

Western Canada & The American Heartland

Farm Study Tour 2020

Date	Activity	Overnight
DAY 1 Thu, Aug 20 Meals on plane. Then an informal welcome reception in Victoria.	Tour leader: Lloyd O'Connell 0428 724 615 <p>We depart Australia for Vancouver (Canada) with connection to a direct flight to Victoria on Vancouver Island.</p> <p>Thanks to crossing the international dateline, our watches and smartphones will be telling us we have arrived in Canada almost before we left Australia.</p> <p>At around 500 km long and 100 km wide, Vancouver Island offers a wide and fantastic range of sights and activities including the world renowned Butchart Gardens. The island is also home to a thriving agricultural industry which benefits from a maritime climate of warm, dry summers, mild and wet winters and a long frost-free season. There is a wide range of farming including field crops, berries, tree fruits, dairy products, pigs, sheep, poultry, floriculture and ornamental crops.</p> <p>We take advantage of our "extra hours" by visiting the magnificent Bouchart Gardens before checking in to our Victoria hotel. We enjoy an informal welcome reception before turning in for a well earned rest after a big day..</p>	CANADA Victoria, Vancouver Is British Columbia
DAY 2 Fri, Aug 21 B,L	<p>Guided touring around Vancouver Island, including a farm visit, before returning to Victoria and a free evening.</p>	Victoria, Vancouver Is
DAY 3 Sat, Aug 22 B,D	<p>A leisurely morning to take in the sights of this beautiful and unique portside capital at your own pace. Early this afternoon we board our chartered float plane for a spectacular flight and water-landing arrival into downtown Vancouver.</p> <p>We are met at the float plane terminal by our local Vancouver guide and bus. We then enjoy a guided city tour to help get our bearings before checking in to our hotel. Dinner this evening at one of Vancouver's renowned restaurants.</p>	Vancouver
DAY 4 Sun, Aug 23 B,L	<p>Guided touring this morning in the fertile and picturesque Fraser River valley where we visit some farms and enjoy lunch at a family-run local produce outlet. Return to Vancouver for a free evening.</p>	Vancouver
DAY 5 Mon, Aug 24 B,L	<p>This morning we board The Rocky Mountaineer eastbound for Kamloops. We will see dramatic changes in scenery today, from the lush green fields and farmlands of the Fraser Valley, through forests and winding river canyons surrounded by the peaks of the Coast and Cascade Mountains, to the desert-like environment of the British Columbia interior.</p> <p>Highlights include the rushing waters of Hell's Gate in the Fraser Canyon and the steep slopes and rock sheds along the Thompson River.</p> <p>We overnight in the historic town of Kamloops where the North and South Thompson rivers meet.</p>	Kamloops

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DAY 6 Tue, Aug 25 B,L	<p>This morning we board our train to continue our journey eastward bound for Canada's stunning Rocky Mountains. Once again we will see a spectacular array of scenery as we travel across ranchlands, along rocky lakeshores, over high mountain passes into Alberta Province and through the remarkable tunnels that form part of the rich rail history of the Canadian Rockies.</p> <p>Today's highlights include Craigellachie, where the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven, the climb over Rogers Pass, Kicking Horse Canyon, the Spiral Tunnels and, of course, the glaciers and snow-capped peaks of the Canadian Rockies. Our rail journey ends this evening in Banff.</p> <p>We are met at the train station and transferred to our hotel. Free evening.</p>	Banff Alberta
DAY 7 Wed, Aug 26 B,L,D	<p>This morning we visit the nearby and majestic Moraine Lake and afterwards, the equally majestic Lake Louise to drink in its incomparable beauty. We also enjoy a very special high tea in the luxurious Fairview room of the Fairmont Chateau. There's time for a paddle on Lake Louise, or whatever else floats your boat, before returning to Banff for some free time.</p> <p>An option this afternoon is an unforgettable 30 minute chopper flight over the Mt Assiniboine Glacier region. The flights depart from Canmore, around 15 minutes east of Banff. Dubbed the 'Matterhorn of the Canadian Rockies' Mt Assiniboine rises majestically to 3611 metres along the Great Divide. The surrounding valleys, glaciers and icefalls are astounding.</p> <p>This evening we take a spectacular gondola ride to the top of Sulphur Mountain, overlooking Banff, where we will enjoy dinner.</p>	Banff
DAY 8 Thu, Aug 27 B,L,D	<p>Today we board our charter coach and travel north. We are travelling the Icefields Parkway – one of the most spectacular drives in the world. This is a wilderness habitat for elk, big horn sheep, moose, mountain goats and bear. Waterfalls, emerald lakes, alpine meadows and snow-capped peaks complete the scene as we wind along the shoulder of the Continental Divide. The Columbia Icefield covers nearly 325 square km. Melt water from the icefield feeds rivers emptying into three different oceans: North to the Arctic; East to the Atlantic; and, West to the Pacific.</p> <p>We visit the Colombia Icefield Discovery Centre and travel by specially adapted vehicles onto the glacier.</p> <p>We continue onto Rocky Mountain House – nestled on the eastern foothills of the Rockies and the edge of the Great Plains – for overnight.</p>	Rocky Mountain House
DAY 9 Fri, Aug 28 B,L,D	<p>With our Canadian farm specialist we set out from Rocky Mountain House this morning to meet with farmers and ranchers typical of the region. Over the next few days we will visit highly successful farming operations. We will also visit a Hutterite colony where very traditional lifestyles belie the sophistication of their large scale farming operations.</p> <p>Our general route takes us from Rocky Mountain House, through to Red Deer and onto Drumheller.</p> <p>Nearing Drumheller, we enter an area of amazing landscapes dubbed the "badlands". We will discover that this moniker does an injustice to the very good farms, and farmers, in the area.</p> <p>The unique soils and geology around Drumheller also create a unique window into the world of fossils, particularly dinosaurs. We visit The Royal Tyrrell Museum – a world-famous centre of palaeontological research – located on the outskirts of town. We also enjoy a BBQ tonight at a unique country pub – the Last Chance Saloon – located a short distance out of Drumheller.</p>	Drumheller
DAY 10 Sat, Aug 29 B	<p>Some more farm visits this morning as we head towards Calgary and a brief city tour to get your bearings before a free afternoon and evening.</p>	Calgary
DAY 11 Sun, Aug 30 B,L,D	<p>This morning we have a direct flight to Chicago. This city has it all and enjoys spoiling its visitors and locals alike with a wealth of culture, shopping, dining and entertainment possibilities. As Frank Sinatra sang so many times about this world-class city, "it's one town that won't let you down." On arrival, we have a guided city tour to help get our bearings before dinner.</p>	UNITED STATES Chicago Illinois

