

# Uniquely MASON CITY

NO OTHER PLACE  
BUT HERE

## YOUR GUIDE to experiences that can only be found in Mason City, IA!

1. An Architectural Hotbed: Mason City is home to the last remaining **Frank Lloyd Wright-designed hotel** in the world, as well as **Wright's first and only Prairie-style house in Iowa that is open to the public!** Learn more about these and other architectural gems on a walking tour of the Rock Glen-Rock Crest Historic District - **the world's largest unified site of Prairie-style architecture!**

2. Did you know the first Grammy ever awarded was presented to none other than Mason City's own Meredith Willson, composer of *The Music Man*? Step back in time and experience Hollywood History come to life at **The Music Man Museum** (located within The Music Man Square) and **Willson Boyhood Home**, which celebrate the life and accomplishments of River City's Music Man!

3. Perhaps one of Mason City's most revered treasures is the collection of more than 500 marionettes and puppets created by America's premier puppet master (and Mason City native), Bill Baird. Some of the most recognized marionettes in the world including *The Lonely Goatherd* which was featured in the Academy Award-winning film *The Sound of Music* can be seen at the **Charles H. MacNider Art Museum**.

5. In 1910, the first Colby, a 5-passenger touring car, took to Mason City's streets. It performed to all expectations and was fast enough to earn a speeding ticket for its test driver, and went on to finish third in the 1911 Indianapolis Speedway Race. Sadly, a competitive auto market put the company out of business in 1914, after only 900 cars were manufactured. One of the last remaining Colby cars has been carefully restored and can be seen at Mason City's **Kinney Pioneer Museum**.

4. One of fewer than 20 surviving "Valentine" style diners in the United States, the **Suzie Q Cafe** is a unique and nostalgic spot to enjoy lunch. This quaint little diner car was brought to Mason City in 1948. Enjoy such classics as a burger, fries, and a malt, or try the Famous Spic-N-Span Tenderloin!

6. For dinner, enjoy a mouth watering, Greek-style steak (with a side of savory spaghetti) at the **Northwestern Steakhouse** - recently named the "Most Iconic Restaurant in the State of Iowa" by thrillist.com. A Mason City tradition, this steakhouse has been family-owned since 1920.

7. Another Mason City tradition - **Birdsall's Ice Cream** - has been serving refreshing hand-made ice cream since the 1930's. Local favorites include the hot fudge sundae, hot fudge marshmallow malts, and everyone's summertime favorite - peach!

9. Mason City is home to one of only two remaining electric freight railways in America - the **Iowa Traction Railway!** The line is still active today, interchanging over 1,300 carloads a year with CP Rail, UP and I&CE. Visitors to the area can see the fleet of old, but well maintained Baldwin locomotives in action as they run back and forth with strings of hoppers and other freight cars. Traction fans and train enthusiasts will find the operation most interesting. With most of the line running alongside the road, there is plenty of opportunity to take photos or capture video. NOTE: IATR is a not a museum or tourist attraction. It is a working railroad. Be courteous. Respect the equipment & observe safety precautions. Railroad enthusiasts are encouraged to visit our **Cannonball 457** - a beautifully restored 1920's steam locomotive - located in Mason City's East Park.

10. Of course, no visit to Mason City is complete without taking the short drive west to Clear Lake. The last concert site of Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, the **Historic Surf Ballroom & Museum** welcomes Rock 'N Roll Fans from across the globe! For those interested in paying tribute to these rock-n-roll legends, driving directions to the crash site and memorial are available.



#MasonCityIA



# DISCOVER MASON CITY, IOWA

■ *Experience the art of hospitality* ■

Discover an array of award-winning attractions, from puppets to prairie school architecture, and an assortment of festivals uniquely blended with facilities catering to visitors.

Mason City is located in North Central Iowa, in Cerro Gordo County, only a few miles from beautiful Clear Lake. The community is the hometown of Meredith Willson, composer of "The Music Man". Plus, the area is legendary as it was the final site of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson's concert. Mason City is also home to Prairie School Architecture with several buildings in the community designed by Frank Lloyd Wright including the only remaining hotel in the world designed by Wright. The largest collection of Bil Baird's puppets can also be seen in Mason City.

We look forward to welcoming you to Mason City, Iowa!

## COMMUNITY

- Mason City is located in Cerro Gordo County in Northern Iowa
- Mason City is the largest urban center in North Iowa and is located 120 miles North of Des Moines, Iowa and 135 miles South of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota
- The population of Mason City is approximately 27,740 people
- A few of the honors bestowed to the community include:
  - In 2014, named as *Great Place for Business Travelers* by USA Today
  - Featured on NBC Today Show as one of five *Fast and Affordable Road Trips*
  - *Best New Midwest Place to Play, Eat and Stay* in 2011 by Midwest Living
  - CNN named the community *An Architectural Hotbed*
- The average winter temperature in Mason City is 18.2 degrees Fahrenheit and the average summer temperature is 70.7 degrees Fahrenheit
- The average annual rainfall in Mason City is 31.4 inches while the average annual snowfall is 37.8 inches
- Mason City has 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, 1 public high school, and 2 private high schools
- The Mason City school district is in the top 15% in the United States in academic student achievement tests
- Mason City is home to a four-year college, a four-year vocational/technical college and a two-year community college
- Mercy Medical Center – North Iowa has been named one of the nation's 100 Top Hospitals. They were also named a Top 100 Cardiovascular Hospital.



## BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

- There are approximately 48 manufacturing plants in Mason City employing nearly 4,000 people
- Mason City's largest employer is North Iowa Mercy Health Center
- Other major employers include:
  - Woodharbor – manufactures wooden cabinets
  - Smithfield Foods – packaged meats and turkey products sold under the Armour, Butterball, Eckrich & LunchMakers brands
  - Cargill Kitchen Solutions – egg processing.
  - Kraft – the only place in the world where ready-to-serve Jell-O and Jell-O pudding snacks are made
  - The Principal Financial Group – administrators for insurance policies and retirement programs

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