

The Land that Built America: An Industrial Tour of the Ten Mississippi River States

On this brief group tour itinerary beginning in Louisiana and running northward to Minnesota, we'll discover the profound role that the ten Mississippi River states played in the building of modern industrial America.

The region's mining, milling, manufacturing and agricultural prowess was a major force in propelling the United States into its position in the world economy. The lumber, cotton, oil, iron ore, minerals, grains and manufactured goods from the center of the country fueled the entire nation's growth in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Join us as we make stops in each of the ten states to learn about America's greatest industrial and agricultural movements and innovations. You'll learn about the trials and triumphs of both the workers, landowners and the industrialists. Many of the stories you'll hear about will surprise you.

Let's begin our industrial tour of the ten Mississippi River states.

Louisiana

We begin our tour in Louisiana, the southernmost of the ten states and home to some of America's oldest communities.

The mild weather and long growing season of Louisiana produces lumber of incredible quality. The southern forests of the U.S. were home to a several varieties of tree species whose wood is widely sought after for their beauty and durability. For centuries, varieties of pine and cypress were cut and milled in small mills just like the one preserved at the Southern Forest Heritage Museum, our first stop on the tour.

Southern Forest Heritage Museum

P.O. Box 101

Long Leaf, LA

(318) 748-8404

www.forestheritagemuseum.org

The Southern Forest Heritage Museum is a large collection of buildings, structures, and artifacts that have remained here since it was a working sawmill complex. The museum was developed from a surviving sawmill in Long Leaf, Louisiana, that once provided a livelihood for hundreds of families from 1892 to 1969. The 57-acre complex is representative of the many sawmill towns that once flourished throughout the South. Much of the plant's railway remains, as well as three steam locomotives dating from 1913 to 1923.

Beneath the fertile fields, thick forests and lush wetlands of Louisiana is another much sought after raw material: petroleum. Our next stop is the International Petroleum

Museum and Exposition in Morgan City, where we'll learn about the history and process of drilling for oil. The museum is a tribute to the pioneering men and women of an industry that developed a culture based on initiative, perseverance, creativity, and hard work. This museum is also the only place in the world where the general public can walk aboard an authentic offshore drilling rig.

International Petroleum Museum and Exposition

Morgan City, LA

(985) 384-3744

www.rigmuseum.com

The International Petroleum Museum and Exposition—also called the “Rig Museum”, features artifacts and information about the offshore petroleum drilling, an industry born in Cajun-country. Visitors will learn how the innovations discovered here have gone on to change the methods of drilling for oil around the globe.

Mississippi

Our next stop will be the Catfish Capitol, a visitor center dedicated to the catfish farming, one of the fastest growing industries in Mississippi.

The Catfish Capitol

111 Magnolia Street

Belzoni, MS

(800) 408-4838

Open Monday through Friday from 9am–5pm.

The Catfish Capitol is located in a renovated train depot in beautiful downtown Belzoni, in Humphreys County, Mississippi. More acres of catfish farms are located in Humphreys County than any other county in the U.S. The Catfish Capitol showcases the rich heritage of Humphreys County and the catfish farming industry. Catfish farming in this area dates back to the mid-1960s and has grown to become one of the region's most important forms of agriculture.

Outside the Catfish Capitol, you'll find sculptures fashioned from spawning cans, hatchery tanks, and seining nets dot the landscape. In fact, Belzoni boasts the largest collection of outdoor sculpture per capita in the State.

Mississippi depends heavily on growing and harvesting crops and timber. The warm climate and dark, fertile soil has made Mississippi become a source of everything from fruits and vegetables to lumber and cotton. Our next stop, the Mississippi Agricultural & Forestry Museum shows the history of agriculture and lumbering in the state.

Mississippi Agriculture & Forestry Museum

1150 Lakeland Drive

Jackson, MS
(601) 713-3365
Open Monday–Saturday, 9am–5pm.

Located in the heart of Jackson, Mississippi, the Mississippi Agricultural & Forestry Museum is an oasis of agriculture amid an urban landscape. The museum is made up of several different museums and exhibits, each focusing on a different aspect of Mississippi History. Exhibits include the Heritage Exhibit Center, the National Agricultural Aviation Museum, the Fitzgerald Collection, Small Town, Mississippi, the Fortenberry-Parkman Farmstead, the Ethnic Heritage Center and the Forestry Auditorium. You'll leave with a real sense of what rural life was like in Mississippi in centuries past and what it's like today.

Other Mississippi Attractions: The Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum in Biloxi is in the process of being rebuilt—look for this fascinating museum to open in the future.

