



The Jampacked



Week
Long

OKOBOJI IOWA

Summer
Vacation

Wanting a family vacation that won't break the bank? Founded in 1864 the Okoboji area has been a tourist destination for over 150 years now. Known as the "Iowa Great Lakes", Okoboji also consists of four other major towns: Arnolds Park, West Okoboji, Storm Lake and Milford. In this itinerary, we will be traveling to four towns and exploring some amazing lake activities. So bring your swimsuit and your adventurous spirit, because we will be touring museums, walking the boardwalk, shopping at local boutiques and enjoying dinner with a view of the water. Throw in an afternoon of rollercoasters and water sports, and you'll be planning your return.

Day 1

10:30 am:

Get to know the history of Iowa's Great Lakes at their Maritime Museum (243 W Broadway St, Arnolds Park, IA)

Located across from Arnolds Park Amusement Park, this is the perfect first stop since they offer guided tours! You'll be able to ask questions, get introduced to the area's history, and even see a boat pulled from the depths of West Okoboji. Along with vintage souvenirs, a rare collection of wooden boats and even a gift shop, this will get you ready for what to expect the rest of the week. (<https://arnoldspark.com/maritime-museum/>)

**Below are two different itinerary options for the afternoon.
Depending on which one you decide to go to, make sure to give yourself
enough time to enjoy it.**

12:30 pm:

Learn the history of Arnolds Park at the Funhouse Museum (243 W Broadway St, Arnolds Park, IA)

Where can you ride an indoor 95-year-old wooden slide? Along with wooden horses from the 1915 merry-go-round, roller skates from 1919, and hundreds of vintage memorabilia, the Funhouse museum has been lovingly restored. Salvaging pin-ball machines and bumper cars from the 70s, this nostalgic second stop of the day will have you reminiscing about days gone by. (<https://arnoldspark.com/arnolds-park-museum/>)

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12:30 pm:

Be serenaded at the Iowa Rock 'n Roll Music Association Hall of Fame (243 W Broadway St, Arnolds Park, IA)

Exhibits here feature musicians who are either from Iowa, played an integral roll in our state history, or traveled to the Hawkeye State to perform. The Okoboji and Arnolds Park area has always been a favorite location for acts to play, and many of them left behind signed memorabilia. Buddy Holly is hard to miss, as well as The Beatles, and famous bands such as the Everly Brothers and Jerry Lee Lewis even played at the Roof Garden Ballroom. (<https://www.iowarocknroll.com/>)

1:30 pm: Sit down for a relaxing lunch nearby

- Maxwell's Beach Café (open seasonally)
- Nautical Bar and Grill
- La Barca Mexican

3:30 pm:

Check in at the Vintage Block Inn & Suites (1107 Sanborn Ave, Okoboji, IA)

Located half a block from the East Lake Okoboji boat access, this quaint Inn is relatively close to many attractions. Pieces of driftwood are strategically placed throughout the property, giving it a rustic feel. Reminiscent of roadside hotels from the 1970s, every room is accessible from the sidewalk, meaning no dreary hallways to walk down. Along with a community pool, there are yard games, a fire pit and even Surrey bicycles to explore the property. You will enjoy coming "home" to this cabin-like oasis. (<https://www.vintageblockinnandsuites.com/>)

4:30 pm:

Walk around and window shop at the Central Emporium (144 Lakeshore Dr, Arnolds Park, IA)

This multi-level indoor shopping mall, with all locally owned businesses, is the perfect place to pick up some souvenirs. Everything from candles, clothes, and even homemade jams. Built in 1901, the Central Emporium was once a ballroom, and even used as boat storage. Then in the 1970s it was purchased, remodeled and leasing for store-front spaces began. You will enjoy browsing the hallways, meeting and conversing with locals, and you'll especially love the restaurant on site, The Gardens. (<https://www.parksmarina.com/central-emporium/>)

6:30 pm:

Dinner with a view at The Gardens (144 Lakeshore Dr, Arnolds Park, IA)

Virtually at lake level, guests only need to walk down a few stairs to the dock, and West Okoboji Lake invites you. You have your choice of indoor seating if you want to escape the heat, or relax on the patio to admire the sunset. Grab a margarita from the bar and enjoy their buffalo chicken wrap while you listen to live music played every night. (<https://www.parksmarina.com/the-gardens/>)

Day 2

8:00 am:

Have breakfast at the hotel. This will be a long day, so we want to get a simple start.

