

Janet's Agricultural Tours Newsletter

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Spring 2010

Maine and New Hampshire Farmers Tour Iowa

The prairie farmlands of Iowa were the recent destination for a group of farmers and farming enthusiasts from Maine and New Hampshire. Their ten-day 1200-mile journey through central and eastern Iowa, planned and led by Janet Spear, who with her husband Bob owns and operates a successful 180-acre vegetable farm in Nobleboro, Maine, gave them a broad overview of farming in this overwhelmingly agricultural state. Iowa is the nation's third largest producer of agricultural products, after California and Texas. Corn, soybeans, live cattle, feeder cattle, and lean hogs make up the five most lucrative commodities in terms of farm cash receipts. Livestock is the biggest consumer of Iowa-grown corn at 400 million bushels annually.

Iowa is also an energy state, with some 40 ethanol refineries and 14 bio-diesel refineries. Visits to an ethanol plant which produces fuel from corn, and a biomass energy conversion facility, processing agricultural crop and animal waste into fuels and chemicals, explored this side of Iowa's extensive agricultural economy. Controversy has developed in the past several years regarding the use of food grade corn for ethanol production, especially with oil prices currently below their all-time highs of 2008 and volatile corn prices, but supporters insist that ethanol has consumed only the corn generated by increased productivity since 2000. The debate continues. Meanwhile, another energy source, wind power, is

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During a visit to the Tassel Ridge Winery in Leighton, Iowa, the group enjoyed a catered lunch and wine tasting as well as a tour of the facility. They were joined for lunch by local farmers including representatives from Vande Rose Farms and Source Verified Foods, who discussed their production practices and national distribution of Premium Duroc Pork and Premium Hereford Beef brand products.

Local Tour Operator Joins Global Network

Nobleboro resident Janet Spear was recently honored in London, England by being inducted into Agricultural Tour Operators International (ATOI) at their 2009 annual conference, on November 6th, 2009. ATOI, an exclusive organization with worldwide membership, is composed of a carefully selected group of professional tour organizers, who become an indispensable resource network for each other. Janet, who has been designing and leading tours with an agricultural focus for the past ten years, learned about ATOI from Carol Bauer an Oakland, California, tour operator and ATOI member, who has assisted Janet with planning for several tours she led to California, the Pacific Northwest, and recently, to Iowa. "Having a local contact is essential when planning a tour to a faraway place," says Janet. "We help each other with information only a 'native' of the area can provide or that we have gained from our own tour experience." Janet has worked with ATOI

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On January 12-14, Janet's Agricultural Tours was an exhibitor at the 69th Annual Maine Agricultural Trade Show in Augusta. The event showcases the latest innovations in farming technology and provides an opportunity for farmers and others involved in agriculture-related endeavors throughout the state to network and exchange ideas. The show is also popular with home gardeners and others interested in Maine agriculture. Janet has found the show to be a great venue for spreading the word about her tours. In addition, many people who have taken tours with her in the past attend the show and are pleased to tell others about her services. Here, Janet discusses upcoming tours with prospective travelers Arlan and Ellie Jodrey.

also a growing industry in Iowa, with giant turbines springing up across the expanse of cropland and spawning a new source of income as well as power for the state.

Everywhere the tour group went, the weather was a big concern. The past two years have brought record rainfall, and this combined with a very cool summer and a deluge of storms in October has put the harvest (usually accomplished in mid-September through early November) far behind schedule. First was the difficulty of getting huge harvesting equipment into soggy fields. Added to that was the moisture content of the crops being far above the acceptable level of 15 percent, the tour group learned. This necessitated the additional time and expense of drying using natural gas.

Janet's 2009 Study Tour to Iowa focused on visits to both large-scale operations and a small, family-owned farm with 150 purebred Holstein cows that processes and markets all its own milk at their own farm store and several other local outlets. While in Des Moines, the group met with Iowa state agricultural officials, including Dean Kleckner, longtime president of the Iowa Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau Federation, Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Karey Claghorn, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and others. The group also toured the state-of-the-art dairy research farm at Iowa State University.

