



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION

Tourism Development News

A Publication of the University of Illinois Extension-Fulton County

Exploring Agritourism

Kevin McGuire

Agritourism is “the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.”¹

John Pike, who will present at our upcoming Agritourism Workshop, often describes agritourism in terms of marketing, as a way for farmers to reach new customers. This may involve a shift from a commodity or wholesale approach toward direct sales to customers, and often includes creating what tourism folks call a “visitor experience.”

My favorite example of how this works is the Tillamook Cheese Visitor’s Center on US Hwy 101 along the Oregon Coast. What

started decades ago as a modest cheese plant, is now an attraction welcoming nearly a million visitors a year.² It includes observation areas, a café, an ice cream counter, and a gift shop. Visitors watch cheese being made and then taste it just a few steps away. This chance to see, learn, taste, and shop creates a memorable visitor experience, one likely to intertwine the Tillamook brand with visitors’ memories of a pleasant getaway along Oregon’s picturesque coast. The tourism reinforces the brand, and for many the Visitor’s Center has become a not-to-be-missed part of the area’s travel experience.

Of course Illinois also offers examples of agritourism success. Southern Illinois wineries and orchards help drive tourism as they

attract visitors who also enjoy the region’s state parks, the Shawnee National Forest, and other sites.

Closer to home, the store at Ken and Sharon Thompson’s Orchard Hill Farm, near Dickson Mounds Museum, is a popular fall destination for those seeking fresh

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Tapping into the RV Market

Ashley Chitwood

Nearly one in twelve U.S. vehicle-owning households owns an RV. There are an estimated 7.2 million RVs on the road today. RVing is a \$14 billion industry.

These are eye-opening statistics for the tourism industry in Illinois, especially to the Peoria area. With current tourism trends focusing on

three to four day getaways within driving distance, the Peoria area is in a great position to target the RV market segment. Due to our prime location between three large Mid-West Cities (Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis), we are easily reached by millions of travelers.

(Continued on page 2)

Agritourism Workshop:

When: Thursday, November 8, 7:00-8:30PM

What: Agritourism overview, resource assessments, business development, marketing, liability concerns, and collaborative opportunities.

Who: Farmers, rural landowners, those interested in tourism, and others.

Where: Dickson Mounds Museum

Presenter: John Pike, Economic Development Educator, U of I Extension, Carbondale Center

Cost: \$7.00 (includes materials and dessert)

Registration: By Friday, November 2. Call U of I Extension (309-547-3711) or register online (<http://fulton.extension.uiuc.edu>)

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News & Updates

Fulton County Tourism Alliance: The Tourism Alliance's Coordinating Group continues to meet every other month. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 4, at 4PM. New members welcome!

Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (PACVB): The Fulton County Board's Tourism & Economic Development Committee will be placing an ad in the 2008 PACVB Visitor Guide to promote visits to Fulton County. PACVB prints 100,000 copies annually and distributes them to our primary travel markets—Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and other sites in the Midwest.

Visitor Guide Project: Fulton County has been awarded a \$10,000 Marketing Grant from the Illinois Bureau of Tourism (IBOT)! During her Peace Corps Fellows internship here, Angie Sanders applied for the grant to fund development of the visitor guide and accompanying website.

A team from the Tourism Alliance and the County Board's Tourism & Economic Development Committee is assembling a draft of the guide. Ad sales will take place in February and March, with publication scheduled for April.

Tourism Summit Postponed: a Fulton/Mason Tourism Summit focusing on opportunities related to the Illinois River Road National



“Success in tourism requires skills in both competition and collaboration, and the good sense to know which to use when.”

Scenic Byway has been postponed. The event, which was being planned for late October, will be rescheduled, probably after the holidays in early 2008.

Those interested in local tourism development are encouraged to attend an Agritourism Workshop on November 8, co-sponsored by U of I Extension's Fulton and Mason County Units and Agritourism Partners of Illinois (ATPI). (See inset box on p. 1 for details.)

RV Market (Continued from page 1)

Recently, I attended a tourism seminar entitled “Rollin’ RV Revenue,” sponsored by the Central and Western Illinois Tourism Development Offices. Dorothy H. Maitland, President of Maitland & Associates, Inc. and Tours by Maitland, discussed nearly every aspect of the RV traveler. From demographics to developing a successful marketing plan, Maitland informed all in attendance about the importance of this up and coming business trend.

One of the fastest growing segments of travel today is the RV traveler. More and more people are hitting the road, both individually and in caravans, traveling to vacation spots and rallies. In fact, a recent rally attracted over 7,000 RVs! The travelers used 1500 room nights and ate 85% of their meals away from their RVs. This impacted the community between

six and eight million dollars! How do we get that kind of business in the Peoria area? Research and relationships.

Research: The two websites recommended by Maitland for resources on the RVing world were GoRVing.com & RVIA.org. Research organizers of RV rallies, and see if they meet your community and/or campground specifications. **Relationships:** Once you know which organizations you can accommodate, begin creating relationships with their planners. You may not receive their event immediately. However, once a relationship is formed, your destination and personal contact will positively influence their decision.

