



Dinosaurs at Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden.

# Driftless Museums and Roadside Attractions

This is a long, but certainly incomplete, list of the institutions that we are blessed with here. There is often some or a lot of overlap between what is a museum and what is a roadside attraction, so we have included both. No road trip or pilgrimage is complete without a visit to at least one or two.

You can find out about hours, prices and other details through links on the Big River website.

## National Mustard Museum

Middleton, Wis.

You will be awed by this place, even if you are more of a ketchup or mayonnaise person. View displays of more than 6,090 mustards from more than 70 countries, then stock up for your summer barbecues.

Free.

## Taliesin and Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center

Spring Green, Wis.

This is where the great American architect lived and taught, as well as one of the finest examples of his work, set like a jewel in the beautiful rolling hills of the Driftless.

Admission.

## Science Museum of Minnesota

St. Paul

All ages will enjoy the displays and hands-on exhibits as they explore nature and how the world works. Advance tickets recommended.

Admission.

## Great River Road Visitor & Learning Center and Freedom Park

Prescott, Wis.

The Learning Center is a great place to learn more about the river and the region, and the park is a great place to walk and view the river. Often you can clearly see the brown stream of Mississippi River water on the far side of the channel and the blue-green water from the St. Croix on the near side, before they mix together downstream.

Free.

## Red Wing Marine Museum

Red Wing, Minn.

Motor heads, avid boaters and river rats will feel right at home as they check out interesting boats and machinery, and learn about this business that had a big presence on the river.

Donation.

## Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum

Pepin, Wis.

The Ingalls family lived on the shores of Lake Pepin before moving west. Learn more about Laura's books, her family and early settlers to the area.

Admission.

## National Eagle Center

Wabasha, Minn.

Not only are bald eagles majestic, graceful and beautiful, we often imagine them as patriotic, wise and magical. The Eagle Center explores all of these qualities and has real, live eagles and eagle programs.

Admission.

## Castle Rock Museum

Alma, Wis.

When most locals hear the word "pike," they think of a fish. There are plenty of pikes, armor, swords and other old and beautiful armaments here, but no fish. It's a stunning collection.

Admission.

## Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden and Museum

Fountain City, Wis.

This small park is chock full of whimsical concrete sculptures.

Free.

## Watkins Museum

Winona, Minn.

The handsome headquarters of the Winona-based company is an attraction in itself. The company's museum tells its interesting story with marketing materials and a dizzying array of products — past and present.

Free.

## Minnesota Marine Art Museum

Winona, Minn.

Water is the unifying theme of the exhibits in this museum overlooking the commercial harbor. From waterfalls, to ships at sea, to swimming pools, to the lakes and rivers of the Midwest, this place will surprise you with the quality, variety and quantity of its artwork.

Admission.

## **Circus World**

*Baraboo, Wis.*

It's a museum and a circus in a circus town!

Summer performance season starts May 16.

Admission.

## **Deke Slayton Memorial Space and Bicycle Museum**

*Sparta, Wis.*

Okay, it's a stretch, but Slayton was a local boy who became an astronaut and Sparta is at the junction of the Elroy-Sparta State Trail and the La Crosse River State Trail. It is, without a doubt, the best space-and-bicycle museum in the Driftless Area.

Admission.

## **Children's Museum of La Crosse**

*La Crosse, Wis.*

Some of us older children are always looking for kids to take to this place, because we feel uncomfortable playing on the fire engine and with the other interactive exhibits by ourselves. Kids like it too.

Admission.

## **Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center**

*La Crosse, Wis.*

The Archaeology Center has thousands of artifacts downstairs, but it displays many of the best ones upstairs. And sometimes there is also an archaeologist hanging around.

Free.

## **International Owl Center**

*Houston, Minn.*

Enjoy all things owls, including live owls, displays and owl art from around the world.

Admission.

## **Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center**

*Westby, Wis.*

"Norskedalen" means "Norwegian valley." Learn about Driftless wild-

life and domesticated Norwegians with events, classes and performances in this beautiful rural coulee.

Admission.

## **Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum**

*Decorah, Iowa*

"Vesterheim" means "western home," and the museum tells the stories of the Norwegian settlers to the Driftless Area and offers programs to sustain Norwegian crafts and culture in the area.

Admission.

## **Driftless Area Education and Visitors Center**

*Lansing, Iowa*

Panoramic views of the Mississippi compete with the classy wildlife and historical displays in this well appointed Center.

Free.

## **Villa Louis**

*Prairie du Chien, Wis.*

This elegant historic 1871 mansion and grounds on St. Feriolo Island have been meticulously restored, and the tour guides will help you see how the house, staff and family operated together as a organized whole.

Opens May 21.

Admission.

## **Fort Crawford Museum**

*Prairie du Chien, Wis.*

The displays do a good job of telling the stories of individuals, families, forts and communities of the area, which has long been an important center for transportation, trade and culture.

Admission.

## **Effigy Mounds National Monument**

*Marquette, Iowa*

These Indian mounds were built in various styles over more than a thousand years, including effigies of birds and bears, mostly near the edges of bluffs overlooking the Mississippi. The small museum in the visitors center is

excellent.

Visitor Center open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Free.

## **Stonefield Village**

*Cassville, Wis.*

The restored buildings furnished with antiques, tools and displays illustrate farming and rural life in 19th- and early 20th-century Wisconsin.

Opens May 31

Admission.

## **Guttenberg Aquarium**

*Guttenberg, Iowa*

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources maintains this aquarium containing many native fish and turtles in downtown Guttenberg.

Free.