Arkansas

The “Natural State” of Arkansas is home to perhaps the single most influential American business of the last 50 years: Wal-Mart. Today, Wal-Mart stores are found all across the U.S. The Wal-Mart Visitor Center in the sleepy town of Bentonville, Arkansas, is the perfect place to learn about the rise of this corporation.

Wal-Mart Visitor's Center

105 North Main Street
Bentonville, AR
(479) 273-1329

The roots of the Wal-Mart corporation can be traced to this building in downtown Bentonville, which was the location of founder Sam Walton's original variety store. The Wal-Mart Visitors Center chronicles the origin of the store from Walton's first forays into retailing to the chain's growth into one of the largest corporations on earth. It's one of the most fascinating entrepreneurial success stories you'll ever hear.

You'll notice that the landscape of Arkansas features numerous hills, low mountains and frequent outcroppings of rock. The Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources reveals the abundance of mineral and petroleum deposits beneath this unique landscape.

Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources

P.O. Box 7
Smackover, AR 71762
(870) 725-2877

Monday–Friday	8am–5pm
Saturday	8am to 5pm
Sunday	1pm–5pm

Arkansas has been a supplier of many mineral products to the national and the world. The Smackover oil field of southern Arkansas was, for a brief period in the 1920s, one of the most important oil fields in the world. Even today, south Arkansas's oil fields produce petroleum throughout a 10-county area. Arkansas is also home to vast subterranean brine reserves that are today an important source in the production of bromine.

The Arkansas Museum of Natural Resources features indoor and outdoor exhibits focusing on drilling for petroleum and brine. Learn about the ancient origins of petroleum as well as the Arkansas's 1920s oil drilling boomtowns. See full-sized derricks in operation.

Missouri

An elaborate transportation network was the key to bringing the crops, raw materials and manufactured goods from the center of the nation to the large population areas on the coasts. Missouri's central location made it an important crossroads for people and goods traveling across the nation. The National Museum of Transportation in St. Louis, Missouri, presents the history and development of the transportation system of the U.S.

National Transportation Museum

3015 Barrett Station Road

St. Louis, MO

www.transportmuseumassociation.org

The museum features a wide variety of vehicles from American history. In addition to antique cars, boats and a plane, the museum's most sizable collection is locomotives and railroad equipment from throughout the U.S. You'll see some of the machines and vehicles that transformed the frontier into a network of interdependent communities.

The advent of a nationwide network of roads and railways helped to give birth to large breweries that could ship their products around the world. In the 1800s, an absence of modern pasteurization techniques and a limited transportation network necessitated thousands of small breweries located in communities throughout the nation. Modern pasteurization and efficient roads and railways in the early 20th century enabled large breweries to transport their produce to anywhere in the nation.

Anheuser-Busch Brewery Tour in St. Louis

12th & Lynch Streets

St. Louis, MO

(314) 577-2626

www.budweisertours.com

Hours

Mar. 1–May 28, Sept. 5–Oct. 31

Monday–Saturday 9am–4pm

Sunday 11:30am–4pm

May 29–Sept. 4
Monday–Saturday 9am–5pm
Sunday 11:30am–5pm

Nov. 1–Feb. 28
Monday–Saturday 10am–4pm
Sunday 11:30am–4pm

The 100-acre brewery is the largest of Anheuser-Busch's 12 U.S. and two overseas breweries. Visitors will learn the science behind the brewing process. There are several national historic monuments on the property and guests will also have a chance to see the world famous Budweiser Clydesdales.

Tennessee

In the early 1800s, cotton rose to become the most important crop in the American South. Cotton was the fuel that ran nearly the entire economy. The rich soil of the newly planted lands and the invention of the cotton gin propelled the enormous growth of this crop. Tennessee was important in both in the production and the distribution of cotton. Our next stop will be the Cotton Museum at the Memphis Cotton Exchange.

The Cotton Museum at the Memphis Cotton Exchange

65 Union Avenue
Memphis, TN
(901) 531-7826

Hours
Monday–Saturday 10am to 5pm
Sunday Noon to 5pm

The Cotton Museum at the Memphis Cotton Exchange tells the story of the cotton industry and its many influences on daily life, the arts, and the development of this region. You'll be able to traverse the "Members Only" trading floor of the Memphis Cotton Exchange, carefully restored to its 1939 glory—you'll even see the 1939 prices hastily scribbled in chalk. The museum also features a 135-foot custom mural created by renowned Memphis artist David Mah.

Tennessee Museum of Aviation

The birth of aviation spawned a new era for American and the world. Follow the history of American flight at the Tennessee Museum of Aviation.