At Pioneer Hi-Bred International, the group learned about the work of this world-leading developer and supplier of advanced plant genetics. The company's mission is to increase crop productivity and develop sustainable agricultural systems. The group also visited the enormous Italian-owned Barilla Pasta Plant, in Ames, where most of the Barilla pasta for the North American market—over 50 types—is produced. Barilla pasta currently accounts for 30 percent of the U.S. pasta market.

Perhaps the most popular stop on the itinerary was the visit to the John Deere Tractor Works, in Waterloo, where all the company's tractors over 135 horsepower are built. With 58



The group's visit to the University of Iowa in Ames was hosted by Dave Acker, Associate Dean of Academic and Global Programs for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. While there, they inspected the university's new state-of-the-art research dairy farm, established in 2007. Later that evening they were guests at a barbeque dinner put on by Alpha Gamma Rho, a national agricultural fraternity, and enjoyed meeting and talking with fraternity members, U of I students majoring in agriculture.

acres of production space under one roof, the facility turns out about 100 tractors a day, destined for farms across the globe. Every tractor made here is custom built. In the probably unique "Gold Key" program, the buyer of a tractor flies to Waterloo the day before his or her tractor is to be built and is on hand to enjoy watching every step of the operation, from first casting to the final touches. In the last step, the new owner turns the key and drives the brand new tractor out of the factory.

One of the cultural highlights of the tour was travel through the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area, in northeast Iowa, one of 37 National Park Service-designated culturally or historically significant areas nationwide. Other cultural points of interest included a drive through one of the largest communities of Old Order Amish in the United States, a visits to a historic feed mill, which was established in 1854 and is now on the National Registry of Historic Places, and the National Farm Toy Museum.

In Dubuque, Iowa's oldest city, the group visited the Cargill grain terminal on the Mississippi River, where barges are loaded with corn and soybeans for shipment downriver and, ultimately, to markets worldwide. They also saw one of the Mississippi River navigation locks and visited the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium.

Driving south along the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, the group crossed the Mississippi to arrive at Moline, Illinois, where they visited the John Deere Pavilion, the world's largest agricultural museum and one of the top five tourist attractions in the central Midwest. While in Moline, they also enjoyed a dinner cruise on a Mississippi Riverboat before heading back across Iowa to Des Moines. Their return trip took them through the Amana Colonies, established by German Lutheran immigrants in 1855.

From just these few highlights, it's clear that this is far from an ordinary tour itinerary. Janet's clients, while not all farmers, typically are people who enjoy rural living—or would like to. They have a curiosity about all things agricultural and are interested in learning about farming in other parts of the United States and the world. They enjoy exploring lesser-known places and back roads to small towns.



The Cargill Grain Terminal is where much Iowa-raised corn and other grains leaves the state. Loaded onto barges, it is shipped down the Mississippi River and to ports worldwide. The group toured the terminal during their visit to Dubuque.

members for her European tours as well.

It was Carol Bauer who nominated Janet for membership in ATOI. The approximately 60 members of ATOI, representing 33 countries, meet annually to network and exchange ideas and information. Each nominee for membership makes a presentation. The next ATOI conference will be in Chicago.

Janet began to develop the "travel bug" back in the 1970s and '80s when her husband, Bob, was traveling extensively for his work with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts at the local, county, regional level, and ultimately, the national level. She was often able to accompany him on trips and began to think that she might like to become a travel agent. In 1996 she joined Adams Travel, in Damariscotta, and while there, she took courses and seminars to learn the basics of the trade. The first tour she planned and led was a motor coach trip from Damariscotta to Colonial Williamsburg, in 1998.

The next year, Janet and Bob, who was by then Maine commissioner of agriculture, took a group of 25 to an agricultural technology conference in Israel, arrangements for that trip having been made by an agent in Connecticut. When they returned, several people asked Janet where they would be going next. Some in the group were anticipating the World Potato Congress that was to be held in the Netherlands in 2000. Through this same group, Janet was put in touch with an agricultural tour operator in Indiana, Jane Turner, who happened to be an ATOI member. This fortuitous contact enabled Janet to plan a very successful tour to the Netherlands and launched her into the agricultural tour business.