## **Dickeyville Grotto**

*Dickeyville, Wis.*

The folk-art grotto and shrines next to the Holy Ghost Church are truly one or a kind.

Donation.

## **National Brewery Museum**

*Potosi, Wis.*

If you love beer, you will be very thirsty after touring the displays of beer bottles, cans, posters, marketing materials, photos and memorabilia in the former brewery. Fortunately the Potosi Brewpub Restaurant is downstairs.

Admission.

## **National Farm Toy Museum**

*Dyersville, Iowa*

Many of us spent time playing farm in a sandbox or on a floor when we were kids, and some of us moved on to the real thing later on, but anybody who played with toys as a child will enjoy these displays.

Admission.

## **Dubuque Museum of Art**

*Dubuque, Iowa*

This museum features tight, impactful shows, sometimes drawing on its



*By Pamela Eyden*

*Photos courtesy of Kristine Beck*

When you drive up the winding road onto the ridge near Bluff Siding, Wis., you might feel that you've passed through a portal in space-time and into an ancient Druid alternative universe. There are three massive stone circles, a labyrinth, dolmens and stones standing like sentries at the borders of the property. Paths beckon exploration.

Kinstone, a 30-acre sculpture park across the river from Winona, Minn., is the creation of Kristine Beck, whose family has farmed on the property for four generations. In 1994 she returned to the farm, bought 30 acres and set to work, with the help of friends, family and a lot of heavy equipment. The stones come from quarries around the country, and were specially chosen for their shapes and textures.

Kinstone hosts events throughout the year, including picnics, yoga, drum circles, crafts, meditations and concerts. There is no better way to celebrate the arrival of summer on the Summer Solstice, June 21, than to watch the sun rise from between massive calendar stones.

For a small fee you can wander the site, pace the labyrinth, sit in the stone circle and hang out in the visitor center

# Kinstone



for the day. Enjoy the artfully constructed natural buildings, including a thatched cordwood chapel. Kinstone is open from May 1 to October 31, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Visitors are

welcome to tour on their own, and groups can be accommodated. Check the Kinstone website for more information. ☼



large collection of Grant Wood paintings or Edward S. Curtis photographs.  
Admission.

### **Mississippi River National Museum & Aquarium**

*Dubuque, Iowa*

This large museum on Ice Harbor contains all things river — history, towboats and wildlife. The huge aquariums, otters and Dredge Black are especially popular.  
Admission.

### **Savanna Museum & Cultural Center**

*Savanna, Ill.*

The museum's Gallery of Civil War Soldiers, with over 150 mannequins dressed in authentic replicas of the era's uniforms and the 1,200-square-foot HO gauge railroad model of 1950s Savanna are big draws.  
Free.

### **Sawmill Museum**

*Clinton, Iowa*

From the late 1800s into the early 20th century, countless log rafts were floated down the Upper Mississippi from the North Woods to sawmills that lined the riverfronts of many river towns. Clinton's mills were among the busiest.  
Admission.

### **Heritage Canyon**

*Fulton, Ill.*

The serene wooded former quarry near the Mississippi contains a collection of restored frontier buildings from the area furnished with furniture, tools and other historic items of the era.  
Donation.

### **Windmill Cultural Center and De Immigrant Windmill**

*Fulton, Ill.*

A full-size, working windmill rises above the river in Fulton, across the street from a building full of scale models of various windmills from around the world.  
Donation.

### **Buffalo Bill Museum**

*LeClaire, Iowa*

Named for a local boy who made good, this regional museum features the *Lone Star*, a real steam-powered paddlewheeler that's more than 150 years old, inside an enclosure protected from the elements.  
Admission.

### **Figge Museum**

*Davenport, Iowa*

This attractive art museum on the downtown riverfront features galleries, shows and great views of the Mississippi.  
Admission.

### **Putnam Museum**

*Davenport, Iowa*

The Putnam focuses on displays and activities about science, nature, history and the Big River.  
Admission.

### **Palmer Family and Chiropractic History Museum**

*Davenport, Iowa*

If you're interested in the history of chiropractic and/or bones, you've got to check this place out.  
Self-guided tours by appointment.  
563-884-5714.

### **Mississippi Spoon Gallery**

*Davenport, Iowa*

Who doesn't love spoons? This new museum in downtown Davenport features "the world's largest collection of antique and souvenir spoons."  
Admission.

### **Rock Island Arsenal Museum**

*Rock Island, Ill.*

Learn about the rich history of the arsenal from 1805 to the present. Though the museum is not a government facility, visitors need to meet some ID and security requirements to visit the museum.  
Free.

### **Hauberg Museum**

*Rock Island, Ill.*

Black Hawk's village was on the banks of the Rock River near this museum, which is dedicated to telling their tragic story.  
Black Hawk State Park  
Free.

### **John Deere Pavilion**

*Moline, Ill.*

Not only is this sunny pavilion packed with green-and-yellow farm machinery — large and small, old and new — there is also plenty of interesting information about modern agriculture.  
Free.

### **National Pearl Button Museum**

*Muscatine, Iowa*

If you don't know yet that you're interested in the history of the pearl button industry on the Upper Mississippi, this place will open your eyes.  
Free.

### **Muscatine Art Center**

*Muscatine, Iowa*

The museum's broad range of art collections include European masters, regional and Mississippi River art, toys, glass and ceramics.  
Free. ☰



*De Immigrant Windmill at Fulton, Ill.*



Visit the Links page on the [BigRiverMagazine.com](http://BigRiverMagazine.com) website for direct links to these museums and roadside attractions.