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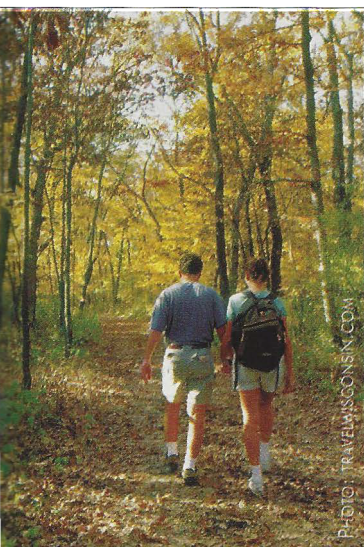


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Autumn Harvest

An art tour, rare architecture, cranes and fall foliage create an Octoberfest of another sort in Wisconsin

■ LINDA GARTZ

Mother Nature is

known to wield a colorful autumn palette across the continent, and Wisconsin benefits wonderfully from this gorgeous kaleidoscope - but fall isn't the only art show on display this October in the Badger State. As you'll discover, man may not be nature's equal - but how we love to try!

If you want to tickle both your artistic and nature-loving muses, drive a mere three hours north of Chicago to the area around Baraboo, Wisconsin. At this year's Fall Art Tour, you can wend your way through nature's glory as you visit local

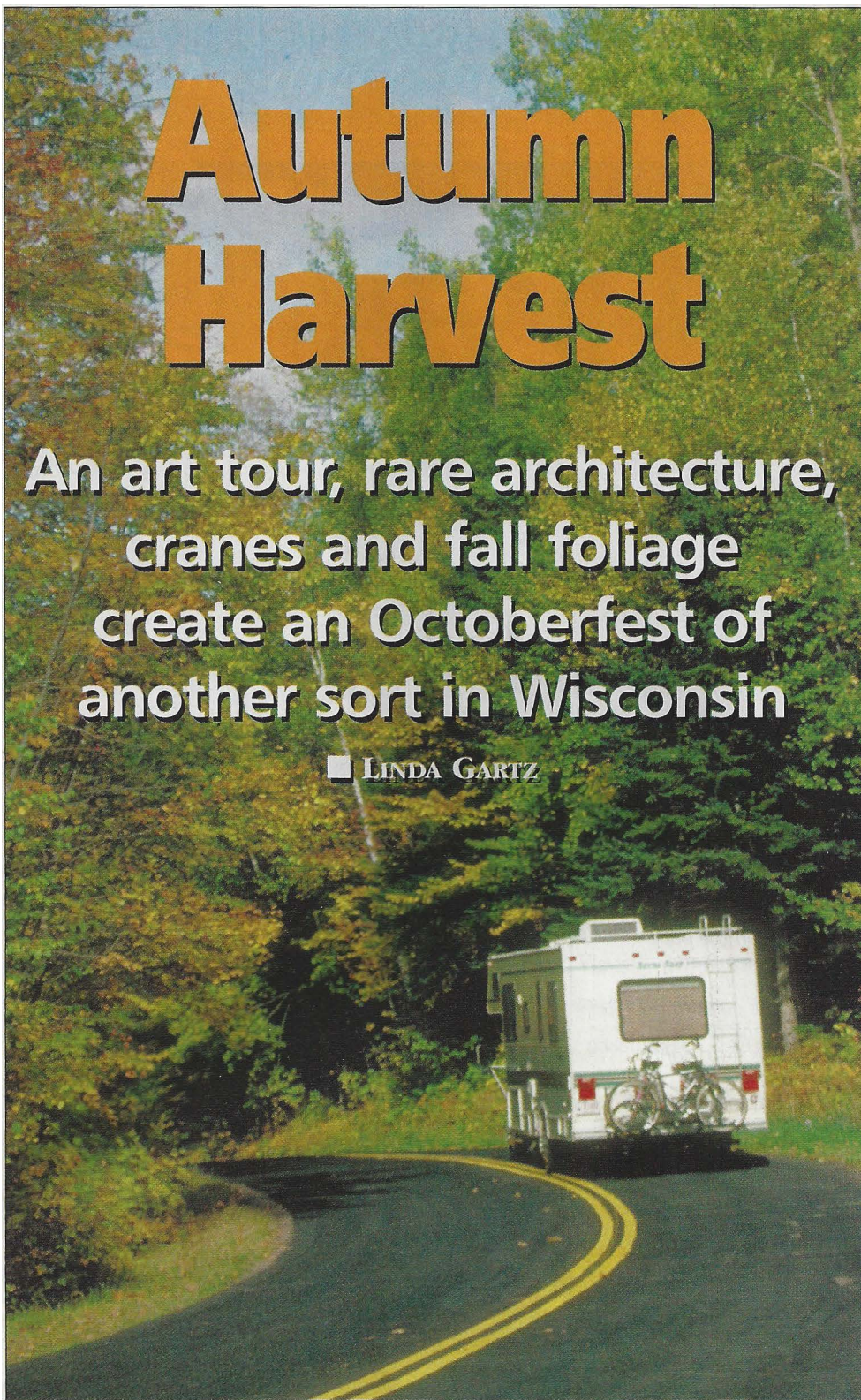


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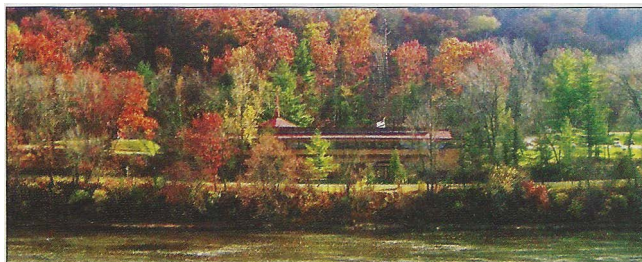
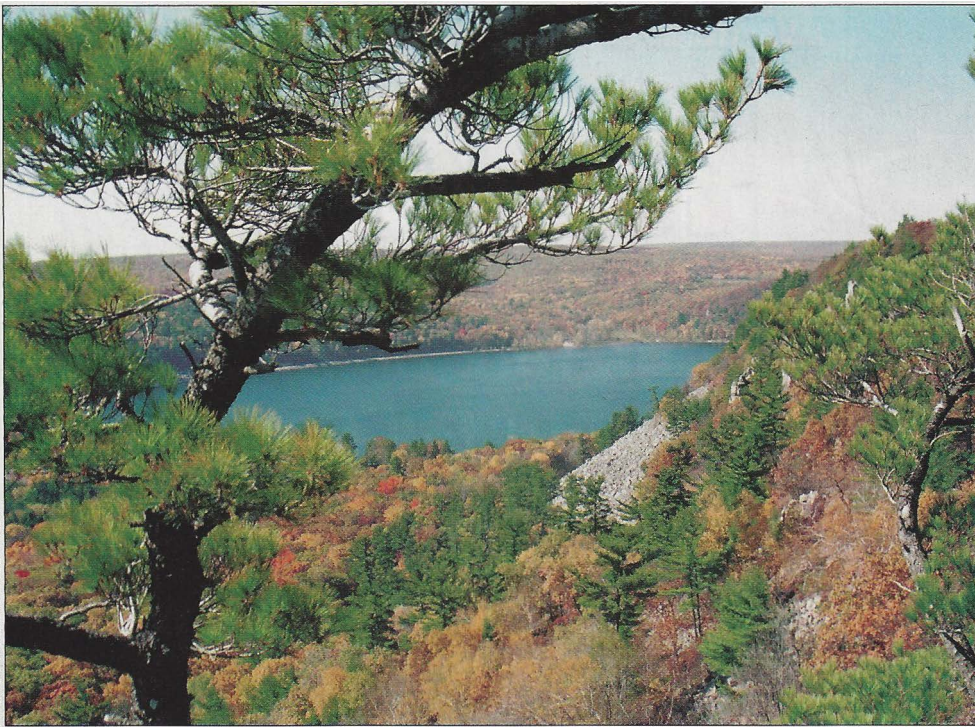


PHOTO: TALIESIN PRESERVATION, INC.

