

Janet's Agricultural Tours Newsletter

207-832-4488 • email rwspear@roadrunner.com • website www.spearsfarmstand.com/tours

Number 2

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Italy in Springtime Is the Place to Be

Where do farmers go on vacation? According to Janet Spear, they like to visit other farmers. Janet is a veteran tour leader who specializes in designing trips that focus on agriculture. She has organized tours around visits to all sorts of farming operations, from strawberry growers in Spain to ethanol production facilities in South America. This spring Janet led a group of Maine farmers on a tour of Italy.

The group of 23 flew from Boston to Rome on March 29. After their overnight flight they spent their first day relaxing and exploring the city on their own, visiting some of the many local food markets that dot the city. The next day they enjoyed a guided tour of many famous places of ancient Rome—the Forum, the Colosseum, Circus Maximus, and the Pantheon—all before lunch! The afternoon featured visits to Vatican City, the basilica of St. Peter's, and the Sistine Chapel.

The next day the group left Rome and traveled to the beautiful region of Tuscany and the Chianina Valley. The morning included an unscheduled bonus stop in the picturesque medieval village of Pienza, where the famous Pecorino di Pienza sheep-milk cheese is made. Arriving in time for lunch at Agriturismo Il Rigo in the village of San Quirico d'Orcia the group toured this family farm which produces organically grown wheat, pulses, and broad beans on rotation. They also visited a nearby olive grove to see how olives

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Study Tour of Iowa

Iowa is the nation's third largest producer of agricultural products, after California and Texas. It's the leading producer of corn, soybeans, hogs, and eggs. It's also an energy producer, with 28 ethanol refineries, 14 biodiesel refineries, and a growing wind energy industry.

Join us for a 10-day Iowa tour, October 24 to November 2, 2009, and visit some of the state's most fascinating places, meet Iowa farmers and state agricultural officials, and learn how they are meeting the challenges of farming in today's new economy. Here are just a few of the highlights of this upcoming tour.

We begin our tour in the state capital, Des Moines, where we will stay in the nearby suburb of Clive for two nights. While there we will tour the city and surrounding countryside and visit the Tassel Ridge Winery, where we will enjoy a catered lunch and wine tasting. We will be joined for lunch by area farmers and representatives from Vande Rose Farms and Source Verified Foods. They will discuss their production practices and distribution of their nationally recognized brands, Premium Duroc Pork and Premium Hereford Beef. A drive through the charming village of Pella (home of Pella Windows) is part of the route back to our hotel where we arrive in time to get ready for our "Welcome to Iowa" dinner with top leaders in Iowa agriculture.

A breakfast meeting with Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey will start our day before we depart for Ames. On the way to Ames we'll visit the Pioneer Hi-Bred International,

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Tour leader Janet Spear admires the bountiful displays of vegetables on sale at Lorenzo Market in Florence.



Harvesting in Iowa

are harvested and cold-pressed in the family's old mill. Then they went on to Tuscany's main city, Florence.

Two nights were spent in Florence, and days there were filled with sightseeing in this city renowned for its Renaissance art and architecture. A guided tour featured such sites as Accademia Museum to see Michelangelo's famous statue of David, the Pitti Palace, Giotto's Tower, and Piazza della Signorina, among others. Other points of interest included some of the city's fabulous open air markets, including the two floors of San Lorenzo Market, Florence's busiest market, built in 1874. A highlight of the visit to Florence was an optional three-hour cooking class in which participants learned to prepare a three-course Italian meal and then they enjoyed the results of their work complete with a glass of Tuscan wine.

The sixth day of the tour began with travel to Vicchio, north of Florence. Here the group visited Cooperativa Agricola II Foreto, a large cooperative farm begun in 1977 by a diverse group of students, workers, and teachers looking for a different way of life. This large, successful operation raises prized Chianina cattle, produces all their own hay and cattle feed, and also has a large cheese-making operation, and other enterprises. In the afternoon the group traveled through the Apennine Hills and plains of the River Po to arrive in Venice.

The day in Venice was filled with a guided walking tour which included many famous sites including St. Mark's Square and basilica, Doge's Palace, Bridge of Sighs, Rialto Market, among others. An optional evening gondola ride was a memorable highlight of this city visit.

Day 8 featured a visit to Verona, one of the largest and most prosperous cities in northern Italy. Highlights here included a visit to Juliet's house, the Arena di Verona, and the city's famous old herb market. Afternoon was spent in a visit to Lake Garda and Cantina della Valtenesi e Della Lugana, a vineyard and farm doing organic cereal cultivation. This winery had a portable bottling operation which could travel to other vineyards to bottle their wines as needed.

On the final day before travel back to Boston, the group traveled to Milan. Their tour of this city included La Scala museum, where they just happened to catch part of an orchestra rehearsal. Also that day they toured an olive oil production facility and learned that the tapanade or residue from olive pressing is a prized delicacy and that the pits are used for fuel.

