



Agritourism in Arkansas

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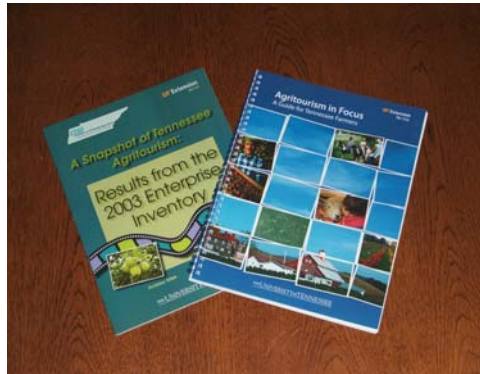
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Statewide Agritourism Inventory Underway

A statewide inventory aimed at identifying and cataloging agritourism providers in Arkansas has begun. Through a collaborative effort between the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, the National Agricultural Law Center, the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Center, this inventory will result in a information database that will provide operators with the opportunity to publicize their operation, while at the same time provide potential tourists with a one-stop source about agritourism sites in Arkansas.

Over the last several months, these organizations have been working with one another on developing the most effective methods of gathering information on the agritourism enterprises currently

operating in the state. After compiling this information, the next step will be to contact each of these providers to find out



In 2003, Tennessee produced two documents from their statewide agritourism inventory. The first, A Snapshot of Tennessee Agritourism, details the findings of the survey, while the second publication, Agritourism in Focus, serves as a resource guide.

more information about their agri-business operation. Currently, there are approximately 500 agritourism sites that have been identified.

When contacting each of the current agritourism providers, the information that is gathered will be used to construct an

online database for use by both producers and tourists. This database will provide information about each agritourism site that wishes to participate. Once all of the producers have been contacted, and the information has been organized and catalogued, the inventory data will be available to view on the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism web site at www.arkansas.com.

Another objective of conducting this inventory is to better understand the resource needs of producers and the priority they place on these needs. Through an evaluation of the inventory survey responses, a resource guide for agritourism providers will be produced. This guide will disclose the results of the survey, address business planning issues, and discuss resources that can be tapped into across the state. Other states that have produced agritourism resource manuals include Oklahoma, Tennessee, Maryland, Kansas and North Carolina.

Roundtable talks on Agritourism at the Upcoming Governor's Conference on Tourism

Two roundtable discussions will be held in conjunction with the Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Hot Springs Convention Center, Tuesday, March 6, 2007. This annual conference, sponsored by Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, attracts people from across the state for sessions designed to improve the quality of the tourism in Arkansas.

Planting the Seeds for Agritourism in Arkansas will provide an informative, open discussion forum for participants. Discussion will be moderated by staff from the National Agricultural Law Center, the U of A Cooperative Extension Service, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Center. For more information visit www.arkansas.com or call (501) 682-1120.

Something to See...Something to Do...Something to Buy

Farmers have invented a wide variety of agritourism options, but the three agritourism basics are:

- ◆ Something for farm visitors to see
- ◆ Something for farm visitors to do
- ◆ Something for farm visitors to buy

Research shows that tourists in the U.S. buy mainly food, beverages, and souvenirs. Agritourism entertainment is often free—and educational.

Helping visitors rediscover a feeling for the land is equally as important as providing entertainment and income for the landowner. In hosting farm visitors, there are plenty of niches for individual farms to discover and fill in the area of ecotourism.

During an herb farm tour in Saskatchewan I enjoyed an herbal beverage with lunch. Agritourism food ranges from freshly harvested fruit at a roadside stand to a catered lunch in an orchard next to a

field of flowers in full bloom, with a majestic, snow-capped volcano in the background. We don't have volcanoes in Arkansas (despite the hot springs and diamond deposits), but we do have plenty of natural wonders and a rich cultural heritage.

