Museums

new treasures one will find at the downtown shops.

Are you feeling peckish after shopping? Groups find a selection of tasty eats at Martinsburg's locally-owned restaurants. Choose between world cuisines or go straight to dessert. Visiting DeFluri's Fine Chocolates and Everything Cheesecake will satisfy anyone's sweet tooth.

For more eclectic shopping and eateries, groups head 15 minutes east to Shepherdstown, the oldest town in West Virginia. Groups visiting Shepherdstown find that hospitality is the only thing more alive than the local arts scene.

It is easy to make a group tour historical in Berkeley County. Historic sites like Morgan Cabin – the home of the area's first white settlers; General Adam Stephen House – the founder of Martinsburg and The George Washington Heritage Trail pull history from the past and into today. Groups can even see

George Washington's outdoor bathtub in nearby Berkeley Springs.

There is an ample amount of Civil War sites, as well. Groups can visit the Martinsburg B&O Roundhouse to see the place once destroyed by Stonewall Jackson's troops in 1861. Men, of course, are not the only participants in the war. Check out the Berkeley County Museum, located in the home of Confederate spy Belle Boyd at the aptly named Belle Boyd House.

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Georgetown Loop Railroad

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### **Georgetown Loop Railroad Georgetown, Colorado**

The Georgetown Loop Railroad was one of Colorado's first visitor attractions. Completed in 1884, this spectacular stretch of three-foot narrow-gauge railroad was considered a marvel for its time.

The then-thriving mining towns of Georgetown and Silver Plume lie two miles apart in a steep, narrow mountain canyon. To connect them, the railroad's builder designed a "corkscrew" route that traveled twice the distance, slowly gaining more than 600 feet in elevation. The Colorado & Southern Railway operated the line for passengers and freight from 1899 to 1938 when it was abandoned.

In 1973, the Colorado Historical Society began restoring the railroad as part of its 978-acre Georgetown Loop Historic Mining & Railroad Park. A replica of the high bridge was completed in 1984 in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its original construction.

Open air train rides of one hour and 15 minutes or train rides are available seven days a week, five trains daily April through January. Train rides with a mine tour of 2½ hours are available seven days a week, four trains daily from the end of April through October. You can enjoy gold panning with any mine tour. The train ride is wheelchair

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## Guide: Historical Attractions & Museums

accessible; the mine tour is not and involves walking a steep slope. Steam trains will operate from early May to October.

There are several Special Events trains including Bunny Trains, Mother's and Father's Day Weekend Trains with treats for Mon and Dad, Sasquatch Adventure Trains weekends in July, Old West Days Trains weekends in August with reenactors of a railroad gang, Grandparent's Weekend in September, Fall Colors weekend and weekdays in late September and early October, Pumpkin fest trains first weekend in October with Pumpkins for the kids, Autumn fest second and third weekends in October, Trick or Treat Trains last weekend in October, Santa Trains and Lighted Forest Trains mid-November through December 24 and Victorian Holiday Trains December 26 through the first weekend in January. Holiday trains run daily and during the night from November through the second week of January. All special events trains include a collectable poker chip. Hol-

iday trains include a yearly Loop Commemorative Ornament.

The Georgetown Loop Railroad is located 45 miles west of Denver on Interstate 70, exit 228; 646 Loop Drive, Georgetown, Colorado or the Silver Plume Depot just off exit 226.

For group reservations contact Makenna Galke at (303) 569-0133 or Makenna.galke@historicrailadventures.com. Visit [georgetownlooprr.com](http://georgetownlooprr.com) for more information.

### Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum Simi Valley, California

Perched atop a hill with sweeping views of the southland, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum is one of California's most beautiful and unique destinations. This iconic landmark is more than just a museum – it is a journey through history. Where else in California can visitors walk onboard an actual *Air Force One* aircraft that

flew seven U.S. presidents, touch an authentic piece of the Berlin Wall or lay a hand on a real steel beam recovered from the World Trade Center after 9-11?



The Reagan Museum boasts a stunning collection of artifacts, interactive exhibits and even a full-scale replica of the Oval Office. Visitors step aboard and tour through an authentic *Air Force One 27000* and *Marine One* to learn how President Reagan changed the face of global diplomacy. Beyond the extraordinary displays, the Reagan Museum offers an opportunity for visitors to truly understand the impact that President Reagan had on the nation and the world.

Visitors may also enjoy the Museum's outdoor grounds, where you can stroll through replicas of the White House Rose Garden and South Lawn, and reflect at President and Mrs. Reagan's memorial site.


