



August Newsletter

BYWAY UPDATES AUGUST OVERLOOKS

Last month, we took a look at all things historical and educational. As a change of pace, we're excited to offer you scenic overlooks and hiking destinations all over the state of Iowa.

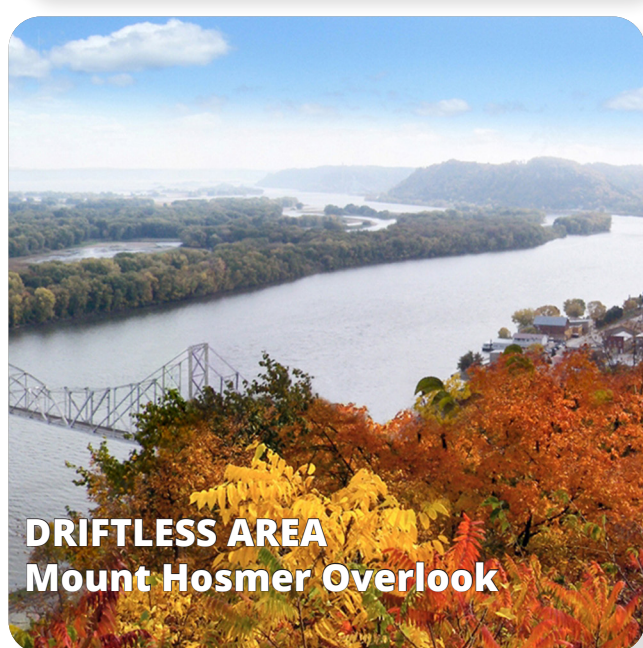
From east to west and north to south, our state is FILLED with the most beautiful locations and hidden gems. Take a look at each of these featured spots along all of the Iowa byways. Where are you going next?



COVERED BRIDGES
John Wayne Birthplace Museum



DELAWARE CROSSING
Manchester Whitewater Park



DRIFTLESS AREA
Mount Hosmer Overlook

COVERED BRIDGES

The Covered Bridges Scenic Byway offers many opportunities for hiking. The two most popular parks for hiking are Pammel Park and Winterset City Park. Pammel Park offers three trail systems - Backbone Trail, Lodge Trail and an Interpretive Trail. City Park in Winterset features a two-mile roundtrip trail up to the monument Clark Tower (one of Madison County's hidden gems). This castle-like structure honors one of the county's first settlers and offers a great view of the Middle River Valley.

DELAWARE CROSSING

Seven days a week, 24 hours a day and all year around, visiting the Manchester Whitewater Park is always a great stop when you are traveling the byway, however, the best experience is in the summer time when you can make the most of the unique feature. There are six, 18-inch drops and it spans over 800 feet in length, but you can get in anywhere along the park. With a paved walking trail and nearby equipment to rent or purchase, there's definitely something for everyone to enjoy - even if it's just the beautiful landscape surrounding it. It's important that recreational users of the river practice their best judgement when it comes to river flow and water levels of the Maquoketa River. Coming up this month, Franklin Street Brewing Company is hosting their annual River Runner Regatta Cardboard Race on August 14, right here on the Manchester Whitewater Park!

DRIFTLESS AREA

Mount Hosmer City Park raises 450 feet above the community of Lansing and the Upper Mississippi River Valley. The 104-acre park is named after Harriet Hosmer, a sculptress who won a footrace to the summit of the hill during a steamboat layover in the 1850s. This park provides opportunities for picnicking and hiking the single track trails, but is most well-known its panoramic views of the Mississippi River and Black Hawk Bridge. Additionally, you can find a children's playground and extensive veterans' memorial monument. Mount Hosmer is easily accessible by vehicle on a road leading out of Lansing. It's the perfect stop for break or an incredible view when you're making your trip along the Driftless.

GLACIAL TRAIL

The O'Brien County Conservation Board is hosting the annual Bison Stampede 5K Trail Run at Prairie Heritage Center on August 7th, but if you can't make it, there are plenty of opportunities for you to go hiking in many parks along the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway! Here are a few highlights: O'Brien County's Prairie Heritage Center features 4.9 miles of walking trails. In Clay County, Bertram Reservation is a 240 acre wildlife area with Oak Savannah Prairie that has hiking trails as well as bridle trails, and Wanata Park is 144 acres featuring trails along the floodplain and the hills surrounding the Little Sioux River. Buena Vista Park offers multiple camping areas, Lodge and cabin over-night rental facilities, day-use shelter, arboretum, prairie grass plantings, and miles of trails through woodland areas for visitors to explore. The trails at Cherokee County's Martins Access wind through woodlands and prairies, crossing small streams and bringing riders near to the banks of the Little Sioux River. There are 5.3 miles of foot trails, 2.4 miles of road, and Day-use Equestrian Trails. More information about all the county parks can be found at www.mycountyparks.com.