10:00 am:

Arrive at Arnolds Park Amusement Park (37 Lake St, Arnolds Park, IA)

Sitting on 20 acres, this small-town amusement park, has a lot to offer. With 23 different rides, Arnolds Park Amusement Park has go-karts, a log ride, and the 7th oldest roller coaster in the United States. Built in 1930, the Legend Roller Coaster stands 63 feet high, reaches speeds of 50 mph, and is the 13th oldest in the world. With gift shops and food stands inside the park, you'll have no problem spending a full afternoon here. (<https://arnoldspark.com/>)

1:00 pm:

Walk through history at the Abbie Gardner Cabin (74 Monument Dr, Arnolds Park, IA)

An outdoor museum with the original 1856 cabin where Abbie Gardner resided, this historic site pays homage to the lives that were lost during the 1857 Spirit Lake Massacre that lasted four days. Located on the grounds is a monument erected in remembrance of the deceased settlers, as well as a visitor center that helps tell the story of 13-year-old Abbie Gardner, her family and how they were captured by the invading Inkpaduta's Native American band. (<https://vacationokoboji.com/attractions/abbie-gardner-cabin-museum/>)

2:30 pm:

Cruise the Lake on Queen II (37 Lake St, Arnolds Park, IA)

Disembarking from the Arnolds Park board walk directly outside of the amusement park, the Queen II is a popular boat cruise that takes you around West Lake Okoboji. Built in 1986 and designated the "Flagship of the Iowa Navy", the Queen II is a historic steam boat that makes several excursions out on the water daily. Recently undergoing a full restoration in 2023, this nearly 40-year-old vessel sits 150 at full capacity, with an open-air upper deck and an enclosed lower deck. This 60-minute narrated excursion provides you with a full service bar on board and snacks for you to enjoy on the water. (<https://arnoldspark.com/rentals/queen-ii-rental/>)

4:30 pm:

Sit down for a relaxing early dinner at The Okoboji Store (1404 U. S. Hwy 71, Okoboji, IA)

Built in 1884, the original Okoboji store was initially a skating rink, then converted to a general store, post office, boat rental facility, and eventually a restaurant. The back of their menus even tell the rich history of Okoboji and how the railroads ignited tourism, fishing became a popular past time, and how The Okoboji Store has been here to see it all. And if you sit outdoor on their back patio, you might even see a local anchor their boat on the dock and walk in for refreshments. (<https://theokobojistore.com/>)

7:00 pm:

Enjoy some nightlife at the Round Lake Vineyards & Winery (30124 State Highway 264, Round Lake, MN)

Take a little drive out of Okoboji and into the country side where you will arrive at one of the best Vineyards in the area. Located 30 miles north of Okoboji, Round Lake Vineyards started planting in 2007, and offers amazing views of their property, wine tasting, and weekend events. Walk the grounds and admire their 19,000 vines across four vineyards, then head back in to share an appetizer or a pizza at their on-site restaurant, The Bistro. (<https://www.roundlakevineyards.com/>)

Day 3

9:00 am:

Start your day with a one-of-a-kind breakfast at O'Farrell Sisters (1109 Lake Shore Dr, Okoboji, IA)