At the farewell dinner on the final evening, the group expressed their appreciation to Janet for her leadership with this tribute, "Thank you for taking such exceptional care of us on yet another exceptional trip. We appreciate all your efforts to make this trip to Italy memorable and enjoyable. Ciao, all your Maine farmer friends.



The group visited a farm that raises prized Chianina cattle, a specialty of Tuscany.



A sidewalk café in Verona is a welcome sight after a walking tour of the city.



Special garb is worn to tour a large cheesemaking operation.

the world's leading developer and supplier of advanced plant genetics. Our first stop in Ames is the Barilla pasta plant. Barilla America is the U.S. subsidiary of Italy's largest food producer, The Barilla Group. The Ames facility produces most of the Barilla pasta products sold in the U.S.

During the afternoon, we will tour Iowa State University, focusing on the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and we'll be briefed on some of the current research projects underway in this world-class institution. We'll also visit their new research dairy farm, established in 2007.

During a BBQ dinner at Alpha Gamma Rho, a national agricultural fraternity, we'll have the opportunity to meet and talk with student fraternity members as well as a representative of Iowa's alternative energy industry.

The next morning we'll visit a corn ethanol plant. The afternoon will feature a visit to a family farm, one of a group of small, independent pork producers, and later, a tour of a large dairy farm that's been in the same family for over a hundred years.

Having traveled through northeast Iowa, a region designated by the National Parks Service as one of the nation's 37 "federal heritage areas," we arrive at Waterloo for a full day of farm visits AND a 2-hour tour of the John Deere Tractor Works including the entire facility, from engine works to tractor assembly.

A visit to the Heartland Acres Agribition Center, an information exchange center, as well as a tour of the farm where the movie *Field of Dreams* was filmed complete our time in the Waterloo area.

Next we visit Dubuque, home of the National Farm Toy Museum, which features thousands of beautifully detailed metal replicas of farm machinery. Dubuque, the oldest city in Iowa, is situated on the banks of the Mississippi River, making it an important port for the transfer of agricultural and industrial products to and from the rest of the world. While here we'll enjoy a Victorian house tour and progressive dinner—a truly fun and unique experience!

From Dubuque we'll travel south through small towns along the western shore of the Mississippi River, then, crossing the river, we'll arrive in Moline, Illinois, where we'll visit the John Deere Pavilion, the world's largest agricultural

museum, one of the top five tourist attractions in the central Midwest.

The next day, traveling west again on our way back to Des Moines, our final visit will be to the Amana Colonies in east central Iowa. Established in 1855 by German Lutheran immigrants, the colonies consist of seven villages situated about two miles apart from each other. Each village specializes in specific industries, such as woodworking, blacksmithing, handwoven brooms and baskets, arts and crafts, candlemaking, and others. There is also a farming operation with both crop and livestock production.

Our last night in Iowa will feature a private farewell dinner party at our hotel in downtown Des Moines. The following morning we breakfast at the hotel prior to our departure for the flight home.

The cost for this tour is \$2020 per person, double occupancy. The single supplement is \$575. Don't wait—this is sure to be a popular tour.



View of wind turbines under construction in the Iowa countryside.

I'm interested! Please send me more information

Please print

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

E-mail: _____@_____

- ☐ Study Tour of Iowa - October 24 to November 2, 2009.
- ☐ Wine and Cheese Tour of France - February 21 to March 2, 2010
- ☐ 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

14 Eugley Hill Road
Nobleboro, ME 04555



Janet pauses with her latest tour group in front of the Colosseum in Rome. Read about that tour and the upcoming Study to of Iowa inside.

Wine & Cheese Tour of France, February 21–March 2, 2010

Join this tour to France, specially tailored for the Maine Cheese Guild, and visit many famous sites along with wineries, farms, farm markets, and a variety of regional cheese-making operations. This tour is sure to please and fascinate, with an abundance of good food, interesting sites, and the beautiful French countryside in early spring. Contact Janet or visit the Web site for a complete itinerary and further details.



Beautifully displayed vegetables grace a farmer's market in Paris.

Cheese & Wine Tour of France

The tour price includes:

- Round-trip airfare from Boston to Paris
- 8 nights hotel accommodations based on sharing twin rooms (single room available for additional fee)
- Included meals: daily breakfast, 7 dinners, 3 lunches
- Comfortable motor coach transportation throughout the tour
- Panoramic guided sightseeing tour of Paris
- Guided tour of Mont Saint Michel
- Entrance to Chateau of Chenonceau and Mont St Michel
- All farm and technical visits
- Guided tour of Rungis market (including breakfast)
- Vineyard tours and wine and calvados tastings
- Dinner cruise on Bateaux Mouches in Paris
- Services of local tour manager
- Tips and gratuities for included services
- Baggage handling in hotels (1 piece per person)

Cost per person \$3215.00 double occupancy. Single supplement \$550.00. **Note:** Due to currency fluctuation and fuel surcharges, prices are subject to change at time of final invoicing.