

Visit: Iola, Weyauwega

Fall Festivals & Trips To A Pumpkin Patch

By Meghan Diemel

September and October in Wisconsin are two of the most beautiful months in Wisconsin. The weather is amazing, the colors of the changing leaves are breathtaking, the air is crisp and cool ... there's very little that isn't fabulous about our northern Midwest autumns!

I discovered one more great thing about the fall season – pumpkin patch visits and festivals! We had so much fun last year visiting our local farm, Pleasant Valley Tree Farm in Elk Mound. Located just a quick drive from Eau Claire, the farm's sprawling acres hosted everything from its Spooky Ridge trail to pumpkin bowling and a giant straw fort and play area, which provided endless entertainment for my daughter and her friends. Giggles abounded as they wound their way through the "spooky" trail, petted the menagerie of animals in the petting zoo and enjoyed the hayride. I really left feeling much more in the autumn and Halloween spirit!

"Autumn is a beautiful time to visit Pleasant Valley," says Robin Scharlau, co-owner. "We are located in a scenic valley in west central Wisconsin. Visitors enjoy the spectacular fall colors as they tour the farm on a wagon ride through our valley. We offer many fun activities for families of all ages. Visit the corn maze, petting zoo, pedal track, Red Pine Ranch Play Area, Magical Woodland Maze, straw tunnels, bounce houses,

Gemstone Mining and Spooky Ridge Trail. Don't forget to check out our 80-foot Spooktacular Slide, Crazy Corn Cannon and the Jack-O-Launcher – it shoots pumpkins hundreds of feet in the air.

"Stop by our Chuckwagon Food Stand for a treat and visit our Country Store for the latest in home décor and gift items," she adds.

Pleasant Valley Tree Farm has become a destination for several thousand people during the fall. And this year, those visitors can look forward to new activities.

"We are adding a new bounce house adventure course and we have some other exciting new plans for fun fall activities," adds Scharlau.

The Pleasant Valley Fall Harvest Festival runs from September 21 through October 27 this year. For more information about specific activities and prices be sure to check out their website www.pleasantvalleytree.com/fall.htm or "like" them on Facebook under "Pleasant Valley Tree Farm."

Schuster's Playtime Farm

If you're looking for a place to celebrate the wonderful tidings of autumn in southern Wisconsin, Schuster's Playtime Farm in Deerfield hosts more than 30,000 visitors in the fall.

"Fall for many Wisconsinites is the best time of year!" smiles Theresa Schuster. "Our farm blends nature, agricultural and pure entertainment in a manner uniquely its own. Our centennial round

barn is a sight to behold and stories of its past capture the attention of kids – young and old. The rolling hills, woods and cropland make a wagon ride to the pumpkin patch about more than just getting a pumpkin. It gives our guests the opportunity to sit back, take a deep breath of the country air and relax.

"Back at the farm our 'backyard' feels like a bustling county fair from shooting cannons to pig races to feeding the goats – plus gobs of activities you've just never quite experienced this way before," furthers Schuster.

She says the smells and tastes of fall abound at the farm with their own cider donuts, hand-dipped caramel apples made with incredible caramel from End of Trail Candy in Waupun, WI, farm-made apple crisp and pumpkin cake and fresh fudge.

October isn't just for the daytime crowd either, says Schuster.

"For years now, Schuster's Haunted Forest has been the outdoor haunt attraction in south central Wisconsin – from the wagon ride to the heart-stopping walk through the forest," she says. "We have grown with our guests adding new ideas and activities every year. Our goal has always been to keep a balance of activities that entertain a variety of ages – young to old. When our guests arrive this fall they will notice some big changes and even more county fair fun as they join our pigs in the racing department –

against other guests, of course."

Schuster's Playtime Farm is located at 1326 US Hwy. 12/18 in Deerfield, WI. For dates and times, you can visit them on the web at www.schustersfarm.com or call them at (608) 764-8488.

Warrens Cranberry Fest

Each September, more than 110,000 people visit Warrens, WI for its Cranberry Fest – and last year organizer's think that total hit more than 140,000. The little town of 400 is a beautiful setting for an autumn festival.

"We are a great fall destination as we have fun and educational activities all wrapped into a five senses experience," says General Manager Kim Schroeder. "The smells are great in the fall air and you just don't know what you want to eat first."

Held this year from September 27-29, a visitor can shop at more than 1,200 booths of arts/crafts, flea/antiques, farm market and more, she adds. And if you want to see how the cranberry grew to its importance in this neck of the woods, you're in luck!

"You can also experience a marsh tour where you are bussed to a local marsh and get to see how the cranberries grow, machinery that is used, and actually step into the marsh and feel and see the cranberries growing," says Schroeder.

Information about the Warrens Cranberry Fest can be found online at www.cranfest.com.



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