

Iowa boasts Golden Gate to the Mississippi

The river town sports “the world’s shortest,
steepest scenic railway.”

48 HOURS IN DUBUQUE

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Picture Victorian homes overlooking a large body of water. San Francisco?

No, Dubuque, in northeastern Iowa.

Dubuque perches on the banks of the Mississippi River amid towering limestone bluffs.

From jazz concerts in Town Clock Plaza, carriage rides through downtown, or tours of the 1891 county courthouse -featuring a gilded dome and 14-foot statue of Lady Justice -this city of 60,000 residents provides many surprises to fill a weekend.

WHERE TO GO: Cable Car Square, in the historic Fourth Street area at Bluff Street, is a great place to spend the day.

Start with a ride on the Fenelon Place Elevator. Built in 1882 by a former city mayor who grew tired of the half-hour carriage ride from downtown to his home on the bluffs, a cable car carries passengers upward 189 feet from the base. It is billed as “the world’s shortest, steepest scenic railway,” and when at the top you’re unlikely to argue. The sight is spectacular, offering a panoramic view of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.

The cable car runs from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. April 1 through Nov. 30. Round-trip tickets are \$1.50 for adults, 50 cents for children. Call (563) 582-6496.

At the base of Fenelon Place Elevator, are specialty shops and boutiques featuring antiques, fashions, gifts and assorted collectibles. One recent addition to the square is the Doll Museum, displaying the collection of Elona Kindschi (1897-1980). Hours are Monday-Saturday 8:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. and Sunday 11-4. Admission is \$3.50.

Call (563) 583-5100.

Historical tours are also available in the Cable Car Square area. Take a one-hour narrated tour of the city courtesy of Trolleys of Dubuque, Inc., which run at least once daily through October.

The trolley, which picks up at Fourth and Bluff streets at 12:15 p.m. and at the Iowa Welcome Center at 12:30 p.m., offers an excellent overview of the city with an emphasis on architecture and special points of interest.

Trolleys can be heated and enclosed, with charters available even during winter months. Call (800) 408-0077.

ALONG THE RIVER: Sightseeing and lunch cruises on the Mississippi are available in October aboard the Spirit of Dubuque, Iowa's only authentic paddle-wheeler.

Experience the world's third-largest river with the added splendor of the fall colors. The two-and four-hour narrated lunch cruises, which continue through most of October, cost \$22 and \$38. Call ahead for reservations at (800) 747-8093.

Explore the Mississippi River Museum at Third Street Ice Harbor, including a 15-minute orientation film, "River of Dreams," narrated by Garrison Keillor.

The museum also includes the National Rivers Hall of Fame, focusing on prominent river travelers such as Mark Twain and Louis and Clark, as well as the Upper Mississippi's largest collection of historic small watercraft.

Of particular interest is the U.S. Army Corps steamboat William H. Black, a 277-foot national landmark. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children. Call (563) 557-9545.

If gambling is your thing, Dubuque Diamond Jo Casino is right next door to the Mississippi River Museum at Third Street Ice Harbor, featuring slot machines, roulette and blackjack. Call (900) 582-5956.