Wisconsin's backroads and byways burst with fall color. The Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center sits hard on the banks of the Wisconsin River. Take in the autumn colors on an easy hike at Devil's Lake. Artist Leah Griffith Boyce specializes in portraits and still lifes.

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Devil's Lake is a popular recreation destination—and the most visited state park in Wisconsin (above). Also located in the park is Parfrey's Glen State Natural Area—a spectacular gorge cut into the south flank of the Baraboo Hills (top, right). A hike up to Devil's Doorway affords sweeping views of 360-acre Devil's Lake (right). Begin your Fall Art Tour in historic downtown Baraboo, where many storefronts look much like they did at the turn of the century (below).

artists at work. Nearby Devil's Lake State Park offers hiking and panoramic views of fall's palette. Just north of the park, the International Crane Foundation is home to a unique collection of rare birds, and down the road a piece in Spring Green, architecture blends harmoniously with the landscape at Frank Lloyd Wright's



PHOTOS: LINDA GARTZ

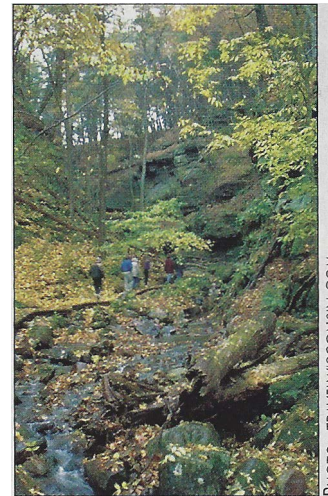


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former home.