GRANT WOOD

Bellevue State Park is located just south of Bellevue and is a great stop to hike or take in the scenic views while you travel the Grant Wood Scenic Byway. The views provide an overlook of the city of Bellevue and includes historic homes, buildings, grids of streets, sites of the Mississippi River, Lock and Dam #12 and, of course, boats and barges! The Mississippi River bluffs and hills can be seen for miles on each side of the river. This overlook site is a popular spot for birdwatching as travelers can catch glimpses of bald eagles, hawks, falcons, neotropical migratory birds and other avian species!

HISTORIC HILLS

Historic Hills Scenic Byway is a destination for any and all state parks, hiking, biking, horse riding, and beautiful view enthusiasts. The Byway begins at Honey Creek State Park with around 759 acres of state park full of picnic areas, abundant wildlife, and the beautiful Rathbun Lake. As you travel the Byway east towards Drakesville, you will come across Lake Wapello State Park with 1,150 acres of recreational bliss. Continuing to travel east along the Byway you will encounter Lacey-Keosauqua State Park who just celebrated their 100th anniversary this past year. Lacey-Keosauqua State Park features 1,653 acres of trails, Mormon Trail history, camping, and a beautiful view of the Des Moines River. Towards the Van Buren and Lee County line you will come across Shimek State Forest which boasts 9,418 acres of wildlife, camping, and trails to enjoy on ATVs or horseback. In Farmington, you can rent a horse and ride the trails of Shimek State Forest.

In addition to our wonderful State Parks, the Historic Hills Scenic Byway has many wildlife and wilderness areas as well along the route. Whether you are looking for a place to boat and fish, camp, hike, enjoy a beautiful view, trail ride horses, or just relax and recharge; Historic Hills Scenic Byway has a place for you and your family!

IOWA VALLEY

On the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway, visitors can find hiking trails and overlook spots far from the beaten path. Some of the places recommended are The Amana Colonies Nature Trail, located north of Homestead at the intersection of Highways 6 and 151, this spot features three separate hiking trails, with the longest stretching for 3 miles. Of note, there are two archaeological spots of interest on these nature trails. The first being three Indigenous American burial mounds, located just off one of the trails that date back 1,000 years. The second is at the end of one of the trail heads near the lookout of a small bluff. Below, you can spot the Iowa River and also an indigenous American fishing weir made from rocks. It was used to trap fish when the river was shallow. One word of note is that these trails are located on private land, and while open for hiking, mushroom hunting and gathering is not allowed.

Located between Keystone and Belle Plaine, just south of the junction of US Highway 30 and V4, visitors can find Pheasant Run Farm. Each August, Pheasant Run plays host to the Sunflower Experience, three acres of blooming sunflowers that guests are invited to explore for a small entrance fee. The sunflowers make for the perfect photo backdrop and you can also pick and take home some fresh blooms.

LINCOLN HIGHWAY

Palisades-Kepler State Park, located in Linn County just four miles from Mt Vernon, has nearly six miles of trails, some of which lie along the beautiful Cedar River. Throughout the 840-acre park you can enjoy dramatic river bluffs and a variety of wildlife. Fossils from millions of years ago have been found in the rock outcroppings, including the molar tooth of a prehistoric mammoth. Several Indian mounds have been identified within the park, a reminder that the location was the home of Native Americans. Cabins, camping, and picnicking facilities are available. There's even a beautiful limestone lodge built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.



It is said that American poet Carl Sandburg frequented the Palisades in the 1920s and 30s.

Ledges State Park, along the Des Moines River valley in Boone County, became one of Iowa's first state parks in 1924. Hikers can enjoy four miles of well-maintained trails through sandstone cliffs, canyons, and scenic overlooks formed 13,000 years ago as the result of glacial melting. While some trails are more challenging, others are accessible to most hikers. The park contains a number of stone shelters and a stone arch bridge constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. A flood pole in the lower park documents water levels of past major floods.

Hiking is just one of the many activities available in the Willow Lake Recreation Area, near Woodbine in Harrison County. The six miles of trails through prairies and woodlands are marked with Smart Trail interpretive signs that use QR codes to provide information to hikers about the Loess Hills and area natural resources. The 222-acre park also offers excellent fishing, boating, and swimming in the 27-acre lake. The park has camp sites with shower houses and restrooms, as well as picnic areas and playgrounds. Visit the Nature Encounter Center to enjoy natural history displays and live animals like turtles and snakes.