Opening their doors in 1949, the O'Farrell Sisters is one the longest running restaurants in the Okoboji area. In fact, when the property was sold in 2003, the new owners invited one of the sister's daughters to return to the famed diner and reclaim her title as the best pie-maker in all of Okoboji. Known for their homemade pancakes and Florentine egg benedicts, this 75-year-old establishment will leave you feeling nostalgic. (<https://www.parksmarina.com/ofarrell-sisters/>)

11:00 am:

Take a tour of the Higgins Museum (1507 Sanborn Ave, Okoboji, IA)

Enjoy the largest collection of National Bank Notes in the United States. Opened in 1978 by William R. Higgins, Jr., this museum has bank notes from various towns and states, a bank teller cage, safes, and a printing press from the Bureau of Engraving. For the past 46 years the Higgins Museum has told a fascinating story of the American banking system with hundreds of bills from the Midwest states and beyond. (<https://thehigginsmuseum.org/>)

1:00 pm:

Get your souvenirs at the Barn Swallow Gift Shop (1212 U. S. Hwy 71 N, Okoboji, IA)

Encompassing three levels, and surrounded by picturesque landscaping, this is unlike any gift shop you've ever seen. An Okoboji icon, this unique and charming tourist stop has been open since 1977 and proudly serves both locals and tourists alike for their home design and Okoboji branded apparel. (<https://www.barnswallowonline.net/>)

2:30 pm:

Re-energize yourself with a late lunch at The Ritz (394 U.S. Hwy 71 S, Arnolds Park, IA)

Built in 1989, The Ritz has become known for their famous "fishbowls", live music and amazing views of East Lake Okoboji. Home of the famed "Lue Burger", this lively eatery also boasts "Boji's Best Pizza". Unlike many restaurants in Okoboji, The Ritz is open year round, and offers two levels of lakeside seating. (<https://theritzokoboji.com/>)

4:30 pm:

Work off lunch at Pirates Cove Adventures Golf (25 Lake St, Arnolds Park, IA)

Surrounded by life-size pirates, shipwrecks and treasures, this 18-hole mini-golf course will delight the entire family. Along with beautiful landscaping, you'll enjoy a little history lesson about century-old sea-crossing bootleggers. With attention to detail, this course has everything from hills, bridges, rivers and even a giant Great White shark! (<https://www.piratescove.net/>)

6:30 pm:

Refresh your spirit with a beer flight at West O Beer (503 Terrace Park Blvd, Milford, IA)

Opened since 2013, this brewery is able to tap into spring-fed water that has helped them create some of the best beer in all of Iowa. Home of the award-winning CocO Stout, West O Beer has a state-of-the-art facility that spans 4,200 square feet and produces over 15 brews on tap, cans of their customer favorites, and even growlers to take home for later. (<https://westobeer.com/>)

7:30 pm: Suggested dinner options

- Miles Inn Okoboji
- The Common Tasting Room
- Prime Boji
- Tavern at the Park Okoboji

Day 4

8:30 am: Start your day off with breakfast at the hotel, you've had three days of chaos, today we relax.

10:30 am:

Arrive at Terrace Beach Park (2414 Okoboji Blvd, Milford, IA)

This is Okoboji's most popular public swimming areas. Along with picnic tables and a pier stretching out into the water, the beach has almost a quarter mile of sand for your family to build castles on, sunbathe and swim. During your stay at the beach, you might even catch the ice cream truck that comes around with refreshments. With an average lake temperature of 80°F and a fenced in area for kids to play, just remember there are no lifeguards on duty. (<https://www.watersafetycouncil.org/swimming/index.html>)

1:30 pm:

Enjoy lunch an outdoor setting at the Taco House (1614 Terrace Park Blvd, Milford, IA)

After a full afternoon at the beach, you'll be ready to refuel. Opening in 1966, the Taco House is one of the most recognized iconic restaurants in the entire Okoboji area. Serving authentic Mexican dishes from an open-air concept kitchen, this rustic setting has the perfect relaxing atmosphere to recharge your sandy bottoms. (<https://www.facebook.com/tacohouseboji>)

3:30 pm:

Finish with dessert at the Nutty Bar Stand (37 Lake St, Arnolds Park, IA)

An Okoboji tradition of nearly 80 years, the Nutty Bar Stand has been an Arnolds Park icon since 1945. Beat the heat by stepping up to the counter, and order one of their famous nutty bars, a refreshing root beer float, or an ice cream cone with your favorite flavor. Once you have your treat, you can continue relaxing in the air conditioning, sit on the covered patio, or stroll along the shops at Queen's Court. (<https://nuttybarstand.com/>)

5:30 pm: Return to your hotel room to freshen up for dinner.

