



Our country has a rich history of immigrants and exploring the Amana Colonies in Iowa was such a learning experience for me. This serene area of the state drew me in with its historical buildings and rich history of a lifestyle that lasted for 91 years. Today, the colonies is a tourist destination that takes you back in time to a period when people were seeking the American Dream. A visit to the Amana Colonies was not only fun, but informative, and a place I would encourage everyone to stop and explore.



ANTIQUe SHOPPING

10 Looking for that perfect piece of nostalgia to take home with you from Iowa? With five antique stores in Amana, you will no doubt wander for hours and then go back again before deciding on what you want to buy. Each store is unique and carries a wide array of interesting, and sometimes confusing, items (depending on how old you are). I had fun going through each shop and trying to figure out what some of the items may have been used for. Good luck choosing your favorite.



PLACES TO GRAB A DRINK

9 Wow! There are so many places to satisfy your thirst in Amana. The main street has four wineries, one brewery and multiple places to grab a coffee. I enjoyed the morning at the Amana Colonies Bakery and Cafe with a delicious latte, later that day I grabbed lunch and had a wonderful local root beer and I wrapped up my evening at the Fireside Winery in the Village with a wonderfully crafted wine tasting. With so many places to choose from, you will never find yourself dehydrated.



LET'S EAT

8 The communal kitchen was the heart of the colonies and you have a choice of restaurants where you can eat family style or on your own. If you are there in season, be sure to sign up for a dinner in Middle Amana at the Communal Kitchen and Coopershop. This is an experience like no other. If you are unable to grab a ticket, head to Amana and the Ox Yoke Inn, where you will be served Old World German fare family style and get to know the others at your table. If you prefer to eat with just those in your group, there are plenty of places to grab a bite.



AMANA MEAT SHOP AND SMOKEHOUSE

7 Let your nose lead you to this amazing place on a backstreet in Amana. With such delectable scents, you will be drawn into the shop where you will find an amazing array of smoked meats. Case after case is filled with brats, steaks, jerky, cheeses and so many great items for your grill. I truly wished that I was part of the community so I would be able to have these goodies at my disposal everyday.



COMMUNITY CHURCHES



HEAD TO THE GENERAL STORES



QUILTING SHOPS



TAKE IN THE WOOLEN MILL HISTORY



FURNITURE SHOPPING



AMANA HERITAGE MUSEUM

6 Each of the villages has its own church, though you should do your best to get to the Amana Community Church in Homestead. If you have booked a tour through the Amana Heritage Society, you will be greeted by a guide and told all about the fascinating history of the colonists' religious life at the Community Church Museum. Sit on a bench in this simply constructed brick church, from 1865, and learn all about the seven Amana village churches that make up the Community of True Inspiration.

5 The Amana Colonies is home to two general stores, one located in Amana the other in High Amana. Today they are very different from each other since the village of Amana has become a more touristy area. For an amazing array of items on two different floors, head to the General Store in Amana. If you can't find a gift or christmas item here, then they just don't have it anywhere. To get a feel for what the stores felt like years ago, head to High Amana and the General Store that was built there in 1858 of sandstone and still retains all the original character that it was built with. There are beautiful tin ceilings, original store shelves and even the proprietor who grew up right there in town. Here you will find a different collection of unique items to buy.

4 If you are a quilter, you may think you have died and gone to heaven when you step into one of the two quilting shops in the colonies. In Amana, you have to stop at the Heritage Designs Quilting & Needlework store. They have tons of beautiful quilts on display, but I have never seen such a collection of fabric in my life. They also take great care in helping you find the perfect cloth for your next project. After that, head to Fern Hill Gifts & Quilts in South Amana. There are gifts on the first floor, but if you head upstairs, you again will be stunned by the amount of fabric available. I absolutely loved the fabric designs by the store owner's daughter, which were so vibrant and captivating.

3 You need to head to the end of main street to get the full impact of what the woolen mills have done for Amana. Once you know the history of the Amana woolen mills, you will be even more impressed with what they have done for the economy. You will want to explore the amazing hotel that they have created from a mill that had burned before watching the weaving process at the only active mill remaining in the state of Iowa. Finally, head next door to Warped & Woven to marvel at all the items you can buy made at the mill.

2 If you want to have one of the most quality pieces of furniture ever made, you'll want to stop at one of the two furniture shops in the colonies. At Amana Furniture & Clock Shop, you will be able to view the making of all kinds of furniture and then head to the store and take in the incredibly beautiful pieces of furniture and clocks. Next, head to South Amana and Schanz Furniture & Refinishing. If you are lucky enough to find Norman Schanz, the founder, working in the workshop, be sure to stop and visit. At 85 years old, he is proud to share his story and talk about the industry today. You no doubt will be moved to take home one of the incredible pieces he has created.

1 The first stop for any trip to the Amana Colonies should be the Heritage Museum. To understand the history of why this German community came to America and how their religion formed the lifestyle they lived, you will begin in the original schoolhouse and view a 22-minute video. Continue into the doctor's residence next door to learn more about their 300-year heritage, how Amana Refrigeration came to be and how the war affected the community. Be sure to stop and ask questions as most of the guides are residents that grew up in the colonies. They are proud of the community they live in and are happy to share their stories.