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Travel to Fairfield, Iowa

Fairfield Has Arts & Entertainment, Shops & Restaurants, and an Element of Magic

by Elsa Backstrom



Young acrobats entertain an appreciative audience on the square in Fairfield, Iowa.

Summer has arrived, the days are heating up, the nights have vibrancy to them, and we're all thinking vacation. Granted, Fairfield, Iowa, might not be the first location that comes to mind when you're planning a holiday. But you'll be pleasantly surprised at the splendid accommodations and exciting events all for the taking in this lively southeastern Iowa town.

Accommodations

Start off your stay by checking into the Seven Roses Inn, the Main Stay Inn, or the Raj.

If you want an elegant, secluded getaway on the edge of town, try the Seven Roses Inn, located almost directly across the street from Chautauqua Park (part of the Jefferson County Trail system). A stately c. 1858 brick-and-stone home, the Inn features interior woodwork in butternut, the Midwest's unique "white walnut," a favorite in the 19th century but now very rare.

The MainStay, located across the street from the Civic Center, a block north of the square, and half-block south of Howard Park (the location of the award-winning local farmers' market), offers the coziness of home with the grandeur of a Victorian home. With its rich Victorian mahogany furnishings, Persian carpets, and crystal chandelier, this is the perfect place to enjoy a French-style organic breakfast, then take a walk to the square.

The Raj, located a short drive north of town, belies its rural location with luxurious accommodations that you won't want to leave. Receive royal treatment with their spa specials that will relax and rejuvenate you, then partake of healthy Ayurvedic food that nourishes you and satisfies your palate.

Also located outside of town and within walking distance of The Raj is the Rukmapura Park Hotel, which places elegance high on the menu with its beautiful pine and spruce exterior and spacious sun-filled rooms.

Bicycling and Canoeing

After getting your accommodations settled, take a scenic bike ride on one or more of the many trails of the Jefferson County Trail System. These paths wind through green prairies, woodlands, wetlands, old railroad corridors, and over major bridges. No need to bring your own bike—you can rent one, or ride the complimentary bikes for guests at Seven Roses or the MainStay. You can also rent a canoe through Jefferson Country Park, and paddle down the Skunk River or on Shallot Lake, next to the Rukmapura Park Hotel.

Tour the Eco-Village

And if you choose to bike around the city, what could be more appropriate than a trip north down B Street past the Maharishi University of Management campus to Abundance EcoVillage. This unique development uses sustainable permaculture design, solar- and wind-generated electricity, and water from rain. The EcoVillage has year round-food production capabilities and is designed to house 21 families. The houses all feature green environmentally friendly design and materials.

Tour the Maharishi University Campus

While tours inside the spectacular Golden Domes on the MUMcampus need to be arranged in advance, they are still a sight to behold. Each morning and evening a thousand or so meditators gather within their silent walls to practice Transcendental Meditation together.

On campus and throughout Fairfield, Maharishi Sthapatya Vedic homes are designed according to timeless natural laws to bring well-being to their inhabitants. These homes and buildings are often recognizable by the fence that surrounds them and the roof-top "kalash," which resembles a pointed urn.

The Raj, for example, is a Sthapatya Veda building. Stop inside for more information about Sthapatya Veda principles.

Farmers' Market

If you are here on a Saturday or Wednesday, don't miss Fairfield's award-winning Farmers' Market, located at Howard Park (Saturdays, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Wednesdays, 3:30-7:00 p.m.). It's a great place to purchase fresh, locally grown produce, homemade banana bread, beautiful plants, jewelry, or a scrumptious meal. On Saturdays you can get a delicious crepe made with organic ingredients or vegetarian sushi rolled right in front of you.

1st Fridays Art Walk

If you're lucky enough to be in town on the first Friday of the month, visit the square 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. for the 1st Friday's Art Walk, winner of the 2005 Iowa Tourism Event of the Year. Dozens of galleries and shops are open to display artists' work. Depending on the theme that month, you might be entertained by musicians, dancers, poets, painters, or street performers. The event has an inspiring energy of its own, and even the most reclusive Fairfielders come out of the woodwork to meet neighbors and friends and stroll

around the square for the festivities.

