



The WTA

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## Mason City—The Music Man's Home

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If you've seen the stage production or the popular motion picture *The Music Man* you know that although the production sings about "trouble right here in river city," it's good old fashioned standards and plenty of citizen aggressiveness that make all come out well in the end. That can be your achievement—all coming out that well as you take a trip to the town that inspired the Warner Bros. motion picture *The Music Man*—Mason City, Iowa.

Mason City is the hometown of Meredith Willson, the internationally renowned composer and creator of *The Music Man*, as well as the setting for his musical. One of the first places you will want to visit is Willson's boyhood home, where he was born and spent the early years of his life soaking up middle American culture. Then travel back to 1912, at the Music Man Square, where you will step into a streetscape with its ice cream parlor/soda fountain and other nostalgic places made famous in the Warner Bros. production. Here you will find Willson memorabilia and items related to his creative musical career. Willson also wrote the musical *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, which became a Broadway success in 1960. His other compositions include *Seventy-Six Trombones*, *It's Beginning To Look A Lot like Christmas* and *May The Good Lord Bless You And Keep You*. The streetscape is free but there is an admission to the museum.



'Lady of the Lake' offers passengers a picturesque ride on Clear Lake.

Photo courtesy of Iowa Tourism Office

Another well-known entertainer grew up in Mason City—Bil Baird who was a master puppeteer. His shows appeared world-wide, at world's fairs, in motion pictures, and on numerous television programs. You'll see a large collection of his work at the Charles H. MacNider Art Museum in Mason City, including the puppets featured in the motion picture *The Sound of Music*. Besides puppets, you will also find American art, a range of ceramics, films, and special events at the museum.

At the local airport, the Kinney Pioneer Museum lets you experience life on the Iowa frontier. Here, visit a one-room school house, blacksmith shop, old jail, and if you drop in on weekends, you'll see demonstrations of pioneer crafts and trades.

As much as you will enjoy these attractions, there is much more at Mason City than just museums and the magic of a mighty motion picture. Here you will also find the last remaining hotel designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Six hotels were designed by Wright and Mason City claims the only one still standing. The hotel is undergoing restoration during 2009 and is slated to be completed by the end of 2010.

Wright's designs were the most famous of the Prairie School style of architecture popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and common to the mid-west. You can visit Wright's residential home where a new architectural interpretative center is expected to be completed by June 2010 to help visitors understand this unique style of design. It is just north of the National Historic District, which is the largest collection of Prairie School designed homes on a unified site. You can tour a residential home and watch a slide show of Prairie School design.

Mason City has a myriad of things to intrigue, entertain, and attract you. For a nostalgia moment, if you are a devotee to the world of music, over by the airport you will find Clear Lake and the Surf Ballroom. This is the final performance location of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and "The Big Bopper" Richardson before their fateful trip on February 3, 1959. Also at Clear Lake, wander through the nearly two acres of Fort Custer Maze, which replicates an 1850 Western fort. There are bridges, a lookout tower, a one-of-a-kind wooden maze, and eight sections to help you find your way out if the twists and turns are too much for you.



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You know with the name of Clear Lake, the community must be near a body of water. From mid-May through September a picturesque paddlewheel boat offers dancing to live music or a relaxing evening sitting and admiring a beautiful sunset.

About 25 miles north of Mason City you can try your luck at the Diamond Jo Casino at Northwood. The casino features more than 900 slots, black jack, craps, roulette, and pai gow poker.

Band music in Mason City began gaining popularity in 1928 when the first North Iowa Band Festival was held to commemorate the town's 75th anniversary. The city still hosts this annual event honoring the musical culture and the townspeople still feature bands for the youth as *The Music Man's* Professor Harold Hill fostered.

In *The Music Man*, Professor Harold Hill brought music and joy to the people of River City. Today, the people of Mason City can bring music and joy to visitors.

To retrieve specific contact information, visit the Destinations section of [www.worldtravelers.org](http://www.worldtravelers.org) ■

## Set Up Your WTA Online Account and Stay Informed

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Also, by setting up your WTA online account, you will automatically be signed up to receive *Travel Talk*®, WTA's e-newsletter that keeps you informed of new member benefits, any benefit changes, and what is happening with WTA during the months that *The WTA Wise Traveler*® isn't published. ■

## TRAVEL ENJOYMENT

Traveling should be exciting, enjoyable, memorable, and most of all ... hassle-free. Here are some suggestions to help make this possible. This is for general information only.

