

# Cassville, Wis., to Dubuque, Iowa

By Reggie McLeod



*The Cassville Ferry carries tourists and commuters across the Mississippi from Wisconsin to Iowa and back. The nearest bridge upriver is at Prairie du Chien, Wis., and the next bridge downstream is at Dubuque. (Cassville Tourism)*

Cassville, Wis., is well off the beaten track along a beautiful stretch of the Mississippi. With just over 1,000 people, it's a quiet place during the summer and fall, and even quieter in winter. Cassville has an attractive riverfront park, a spectacular state park and two coal-fired power plants. But along the river, its claim to fame is the **Cassville Car Ferry**, which, in the warm months, saves about 50 miles of highway driving between Cassville to Guttenberg, Iowa.

The ferry isn't the only way for boatless travelers to get out on the water at Cassville. **Upper Mississippi River Adventures and Lodging** is one of the very few eco-tour operations on the river, leading people out for a couple of hours, on day or night cruises.

**Nelson Dewey State Park**, two miles upstream, was named after a Cassville resident who became the first governor of Wisconsin. The park has 45 campsites, a group camp, short hiking trails and Indian mounds.

*Twin-O-Rama, a 60-year Cassville tradition, started when a couple of twin brothers organized a picnic for other twins.*

Some of the walk-in campsites offer stunning views of the river and lots of action during the spring and fall migrations. Hiking trails wind through bluffsides forests with healthy populations of spring flowers and along the edge of the bluff through goat prairies.

**Stonefield Village**, across the highway from the state park, is a re-created historic farming village, complete with machines, tools and furnishings (open May 23 to Oct. 11, 2009). The

*In each River Loop column we'll explore a stretch of the Upper Mississippi where you can make a circle trip in one day. Follow along with us as we prowls for interesting places and things to do.*

**State Agricultural Museum** there has Wisconsin's largest collection of farm tools. Attend **Stonefield's Railroad Days** in August to visit a Hobo Camp and meet the King of the Hoboes.

**Twin-O-Rama**, a 60-year Cassville tradition, started when a couple of twin brothers organized a picnic for other twins. It's grown a lot since then and now draws twins and curiosity-seekers to the village on the third weekend in July.

If you are in an adventurous mood and the roads are in good shape, you might want to follow County Road W, then Closing Dam Road upstream to its end. The route, which is only one-lane wide in its final stretch, picks its way between the steep forested hills on one side and the big river on the other, before it ends at one end of a closing dam across the river from Guttenberg.

## Worthwhile Potosi

From Cassville, take Highway 133 downriver to Potosi, which was originally a busy lead-mining town. It was named after a city on a mountain in Bolivia where huge quantities of silver and other minerals have been mined for hundreds of years. The long Main Street winds up through a narrow valley to the ridge. In the early 1800s

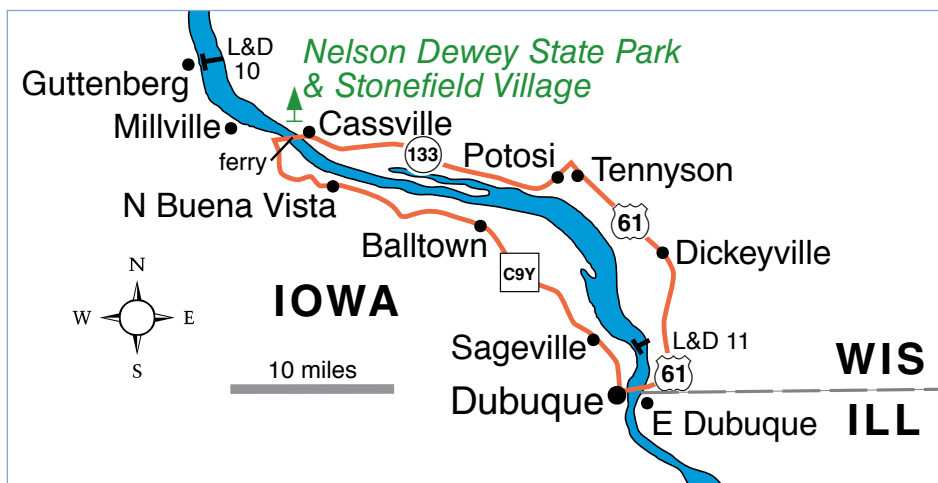
miners worked numerous mines dug into the rock on both sides of this valley. The lead ore was carried down the valley to the river and onto riverboats. **St. John's Mine** offers guided tours of one of the lead mines.

