

## Illinois considers putting spaceport near Quad Cities

The Quad Cities International Airport in Moline, Ill., is conducting a study to determine if it can support a commercial spaceport.

Spaceports are critical for space exploration and commercial spaceflight. They could be used for launching rockets, landing spacecraft, satellite deployment, research, and tourism.

Space tourism is expected to grow in the 21st century. NPR Illinois reports that airport is considering a “horizontal launch” site, and only 10 such spaceports have been licensed by the FAA.

“With a limited number of certificates being issued for spaceports, we want to seize the opportunity while it exists,” reads a Quad Cities airport blog. It may sound a little silly, but [we] believe it’s short-sighted to think we’ve reached the peak of aviation.”

The envisioned spaceport would be roughly three and a half hours west of Chicago and four hours north of St. Louis, but it could be a vital resource for both metros. Some lawmakers say it could be an economic boost for not only the Quad Cities region, but the whole Midwest.

Nexstar affiliate WHBF reports the study to determine spaceport prospects is being funded through a \$283,500 grant, 90% from the Illinois Department of Transportation.

– fox2now.com



Photo: South Dakota DNR

## Destinations seek to harvest ag resources

**Agri-tourism.**

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**Agtourism.**

**However you label it, this specialty has grown exponentially and that is likely to continue. Here are some examples from across the country.**

**South Dakota** celebrates its heritage by offering a range of agricultural tourism experiences.

Some visitors spend time on farms and ranches, while others come to experience world class hunting and fishing in the Black Hills.

Dave Ciani and his wife Teri have built their award-winning outfitting business to give visitors unique experiences.

Creating habitat has been key as they’ve built their own wildlife oasis to welcome hunters and anglers throughout the year.

The couple’s High Prairie Outfitters in Spearfish started two years ago when

the husband-and-wife team bought 300 acres that were habitat ready. “We have turkey hunting, we have antelope hunting at the end of August, early September. We’re coming now into pheasant and upland waterfowl, deer, and the upland waterfowl ... to the end of January,” Ciani said.

Pennington County Commissioner Gary Drewes said agriculture and tourism go hand-in-hand.

“Tourism is critical to the state of South Dakota, and it fits right along with our number one industry being agriculture. Quite frankly, in the hills, the number one industry may be tourism at this point in time.”

– sdpr.org

Local leaders in **Washington State** look at Yakima County’s 2,952 farms, and they don’t just see agriculture operations that grow fruits, vegetables and grains. They see tourist attractions.

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## Destinations harvest agricultural resources

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They see opportunities for out-of-towners to hike, ride horses or snowshoe through rural farmlands — or take educational tours, play in corn mazes, go on hayrides, pick their own fresh produce.

Presenters at last month's State of Washington Tourism Conference at the Yakima Convention and Event Center outlined a colorful palette of ideas for promoting the region through agricultural experiences.

Sherry Rupert, CEO of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association, added one more:

"It's a prime time for Indigenous tourism because people are wanting to travel again," Rupert said. "You can't experience this nation without experiencing the First Peoples of this nation."

Yakima County officials promise to revisit calls for loosening zoning rules for agritourism businesses.

— *yakimaherald.com*

The **Linn County (Iowa)** Board of Supervisors last month unanimously amended an ordinance to streamline ideas for agricultural tourism in the county, looking to spur destinations that blend the economic benefits of tourism with Iowa's agricultural destinations.

The new ordinance streamlines the approval process for most agritourism operations, reducing off-site parking requirements and reducing or eliminating application requirements.

The Linn County Planning & Development Department worked on the changes with the county

Food Systems Council and Linn County farmers who offer activities on their property.

Agricultural experiences include but are not limited to you-pick operations, corn mazes, tractor rides, food services and special events.

"The time and expertise shared by local farmers and agritourism business owners with (county) staff has greatly improved our product, and I would like to thank everyone who helped us in this process," Linn County Planning and Development Director Charlie Nichols said in a statement.

— *thegazette.com*

In **Maryland**, the Montgomery County Council has introduced a zoning text amendment that could allow farms in the to add up to 10 "accessory structures" on their properties for overnight stays.

Marc Potash, the owner of a 300-acre property in Beallsville, said: "Imagine going to the Ritz-Carlton or the Four Seasons" where each unit would be "like a small cabin," but cushier. "Like any high-end hotel" but "not over the top."

Potash is a tech executive who has become involved in rye production and is in the process of establishing a distillery on the property he calls Sugarloaf Farm. He proposed the

zoning change, explaining that it would allow farmers to have "an additional revenue source, and then you could also combine it with education too."

According to county documents, under the zoning text amendment, overnight stays would be permitted as part of the activities related to agricultural tourism like hay rides, corn mazes, educational tours and workshops.

— *wtop.com*

In **Michigan**, the inaugural Michigan AgriTourism Summit has been announced for May 8, 2024, in Traverse City. The one-day event aims to draw together Michigan farmers, municipal officials, and rural community stakeholders in an attempt to foster growth in the state's agritourism industry.

Summit organizers cite the economic power of Michigan's agriculture and tourism industries but attest that there is still plenty of room to grow for both, and especially if and when they overlap. The sharing of best practices among Summit attendees will be at the forefront of the inaugural event.

Sponsors are Michigan State University Extension, Traverse City Tourism, Northern Michigan College, 9/10 News, and Promote Michigan.

— *secondwavemedia.com*



**Lavender Hill Farm in Boyne City, Mich.**

Photo: Rural Innovation Exchange