

Heart of Hidden Valleys Driving Tour

We begin our adventure through the **Heart of Hidden Valleys** in Richland County's largest community and county seat, **RICHLAND CENTER**. Richland Center was settled on both sides of the Pine River by trappers canoeing up the Wisconsin River. By 1880 it was a thriving community of 1,227. World-renowned architect **Frank Lloyd Wright** was born here in 1867. He returned in 1915 to build the unique **A.D. German Warehouse** located on Church Street. The beautifully restored, 1909 railroad depot now houses **Richland Center's Visitor Center**, 800.422.1318, on the corner of Highway 14 and Seminary Street One block north of the Visitor Center is Court Street, the downtown main street. Restaurants, art galleries, and many unique shops are readily available in the downtown area. On the outer areas of Richland Center, **apple orchards** cover the hillsides with spring blossoms and fall fruit. Take advantage of more shopping, a place to spend the night, and a fast burger, all of which can be found before leaving town, as we head east on Highway 14.

You can hop on your bicycle and take a lazy ride on the **Pine River Recreation Trail**. It meanders through bluff scenery and broad valleys and crosses a number of bridges from Richland Center to Lone Rock. The river backwaters are havens for great blue herons, egrets, turtles and other wildlife. We will take Highway 60 West out of **GOTHAM**. This winding road that follows the Wisconsin River never fails to be a traveler's delight. For the absolute greatest view of the river, rent a canoe for an adventure you are not likely to forget.

At the junction of Highway 60/80, just across the bridge over the Wisconsin River is **MUSCODA** and **Riverside Park**, a scenic little park with a playground, shelters and a camping area that overlooks the river. Wisconsin Avenue is Muscoda's downtown. At the end of Wisconsin Avenue follow Highway 80 to the left, about half a block, to see the outdoor sculptures of **Tom Nelson**. Stop and look around—he has a very creative yard. Backtrack and go straight through the intersection staying on Catherine Street out of town. It becomes County G. A few miles out, take County Q up the hill, which then winds through a beautiful valley on a very narrow road. A few miles out start watching for the sign for **Spurgeon's Vineyards**. Down Pine Road,

off the beaten path, about two miles is the winery. They are open year round, 10-5, tours April through October. The bald eagles come into the valley around October and stay until March, so keep an eye open to the sky.

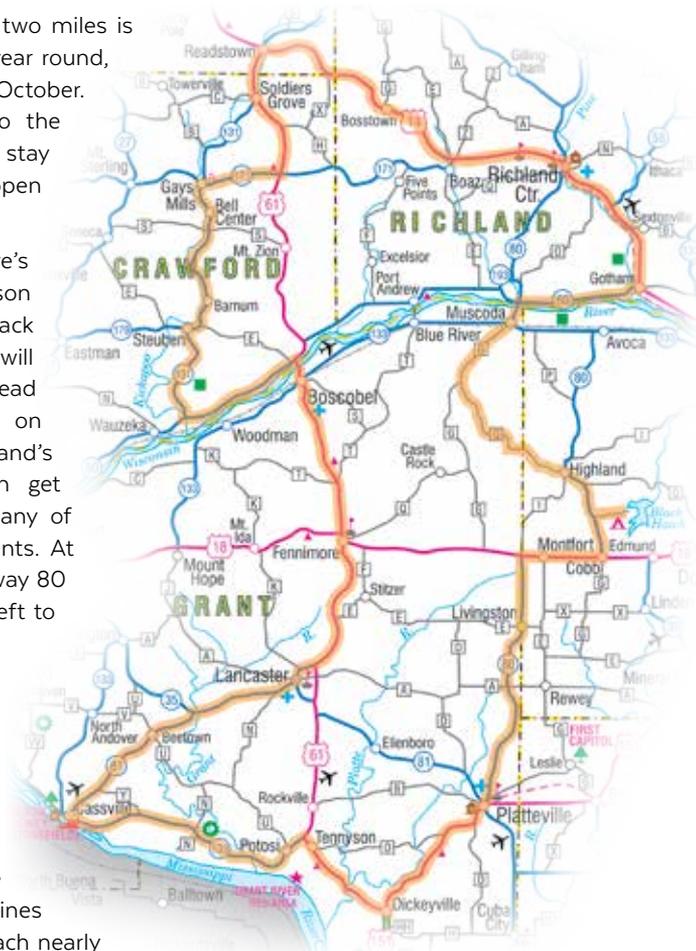
Back up on County Q there's a race horse ranch and a bison farm before you enter the back side of **HIGHLAND**. You will go to the stop sign and head down the steep hill, back on Highway 80, which is Highland's downtown, where you can get something good to eat at any of a number of small restaurants. At the bottom of the hill, Highway 80 makes a sharp turn to the left to head out of town.