The Reagan Library is also home to two restaurants – Reagan's Country Café and The Ronald Reagan Pub. Group tour meals are

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available, as are docent-led tours. Phone (805) 577-4066 or e-mail [visitorservices@reaganfoundation.org](mailto:visitorservices@reaganfoundation.org) for more information. In addition, the Reagan Library features many world-class traveling exhibits. It is always

best to go on the Library's Web site at [reaganlibrary.com](http://reaganlibrary.com) or to phone (800) 410-8354 to see what exhibits may be open for touring during your visit. The Library also has free bus parking.

From [Air Force One](#) to historic photos and video to interactive games to exquisite landscaped grounds, the Reagan Library is sure to be a fun, entertaining and educational experience for everyone, of every age, in your group.



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## Guide: Historical Attractions & Museums

Open seven days a week, the Reagan Library is only closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

### Stuhr Museum

#### Grand Island, Nebraska

Stuhr Museum, located in Grand Island, Nebraska, is a captivating destination that brings the past to life, offering visitors a unique and immersive experience into the history of the people who called the Platte River Valley home. Spread across 200 acres, the museum includes a living history component and is dedicated to preserving and showcasing stories from our past that shaped the Midwest in the 19th century.

The Stuhr Building, open year-round, is home to beautifully-curated exhibits that include artifacts, photos and accounts of the past from real-life people. A portion of the exhibit space is dedicated to rotating exhibits, which range from specific historic events to art exhibitions.

Education is integral to the museum's mission, ensuring that visitors of all ages can engage with history in a meaningful way. From educational programs and school field trips to workshops and living history demonstrations, the museum strives to make the past accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences.

One of the largest draws to Stuhr Museum is Railroad Town, available from May through mid-September each year. A meticulously recreated town transports visitors back in time, as living historians occupy authentic buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries that have been relocated to the museum, creating a realistic setting that mirrors the daily life of settlers on the Nebraska prairie. Visitors can stroll down dirt streets lined with homes, businesses and even a one-room schoolhouse, gaining a hands-on understanding of the challenges and tri-



Stuhr Museum

umphs of pioneer life. Skilled tradespeople, such as the blacksmith, are known to charm and entertain visitors to their shops.

In essence, the Stuhr Museum celebrates the resilience, innovation and spirit of those who lived before us, inviting visitors to step into the past and gain an appreciation for the challenges and achievements of those who shaped the American heartland. □

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## Wineries & Distilleries

### Crawford County, Pennsylvania

Beautiful Crawford County is home to endless activities and diverse amenities. Crawford County, part of the Great Lakes region, borders Ohio and is conveniently located right off Pennsylvania Interstate 79, 30 minutes both north of I-80, or south of I-90. Enjoy a great multiday trip, approved by the locals.

Start your day off in Linesville “Where Ducks Walk on the Fish” at Pymatuning State Park’s “The Spillway.” Throw bread and watch the frenzy of thousands of carp and ducks fight for the bread. Enjoy the picturesque state park and swing into town for Twin Pies. Who does not love pie and coffee for breakfast?

The nearby town of Conneaut Lake showcases Conneaut Cellars Winery and Distillery. Enjoy a free tasting and a tour. This winery has a large variety of high-quality, award-winning wines and spirits. Take your favorite bottle and board the historic *Barbara J.* stern-wheeler paddle boat. The boat has an open upper deck and a lower enclosed room to view Pennsylvania’s largest glacial lake.

Enjoy lakefront dining at Silver Shores Restaurant on beautiful Conneaut Lake.

Ride the historic Oil Creek and Titusville Railroad across “the Valley that Changed

the World,” Enjoy fun murder mystery dinners or wine and brew events. While they are famous for their fall scenic excursions, any time of their season is great. Stay the night at the Caboose Motel to complete your experience.

After the three-hour train ride, enjoy all that Titusville has to offer including Fat Chad’s Tap and Steakhouse.

Visit the historic Meadville Market House Built in 1870. This structure is the oldest, continuously-operated market in Pennsylvania featuring many local vendors.

Tour the Baldwin Reynolds House Museum, built in 1843. The mansion was the quintessential Southern home located in northwestern Pennsylvania with a huge national history impact. Enjoy a daily tours, dinner theaters, lectures, music and more.

Unwind at any of the local restaurants such as Voodoo Brewery, Riverside Brewing, Davenport or Julian’s, which feature live music entertainment most nights.