In 2001 she had just finished planning and was taking deposits on a tour she had planned to England and Scotland when the outbreak of hoof-and-mouth disease in cattle in Great Britain forced its sudden cancellation. Jane Turner came to the rescue by referring Janet to California-based ATOI member Carol Bauer, mentioned earlier, who ably assisted Janet with her first West Coast tour, which proved a very satisfactory substitute for the aborted UK tour.

Each of Janet's tours is carefully researched and planned to include a diversified itinerary of agricultural, educational, and cultural visits. Tours typically take one to two years of plan-

ning, and Janet makes good use of her ATOI network as well as her personal experience. Currently, Janet is working on a trip to the Netherlands for Floriade 2012, the once-a-decade World Horticultural Expo. Other tours now in various stages of planning include Germany/Switzerland/Austria for 2011,



Switzerland

Upcoming Tours

October 25-30, 2010. Maine, Quebec, Vermont and New Hampshire. See back cover for more information.

Feb 7 - 11, 2011. North American Strawberry Symposium in Tampa, Florida

March 28-April 7, 2011. Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Just a few of the highlights: Frankfurt, Koblenz, Mannheim, Heidelberg, Black Forest region, Titisee, Rhine Falls at Schaffhausen, Lucerne Engelberg, Innsbruck, Salzburg, and Munich.

Late October 2011. Study Tour of Texas, including Dallas, Ft. Worth, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Galveston, Houston and many agricultural highlights.

Late March 2012. The Netherlands Agricultural Tour including the Floriade World Horticultural Exposition

I'm interested! Please send me more information

Please print

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: (_____) _____

E-mail: _____@_____

- Northern New England & Quebec Tour - October 25-30, 2010.
- Germany/Switzerland/Austria - March 28-April 7, 2011.
- I'm not ready to travel just yet, but please keep me on your mailing list for future trips

Please return form to: Janet Spear, 14 Eugley Hill Rd., Nobleboro, ME 04555

Janet's Agricultural Tours

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Nobleboro, ME 04555



Northern New England farmers visit the John Deere Tractor Works in Waterloo, Iowa. Behind them is one of the huge, custom-built tractors produced at this facility, a 535-horsepower model ready for shipment.

Now Booking

Maine, Quebec, Vermont & New Hampshire Agriculture Tour, October 25—30, 2010

We are proposing an entirely new and very diversified agricultural program this fall, starting in central Maine and traveling to Quebec, Vermont, and returning through New Hampshire. See highlights at right.

A Passport Will Be Required!

If interested, don't delay. *There is limited space available and this tour will sell out very quickly.* Call Janet at 207-832-4488 or E-mail: rwspear@roadrunner.com



A view of Iles d'Oleans in Quebec.

Northern New England & Quebec Tour

Tour Highlights include:

- Visit farms that produce salad greens, ice cider, cheese, large dairy farm with rotary parlor, roses, bison farm, maple syrup, dairy farm with 4 robot milking units, corn, cereals, fodder, goat dairy, and much more!
- Comfortable motor coach transportation
- Five nights' hotel accommodations, double occupancy (single room available for additional fee)
- Included meals—daily breakfast, 5 dinners, 3 lunches
- All farm and technical visits
- Locally-Known Salad Greens
- Flood's Dairy Farm
- Arnold Farm Sugar House
- Guided tour of Old Quebec City
- Meeting with professional farmers' union organization
- Domaine Steinbach in Quebec
- Montmorency Falls and Ile d'Orleans
- Rose Drummond
- Cabot Creamery Cheese Factory Tour
- Marsh Billings Rockefeller Museum
- Simon Pearce Glass Blowing
- Hanover Consumer Society Co-op
- Pleasant View Gardens

Cost per person \$1045.00 double occupancy. **Note:** Due to Canadian currency fluctuation and fuel surcharges, prices may be subject to change at time of final invoicing.