

INDIANA'S UNIQUE TOURS

Dearborn County

For groups looking at a more modern twist, Dearborn County is a good place to find a number of packages to be enjoyed.

Sally McWilliams, the group tour and package travel specialist for Dearborn County notes, "Our 'Girlfriend Getaways' are really catching on, by far the most requested tour through our office—and they are great overnight or day trips."

Groups also seem to find pleasure in the hands-on fun at McCabe's Greenhouse and the Arty Parties at The Framery (where group members get to be artists using glass, acrylics, and other media), with most itineraries also including the

Each area offers excursions that incorporate a bit of culture and history with tour programs ranging from Tour for the Cure to Amish buggy rides throughout the area.

signature Tour for the Cure initiative.

"Groups are embracing the opportunity to 'Have Fun, Give Hope,'" McWilliams explains. "We've recently launched Tour for the Cure luncheons at two restaurants to enable day trip groups the opportunity to participate in our program."

A sample Tour for the Cure itinerary not only raises money for breast cancer research, but also allows groups a chance to step back into the Victorian era by beginning with a visit to Hillforest Victorian House Museum in Aurora with a quick course on beauty secrets practiced in the late 1800s. Sample lotions are from period recipes and the tour is accompanied by a costumed guide.

There is also Aurora's Veraestau Historic Site, a landmark home capturing a long sweep of Indiana's architectural history and exemplifying the historic preservation practiced by two generations of families. A signature Tour for the Cure luncheon specializing in wellness is created just for the tour by the executive chefs at Applewood on the River in Aurora and Whisky's Family Restaurant in Lawrenceburg named after Lawrenceburg's nickname "Whiskey City," home of Seagram's distillery for 150 years.

Afterward there is a stop at McCabe's Greenhouse and Floral or The Framery where groups can opt to stretch their legs during a walking tour of Aurora, the "City of Spires" while touring the Windows of Aurora murals project.

For more off-the-beaten path options there is the Tri-State Antique Market at the Lawrenceburg Fairgrounds on the first Sunday of every month from May through October. Indiana's largest outdoor vintage-only market, there are over 250 vendors and groups have definitely come to enjoy this

outdoor shopping experience.

"For a bit of adventure, groups of all ages enjoy Perfect North Slopes for skiing and tubing and Argosy Casino is always a popular evening option," McWilliams adds. "We also have an apple orchard that's a fun stop in the fall—a tour with tasting is inexpensive at \$5 per person and small bags of apples or jars of apple butter can be included for a small fee. And groups love to take home goodies."

New in the group tour marketplace, McWilliams says Dearborn County is catching on since the first group arrived in the fall of 2007. And, judging by 2008 and the bookings for 2009 McWilliams says it looks like the late spring and early summer is definitely set to be a popular time to visit the area.

Wabash County

From the modern twist of Dearborn County, groups can experience the history of Wabash County. A tour of the county begins with the Wabash County Historical Museum to learn the history of the county.

From there, head to the County Courthouse and see the original light that made Wabash the first electrically lighted city in the world.

After the courthouse, the tour heads to various historic homes in the area, such as the Honeywell House and the home of former U.S. Vice President Thomas Marshall, which is in the Victorian Village of North Manchester.

The itinerary also highlights the fact that Wabash offers some very sweet treats. Day one has an ice cream stop at Lynn's Restaurant, while the ice cream stop on day two is at Mr. Dave's, which is also known for award-winning tenderloins.

"The type of experiences found [in Indiana] lend themselves to a 'Take Away.' Whether it is learning about the Amish Culture, getting hands on with cooking demonstrations and tasting regional foods or feeling like your tour is contributing to cancer research with 'Tour for a Cure,' Mid-America Tour guests return from these experiences feeling good about themselves and are enriched from the experiences they have had," Snyder concludes. □

Unique Tour Contacts

Northern Indiana Amish Country/Elkhart County
800-250-4827, www.amishcountry.org

Dearborn County
800-322-8198, www.visitsoutheastindiana.com

Wabash County Convention and Visitors Bureau
800-563-1169, www.wabashcountycvb.com