For more information including accommodations, events and additional itineraries, go to [VisitCrawford.org](http://VisitCrawford.org) or phone (814) 333-1258. Try downloading the new app while on the site. □

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# Dining and Lodging



Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center

## **Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center** Oglesby, Illinois

Starved Rock Lodge, located in Oglesby, Illinois, is nestled in the middle of scenic Starved Rock State Park (a National Historic Landmark) featuring sandstone canyons and seasonal waterfalls. Starved Rock Lodge is the only lodging facility located within the park. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, the lodge is a unique, architectural masterpiece with a massive Great Hall anchored by the largest, two-sided limestone fireplace in the Midwest. Guests remark that the

ambiance is much like that of lodges in national parks.

The most popular group tours activities are the lodge's Tribute to the Stars series of musical performances. The talented singers and performers take guests on a walk down memory lane with their renditions of famous hits by Elvis Presley, Patsy Cline and others. A hot buffet lunch is included in the ticket price. The setting is the historic Great Hall.

Trolleys play an important role in the tours offered by Starved Rock Lodge, providing a comfortable way see the region. Land and water cruises aboard the *Eagle I* or the *Sainte Genevieve* Riverboat offer

guests a slow-paced cruise around Starved Rock State Park offering a view of the forests, foliage and wildlife from the Illinois River. Tours of the lodge and guided hikes are often added to enhance the guest's experience.

Starved Rock Lodge features comfy hotel rooms, cabins, an indoor pool complex, the Back Door Lounge, Main Dining Room and Café – all under one roof. In warm weather, outdoor dining on the Veranda offers a stunning view of scenic LaSalle County and the Illinois River Valley. Starved Rock Lodge is more than a day trip – it is a lasting memory.



## Guide: Dining & Lodging

View at [starvedrocklodge.com](http://starvedrocklodge.com) for more information.

### River City Café

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

"It's All About the Burger" at River City Café located in the heart of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Voted "Best Burger on the Beach" year after year by locals and visitors alike, River City Café serves up juicy always fresh, never frozen signature burgers, hand-cut style fries, giant homemade onion rings, and so much more. Within the seven area locations throughout the Grand Strand (and growing), you will find friendly faces providing excellent service, rustic wood vibes, license plates lining the walls as far as the eye can see and even peanut shells all over the floor *USA Today* named RCC "one of the best places in the nation to feed the kids," and that is just what they have been doing for more than 35 years.

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## Guide: Dining & Lodging



River City Café

than 25 signature burgers. They offer every topping under the sun from bacon, chili and jalapeños, to peanut butter, fried eggs and bananas. You can even substitute the juicy beef patty for a grilled chicken breast or turkey burger. If you want to be double dog dared, try the Kitchen Sink Burger – two beef patties topped with homemade Texas chili, hickory-smoked bacon, grilled onions, jalapeños, sautéed fresh mushrooms, swiss, cheddar, lettuce, tomato, pickles, mustard, mayo, stuffed between two grilled cheese sandwiches,


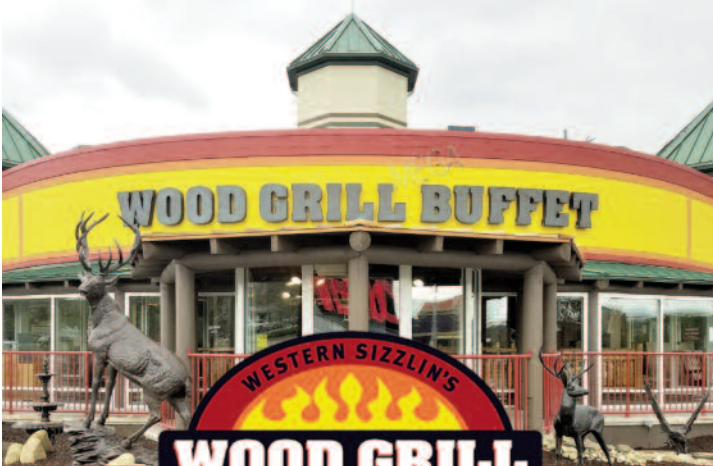


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## Guide: Dining & Lodging

served with a pile of fries, two giant fried onion rings and coleslaw, of course. If that does not fill you up, there is always dessert.

Not into burgers? That is okay. Their menu also includes starters like jumbo chicken wings tossed in sauce, cheese curds, farm-to-table sweet potato fries, blooming onions and world-famous giant onion rings. Or check out beach favorites like the blackened grouper reuben, homemade pulled pork sandwich and the Darlington 500 – a half-pound slab of deep-fried bologna topped with grilled onions and American cheese served on grilled Texas toast. Now that is a mouthful.

Whether you are with your family, a group of friends, a tour group or rolling solo on a beautiful beach day, River City Café is truly the best place to find a great meal in Myrtle Beach.

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# Military & Space



## Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum Chantilly, Virginia

"Wow!" That is what most people say when they first glimpse the exhibits at the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia.

