

Day 3 – Mississippi River Run

We started the day with breakfast at the hotel and said goodbye to several couples that had to head home early, so we had a smaller group. The day was a little foggy at the beginning as we headed across the Mississippi River to La Crescent to Lock and Dam #7. Our guide was an employee of 7 years, "Doyle". After many years in the armed services, Doyle came to work at Lock and Dam #7. We watched as he started to fill the lock, and then drained the excess water. He explained how the barges of all sizes are processed through the lock, as well as smaller boats – even kayaks, and the order that boats are processed through. It's not first come, first served! The dam has a crucial roll – not in trying to prevent floods, as we all thought – but in maintaining a river depth of 9 feet. Then we crossed the lock and entered the dam. The internal workings were most interesting. The chains used to operate the gates had links of about 2 feet! And Doyle assured us, that if we fell in close to a roller gate, that we indeed would be squeezed through the 6" opening! We ended with a look at the museum that held displays and interesting data.

Next stop after a short drive down the river was the Driftless Area Education & Visitor Center in Lansing, Iowa. A beautiful building with interesting displays of area animals and birds and wonderful vistas from the porch. Excellent restrooms are always appreciated.

The GRR then took us to Effigy Mounds National Monument and Information Center in Harper's Ferry, Iowa. What an interesting place! We were escorted to an area nearby that had three mounds and were privileged to have two gentlemen give us information on the mounds and the people who built them. One was a college student, working as a forest ranger for the summer. He knew his subject and had lots of information. He'll make a good teacher. Then the other gentleman took over. Kurt Sampson is an archeologist specializing in effigy mounds in Wisconsin and is writing a book on all his findings over 20 some years. He was able to answer all our questions and was quite enlightening.

Our even smaller group of five cars, made our way back to Prairie du Chien and Huckleberry's and enjoyed a delicious lunch together, then headed home.

Thank you Marcy and Jim Hotz, and Mike and Mary Jo Schweiger for designing such an entertaining ride for us!

Jan Bright

PS. To those of you that I mentioned Gwenyn Hill Farm in Wales, the website is gwenynhillfarm.com They have an all-organic farm with CSA options and a farm store on site, and right now, fresh flowers you can cut.