Workers in surrounding states dream of their two weeks on the lakes and rivers of Arkansas. Visitors come from Europe and Asia to enjoy our state's natural beauty. The meandering bayous

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Agritourism provides something to see, do, and buy!

Do you have information or questions about Agritourism taking place in Arkansas?

If so, please contact Joe Foster at the Winthrop Rockefeller Center at (501) 727-6219 or fosterj@uawrc.net



Agritourism Factsoids

- ◆ If all the blueberries grown in North America in one year were spread out in a single layer, they would cover a four-lane highway that stretched from New York to Chicago
- ◆ The world's largest apple peel was created by Kathy Wafler Madison on October 16, 1976, in Rochester, NY. It was 172 feet, 4 inches long. (She was 16 years old at the time and grew up to be a sales manager for an apple tree nursery.)

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and cypress swamps of southeastern Arkansas hint of rare species and offer the spectacle of millions of migrating birds. And then there is the Mississippi River on the eastern border, made famous the world over by Mark Twain. The 1840's Ozarks were popularized in Europe by the *Tales and Sketches* of Friedrich Gerstacker and worldwide a century later by folktales collected by Randolph and Parler. The rediscovered Bear Cave of the *Tales and Sketches* has become part of the heritage of Madison County. South Arkansas has its own history of festivals, including Zydeco; Western Arkansas has contributed unique heirloom garden seeds.

Historical geology maps are now available at <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~rcb7/nam.html>.

These can help visitors understand the development of the basement rocks and soils, plant and animal migrations, and forest successions of each Arkansas bioregion. There are even pollen maps representing dynamic forest change over time.

I like pieces of rock that tell a story. One of my treasures is an ark bi-valve fossilized in the limestone of Clear Creek in Washington County. As a child I searched the gullies of Tanglewood Creek with friends for Osage flint flakes and lumps of chert. A long-ago skirmish is memorialized by a painting in my office showing two armies along the Creek. All that remains now are a few musket balls—and the stories. A giant beaver tooth recently found in that creek recalls the jumbled layers of history.

A sandstone amulet reminds us of thousands of years of human enjoyment of this land. Former generations could read the landscape better than we do today. Now that's often left to specialists. Rural communities that retain or regain knowledge of how to tell the story of the land can find many creative ways to welcome and educate tourists.

Contributed by Katherine Adam. Katherine works for the non-profit National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). NCAT www.attra.ncat.org champions small-scale, local, and sustainable solutions for reducing poverty, promoting healthy communities, and protecting natural resources.

Top-Five Issues in Agritourism

A 2003 study conducted by the Tennessee Agritourism Initiative found the following to be the top-five issues in the start-up and continual operation of agritourism enterprises.

1. Finding/Hiring Qualified Employees
2. Liability Insurance
3. Promoting Your Enterprise
4. Signage
5. Identifying Markets

* From "A Snapshot of Tennessee Agritourism: 2003 Enterprise Inventory"

Agritourism Tutorial

Agritourism presents a unique opportunity to combine aspects of the tourism and agriculture industries to provide a number of financial, educational, and social benefits to tourists, producers, and communities. Agritourism gives producers an opportunity to generate additional income and an avenue for direct marketing to consumers. It enhances the tourism industry by increasing the volume of visitors to an area and the length of their stay.

As a result, agritourism provides communities with:

- the potential to increase their local tax bases
- new employment opportunities
- educational opportunities to the public
- help in preserving agricultural lands
- a method of developing business enterprises that cannot later be "outsourced" to other countries.

A person interested in engaging in agritourism or expanding the scope of their current operation should be prepared to confront several important issues. The most important issues include legal liability, insurance, financing, risk management, business organization, and marketing. Other issues could arise, such as food safety laws, depending upon the type and nature of a particular agritourism operation. As the industry matures, answers to these issues are emerging.

Contributed by Harrison Pitman. Harrison is the Co-Director and Assistant Research Professor of Law at the National Agricultural Law Center in Fayetteville.