Located next to Washington Dulles International Airport, the Udvar-Hazy Center is a "must see" for anyone traveling to the DC/northern Virginia area. The center includes a massive aviation hangar (three football fields in length) and a space hangar that is large enough to hold a Space Shuttle and so much more.

The center displays more than 3,000 artifacts, including nearly 200 aircraft, sharing the story of human flight from 18th century ballooning to the cutting-edge James Webb Space Telescope. This includes Space Shuttle *Discovery*, an SR-71 Blackbird, an Air France Concorde, a World War I-era Sopwith Camel, the B-29 Superfortress *Enola Gay* and more.

Every artifact on display has a unique story and the best way to hear them is by taking a free guided tour. The 90-minute public tours run throughout the day and may also be reserved for groups of 20 or more (10 or more for 60-minute student group tours). Volunteer docents take visitors on a guided journey through the museum's vast



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## Feature: Military & Space

collection and share stories that will not be found on the artifact's label.

Each tour is unique, as is each docent. Many have had careers in the aviation and aerospace industry – some even have first-hand experience with some of our artifacts. The one thing they have in common is their passion for the museum. Their dedication is apparent when they share the stories that have fascinated us and fueled our desire to take to the skies and explore both our world and others.

Museum admission is free and complimentary bus parking is available. Group discounts are available for films in the Airbus IMAX® Theater, simulator rides and Shake Shack restaurant to enhance your group's experience.

The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. It is closed December 25. Reservations are not required to visit, although advance notice of your arrival is appreciated. For groups interested in a free guided tour, visit [s.si.edu/nasm-group-visit](https://s.si.edu/nasm-group-visit). □



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# Conway Scenic Snow Train



Article and photos courtesy of Brian Solomon

**T**his winter Conway Scenic's *Snow Train* enters its fifth operating season. *Snow Train* offers visitors to New Hampshire's Mount Washington Valley a classic train ride through a winter wonderland that also provides an alternative way to reach the popular Attitash Mountain Resort. *Snow Train 2024* will begin operation on December 26, 2023 and will offer weekend and holiday excursions from North Conway to Attitash through the end of February. On the days of operation, Conway Scenic Railroad offers four *Snow Train* departures from its classic Victorian-era North Conway Station. Passengers have the option of traveling out and back to Attitash on the same run or to lay over at Attitash between runs and enjoy winter sporting and cultural activities at the Attitash Mountain Resort.

## Building on the Historic Legacy of Boston & Maine's Snow Train

Snow Train has a long history in the White Mountains. A century ago, the Boston

& Maine Railroad identified winter sports as a growing source of traffic for passengers traveling from southern New England to northern New Hampshire. By the mid-1920s, the railroad was marketing their trains as an ideal way to reach hotels and resorts in the White Mountains. Then, during the early years of the Great Depression the railroad invented *Snow Train* as a means to further boost its seasonal traffic and make weekend use of trains that otherwise would be sitting idle.

With this in mind B&M helped develop the weekend ski industry by operating specially scheduled *Snow Trains* directly from Boston, Rockport and Worcester, Massachusetts, to allow visitors to take day trips or weekend overnights to enjoy, 'Fast Trails – Gentle Slopes – Fun for All' in North Conway and other areas of New Hampshire's White Mountains. For two decades B&M's *Snow Train* flourished and helped plant the seeds of New Hampshire's winter

sport industry. However, after World War II, improved highways, increased automobile ownership and a general decline of privately-operated New England railroads, resulted in diminishing interest in rail travel. The historic B&M *Snow Train* made its final runs in the 1950s.

## In 2020, Conway Scenic Reinvents Snow Train

Conway Scenic Railroad assumed operation of the northern six miles of Boston & Maine's Conway Branch in 1974, and began operating summer and autumn excursions on August 4 that year. The railroad expanded in the mid-1990s, when it assumed operation of the long-dormant Mountain Division from North Conway through Bartlett and over Crawford Notch, now the route of its popular *Mountaineer* that runs May through November. In 2020, under the direction of Dave Swirk, Conway Scenic Railroad re-introduced the *Snow Train* concept. While it was no longer possible



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**Feature: Conway Scenic Snow Train**



North Conway, NH 1946

to run long-distance rail services from Boston to North Conway because key connecting lines had been abandoned decades ago, Conway Scenic Railroad devised its *Snow Train* as a means of using the Mountain Division to connect its North Conway Station with the winter playgrounds at Attitash.

