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Dittmar Farm among tri-state pumpkin patches to pick from

BY JIM SWENSON jim.swenson@thmedia.com Oct 8, 2017



Nikki Schreiber and her son Desmond Schreiber, 2, both of Galena, Ill., look for pumpkins at Dittmar Farms & Orchard in Elizabeth, Ill.

Jessica Reilly Telegraph Herald

Buy No



The winding and rolling car ride over to Dittmar Farms & Orchard's Pumpkin Patch about six miles northeast of Elizabeth, Ill., can be breathtaking this time of year.

"When the leaves start changing, it's worth coming out just for the view," said Rick Dittmar, co-owner of the 165-acre farm.

Then, you get to pick pumpkins. Or take a hayride. Get lost in a corn maze. Eat, drink and be merry during weekends in October.

Rick Dittmar

Contributed

Dittmar's is one of several family-centered tri-state area destinations where people can enjoy a cool day in a rural setting up through Halloween.

harvest fest

Event: Harves Fest

Time/date: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Saturday, Oct. 16

Location: Camp Albrecht
Acres, 14837 Sherrill Road,
Sherrill, Iowa.

Cost: \$5 per car.

A camp fundraiser featuring live music, food, craft vendors, games and a petting zoo.

"We always try to come up with something new, something outside of the box," said Dittmar, 66. "We've added pony rides this year. And, there's a Drive an Antique Tractor. We have three antique tractors that people can try out. We're hoping to also offer tethered balloon rides."

His wife, Peg; son, Mike; and daughter-in-law, Jonna, also run the operation.

They have 10 varieties of pumpkins in their three-acre field. Among them are extra large and flat ones; gray, white and striped ones.

"Our sales of pumpkin bread and doughnuts are going really well," Dittmar said.

The Pumpkin Patch started four years ago, after the family had been hosting fall family gatherings in previous years.

"We only have 50 tillable acres," Mike said. "We were looking for profitable ways to use it."

Last year, they added a covered pavilion.

"Some people like to come out just to sit under the pavilion, talk and eat food," Rick said.

Apples have been a big part of the farm since before pumpkins arrived. There are 100 producing apple trees. They planted 600 more this past year.

"We started the pumpkin patch to get a market for the apples, but the pumpkin patch took off," Mike said.

Area pumpkin patches

Dittmar Farms & Orchard

Address: 256 S. Grebner Road, Elizabeth, Ill.

Years in existence: 4.

Dates open to public: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sundays, weekends through Oct. 29.

Special features: An about 25-minute hayride that goes over a couple of creeks, a two-acre corn maze and, new this year, pony rides and Drive an Antique Tractor.

Comment: "People from the city don't come out to sit in their hotels. They come out to do something. And, that's what we're offering here." — Rick Dittmar, one of three owners.

Admission: \$8.

Contact: dittmarfarms.com or 815-218-0597.

Papa's Pumpkin Patch

Address: 16679 360th Ave., Bellevue, Iowa.

Years in existence: 9.

Dates open to public: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily through Nov. 1.

Special features: Pumpkin bowling, pirate ship, barrel rides, hay ride, petting zoo and homemade bat cave for the kids.

Comment: “People can just bring the kids, get out of the house and enjoy the day. It’s free. You don’t have to buy anything from me.” — Rick Budde, co-owner.

Admission: Free.

Contact: tinyurl.com/y8ly5f6n or 563-872-4728.

Schuster’s Pumpkin Patch

Address: 7541 Schueller Heights Road, Dubuque.

Years in existence: 18.

Dates open to public: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays, through Oct. 29.

Special features: Five-acre corn maze, bounce house, small corn box for kids, pumpkin blaster and a cannon that shoots pumpkins at a specified target located in a field.

Comment: “Most people really like the ride to the pumpkin patch, which takes them to where they can pick a pumpkin. It’s just a nice family fun day.” — Pam Schuster, co-owner.

Admission: Free. Hayrides are \$4 for adults, \$2 for kids ages 6-12 and free for ages 5 and younger.

Contact: schusterspumpkinpatch.com or 563-556-2879.

Vesperman Farms

Address: 8149 Stage Road, Lancaster, Wis.

Years in existence: 14.

Dates open to public: Noon-6 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sundays.

Special features: Five-acre corn maze, mini-corn maze, feed farm animals, barnyard activities, watch pumpkins launched from catapult and air cannon.

Comment: “We offer hours and hours of unique family fun with our air cannons, pumpkin catapult and zipline.” — Kyle Vesperman, owner.

Admission: \$8, free for children younger than 5 .

Contact: vespermanfarms.com or 608-723-2712.

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