

TRAVELING TO EXPERIENCE “THE REAL AMERICA.” THAT’S WHAT RURAL TOURISM IS ALL ABOUT, AND AN INCREASING NUMBER OF REMOTE AREAS AND SMALL TOWNS ARE FINDING THAT THERE ARE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL TOURISM THAN EVER BEFORE. THE “GREAT AMERICAN TIME SQUEEZE” IS CHANGING VACATION HABITS, CAUSING AMERICANS TO TAKE SHORTER, MORE FREQUENT TRIPS CLOSER TO HOME.

This publication includes the stories of rural regions and small communities that have developed successful tourism programs. These rural communities rely on their most important resources—their people, culture, history and natural resources. They have found ways to create linkages that tie attractions and visitor services together into a comprehensive visitor experience. Most of these projects involve careful planning, incremental changes and gradual growth designed to respect local resources and values. In addition to outlining the issues faced at the outset, each story describes how the community addressed those issues and shares the measurable results of their efforts.

A list of partners is included with each story. The lists are not comprehensive, as there are often many additional organizations and individuals who have helped make a program successful. Instead, the lists include the primary sources of additional information for readers who want to learn more about a project.

Stories Across America is intended for anyone who is working on (or considering) rural tourism development. This includes professionals and volunteers in tourism, economic development, Main Street revitalization, the arts, recreation, agriculture,

historic preservation, and conservation as well as elected officials and other interested citizens. No one approach will work for everyone. Local communities must decide which approach best complements their goals.

The experiences shared in this publication include a wealth of ideas and sound advice for those hoping to capitalize on the benefits offered by rural tourism. While the stories included here illustrate a variety of approaches to meet the individual needs of each area, all the stories demonstrate the critical importance of partnerships as well as strong and dynamic leadership.

Working together offers several distinct advantages. First, by packaging diverse attractions together, a rural region can create greater visitor appeal with a critical mass of things to see and do. Second, pooling human and financial resources shares the burden of responsibility. No one organization is shouldering the entire responsibility to develop and promote the region.

Strong leadership is also a critical ingredient for success. Readers will find a number of stories where a key individual provided the spark to get the effort going and the guiding leadership to keep the effort on track. Look

for the leaders in your own community and support their efforts to make your community a better place to visit and live.

Featured stories embody the five guiding principles for successful and sustainable tourism developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation—collaborate; find the fit between the community and tourism; make sites and programs come alive; focus on authenticity and quality; and preserve and protect resources. These five principles, along with the four basic steps for getting started, are described in greater detail in the National Trust’s publication *Getting Started: How to Succeed in Heritage Tourism*.

An interagency working group has guided the development and shared in the cost of compiling information on these rural tourism case studies. The key partners and sponsors for this initiative are:

United States Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
United States Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service
Forest Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Endowment for the Arts
America’s Byways Resource Center

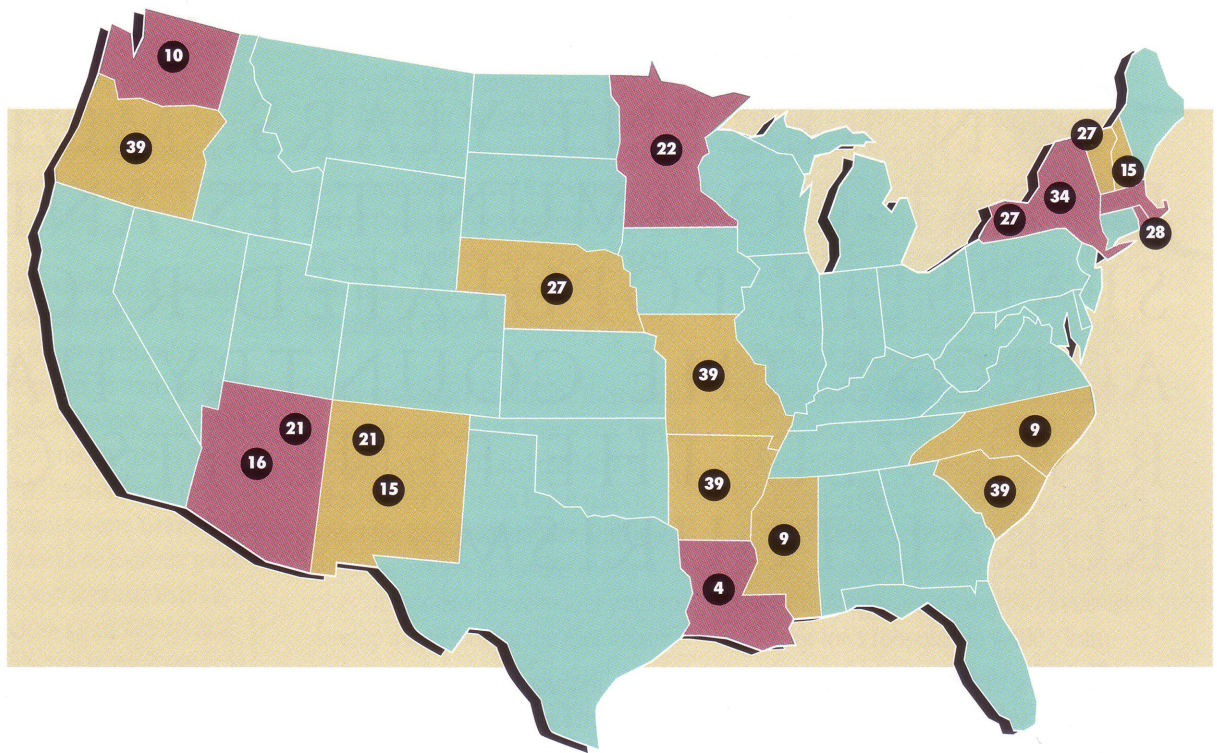


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