Rather than simply run one or two excursions per day, the railroad implemented an intensive schedule to allow for multiple departures plus the option for an Attitash layover. The blossoming success of this concept allowed *Snow Train* to grow over the last few seasons. Conway Scenic's 2024 season (started December 26, 2023)

will offer increased seating capacity, including more premium dome seating, and ushers in partnership with Attitash Mountain Resort to give *Snow Train* riders a choice of Attitash activities. To further the *Snow Train* concept the railroad hopes to offer group bus tours from Portland, Maine to bring passengers to North Conway to enjoy a trip on the *Snow Train* and a visit to Attitash. Please direct bus tour inquiries to [tom.spina@tomspinaconsulting.com](mailto:tom.spina@tomspinaconsulting.com).

For tickets, schedules and general information about *Snow Train* see [conwayscenic.com](http://conwayscenic.com). □

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Conway bridge



# New York City Congestion Pricing

by Larry Plachno

Since many readers of *Bus Tours Magazine* either currently operate tours into New York City or are planning to do so in the future, we thought it might be a good idea to give you a “heads up” that a new congestion pricing toll for Manhattan could go into effect as early as spring of 2024. While the program has been approved, it is going through a review process and could easily be modified or delayed. Hence, those who are running bus tours into New York, or planning to do so, should watch closely to see how things develop. The following information is current through late December but could easily be changed as things develop.

## Background

While similar congestion pricing programs are already in place in London, Stockholm and Milan, this would be the first such program in the United States. The original concept dates back to pre-pandemic days but became more popular lately. There is increasing concern over congestion and pollution in Manhattan’s Central Business District while the MTA has been suffering from reduced ridership and income since the pandemic. Hence, the new congestion pricing program would charge a toll to vehicles entering the Central Business District to reduce congestion and pollution while then using that money to support the MTA’s bus and rapid transit operations.

The Transportation Mobility Review Board was charged with developing rates and regulations for congestion pricing. They issued their recommended tolling structure



Times Square

on November 30, 2023, which then went to the MTA for approval. On December 6, 2023, the MTA board approved the rates and regulations suggested by the Transportation Mobility Review Board. Only one of the 10 MTA board members opposed the plan. He said, “\$24 – that is what it will be to go in and see a son or daughter, or to see a show or have dinner. I cannot vote for it I am sorry to say.”

At this point the program goes into a 60-day response period which will include four public hearings in late February and early March. It is possible that the new tolls could go into effect as early as late spring. However, there are several government bodies and groups opposed to the plan as well as individual groups seeking exemptions for taxis and buses. Hence, there is a possibility that the program could be delayed or the rates and procedures changed.

## Area Involved

The area involved with the new congestion pricing tolls is in Manhattan and is being called the Central Business District. On the north it starts at 60th Street, which is effectively the south end of Central Park, and then continues south to the south tip of Manhattan at the Battery and boat docks.

There are two exceptions: the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive on the east side of Manhattan adjacent to the East River and the West

Side Highway on the west side of Manhattan adjacent to the Hudson River. Presumably, these exemptions would allow drivers to come in to Manhattan in a tunnel or on a bridge, circle the extreme edge of the island and leave in another tunnel or on a bridge without having to pay a toll.

Some people not familiar with New York City have asked whether it is possible to do a bus tour of New York without entering this area. The answer is a pretty strong “**No.**” While Central Park and a few attractions are north of this area, the majority of key attractions are located south of 60th Street. These would include the 9/11 Memorial, the Empire State Building, Chinatown, the Flatiron Building, Rockefeller Center, Radio City Music Hall, Times Square and numerous others. It is possible to get a ferry to the Statue of Liberty from the New Jersey shore.

## Tolls

Regular daytime toll rates would be in effect from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends. At other times it was suggested that tolls should be reduced by about 75 percent.

Daytime tolls for automobiles would be \$15, but this fee is charged only once each day. Drivers who already pay a toll to use one of the tunnels to reach Manhattan would get “crossing credits” that would reduce their congestion pricing fee.



## Feature: Congestion Pricing

The only buses exempt are city transit buses and commuter buses. All other buses would pay a toll. The rate would be \$24 for intercity and charter buses but \$36 for tour buses. I am not sure how the overhead scanners would know the difference.

### How to Pay

While there may be additional ways to pay, it is presumed that the majority of the congestion tolls would be collected by overhead scanners reading E-Z Pass devices mounted in the vehicles. Overhead scanners are already being erected south of 60th Street. For those who do not know, the E-Z Pass is very popular in the Eastern states and elsewhere for collecting tolls for a tollway, bridge or tunnel. Those buses already going into New York are probably already carrying an E-Z Pass device.

There are other systems that will work with E-Z Pass. I have driven buses into the Northeast states and find that our Illinois

I-Pass will also work. You can check to see if other systems are compatible.