As soon as you reach the outskirts of Highland keep your eyes to your right. Twenty wind turbines, spanning approximately five miles of farmland, fill the horizon. These are the largest wind turbines manufactured in the U.S., each nearly as tall as a 33-story building. They can supply enough energy to power 10,500 average Wisconsin homes. They don't look that big from here.

Three miles up the road is the entrance to **Blackhawk Lake Recreation Area** which consists of a 220-acre lake with a 300-foot sand beach, shower house, playground, picnic shelters, canoe, boat, kayak, paddle boat, and pontoon rentals, 135 campsites, cabins, and a boat launch.

Back to Highway 80 south and you will come into **COBB** which hosts the annual **Cobb Corn Roast** each August with all the sweet corn you could possibly eat, a carnival and parade. Continuing on Highway 80/18, follow the windmills about six miles, you will come across a very unique depot and bowling alley. Take the kids in for a game of bowling. They have bumper rails for the youngsters. The walls are covered with pictures of old railroad cars and they also have information on the **Montfort Wind Farm**.

MONTFORT is less than one mile down the road. It is home to **Rural Route 1 Popcorn** and gift shoppe, where you can sample



many of their scrumptious popcorn flavors. Take Highway 80 back in the direction you just came from and turn south to Livingston.

LIVINGSTON is a small town established in 1880 from mining and agriculture. Take one of the streets to your right to Center Street which is the downtown area. They have a few small businesses, and several serve food.

Heading out of town on Highway 80 keep your eyes to the right. There aren't many lighthouses in this area, but this residential house will sure fool you! Coming down off the ridge, you come into the little town of **ARTHUR**. It may be small but it hosts a very big class act at a comedy club on the weekends. We are staying on Highway 80 and heading toward Platteville, the biggest town on our tour.

In **PLATTEVILLE**, you will hit a four-way stop which is the beginning of Platteville's downtown main street. Take a stroll in this Historic shopping district and enjoy a very diverse selection of shops. There are restaurants, a photography shop, a bridal

shop, crafts, tattoos, wines, a coffee shop, and even a bicycle shop. Continue down Highway 80 until you get to the stoplights. Take a right on Highway 151. You will find an abundance of places to eat, sleep and play. From the historical and artistic to the great outdoors, you can find it all right here in Platteville. The **Tourist and Area Information**, on the left of Highway 151 heading south, is open 9-5 M-F. From there, you can start exploring. See the 1845 Bevans Lead Mine at the **Mining Museum** or the thousands of farm and home exhibits at the **Rollo Jamison Museum**. Visit the **Stone Cottage** built in 1835 by one of the founders of Platteville, or bike the **Rountree Branch Trail**. **University of Wisconsin-Platteville** is a liberal arts college with the **Wisconsin Room** on campus which is open to the public. The **Nohr Gallery** features art exhibits & collections. **Rountree Hall** is the site of the first School of Mining built in the U.S. in 1866. **UW-Platteville Center for the Arts** features international music and theatre performances throughout the year. **Katie's Garden** arboretum offers a peaceful setting along the Rountree Branch stream. Climb the **World's Largest "M,"** enjoy the **Family Aquatic Center** with its 150-foot water slide, or stroll through any one of Platteville's 14 city parks. Take your time and enjoy the sights in this one area.

We will head out of town staying south on Highway 151 to **DICKEYVILLE**. Go north on Highway 35/61 to Dickeyville's **Grotto**, built about 1925. It is a religious and patriotic wonder made of stone, mortar and millions of pieces of colored glass, gems, petrified wood, stalactites, seashells, fossils and all kinds of rock collected from all over the world. The shrines and gardens are open to the public year round, with a gift shop in the back.

On to **POTOSI/TENNYSON**. Through Tennyson, take a left north on Highway 133 down the hill. We come to Potosi, having the longest main street in the world without an intersection. Potosi hosts its **Catfish Festival** each year, the second weekend in August. Just out of town on your left is the road to the **Grant River Recreation Area** along the Mississippi River. It is open April-October, with campsites, boat dock, fishing, and picnic areas.