The RV market is large, lucrative and easily reached. It's time to open our minds to the possibilities



RVs nestled into choice lakeside sites at Fulton County Camping and Recreation Area.

of the RV traveler in the Peoria area.

The Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau is available to answer any questions regarding the RV traveler. Please feel free to contact Ashley at 309-676-0303.

Ashley Chitwood is Tourism and Special Projects Manager for the Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (PACVB)



Ask “Dr. Tourism”—The Labels We Use

Dear Dr. Tourism,

I’ve been hearing about a bunch of different kinds of tourism—“nature-based tourism,” “eco-tourism,” “agritourism.” It’s confusing! Please help make sense of it all!

Needled in Norris

Dear Needled,

The way we label different kinds of tourism can be useful in some respects but an obstacle in others.

First, see Kevin McGuire’s article on page 1 for a definition and examples of *agritourism*. McGuire mentions Orchard Hill Farm near Dickson Mounds Museum as an example of an *agritourism* business. Dickson Mounds Museum might reasonably be labeled a *cultural heritage tourism* attraction, where travel is “directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage, and special character of a place.”¹ Do these labels matter to visitors? Almost certainly not. A *cultural heritage tourist’s* trip to the museum is enhanced by the fresh fruit and apple dumplings for sale just up the road. The *agritourists*

who visit Orchard Hill Farm are, in turn, potential visitors for a new display at the museum. If we put too much stock in such labels, viewing such sites as either one or the other, we risk not seeing and tapping the power of the combination to create the kind of visitor experience that can drive travel and encourage return visits.

On the other hand, *nature-based tourism* and *eco-tourism* are a case where such labels can be useful. These labels and the distinctions they point to are useful in thinking about potential visitors and what kind of attractions, services and accommodations will drive their choices.

Nature-based tourism is “travel to a destination for the primary purpose of enjoying and experiencing nature” and is a rapidly growing segment of the tourism industry.² The Illinois River Country Nature Trail, which includes numerous local wildlife viewing sites in its Canton and Havana Loops, is a project expected to appeal to this growing market.

Eco-tourism goes beyond nature-based tourism. It is “a form of nature-based tourism that minimizes impacts and promotes conservation of the resources on which it depends” and “is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry.”³ *Eco-tourists*, for example, are likely to be particularly interested in The Nature Conservancy’s restoration work at the Emiquon Preserve. They are likely to prefer, seek-out, and pay extra for lodging and dining that employ practices consistent with the value they place on reducing environmental impacts—i.e., alternative energy, recycling, water conservation, local/organic foods, and reduced carbon emissions, etc.

^{1,2,3} Messer, Cynthia C., et al. 2004. *Community Tourism Development, 2nd Edition*. University of Minnesota Tourism Center, St. Paul, MN

Agritourism (Continued from page 1)

fruit, caramel apples, or Sharon’s delicious apple dumplings.

Agritourism comes in a wide range of shapes and sizes—popular pumpkin patches, farm markets, corn mazes, wineries, Christmas tree farms, fee-hunting operations, and farm-based bed and breakfasts. Economic benefits from agritourism can expand beyond the farm as visitors to such farm attractions extend their spending to local shops

and businesses in nearby rural communities.

To learn more about agritourism, how agritourism businesses are working together, cooperating with other tourism enterprises, and benefiting local communities, please join us for an informative evening workshop, November 8, at Dickson Mounds Museum. Presenter John Pike combines professional expertise with personal

experience for engaging presentations throughout Illinois. He is a past president of Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois (ATPI), a co-sponsor of the workshop.

¹Messer, Cynthia C., et al. 2004. *Community Tourism Development, 2nd Edition*. University of Minnesota Tourism Center, St. Paul, MN

²<http://www.tillamookcheese.com/>

Tourism Development News and U of I Extension

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Events and Meetings

Due to limited space, this section highlights only some of the upcoming events & meetings in our area.

November

Nov. 7	Fulton County Visitor Guide Team , 3 pm, Farm Bureau building board room (309-547-3711)
Nov. 8	Agritourism Opportunities Workshop , 7 pm, Dickson Mounds Museum (U of I Extension - 309-547-3711)
Nov. 10	Mountain Dulcimer Workshop , 10 am - 4 pm, Dickson Mounds Museum (Steve Endsley - 309-668-2362)
Nov. 13	Fulton County Arts Council Annual Membership Show , Graham Hospital Atrium Gallery, Canton (runs through January 8, 2008)
Nov. 17	Hickory Ridge Coffee House , Bob Bovee & Gail Heil, 7:30 pm, Dickson Mounds Museum (309-547-3721)

December

Dec. 4	Fulton County Tourism Alliance Coordinating Group , 4PM (Location TBA) (309-547-3711)
Dec. 15	Hickory Ridge Coffee House , Ben Bedford, 7:30 pm, Dickson Mounds Museum (309-547-3721)

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