LINCOLN HIGHWAY Ledges State Park



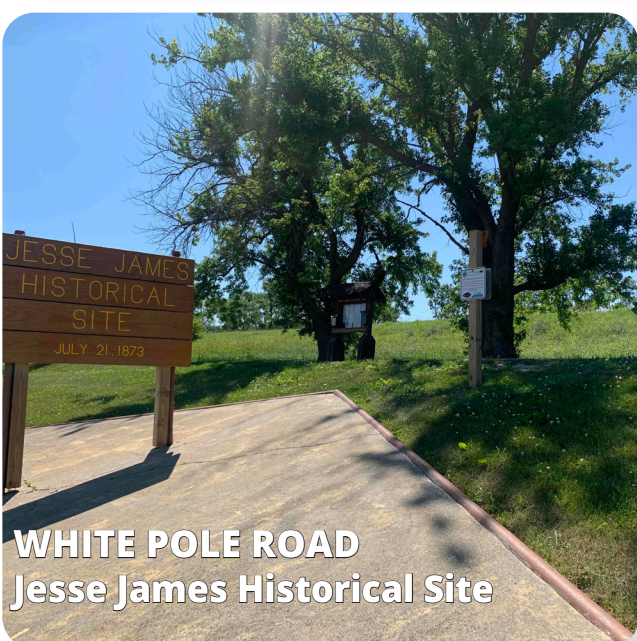
LOESS HILLS Murray Hill Scenic Overlook



RIVER BLUFFS Pikes Peak State Park



WESTERN SKIES Whiterock Conservancy



WHITE POLE ROAD Jesse James Historical Site

LOESS HILLS

In June of 2019, Brent's Trail opened as an 8-mile hiking trail connecting Harrison County Conservation's Murray Hill Scenic Overlook and Gleason-Hubel Wildlife Area via the Loess Hills State Forest. The trail was the start of a proposed trail that will eventually connect the northern and southern ends of the State Forest, and is named after longtime state forester Brent Olson. It is a unique partnership between Harrison County Conservation Board and Iowa Department of Natural Resources, with many other partners and supporters including Friends of the Loess Hills State Forest and Preparation Canyon State Park, Loess Hills Missouri River Region, Golden Hills RC&D, and Loess Hills Alliance. Since the grand opening of Brent's Trail, it has grown in popularity with the reputation of being one of the most scenic and rugged hiking trails in the midwest. Work immediately began on an extension for the trail, and on August 28th a grand opening for the extension will be held.

The Sioux City Art Center features exhibits, events and education opportunities. A state-of-the-art facility located in the heart of downtown Sioux City, the Sioux City Public Museum features large, colorful exhibits, hands-on exhibits and interactive displays of local and regional history. If you're traveling with children, you won't want to forget the Launch PAD Children's Museum!

RIVER BLUFFS

Pikes Peak State Park lies on the bluffs of Mississippi River, just south of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway community of McGregor. It's named for the explorer Zebulon Pike who recommended it as a suitable location for a military fort that would have a sweeping view of the entire valley, including the mouth of the Wisconsin River, the trading hamlet of Prairie Du Chien and the Wisconsin delta, today it is a well-known DNR State Park that has been well developed for scenic viewing. It has invested in beautiful overlooks, hiking trails, and different perspectives of the river for as far as the eye can see. The park and the panoramic views from Pikes Peak have historical, archeological, geographical and scenic values that you won't want to miss when you're making your way around the river bluffs and bends.

WESTERN SKIES

Whether you want to go hiking, biking, horseback riding or paddling, Whiterock Conservancy just off the Western Skies Scenic Byway has a trail for you! Whiterock Conservancy is a 5,500 acre non-profit land trust that balances sustainable agriculture, natural resource protection, and public recreation on the landscape. Located near Coon Rapids, Iowa, along seven miles of the Middle Raccoon River valley, they are open to the public every day for recreation and exploration. Whiterock features 40 miles of trails for walkers, hikers, runners, mountain bikers, equestrians, paddlers, and those with mobility limitations through the use of low-powered vehicles. In addition to the trails, Whiterock offers accommodations, camping, fishing, stargazing, and other outdoor activities. Check them out at www.whiterockconservancy.org

WHITE POLE ROAD

White Pole Road has several overlooks and hiking spots that you won't want to miss out on during your travels.

- 1.) View of the old park and campsite from the Bonnie and Clyde shootout marker (3291 Dexfield Road Dexter, Iowa)
- 2.) Nations Bridge County Park
- 3.) Rolling Hills Northwest of Menlo (beautiful scenery & ghost towns)
- 4.) New Pocket Park in Casey
- 5.) Correll Wildlife Area
- 6.) Jesse James Historical Park
- 7.) Seven-acres of restored prairie planting
- 8.) A Steam Engine Wheel marking the spot where 1873 Jesse James Gang pulled off the world's first robbery of a moving train!