- When airplane air pressure changes bother your ears, besides chewing gum, what else is recommended?
  - Hold hand over mouth and nose and blow
  - Swallow and yawn
  - Both of the above
- According to some experts, which location has the best odds for roulette gambling?
  - French casinos
  - Atlantic City casinos
  - Nevada casinos
- What is usually the best way to obtain cash when traveling to Europe?
  - Use ATMs
  - Take travelers checks
  - Carry large bills
- What day usually has the smallest airport lines?
  - Tuesday
  - Thursday
  - Saturday
- With only a small inconvenience, what will help protect a man's wallet from pickpockets?
  - Put wallet in sock pinned to pocket
  - Carry wallet inside shirt
  - Close pocket top with safety pin to make opening small and difficult for pickpocket to insert hand
- When traveling abroad, what is a good way to be sure you can be reached quickly if an emergency arises at home?
  - Always leave itinerary with neighbors
  - Leave forwarding address at each hotel
  - Use free State Department trip registration
- When traveling abroad, what is a good way to get to know the laws of the country you're visiting?
  - Use U.S. State Department web site
  - Ask friends who have visited there
  - Check U.S. Embassy upon arrival
- What is the best way to avoid custom problems with foreign-made items you take from home on your trip?
  - Take along receipts of purchases
  - Have items stamped by customs in visiting countries
  - Register items with U.S. Customs before leaving
- Items manufactured in Cuba:
  - May be brought into the U.S. if purchased in a third country
  - Must be declared and import tax paid
  - May not be brought into the U.S. regardless of where they are purchased
- When packing, what is a good way to reduce wrinkles in clothing?
  - Lie all items flat
  - Roll items
  - Place easily wrinkled items between layers of heavier items

*Key to Answers: 1c, 2b, 3a, 4c, 5c, 6c, 7a, 8c, 9c, 10b*

## Don't Get Soaked When It Comes to Water Damage

Water damage claims hit the American public hard each year, with 25 percent of homeowner-related insurance property losses involving claims related to water or freezing. These claims result in an estimated \$6.8 billion worth of property damage each year, according to the Institute for Business & Home Safety. WTA members have the opportunity to apply to purchase a MetLife Auto & Home® policy at special group discounted rates to help protect their property from water damage.

Here are some water damage prevention tips from MetLife:

- Check all the windows in your household and ensure that the seals are tight. Replace caulk as necessary to avoid water seepage.
- Make certain that your tub and shower make the grade—inspect your shower stall for leaks, and inspect and replace old or brittle caulking. In addition, check your sink and toilet. Water stains around the toilet may be an indication of damage to the rim and tank seals.

Haven't taken out a MetLife Auto & Home policy, yet? Don't worry—it's not too late. You have the opportunity to apply to purchase quality group insurance at special group rates that are designed to save you money, with hassle-free payment options, and personalized service. A variety of policies are available to you through this program, including auto, mobile home, recreational vehicle, and personal excess liability ("Umbrella").

For more information, free insurance reviews, and no-obligation premium quotes, call the toll-free MetLife Benefits Line at 800-888-2508 or visit [www.worldtravelers.org/metlife.asp](http://www.worldtravelers.org/metlife.asp). Be sure to mention Group Code **BGX**. ■

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- **WTA Travel Insurance**
- **WTA Travel Destination Info**
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- **WTA Travel Tips**
- **WTA MasterCard® Credit Card**
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- **Lodging Discounts**
- **WTA Theme Park & Zoo Discounts**
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- **WTA Movie Discounts**

*You love to travel...  
You love a great deal...*

**Good thing you  
belong to WTA**



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- Save on car and vacation condo rentals, and cruises. Book airfare, too.
- Free Destination Guides help you plan your trip like a pro.

***Be a wise traveler and get the best value for your travel dollars with the WTA Online Travel Booking Service.***

*Savings so great, you can't afford to stay home.*