

# Heritage Tourism



United States  
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# Alternative Enterprises – Heritage Tourism

## How to use your land's legacy to benefit the public and boost your bottom line

### What Is Heritage Tourism?

Unlike conventional tourism, heritage tourism features historical sights and other cultural attractions that help people learn about our Nation's past. If properly planned and managed, land, buildings, and other resources that have historic or cultural significance – or that are located near historically or culturally significant sites – may provide landowners with new income opportunities. The following are some examples of heritage tourism ventures:

**Historic Farm Tours:** With planning and effort, Century Farms or others that have original farm structures or equipment may serve as heritage tourism attractions. While our Nation's heritage is deeply rooted in agriculture, the urban connection to our agrarian background is growing weaker. Farm and folklife tours are increasingly used to educate people about both historic and modern methods of food production.

**Reenactments:** Some farms and ranches include historically significant land, such as land that served as a site of a Civil War battle, as a way station for weary settlers on their route West, as part of the underground railroad, or as the home of a famous American. These areas might be appropriate sites for reenactments, other educational activities, or festivals.

**Cultural Events:** Farms, ranches, and other lands located in beautiful settings with adequate open space may be attractive sites for outdoor plays, concerts, fairs, and cultural festivals. Even if a farm isn't appropriate as a tourist attraction itself, it may offer hospitality services, such as food, lodging, or agri-entertainment to tourists enjoying nearby cultural or historical attractions.

### Why Heritage Tourism?

Historic and cultural tourism is enjoying increased popularity and generating income for individuals and communities. Studies show that visitors to historic or cultural attractions tend to spend more money per trip and

take longer vacations compared to all other travelers. Heritage tourism also helps preserve a community's unique character and can help diversify local economies.

Moreover, heritage tourism is a flexible income source. Operators can control when the sites will be open. This allows operators to continue farming while offering value-added tourism during certain times of the day or year. Attractions can be open for single annual events, seasonally, or daily with restricted hours.

### What Should You Consider?

**Resource Assessment:** Does your land have natural resource attributes, such as streams or ponds, vistas, or open spaces that would make it an attractive tourist destination? Does your land have a roomy home that could provide lodging, such as a bed and breakfast, for tourists? Do you have open space that could accommodate fairs, festivals, plays, or other events?

Do your land or buildings have unique historical significance? Is your farm located in an area with unique historical or cultural significance?

**Customer Base and Marketing:** Who are your potential customers? Families with children? Retirees? Amateur historians? Are they located nearby, or do you hope to attract tourists from distant areas? Would your venture be a destination attraction, or a place that tourists might stop on their way to their destination? Are there other historical or cultural attractions nearby that would help draw tourists to your site?

**Infrastructure:** What new facilities, such as restrooms and parking areas, must you provide if large groups visit your land? Are there ample and suitable lodging and dining facilities nearby? Are the roads and other local transportation systems well suited for tourism?

**Opportunities for Collaboration:** What other local organizations, governments, or businesses can you collaborate with to enhance the financial opportunities of your tourism venture?

**Legal Matters:** What are the liabilities of allowing tourists on your property? What types of insurance must you carry? Is your land zoned, or capable of being rezoned, for tourism activities? What safety regulations might you be required to comply with?

## Where To Get Help

There are a number of information resources that can help you get started on your new venture. A few of those resources are listed below. For more information, contact your USDA Resource Conservation and Development Council area office. For a national listing of RC&D offices, see <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/RCCD/rc&dsta.html> on the web or call the Natural Resources Conservation Service at your local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center (in the phone book, under "Federal Government").

For a national listing of alternative enterprises and agritourism liaisons, see <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/RESS/econ/ressd.htm>.

### **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

Through its Heritage Tourism Program, the National Trust for Historic Preservation offers technical assistance on strategic planning, preservation, tourism development, interpretation, and marketing on a fee-for-service basis. They also offer low-cost "how-to" publications on heritage tourism, an introductory video, and a resource manual that lists additional organizations that can help you start your new venture.

For more information, see <http://www.nationaltrust.org> and click on "publications" or call (202) 588-6286. To reach the Heritage Tourism Program staff, call (303) 623-1504.

A free heritage tourism fact sheet is available from the Trust's regional offices. To locate the regional office nearest you, see <http://www.nthp.org/main/frontline/resources.htm> on the web.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

USDA's Forest Service produced a heritage tourism development model that helps landowners and communities assess and develop a heritage tourism enterprise. To get a copy of the report, contact USDA

at (202) 720-2307. An electronic copy can be found at <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda/RESS/econ/ressd.htm> on the web.

