

Spud, Berry and Dairy Agriculture Adventure

Visit environmentally friendly farms, picturesque cranberry marshes and state-of-the-art food processing plants in the Central Wisconsin region. After this tour, you will have a new-found appreciation for spuds, berries, dairy and more!

Portage County is located in the heart of Wisconsin's "Golden Sands Region" and stands as one of the nation's most important agricultural suppliers of potatoes, sweet corn, snap/green beans and green peas. As the largest producer of potatoes for processing in Wisconsin, Portage County produces over 900 million pounds of potatoes annually.

Wood County is the largest producing area of cranberries in the world and contributes nearly 15% to the total United States' cranberry crop! Additionally, Wood County's agricultural contribution to dairy production includes cheese making at nine different commercial processing plants.

Between Wood and Portage Counties, more than 36,000 cows produce an equivalent of over one billion, eight-ounce glasses of milk annually. These two counties rank first in Wisconsin for cranberry and ginseng production and third in Wisconsin for potato, green pea and carrot production.

Day One Options

View Wisconsin's largest fresh potato packer/shipper and the Midwest's largest vertically integrated potato supplier at **Russet Potato Exchange**. Located in Bancroft, Russet Potato Exchange serves all sectors of the potato market including restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores, warehouse club stores, bag potatoes and valued added potatoes like Biggins™ Singles Easy to Steam potato line. Length of tour and hours of operation vary.

Glacial Lake Cranberries, a working cranberry marsh in Wisconsin Rapids, is a remarkable sight to see. Picture ruby red cranberries floating on sapphire blue water surrounded by vibrant colors of a Wisconsin autumn. Glacial Lake Cranberries owner Mary Brazeau Brown and her husband Phillip Brown take you on an hour-long personal tour of their cranberry growing operation. Open year round by appointment, with cranberry harvest tours featured September and October.

Central Sands Dairy is a 3,800 milking cow dairy located in the central sands, potato growing region of Wisconsin. Central Sands Dairy partners with **Wysocki Produce Farms** who grows dairy forages, corn silage and alfalfa haylage in rotation with potatoes. They use nutrients from Central Sands Dairy cows' manure, after being processed through an anaerobic digester, to replace commercial fertilizers previously used in crop production. The Dairy uses around half the "green" methane electricity generated and the balance is sold to a local power company. Tour length and hours of operation vary.

Experience **Hancock Agricultural Research Station**, where the most common phrase heard from visitors of the station is "I didn't know that!" In today's world, people tend to be removed from the growing and processing of produce. After a tour at Hancock Agricultural Research Station, you will never look at a potato chip the same way again. Length of tour and hours of operation vary.

Visit **Heartland Farms, Inc.**, a 14,000 acre potato and vegetable farm in Hancock with farming roots dating back to 1863. Heartland is the largest potato grower in Wisconsin as well as the largest potato supplier to Frito-Lay in the United States. Heartland Farms believes in using the latest technology to minimize their environmental impact. Length of tour and hours of operation vary.

Continue the “AgVenture” at **P & R Packing, LLC**, a year-round onion packing facility. They pack red, white and yellow onions grown on their property and also serve as a re-packer of onions for the **Russet Potato Exchange**. This facility carries the highest American Institute of Baking rating that a business can achieve, *superior!* Length of tour and hours of operation vary.

Day Two Options

Tour an integrated dairy facility that conducts research on 360 dairy replacements at **UW Agricultural Research Farm**. This Marshfield-based company provides long-term federal support for research concerning environmentally sound dairy herd management. Guided tour is approximately one hour and reservations are required.

Stop at **Nasonville Dairy** in Marshfield to view a family run dairy operation. For over 45 years, all three generations of the Heiman family at Nasonville Dairy have worked together. Their cheese making plant is currently managed by brothers Ken, Kim and Kevin along with their parents Arnie and Rena Heiman. Open Monday through Saturday, length of tour varies.

Walk through an outdoor park with agricultural flair. At **Jurustic Park** in Marshfield, view mythical swamp creatures made of old farm machinery and dairy equipment that replicate animals said to have existed near McMillan Wildlife Marsh millions of years ago. Reservation required and tour times vary from one-half hour to one hour.

Learn about Central Wisconsin’s rich dairy heritage at **Wisconsin Dairy State Cheese** in Rudolph. This is a family-owned and operated retail sales store and production facility with tours available Monday through Sunday. Browse the store of over 100 fresh cheese varieties, view the production process from two observation windows and enjoy your favorite flavor of homemade, hand-scooped ice cream.

Check out **Altenburg’s Country Gardens** in Wisconsin Rapids to travel through a forest, pumpkin patch and corn maze. The Altenburg family has been farming in Central Wisconsin since 1890. Today they entertain families at their strawberry and pumpkin farm. Seasonal fall tours run September through late October and reservations are required for weekday tours.

Explore several area cranberry marshes, pick fresh from the vine berries and observe testing, cleaning and freezing of the harvest with students from the nation’s only Cranberry Science Class as your tour guide. **Splash of Red Cranberry Tours**, which benefit the Pittsville Future Farmers of America, are available Monday through Friday during the fall months and last two-and-a-half hours. Additional fees associated with tour.

For group dining and lodging options, and to finalize your itinerary, contact a group tour specialist at the Central Wisconsin Tourism Association, 715-344-2556.