Tennessee Museum of Aviation

135 Air Museum Way

Sevierville, TN
(866) 286-8738

Hours
Daily 10am–6pm
Sundays 1pm–6pm

Winter Hours—Jan. 1 thru Feb. 28
Daily 10am–5pm
Sundays 1pm–5pm

The museum occupies a new 50,000 sq. ft. facility beside a 5,500-foot runway. This unique location makes bringing aviation history to life possible as airworthy vintage aircraft perform impromptu flybys for visitors. Visitors will artifacts and actual airplanes that trace the history of aviation.

Kentucky

Kentucky is a mix of scenic wilderness areas and hard-working industrial centers. The state is famous for its horse farms, but is also a major cattle producer. The coal fields in eastern Kentucky are some of the most productive in America, making coal mining a major part of the state's economy. Learn about the history of Kentucky coal mining at the Kentucky Coal Mining Museum.

Kentucky Coal Mining Museum

Benham, KY
www.kingdomcome.org/museum
(606) 848-1530

Hours
Monday–Saturday 10am–5pm
Sunday 1pm–4pm

The Kentucky Coal Mining Museum is housed in an old commissary building built by International Harvester. The museum features four floors of exhibits exploring the lives of coal miners and the history of coal mining in Kentucky through artifacts, photographs and equipment.

Manufacturing has long been an important part of the economy of the ten states located along the Mississippi River. In the late 1800s, the factories of this region found ample labor in the people who were moving from agriculture into the larger cities and the thousands of immigrants from Europe. Today, Kentucky ranks forth in U.S. production of automobiles.

Kentucky is home to one of the most famous factories on earth: Louisville Slugger in Louisville, founded in 1884.

Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory

800 West Main Street

Louisville , KY

(877) 7-SLUGGER

www.sluggermuseum.org

Hours

Monday–Saturday 9am–5pm EST

Sunday Noon–5pm EST

For exact hours, visit website.

Tour the most famous baseball bat maker on earth. The Louisville Slugger is the Official Bat of Major League Baseball, and many of sport's the greatest players of all time have used Louisville Slugger bats. The museum shows the changes that have taken place in baseball since its first days.

Illinois

For many people, the symbol of American industrialism is Chicago, Illinois. The feedlots and factories of late nineteenth century Chicago fueled the nation and helped this area to become what is now America's third largest metropolitan area. The Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago is an extraordinary place for learning about the history of technology and industry in America.

Museum of Science and Industry

57th Street and Lake Shore Drive

Chicago, IL

(773) 684-1414

www.msichicago.org

Hours

Monday–Saturday: 9:30am–4pm.

Sunday: 11am–4pm.

The Museum of Science and Industry is housed in a building originally built for the 1893 Columbian Exposition. The museum features a breathtaking array of exhibits focusing on everything from space exploration and aviation to the human heart and geology. One of the highlights of the museum is the interactive U-505 Submarine exhibit. The Chicago Science and Industry Museum will take a whole day to explore.

As Chicago grew in prominence as a major U.S. city, the community began to express its importance through its architecture. We will take a unique tour of Chicago's most impressive structures—by boat!

Chicago Architecture Foundation

Architecture River Cruise
Corner of the Michigan Avenue Bridge & Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL
(312) 922-3432 Ext. 226
www.architecture.org

A Chicago Architecture Foundation certified docent will guide you on this 1.5 hour boat tour of the Chicago River. See towering skyscrapers and more than 50 of Chicago's most important architectural treasures. It's a truly unique perspective and an exciting way to learn about architecture.

Other attractions in Chicago include the Museum of Broadcast Communications, which is undergoing a major renovation and will reopen at a greatly expanded location in 2008.

Iowa

The fertile soils of Iowa are famous for their ability to support vast farms. While most people are aware of Iowa's flatter side, the rolling hills and deep valleys of Iowa's eastern along the Mississippi River provide some of the best scenery in the Midwest.

The communities along Iowa's Mississippi River were once the center of a major industry that is now long forgotten. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, thousands of people and hundreds of factories produced pearl buttons from the shells of freshwater mussels that were gathered from the Mississippi River. The Pearl Button Museum in Muscatine, Iowa, is the best place to get a glimpse into this forgotten way of life.

Pearl Button Museum in Muscatine

117 W 2nd St
Muscatine, IA
(563) 263-1052

The Muscatine Pearl Button Museum is a journey back to the little-known era of the pearl button industry. You'll experience life in a "pearling" camp and learn about the process of manufacturing pearl buttons. A 36-foot hand-painted diorama brings to life clammers working on the river.