The Fall Art Tour takes place the third full weekend in October (this year, it runs October 20-22). The tour is sponsored by four Wisconsin towns, each within 30 minutes of each other: Baraboo, Spring Green/Dodgeville, and Mineral Point. The featured artists work in materials as diverse as metal, glass, ceramics, wood, textiles and mixed media on paper. Each town (Spring Green and Dodgeville are combined) has a tour headquarters, where you can pick up a map with a brief description and sample photo of each artist's work; the Fall Art Tour Headquarters in Baraboo is at Cornerstone Gallery.

What's cool about this tour is that it really takes you off the beaten path, around and down Wisconsin's backroads and byways as it leads you to the homes and studios of local artists. Diana Johnston, one of the organizers of the tour and an artist herself, said it best: "People love finding artists in their own homes, living their dream, doing what they love."

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Don't let that "back-roads and byways" part scare you, however. This year the art tour is adding GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates for every artist's location — so you won't get lost if you have one of those nifty gadgets. Even if you do get "a little lost" among the brilliant fall trees and foliage, you really won't mind — for fall foliage junkies, you get to enjoy nature's own art extravaganza as you explore a diverse selection of arts and crafts emerging from the human mind and soul.

If you end up exploring some of the artists' creations in the area around Spring Green, be sure to take a detour to Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's Wisconsin home. Recognized as one of the greatest architects of our time, Wright believed that in order for people to be happy, they had to live in harmony with nature. He created buildings in the Prairie Style, low-slung structures that fit harmoniously with their flat Midwest landscapes. When you see Taliesin, with its low-pitched roofs, overhanging eaves and horizontal lines, you realize he was onto something — the house seems to have sprung from the same earth that gave us the backdrop of the fall-colored land behind, blending seamlessly into the surrounding countryside. The fall public tour schedule at Taliesin runs through the end of October and includes a variety of tours.

For a walk through the architecture nature has wrought, head to Baraboo and Devil's Lake State Park — claimed to be the most popular state park in Wisconsin. Carved and created first by colliding continents 1½ billion years ago, then sculpted and filled by the movement and melting of glaciers, 500-foot-high bluffs rise on each side of the small eponymous lake, which covers only 360 acres.

Devil's Lake Campground has 407 sites, 121 with electricity, and fresh water is available at the dump station. For fall color weekends, it is recommended to make reservations several months in advance; weekdays are more flexible.

Devil's Lake has more than 29 miles of hiking trails, from easy to strenuous. Climbing the park's bluffs will give you not only a nice endorphin buzz from a good cardio workout, it will make your heart leap when you get that bird's-eye view of the lake sparkling hundreds of feet below, surrounded by a dense carpet of trees ablaze in reds and golds.

Pick up a trail guide as you enter the park and decide which level of exertion is right for you. When I visited with my family last fall, we took the East Bluff Trail, a favorite because it's rated a medium-effort trail and leads to spectacular views of the fall-painted trees below. You may get winded, even if you go to aerobics classes regularly, but there are plenty of places to stop and catch your breath.

Near the end, the trail divides and you can either challenge yourself on a steeper trail leading to Balanced Rock or take another direction to gawk at Devil's Doorway. Each of these amazing rock formations consists of precariously positioned boulders, worn to their present shape by five millennia of freezing and thawing during the last glacial period.

If you're not prepared for the escalating hikes, there are other trails that follow flat terrain through the state park's forested areas. In any case, wear good hiking shoes, and take your time if the trail is wet — it gets slippery.

Another of my favorite hikes is through Parfrey's Glen Trail, accessed approximately four miles east of the park. A "glen" is the Scottish word for a narrow, rocky ravine, and when you walk this moderately easy .8-mile trail you may feel as if you've been transported to the mythical world of Brigadoon. The walls of the glen reach as high as 100 feet in some places. Moist and shaded, the glen supports yellow birch, mountain maple and red elder, as well as ferns and several rare species of plants like cliff goldenrod. It's magical to see much of this flora growing directly out of the sandstone and quartzite walls, dappled in sunshine that

trickles in from above.

Instead of looking down, as you did at the tops of the bluffs, here you can look up through the gaps opening to the sky, and catch glimpses of glorious fall color framed by the rocky walls. A mountain-like stream gurgles along the bottom, enhancing the serenity of being enveloped by the cool green and autumn golden of the glen.

For views of a decidedly different flavor, visit the International Crane Foundation (ICF), about 30 minutes north of Devil's Lake State Park. At ICF, you can marvel at the extravagant plumage, audacious colors and wild primordial calls of the world's largest birds capable of flight. Cranes originate on five of our Earth's continents, but the only place in the world where you can see — and hear — all 15 species of cranes in one spot is at the ICF.

Cranes, Devil's Lake, Art Tour, Taliesin — the proximity of these destinations to one another makes for a long, relaxing weekend with lots of options. When you move on, you'll feel refreshed and fulfilled after indulging your senses in artistic and natural beauty. ■