Beer wrote another chapter in Potosi's history. The **Potosi Brewery** made beer from 1852 to 1972. The **Potosi Brewing Company** came back to life last year, along with the **National Brewery Museum**, **Potosi Brewing Company Transportation Museum**, a brew pub, a restaurant and a **Great River Road Interpretive Center**.

The entire complex is housed in an old stone and brick building across Main Street from a new event center. The restaurant is light and pleasant with wraps and sandwiches on the lunch menu and a full menu for dinner, in addition to five varieties of Potosi beer. The museum, which features regional brewery memorabilia,



*Nelson Dewey State Park features many beautiful overlooks and hiking trails. (Cassville Tourism)*





Eagle Point Park above Dubuque is rich with architectural stonework and fabulous overlooks. (Reggie McLeod)



Above: For the price of admission to the National Brewery Museum (\$7) you get beer exhibits and a glass of fresh Potosi beer. (Tim Skwiot)

Left: The bottom of the "World's Largest Cone-Top Beer Can," across the street from the Potosi Brewing Company, opens up into a bar. (Tim Skwiot)



### Discover Potosi

#### Visit the Potosi Breweriana and Collectibles Show

March 21, 2009

9 am to 2:30 pm

St. Andrew-Thomas School Gymnasium  
Corner Hwy 61 & Hwy 133

Go to buy, sell, swap or just look.

fills several rooms. (We found it notable that beer advertising from the late 19th and early 20th century usually featured a bunch of old guys with lots of whiskers smiling and drinking beer. Times have changed.) The displays will change as the museum rotates

*On the bluff overlooking Lock and Dam 13, Eagle Point Park offers great views of the river and city.*

items from various collections. The \$7 admission also pays for a glass of Potosi beer after viewing the museum.

Potosi (pop. 711) bills itself "Wisconsin's Catfish Capital," a title supported by its **Catfish Festival** (Aug. 7-9, 2009) and **Catfish Fry** (Aug. 9, 2009). The **Passage Thru Time Museum** features local history.

At the foot of Main Street, facing the river, you could turn left to travel downstream to the **Grant River Recreation Area**, which offers camping and access to the river. Or, you could turn right to follow Highway 133 back to Cassville, but if you have some spare time and the weather is nice, you might want to drive straight out onto the river to **Potosi Point**. The

small peaceful park and boat ramp at the end of the point are surrounded by the river on three sides. During the migrations, the shallow backwaters are busy with waterfowl.

Early this year the Village of Potosi got a \$100,000 grant to build a sheltered viewing deck with viewing scopes and interpretive signs here.

## Highway 61 Crossing

After Highway 133 climbs up to the ridge, it joins Highway 61, which passes through Tennyson and Dickeyville before crossing the Mississippi River at the extreme southwestern corner of Wisconsin to Dubuque, Iowa, (pop. 57,313). If you're interested in folk art, you will want to visit the **Dickeyville Grotto**, next to the Holy Ghost Church. The grotto, assembled from a bewildering variety of materials by Father Mattias Wernerus from 1925 to 1930, celebrates love of God and colors and country.

The Highway 61 bridge sweeps across the river to **City Island**, which has a park, a marina and the

**Dubuque Greyhound Park & Casino**. Then the highway continues past downtown and the **Ice Harbor** area, where the **National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium** and several other new attractions line the riverfront. Upriver, on the bluff overlook-

*This winter, Breitbach's was selected to receive an "America's Classics" award from the James Beard Foundation.*

ing Lock and Dam 13, **Eagle Point Park** offers great views of the river and city, as well as remarkable Prairie School buildings and landscaping, picnic areas and playgrounds.

**Little Maquoketa River Mounds State Preserve**, in Sageville, has hiking trails on its 42 acres and features a fenced, three-acre area containing 32 Indian mounds. Nearby, the scenic, 26-mile **Heritage Trail** mostly follows

the Little Maquoketa River to Dyersville along a former railroad right of way.

The Great River Road follows Highway C9Y from Sageville to Millville, where it rejoins Highway 52. If you're hungry and/or curious you might want to stop midway, in Balltown, to check the progress on **Breitbach's Country Dining**, the oldest restaurant in the state. The restaurant burned down twice within 10 months, but this winter the owner, Mike Breitbach, decided to rebuild again. He hopes to reopen by midsummer. This winter, Breitbach's was selected to receive an "America's Classics" award from the James Beard Foundation.

Shortly before Millville, right before Turkey River, 360th Street leads to Oak Road, which leads to the Cassville Ferry landing, across the Main Channel from Cassville. Just beyond Turkey River the Great River Road follows Highway 52 to Guttenberg.



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