Next, we'll travel across some of Iowa's most productive farmland to the community of Waterloo. It is here that the most famous name in agricultural equipment makes the tractors that farmers use to plow, plant, and harvest much of the farmland of North America and the world.

John Deere Waterloo Works Factory Tour

3500 East Donald Street
Waterloo, IA
(800) 765-9588

www.johndeere.com

Tours twice a day on weekdays. Call ahead for times.

Take a guided tour of the John Deere Waterloo Works, a massive manufacturing facility comprised of five different sites. The complex consists of more than 13.2 million square feet of office and manufacturing space.

Observe the production of a full range of different tractors, from 95 to 450 horsepower. See the manufacture of engines, watch the assembly of the massive tractor drive trains and visit the unique gift shop.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin is a place famous for its lakes and waterways. Wisconsin's Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, together with the Great Lakes, are the inland seas of America. North America's earliest explorers used these Great Lakes to reach the nation's interior. Later, fur trappers and settlers made their way through the Great Lakes to make their homes along the shores or further west and south. In the industrial age, the Great Lakes became water highways for transporting coal, iron ore and lumber. The Wisconsin Maritime Museum, located right on Lake Michigan, is the best place in the Midwest to learn about shipping on the Great Lakes.

Wisconsin Maritime Museum

75 Maritime Drive

Manitowoc, WI

(866) 724-2356

www.wisconsinmaritime.org

Hours

Open 7 days a week year-round

Summer: 9am–6pm.

(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Winter: 9am–5pm.

(Labor Day weekend through Memorial Day weekend)

Through over 60,000 square feet of exhibits and displays, you'll discover the Great Lakes region's rich in maritime history. Visitors to the Wisconsin Maritime Museum will learn about sailors and shipbuilders, heroic maritime triumphs and incredible disasters.

Highlights of the museum include tours of the USS COBIA, a World War II era submarine.

Like the railroad before it, the automobile reshaped the American landscape. As car ownership increased, so did the number of paved roads until even the most remote parts of America were accessible by roads. The history of the automobile is what's on display at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum.

Wisconsin Auto Heritage Museum

147 North Rural Street
Hartford, WI
(262) 673-7999
wisconsinautomuseum.com

Hours

May 1–September 30
Monday–Saturday 10am–5pm
Sunday Noon–5pm

October 1 - April 30
Closed Mondays, Tuesdays & Holidays

The Wisconsin Automotive Museum in Hartford is Wisconsin's largest auto museum and presents a truly amazing walk through the history of the automobile. Hartford was once home to the Kissel, a car which was manufactured here from 1906 to 1931. In the early years of the automobile, there were hundreds of car manufacturing companies across the nation, and this fascinating museum allows you to look at the rise and fall of a unique and innovative automotive company. The broad collection of cars in the museum also features examples from all the major automakers.

Minnesota

To the immigrants coming to Minnesota in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the hills, prairies and woodlands of Minnesota seemed nearly endless. This enormous natural abundance helped to provide the growing U.S. with lumber, crops and mineral resources. Today, the manufacturing industries of the U.S. and the world depend on a steady supply of steel. For much of the 20th Century, the Iron Range of northern Minnesota was one of the most important sources of taconite, an iron-rich ore.

Ironworld

801 SW Hwy 169, Suite 1
Chisholm, MN
(800) 372-6437
Tuesday through Sunday, 10am–5pm and Thursdays 10am–9pm.

The fascinating history of taconite mining in northern Minnesota is something few people know about. Discover the incredible story of Minnesota's Iron Range at Ironworld. In the early 1900s, the Minnesota iron mining industry attracted thousands of people, many of them immigrants, to work in the vast mines. Learn about the mines as well as the stories and cultures of the people who worked the mines. It's a truly American story that will make you want to learn more.

The vast wheat fields of the Great Plains made Minneapolis the perfect center for the milling of grains. Minneapolis was once the world center for the production of flour, earning it the name “Mill City.”

Mill City Museum

704 South 2nd St.

Mpls, MN

(612) 341-7555

www.millcitymuseum.org

Tuesdays–Saturdays 10am–5pm (open until 9pm on Thursdays)

Sundays Noon–5pm

The Mill City Museum chronicles the flour milling industry that dominated world flour production for roughly a half-century and fueled the growth of Minneapolis. This award-winning museum is located within the ruins of the Washburn A Mill, a National Historic Landmark. The museum includes an eight-story “Flour Tower” and presents visitors with a multi-sensory, interactive journey telling the story of milling and its impact on Minneapolis, the nation and the world.

These museums and attractions give just a taste of what the ten Mississippi River states offer in terms of industrial history. For more information on what this region has to offer group tours, visit www.experiencemississippiriver.com