6:30 pm:

Dinner at The Barefoot Bar (24457 Stake Out Road, Okoboji, IA)

With a special shipment of tropical palm trees every year, this is exactly what you would assume a tiki bar should look like. Known as the "Key West of the Midwest", The Barefoot Bar emulates the laid-back atmosphere of the coastal historic town of Key West, and the barefoot logo is easily recognized all around Siouland and beyond. Their souvenir shop sells t-shirts, key chains and hats, and just like Key West, the glasses your drinks are served in can be taken home as an added bonus souvenir. And if you want to continue your day in the water they have a slide attached to the dock for a short ride into the warm waters of East Lake Okoboji. (<https://www.parksmarina.com/the-barefoot-bar/>)

Day 5

9:30 am: Pack up and check out of hotel room.

10:30 am: Start your journey home with breakfast

- Wyman's Spudnuts
- The Koffee Kup
- Monarch Art Café
- The Hutt Bar & Grill

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Note

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**Below are two different itinerary options for the afternoon.
Depending on which one you decide to go to, make sure to give yourself
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12:30 pm: Do your last minute souvenir shopping

12:30 pm:

Walk the outdoor sculpture trail at the Lakes Art Center (2201 U. S. Hwy 71, Okoboji, IA)

Housing six galleries, a 300 seat performing arts theatre, clay studio, interactive gallery, library and a gift shop this amazing art center is free for everyone to enjoy. Opening in 1965, the Pearson Lakes Art Center also offers educational programs and classes, performances and even tours which can be scheduled on their website. Along a mile-long trail there are twenty outdoor sculptures to admire while you make the scenic walk to the adjoining Dickinson County Nature Center. (<https://www.lakesart.org/>)

2:30 pm:

Drive back in time at Okoboji Classic Cars, LLC (810 Jeppeson Rd, Milford, IA)

This is the ultimate destination for classic car enthusiasts. Recreating real-life 1960s storefronts from downtown Spencer and Arnolds Park, this 28,000 square foot showroom features hand-painted murals and vintage signage. With over 70 vehicles estimated to valued at \$6 million dollars, this museum is the product of owner Tony Shine. Fully restored to their former glory, many of these automobiles stay in the showroom, but some are also for sale! Along with a fully stocked gift shop and guided tours, there's also a restoration shop on-site with progress pictures of before and after. (<https://okobojicc.com/>)

5:00 pm: Grab dinner before hitting the road back home

- Okoboji Barn
- Waterfront Grille & Event Center
- Captain's Getaway
- Outrigger Restaurant & Lounge

Thank You

And that's how you jam pack an Okoboji itinerary! Remember, you do not have to do everything on this list, and please make adjustments depending on your comfort level. Okoboji and the surrounding area has become the #1 destination spot for lowans, so be sure to check availability of events, tours and places you'd like to visit. Keep in mind that this is a summer itinerary, meaning many of these establishments may not be open during the winter months. Please feel free to reach out with any questions you might have, and tag me on Instagram with your Okoboji adventures @thesiouxlandblog!