### Opposition

While proponents of the congestion pricing plan suggest it could go into effect as early as late spring of 2024, it is facing a response period with substantial opposition and requested changes. Hence, it is possible that the congestion pricing implementation will be delayed or modified.

The biggest opposition is coming from government agencies. The State of New Jersey leads this group and has apparently already filed a lawsuit. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy points out that New Jersey drivers would be badly hurt and would get nothing in return since the MTA rapid transit lines do not serve New Jersey. Opposition is also coming from the borough of Staten Island that has no direct road, tunnel or rapid transit connection with Man-

hattan. It is the most isolated and car dependent of the five boroughs.

In addition, there are organizations supporting various driving groups. Current proposed regulations would not exempt school buses, and there is a move to do that. In fact, some of the bus people would like to exempt all buses since they reduce pollution and congestion. Some people are also trying to exempt taxis since they perform a public service and their ridership has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Of course, there are also those who object to the toll money going to the MTA. Many of the drivers say that they are forced to drive because of a lack of suitable public transportation.

Again, we need to watch and wait to see what happens. Meanwhile, we hope that this information has helped BUS TOURS MAGAZINE readers. We will try to update it in future issues. □

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# Heartland Travel Showcase in South Bend, Indiana





**M**any people know our destination as home to an iconic institution: The University of Notre Dame. Just minutes north of downtown South Bend, the university is known around the world.

Sports like football, basketball and hockey, among others, draw visitors from all over the country. Campus is home to several architectural landmarks, like the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and the Main Building with its Golden Dome. Elsewhere on campus, the new Raclin Murphy Museum of Art invites art lovers from around the world to browse its galleries.

Yet there are dozens of off-campus reasons why our area is a Midwest must-visit destination.

Studebaker National Museum details the growth and decline of what became one of the country's largest car manufacturers. It is also home to the world's largest collection of presidential carriages, including the one that carried president Abraham Lincoln on the night of his assassination.

Nearby, The History Museum and Oliver Mansion showcase our area's rich history.

The Indiana Dinosaur Museum will open its doors in early 2024, promising to be a popular family attraction. Elsewhere on the property visitors can tour the new South Bend Chocolate Co. Factory, browse a farmers market or grab some food at the on-site restaurant.



Oliver Mansion

You can find even more entertainment at Four Winds Casino South Bend. Several restaurants, gaming, live music, plus a spa and hotel tower are just some of the options available.

We are home to one of the largest local dining scenes in northern Indiana, with dozens of independently-owned restaurants offering up a diverse set of flavors.

Even better, all this is readily accessible. South Bend is situated in the heart of the Great Lakes region within an easy drive of Chicago, Indianapolis and other larger metro areas. We are just a short drive from Shipshewana, Elkhart and more popular tour stops.



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**Y**our time is precious. Heartland Travel Showcase makes the most of every minute, ensuring tour operators learn about exciting and experiential new tour products and refresh key contacts.

This year, the show is held March 1-3 at the Century Center in South Bend, Indiana. This easily-accessible location is home to the Studebaker National Museum, the Civil Rights Heritage Center and of course, the Fighting Irish – Notre Dame.

“We have attended Heartland Travel Showcase 20 years or more because it gives us an opportunity both to sell our tours as well as to discover new destinations. It is one of the top shows in the U.S. for both reasons,” says Bob Cline, US Tours.

### **Group Experiences Found #Onlyintheheartland**

This showcase features group travel products from about 12 states in the heartland of the United States, with a floor layout that makes it easy to envision short and long itineraries. Plus, many of the suppliers do not attend other shows, so Heartland is the place to find these one-of-a-kind group experiences.

“With its focus on regional destinations and suppliers, Heartland Travel Showcase allows us to find those unique and fun components that help bring our touring programs to life,” says Timothy Patrick, Mayflower Cruises and Tours.

### **Book with Suppliers You Can Trust**

Perhaps the most compelling reason to attend Heartland Travel Showcase is that the show has spent years cultivating an environment where group travel suppliers are committed to your success as an operator.

“We have spent time educating suppliers throughout the region on what you need, as a tour operator, to be successful,” explained Janet Johnson, Heartland Travel Showcase manager. “From working with operators and suppliers on identifying group tour standards, to offering engaging conversations, our goal is to create group experiences where your customers will be treated liked gold.”





## Learn How to Harness the Power of Influencers to Attract Customers

Education is not limited to just suppliers. The show offers a workshop each year, focused on a top opportunity in the group market. Transformation in group travel is coupled with the need to change how we market group travel and how you market your tours.