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DAY 12 Mon, Aug 31 B	More touring around Chicago including The Magnificent Mile, The Loop and other places Al Capone and his ilk liked to frequent. Free afternoon and evening.	Chicago
Day 13 Tue, Sep 1 B,L,D	Today we begin our exploration of the American agricultural heartland. More than two million farms dot the US rural landscape – and 99 per cent of them are owned by individuals, family partnerships or family corporations. We travel west into the seemingly endless and fertile wheat, corn and bean fields of the Mid West. We visit the world headquarters of John Deere at Moline before continuing west to Cedar Rapids.	Cedar Rapids Iowa
Day 14 Wed, Sep 2 B,D	Today we visit the Farm Progress Show at Boone, Iowa. This is the largest outdoor farm event in the US and annually hosts more than 600 exhibitors displaying new farm equipment, tractors, combines other farm implements and inputs. We then travel southeastwards through the wonderful farmlands of Iowa towards the mighty Mississippi.	Southern Iowa
Day 15 Thu, Sep 3 B,L	Today we continue onto St Louis, following the Mississippi, with a farm visit along the way. We call into Hannibal, the very well preserved historic Mississippi river town and the boyhood home of Samuel Langhorne Clemens – better known as Mark Twain.	St Louis Missouri
Day 16 Fri, Sep 4 B,L,D	We meet with Bayer/Monsanto in St Louis this morning before continuing into the southeast corner of Illinois with a farm visit on the way. We tour through the Shawnee National Forest and cross into Kentucky. As Lonely Planet points out, while the big cities such as Louisville and Lexington have high-end restaurants, cocktail bars and “all of the other hipster requirements, most of Kentucky is made up of small towns with quiet scenes.” We enjoy these “quiet scenes” including the Land Between the Lakes. This is an area created by the 1960 construction of a dam on the Cumberland River which brought the subsequent lake level to such a height that a canal could be built connecting the Cumberland and nearby Tennessee rivers. This considerably lessened the shipping distances for Cumberland Valley goods going to ports on the Gulf of Mexico. We cross another state-line into Tennessee and onto Clarksville – a major port city on the Cumberland River.	Clarksville Tennessee
Day 17 Sat, Sep 5 B,L	From Tennessee’s founding as a state in 1796, Clarksville’s growth was rapid – as was its emergence as an agricultural and politically strategic centre. By 1820, steamboats were navigating the Cumberland River, transporting goods and people to and from the region. Clarksville exported flour, tobacco, cotton, and corn to ports such as New Orleans and Pittsburgh along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Major roads were also established linking the region with Nashville to the southeast and Hopkinsville to the north. In 1859, the railway came to town. By the start of the American Civil War (1861), planters in the area depended on slavery for their labour-intensive farms, particularly tobacco and cotton production. In 1861, Clarksville County voted for the state of Tennessee to secede and join the Confederate States of America (the South). War with the Union (the North) had begun. The Union sent troops and gunboats down the Cumberland River in 1862 and captured Clarksville and other strategic river cities and towns. Between 1862 and 1865 the Union retained control of Clarksville. Many slaves who had been freed or escaped gathered in Clarksville and joined the Union Army. We learn more about the region’s intriguing history before visiting a farm on our way south to Nashville. As at late December 2019, artists have yet to be announced but there is a performance tonight at 7.30 at The Grand Ole Opry – the show that made country music famous. The line-up of performers typically features new stars, superstars and legends of country music. There’s nothing quite like it anywhere else!	Nashville