Continue on Highway 133 to **CASSVILLE**. This small community sits on the banks of

the Mississippi River. It is home to **Nelson Dewey State Park**, the **Roe Nature Preserve**, and the **Stonefield Historic Site**, featuring the **Governor Nelson Dewey** home site, the state **Agricultural Museum**, a **1900 farmstead**, and a 1900 village. You can also take **Charlie D**, Cassville's car ferry—the fun way across the Mississippi. Cassville also has a large river front park hosting farmers market and the September Car Cruise. When you are done discovering all that Cassville has to offer, take Highway 81 North to the very small town of **BEETOWN**. You will find scenic rock ledges and high bluffs and a quiet class 1 river ideal for family fun.

Continuing on Highway 81 east will take you into **LANCASTER** "City of the Dome" right up to the square where you will find the **Grant County Courthouse**. The courthouse's octagon copper and glass dome sparkles over downtown Lancaster. The turn of the century architecture is prominent in the shops that surround the square and traffic goes only one way. **Cunningham Museum** is just off the square along with the grave of Wisconsin's first governor, **Nelson Dewey**. The **Grant County Fairgrounds** are in Lancaster, where stock cars race around the tracks every weekend during the summer.

Continue on Highway 61 to **FENNIMORE** where the **Fennimore Doll and Toy Museum** has a great collection of dolls, puppets, tractors, circus clowns and more. A few blocks further up Lincoln Avenue is **Fennimore Railroad Museum**, which resembles a 1900 depot with a replica water tower. It features train memorabilia from Fennimore's past and the kids will love the miniature train ride. It is open Memorial Day to Labor Day and also serves as one of Fennimore's tourist centers.

Kronsage Park in **BOSCOBEL** sits on your immediate right. It hosts one of the largest **Civil War Reenactments** in the Midwest, the first weekend in August. Boscobel's main street offers the **Railroad Depot**, a restored depot that also serves as a museum. Follow Wisconsin Avenue to the stop sign and take a left on Prairie Street to Highway 61. Go north and cross the bridge, taking Highway 60 west to the left, which follows the Wisconsin River until you reach Highway 131 North.

Highway 131 is a very curvy road, so take your time and enjoy the scenery through the woods. Keep your eyes open for the sign for **Husher Park Wayside**. As you ascend

the hill, it comes up pretty suddenly. It's well worth stopping for the view. There are two lookout stands that allow you a 360° view of the Crawford County countryside. It is absolutely astounding! From the wayside you will come down into the small community of **STEBEN**. Stay on Highway 131 north.

The river you see that snakes to and from the road is the **Kickapoo River**. It is one of the crookedest rivers in the world, as you can very well see on this stretch of Highway 131.

Coming into **GAYS MILLS**, at the stop sign, a left will take you downtown, but we are going to take a right up the very steep hill. One-half mile up and you can pull over into the historical marker and wayside. There is an amazing view of Gays Mills worth stopping for. And then the apple orchards begin with all have something to offer—bakeries, gift shops, Amish goods, and a whole lot of apples. The orchards are beautiful in the spring, and the apples are delicious in the fall. No matter what time of year you travel this section of road, it is quite a site for all.

At the stop sign at Highway 61/171 head north five miles to **SOLDIERS GROVE**, America's first solar village. A short drive farther, continue to **READSTOWN**, where you can rent canoes, kayaks, get a fishing license and supplies, and enjoy a day on the river. To complete our circle tour, take Highway 14 back to Richland Center, via Boaz, where **Boaz Fun Days** is celebrated every July at the Community Park.

As you once again enter **RICHLAND CENTER**, you cross over the small bridge. Look to your right to see the **Richland Center Footbridge**. It was built in 1912, enabling west side residents to walk across the river to attend functions on the east side. It has been rebuilt and is maintained well and lighted at nighttime. To your left is **Krouskop Park** where **Star Spangled Celebration** is held the last full weekend each June. If you love country music, you won't want to miss this three-day event with many top Nashville entertainers. Continue on Highway 14 to your right to the stop lights and you are once again at Richland Center's Visitor Center. Stay and take full advantage of all Richland Center has to offer—there is something for everyone.