

Sample Itinerary for “The Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway”

DAY ONE

2:00-4:00 p.m.

Start your tour in Pepin, Wisconsin, the 1867 big woods birthplace of Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the ever-popular Little House books. See the landmarks she wrote about, including the shores of beautiful Lake Pepin. Visit the Pepin Historical Museum and log house to learn about Laura’s birth and pioneer life here.

4:00-7:00 p.m.

Suggested overnight stay at: Red Wing, MN, Wabasha, MN or Winona, MN.

DAY TWO

7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. (depending on your overnight location)

Check out of your motel and proceed through beautiful Historic Bluff Country.

10:30-12:00 p.m.

Arrive in the quaint Iowa village of Burr Oak at their Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum, the restored Masters Hotel on the National Historic Register. Charles and his family lived and worked here in 1876-77. Start at the Burr Oak Savings Bank, which is the location of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Park and Museum gift shop and the site of Winneshiek County’s first bank robbery. From there you will be taken on a personally guided tour of the Masters Hotel, the only childhood home of Laura Ingalls Wilder remaining on its original site.

12:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Head to Harmony and stop for a lunch break in Historic Bluff Country. Take time to visit Slim’s Woodshed or the Scandinavian Blomma Shop with its fine imported gifts.

1:30-3:00 p.m.

Meet your Spring Valley Wilder tour guide at the majestic Methodist Church Museum with its 21 beautiful stained-glass windows brought from England, a Wilder photo display, religious artifact collections, an old-time country store, pioneer artifacts, and an 1874 wooden fire wagon. Built in 1876 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is where Laura’s husband, Almanzo, Laura, and their daughter Rose attended in 1890-91.

5:30 p.m.

Check into the Holiday Inn Owatonna and then out for dinner. After dinner, take an evening tour of the Village of Yesteryear – a special treat for visiting groups. You will have to call ahead so they will open just for your group.

DAY THREE

8:30 a.m.

Check out from your Owatonna hotel after breakfast, and head for some amazing prairie architecture.

10:15-11:00 a.m.

Take a tour of the famous Sod House Exhibit at Sanborn where the History Channel filmed a documentary in 2000. As you tour the historically accurate replicas of a soddy in a prairie setting, the floor plan and architecture will give you a greater understanding of the lifestyle of the prairie homesteaders. Coffee or iced tea can be served.

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Arrive at Walnut Grove just in time for lunch.

1:00-4:00 p.m.

In 1874, seven-year-old Laura and her family traveled from the Big Woods of Pepin to the prairieland of Walnut Grove. Like other visitors from around the world, your tour group can see the Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum & Gift Store (an 8 building complex), including items of Laura’s, a tribute to the NBC TV series Little House on the Prairie and 1,000’s of period artifacts. Learn about the people Laura wrote about in her book “On the Banks of Plum Creek” and what it was like being a pioneer of the prairie. See the Ingalls Dugout Site along Plum Creek, Pa’s Bell and other recognizable landmarks. Quaint antique, collectible and specialty shops dot this town and are open year round. You may want to schedule your visit to include the popular Walnut Grove annual outdoor Wilder Pageant in July.

4:00 p.m.

Depart for Brookings, South Dakota.

5:30 p.m.

Check into your Brookings hotel.

DAY FOUR

8:30 a.m.

After breakfast, head for your final Wilder destination.

10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Arrive in DeSmet at the “Discover Laura!” Center and journey into the heart of Laura’s “Little Town on the Prairie”. Join costumed guides for a visit to the original Surveyor’s House where Laura and her family spent their first Dakota winter in “By the Shores of Silver Lake”. Visit the sixteen sites mentioned in the Little House books. You may also want to time your group visit to include the Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant in July. Guided tours of the restored Surveyors’ House, the Ingalls Home, the Ingalls Memorial Site and Pa’s Cottonwood Trees start at the gift shop.

12:00 p.m.

Lunch at the Oxbow Restaurant in DeSmet.

1:30 p.m.

Visit the original Ingalls Homestead site. Take covered wagon rides, observe a period school with a living teacher instructing like Laura would have seen.

Miles from location to location:

Pepin, WI to Burr Oak, IA – 120 miles

Burr Oak, IA to Spring Valley, MN – 40 miles

Spring Valley, MN to Walnut Grove, MN – 207 miles

Walnut Grove, MN to DeSmet, SD – 110 miles

For more information, and to customize this sample itinerary for **your** group, contact your tour operator, or Merlene Brown of the Laura Ingalls Wilder History Highway at 563-735-5916.