### **Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)**

ATTRA offers tip sheets on a variety of alternative enterprises and provides tips on evaluating potential agritourism ventures. For helpful information on agri-entertainment, see <http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/pickyour.html> on the web, or call (800) 346-9140. ATTRA also provides useful information on marketing and evaluating alternative agricultural enterprises. ATTRA is sponsored by USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

### **Travel Industry Association of America**

A membership organization, TIA provides information on tourism research and resources. You can contact them at 1100 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20005-3934, (202) 408-8422, Fax (202) 408-1255 or see <http://www.tia.org> on the web.

### **State Departments of Tourism**

All 50 states have tourism offices that can provide you with additional information and resources to get you started. To find the address, phone number, or website address for your state tourism office, see the Tourism Industry Association of America (TIA) website at <http://www.tia.org/discover/getallstos.asp> or call TIA at (202) 408-8422. Also, contact your local convention and visitors bureau.

### **Farming Alternatives Program (FAP), Cornell University**

FAP has produced a step-by-step workbook to help you plan and evaluate a new enterprise. The workbook, *Farming Alternatives: A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm-Based Enterprises*, can be ordered by calling (607) 255-9832. FAP also offers an agritourism resource packet and a report providing in-depth case studies of agritourism in New York. Also see <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/dept/ruralsoc/fap/fap.html> on the web.

For additional copies of this information sheet, AE-3, call 1-888-LANDCARE or see the website at <http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda/RESS/econ/ressd.htm>.

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restaurants, etc. could be incorporated on tours? What uncommon extras could be included to prompt travelers to "linger longer?" These bonuses could be speciality shops and places to stop while the tourists are in the area.

Finally, there should be interesting and intriguing places for local residents to patronize. Museums, craft shops and stores should also be available for local consumption. These businesses should be open longer and more accessible. Since the tracing of family ancestors has become a common pastime, historical museums need to be accessible for charting family genealogies for natives of the area as well as for out-of-towners who visit on weekends.

Heritage tourists need places to eat, sleep, tour and shop. Restaurants should provide local cuisine as well as foods and culinary styles from other areas. Hotels, hostels, Beds and Breakfasts, motels and inns should be available to supply the need for overnight accommodations.

Shopping has become the number one activity of visitors to Ohio's Hill Country. Food products and crafts are often desired.

Familiarization (Fam) tours can be developed to depict heritage themes. Cottage industries, home-based businesses, craft shops and art studios can tie the tourism routes together.

There is going to be more competition among regions vying for the heritage tourist. Prospective guests may become overwhelmed by the amount of information explaining travel destinations. Heritage areas need to emphasize the value of history and the past and take steps to assure that preservation is secured for future generations.

### What Heritage Destinations Can Do to Promote Tourism

- ◆ Develop an authentic product. Visitors want to see the real thing. Reproductions are not as desirable
- ◆ Educate through interactive education and entertainment. By engaging tourists in the history of the area, they can appreciate the historical significance of the event and the region. Activities can be both participatory and passive.
- ◆ Market your area strategically. Have a travel route mapped with an itinerary. Take the tour to be sure that it makes sense. Develop corridors based upon themes - which may include history, culture, and nature.

Avoid naming counties. Refer to locations by towns or routes. Have the routes begin and end with major highways. Make it easy for the tourist by providing packaged tours that include places to eat, sleep, tour and shop.

Because the historical past is evident throughout Southern

Ohio, tourism businesses should focus on it. Twenty-one percent of travelers to Ohio's Hill Country are likely to tour historic sites as opposed to 6.5% statewide. Sites include prehistoric Indian mounds, the first state capital, the state's oldest standing courthouse, the state's only Civil War battlefield, murals depicting the area's history and culture, etc. Since Appalachian Ohio follows the Ohio River, the river can serve as a backdrop, not just because of its historical significance, but also as a component of soft adventure tours.

- ◆ Manage the capacity of travelers that you want to attract. Collaborate throughout the region to determine the logistics of handling great numbers of visitors.

Areas within a region should partner with each other. Package tours of several different sites should be available for discount prices.

- ◆ Encourage hospitality training. Those people working the front lines in restaurants, hotels, gas stations, tourist businesses, shops and stores should understand the area's heritage and the importance of tourism. They should be trained in relaying information about the historical attractions and people of the area. Employees should exhibit impeccable manners, exceptional service and good public relations. It is essential that they focus on the opportunities of which travelers can take advantage instead of the problems of the area.

Southern Ohio can become one of the state's major tourist attractions. Tourism professionals and interested citizens can work together to make the vision happen. The history and heritage are already there; collaboration and planning can bring it to realization.

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