This year, Heartland Travel Showcase is offering training to create fresh and inventive marketing strategies to engage a broader audience and raise awareness about your brand. Micro and Macro influencers, along with content creators, have emerged as a powerful avenue for organically exposing your tours to an audience where traditional marketing approaches may have fallen short.

Discover the art of connecting with these influencers, writers and content creators to initiate discussions about potential collaborations. Uncover the key qualities that make an influencer an ideal partner for your brand. Engage in brainstorming sessions during the

Q&A session to glean valuable insights and determine the influencers best suited to your unique needs.

## Join FAM Tours to Shipshewana and South Shore, Indiana

Heartland Travel Showcase features two opportunities to get out on the road to experience group experiences.

Prior to the showcase, a FAM tour is being held February 28-29 throughout the Shipshewana area. This is home to the third largest Old Order Amish Community in the U.S. This FAM will stop at several Amish family bus winesses where you will witness Amish craftsmanship up close and have time to talk to the makers. Other stops include an antique auction, an antique carousel, a one-room Amish schoolhouse and more. Each day is packed with plenty of home-cooked meals, hands-on programs and in-person demonstrations to give you a taste of what your guests can expect.

Following the showcase, a FAM tour from March 3-6 explores the South Shore, Indiana region with stops at Indiana Dunes, the Century of Progress homes built for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, an enchanting candy factory that produces the World's Best Gummies, the 1920's era Museum at Lassen's Resort, a botanical garden and several agricultural and dairy experiences.

## For More Information and To Register

To register for Heartland Travel Showcase and to learn more, visit [heartlandtravelshowcase.com](http://heartlandtravelshowcase.com) or contact Sarah Herrick at [sarah@ohiotravel.org](mailto:sarah@ohiotravel.org).