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Day 18 Sun, Sep 6 B	<p>As the “home of country music”, Nashville has been the second-largest music production centre (after New York) in the US. The total economic impact of the industry is estimated at more than (AUD)\$10 billion per year and contributes 20,000 jobs to the area.</p> <p>Famous attractions include the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Belcourt Theatre and Ryman Auditorium and of course, the Grand Ole Opry House.</p> <p>Many music clubs and honky-tonk bars are in downtown Nashville, often referred to as “the District”.</p> <p>It’s a free day to do your own exploration of Nashville or just enjoy some music at any number of venues in the District.</p>	Nashville
Day 19 Mon, Sep 7 B,L,D	<p>This morning we leave Nashville and travel southeast towards North Carolina and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is also part of the Blue Ridge Mountains, which are in turn a division of the larger Appalachian Mountain chain.</p> <p>For thousands of years, Native Americans cultivated the fertile valleys of the Blue Ridge mountains raising corn, beans and squash — which were the staples of their diet. The Cherokee used “slash and burn” techniques to clear small areas of forested land and to fertilise the soil. European immigrants brought many of their agricultural practices with them. But as they settled in the mountains, they soon adopted many Cherokee crops and techniques which had been refined over centuries. This blending of immigrant agricultural practices with Native American traditions resulted in a distinctive regional agricultural heritage.</p> <p>We visit a farm in the region before continuing on to Asheville, North Carolina. With a unique mix of hipster coffee shops, award-winning restaurants, outdoor activities, and more breweries per capita than anywhere else in the US, many seasoned travellers rate Asheville as the “coolest” small town in the whole country.</p>	Asheville North Carolina
Day 20 Tue, Sep 8 B,L,D	<p>We continue south and cross into South Carolina. While this state is renowned as a top poultry producer (broilers and turkeys), almost 2 million fertile hectares are producing a diverse range of high value greenhouse and nursery products, cotton, corn, cattle, soybeans, peanuts, eggs and wheat. Agribusiness is South Carolina’s largest economic sector, contributing around US\$40 billion and over 200,000 jobs each year to the state’s economy. We’ll call in on some local producers before crossing into Georgia and the beautiful and historic city of Savannah.</p> <p>Savannah’s recorded history begins in 1733. That’s the year the British General James Oglethorpe and the 120 passengers of the good ship “Anne” landed on a bluff high along the Savannah River. Oglethorpe named the 13th and final American colony “Georgia” after England’s King George II. Savannah became its first city.</p> <p>During the American Revolution, the British took Savannah in 1778 and held it into 1782. After independence was secured, Savannah flourished. Soon, farmers discovered that the soil was rich and the climate favourable for cultivation of cotton and rice. Plantations and slavery became highly profitable enterprises. The trans-Atlantic slave trade brought many African-Americans through the port of Savannah. Many who stayed in the area formed the unique Gullah culture of the coastal communities in Georgia and South Carolina.</p> <p>With the wealth brought by cotton, residents built lavish homes and churches throughout the city. After the invention of the cotton gin on a plantation outside of Savannah, the city became a major commercial port. And many of the world’s cotton prices were set on the steps of the Savannah Cotton Exchange. The building is still in existence.</p>	Savannah Georgia

Date	Activity	Overnight
Day 21 Wed, Sep 9 B,D	<p>Consistently named one of the world's friendliest cities the coastal town of Savannah has a world-class reputation for hospitality and grace. The city was built with squares in mind and the original 'town plan' incorporated 24 of them – 22 remain today and each beautiful square contains its own piece of Savannah's history. The squares are surrounded by Savannah's historic homes.</p> <p>To give you an idea of how beautiful this city is, during the Civil War the ruthless and all-conquering Union General Sherman was so taken by the city that he could not destroy it. On December 22, 1864 he sent a famous telegram to President Abraham Lincoln, offering Savannah as a Christmas present.</p> <p>We check out just some of the many highlights on a guided city tour this morning before free time this afternoon.</p> <p>Farewell dinner this evening.</p>	Savannah
Day 22 Thu, Sep 10 B	<p>Transfer to the airport today for flights home or you can continue your adventures in the US or elsewhere.</p>	