High Caliber Theater

Fairfield recently ramped up its cultural cache with the opening of the new Arts and Convention Center. Its shining jewel is the Stephen Sondheim Center for Performing Arts, a 520-seat theater named after the great American composer and lyricist, with his generous blessing. This summer's offerings include *Joseph & the Technicolor Dreamcoat* in July and *Banjo Boys* in August.



Richard Kind and other Broadway stars came to Fairfield to present *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* at the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts.

“It is just so exciting to have Broadway-level performances within walking distance of the square,” says Sara Hawthorne, who’s acted in several recent presentations.

Free Music on the Square

Live on the Square is a mid-month weekend event in the summer, featuring live music by area bands in the gazebo. This draws a varied crowd of participants, some of whom prefer to bring lawn chairs and tap along to the beat, others bring blankets and picnic baskets, and still more come and dance.

Dining

Whether you’re sipping on Cafe Paradiso’s “elixir of the Gods” espresso, ordering their buckwheat pancakes, or enjoying an evening performance, this fun eatery is absolutely worth a visit. Located in the Broadway Building, 607 W. Broadway, a former brick factory turned apartment complex, Cafe Paradiso hosts a Sunday brunch so popular that seats can be scarce. Owner Steve Giacomini treats coffee making like an art, roasting high quality organic coffee beans on site. Customers have definitely taken note: for the past three years Cafe Paradiso won for Best Coffee in the Iowa Source Regional Restaurant Contest.

Looking for a sandwich, salad, or pizza? Revelations Cafe and Bookstore, voted “best people watching spot” in the Source Restaurant contest, makes oven-fired pizza that brings people back for more time and

again. And their sandwiches and salads are made with the finest locally grown ingredients.

French cuisine in Iowa? Petit Paris, owned and run by a French family, serves up tasty vegetable crepes, creamy quiches, and savory soups based on family recipes. The entrées are on the light side, which is good because you will definitely want dessert here.

Also, worth visiting are Small Planet, organic soups, salads, and entrees; Vivo's, fine dining in an elegant bistro atmosphere, and any of the authentic Mexican and Thai restaurants.

Boutique Shops

Fairfield's square is home to several unique specialty shops. You can find organic free-trade clothes and bedding at Natural Selections; incense, quality herbs, and fine gifts from Thymely Solutions; cozy gifts and items for the home at Kim's Cottage; and gourmet foods, cookware, Burleighware dishes, and an extensive yarn selection at the At Home Store.

Listen to KRUU

While you are driving to or from these locations, tune into 100.1 FM KRUU-LP, the local community run, grass-roots, non-profit radio station. Or simply stop by the station at 405 N. Second, one block south of Everybody's Whole Foods.

"The town has grown together through this radio station, and we have created a spectacular example of community expression," says station manager James Moore. Throughout the day KRUU offers a kaleidoscope of personalities, music, and interviews, all of which speak to the depth and richness at the heart of this small town.

A Fair Field

Though modest in size, Fairfield has a penchant for attracting a culturally diverse citizenry, people from all walks of life who want to explore their individual talents and gifts. The monthly art walks are just one manifestation of this lively pool of imaginative vision. "I never cease to be amazed," exclaims Cathy Wadsworth, executive director of 1st Friday's Art Walk. "This town has an endless amount of talent and creativity to keep the art walk fresh, vibrant, and just loads of fun each month."

Rustin Lippincott agrees. In his first year as Executive Director of the Fairfield Iowa Convention and Visitors Bureau, he has personally witnessed a slew of new projects and creative endeavors that make Fairfield an effervescent, almost magical place. town itself has something beyond description which will leave you feeling enriched and inspired," he says. "Whatever it may be, it is clearly something worth exploring."

For more information or inspiration to visit Fairfield check out: <http://www.travelfairfieldiowa.com>.

Elsa Backstrom hosts "A Taste of Fairfield" on [KRUU-FM](#)

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