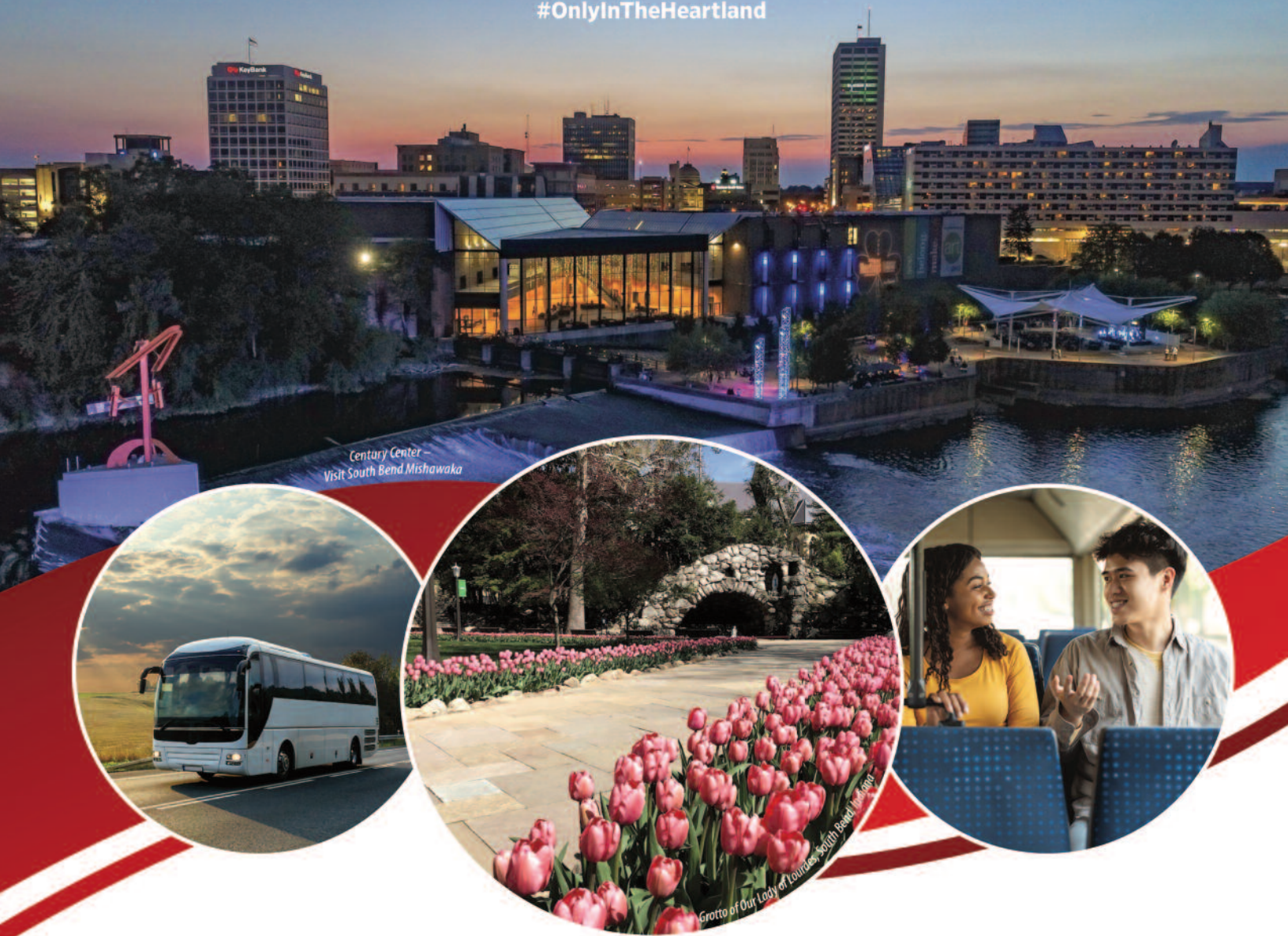


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In the bustling world of motorcoach travel, where every detail matters, choosing the right accommodations can significantly impact the overall journey. Aloft South Bend, a contemporary gem in Indiana, has emerged as the go-to supplier for motorcoach groups seeking a seamless blend of modern comfort and Midwest hospitality. With its strategic location, thoughtful amenities, and commitment to exceeding expectations, Aloft South Bend is setting a new standard for motorcoach-friendly accommodations.

Strategically situated in the heart of South Bend, Aloft offers motorcoach groups easy access to major highways and local attractions. This prime location minimizes travel hassles and ensures that groups can effortlessly explore the cultural richness of the area. The hotel's commitment to convenience begins with its spacious parking facilities, providing ample space for motorcoaches and simplifying the arrival and departure processes for group leaders and travelers alike.

The hotel's commitment to the motorcoach community is further exemplified by its group-friendly amenities. Aloft South Bend offers spacious and well-designed rooms equipped with modern furnishings, ensuring that every traveler enjoys a comfortable and restful stay. Accessibility features are seamlessly integrated, reflecting the hotel's dedication to inclusivity and ensuring that all guests, regardless of mobility challenges, experience the utmost in comfort and convenience.

Beyond the exceptional facilities, Aloft South Bend places a strong emphasis on personalized service. The hotel's staff is dedicated to



Aloft South Bend

ensuring that every motorcoach group feels welcomed and valued. From assisting with itinerary planning to facilitating group activities, Aloft South Bend's commitment to hospitality goes beyond providing accommodations – it extends to creating an unforgettable experience for every guest.

In conclusion, Aloft South Bend stands as a premier supplier for motorcoach groups, seamlessly combining modernity with Midwest charm. Its strategic location, thoughtfully designed facilities, commitment to accessibility, and personalized service make it a standout choice for those seeking accommodations that elevate the motorcoach experience. □

Aloft South Bend is ready to welcome your group. Located in the heart of downtown South Bend and close to all area attractions. We can't wait to Welcome You!





# Stone Castle Hotel & Conference Center



Step into a realm of whimsical charm and regal hospitality with the Stone Castle Hotel & Conference Center, a unique castle-themed retreat nestled just off the pulse of Branson's renowned entertainment strip. This majestic haven is more than a hotel; it is a celebration of community and camaraderie tailored for motorcoach groups.

Every group, from student performers to seasoned crafting circles, finds a niche in this castle's heart. Wake up to a royal feast with our hot breakfast buffet, where guests consistently rave about our exclusive coffee blend, a regal start to the day that is included with your stay.

Beyond the table, the Stone Castle is a treasure trove of amenities. Wander through the indoor corridors to find not one but two indoor pools, where the sound of laughter echoes off the water.

Unwind in bubbling hot tubs or challenge companions to friendly competition in our Tracks-sponsored game room. Outside, the picturesque gazebo and picnic area await, offering a serene setting for moments of quiet conversation or jubilant celebration.

The Stone Castle's versatile 10,000-square-foot meeting space is a grand hall transformed for events from intimate to grandiose, hosting 10 to 300 guests.

Picture a student group's laughter ringing through the corridors or the elegant silence of a church marriage retreat. Visualize the camaraderie of military reunions, the shared memories of class reunions, and the collective anticipation at children's beauty pageants. Imagine sports teams strategizing in huddles and business leaders networking at conferences – all within the castle walls.

The Stone Castle Hotel & Conference Center beckons your motorcoach group to a Branson experience wrapped in the luxury of a castle but with all the warmth of home. Here, every guest is treated like

royalty, every event becomes a celebrated tale and every stay promises stories worth telling for years to come.

Welcome to the Stone Castle, where your Branson adventure begins and where every journey feels like a royal procession. □

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