If you have time, check out:

- Boji Splash Waterpark at Bridges Bay (630 Linden Dr Arnolds Park, IA)
- Bouncelandia (2501 Boji Bend Dr Milford, IA)
- Brooks Golf (1201 Brooks Park Dr Okoboji, IA)
- Captains Getaway (107 Broadway St Arnolds Park, IA)
- Clark Museum (2151 213th Ave Milford, IA)
- Dickinson County Museum (1708 Keokuk Avenue Spirit Lake, IA)
- Dickinson County Nature Center (22785 Nature Center Road Spirit Lake, IA)
- Indian Motorcycle Experience Center & Factory Tours (1900 US-71 Spirit Lake, IA)
- Iowa Great Lakes Trails (389 US-71 Arnolds Park, IA)
- JTG Expeditions & Fishing Guide (243 W. Broadway St. Arnolds Park, IA)
- Kurio Kastle Pottery Painting Palace (709 16th Street Spirit Lake, IA)
- Oak Hill Outdoor (2188 IA-86 Milford, IA)
- Okoboji Brewing Company (3705 Hwy 71 Spirit Lake, IA)
- Okoboji Gold Disc Golf Course (2279 170th St Spirit Lake, IA)
- Okoboji Summer Theatre (2001 US-71 Okoboji, IA)
- Parks Marina (24457 Stake Out Road Okoboji, IA)
- Pikes Point State Park (21301 155th St Spirit Lake, IA)
- Riddle Me That Escape Room (589 Hwy 71 S., Arnolds Park, IA)
- Roof Garden Ballroom (91 Lake St, Arnolds Park, IA)
- Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery (122 252nd Street Orleans, IA)
- The Venue (1605 Hill Ave, Spirit Lake, IA)
- The Wine Bar and Art Gallery (139 W Broadway St, Arnolds Park, IA)
- Throwing Post (29 Allen Ave, Arnolds Park, IA)
- Triggs Bay Resort Watersport Rentals (Linden Drive Arnolds Park, IA)
- Westport Rural School Museum (22531 Nature Center Road Spirit Lake, IA)

With so many live music venues in and around the Okoboji area, check out Vacation Okoboji's website for venue information and what to expect:

<https://vacationokoboji.com/live-music-in-okoboji/>

By far the two most popular events in Okoboji throughout the year are:



- July 4th Fireworks on the Lake
- University of Okoboji Winter Games



Or if you are planning a trip around a certain event, here are some ideas to help you on your journey:

- Okoboji Snowmobile Vintage Ice Drags (February 3rd, 2024)
- Midwest CMA's (April 27th, 2024)
- Walleye Weekend (May 4th-5th, 2024)
- Memorial Day Flea Market (May 25th-27th, 2024)
- Antique & Classic Boat Show (July 27th, 2024)
- Pearson Lakes Art Center Art in the Park (August 3rd, 2024)
- University of Okoboji Point to Point Swim (August 3rd, 2024)
- 9th Annual Tiki Bike Ride (August 3rd, 2024)
- 11th Annual Black Knights Car Show (August 17th, 2024)
- Iowa Rock 'n Roll Induction Weekend (August 30th-September 1st, 2024)
- Okoboji Antique & Flea Market Weekend (August 31st-September 2nd, 2024)
- Dee's Bee & Butterfly Festival (September 6th, 2024)
- Okoboji Writer's Retreat (September 15th-18th, 2024)
- University of Okoboji Oktoberfest Celebration and Bike Ride (September 28th, 2024)
- Hill Ave Holiday Window Lighting (November 30th, 2024)
- Milford Holiday Fantasy (December 7th, 2024)
- Santa's Village on Hill Avenue (December 7th, 2024)

Re-occurring weekly seasonal events:

- Farmers Market in the Park (Every Saturday morning May-Oct)
- Dickinson County Fair (July 19th-24th, 2024)
- The Grove Pumpkin Patch (Open weekends Sept-Oct)
- Lueders Ridiculous X-Mas Lights (Nov-Dec)

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Check out their events schedule during your stay. Bingo, Karaoke, Painting classes, Trivia night, local family and kid-friendly events, Craft fairs, and more:

<https://vacationokoboji.com/events/>