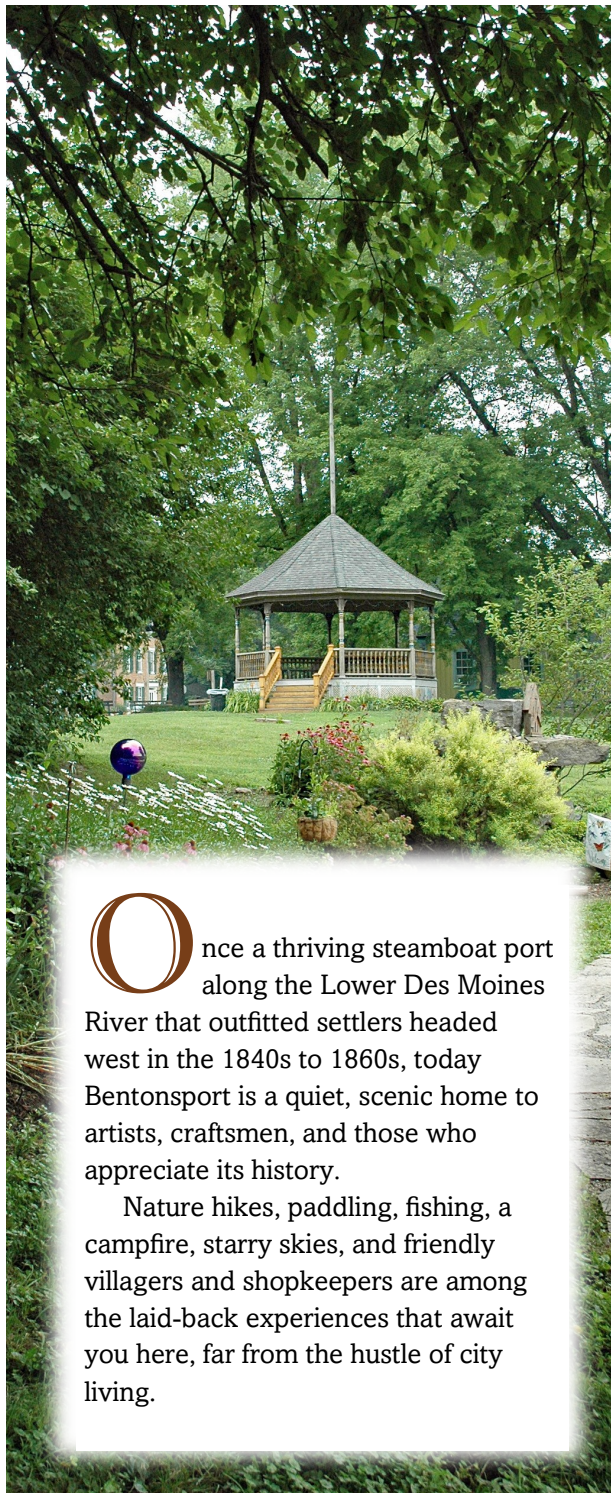


# BENTONSPORT

National Historic District

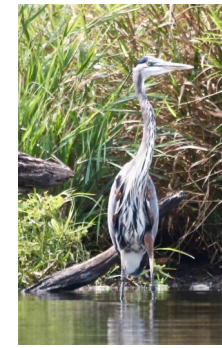
Notable Steamboat  
River Port

Visit our 1840s village in  
a peaceful, beautiful  
setting along the Lower  
Des Moines River



Once a thriving steamboat port along the Lower Des Moines River that outfitted settlers headed west in the 1840s to 1860s, today Bentonsport is a quiet, scenic home to artists, craftsmen, and those who appreciate its history.

Nature hikes, paddling, fishing, a campfire, starry skies, and friendly villagers and shopkeepers are among the laid-back experiences that await you here, far from the hustle of city living.



## Things to do

When you hear water running over rocks, detect an eagle's peal, and see a flash of red fur on the riverbank; you know you're in Bentonsport. Wildlife is just as much at home here as you will be.

**Paddle your canoe/kayak** in the Lower Des Moines River and watch herons, kingfishers and raccoons fish along the banks. Under bridges witness the aerial feats of swifts. Near a snag, you may startle wood ducks and their brood. If the river is too swift or low, Lacey Lake and Lake Sugema are close by.

**Pick up a copy of the Bentonsport Self-Guided Tour and stroll** through the village as you read about the historical homes, commercial buildings, churches, and schools still used.

Inside rock foundations of a mill pond and its mill is the **Rose and Shade Gardens**, created and maintained by volunteers for nearly 45 years.

A place not to miss is **Tony Sanders' Indian Artifact Museum**. He has collected more than 5,000 arrowheads and artifacts, as well as prehistoric mammoth bones. Even more fascinating are the hand-tooled mosaic cases and mountings Sanders has made from native woods.

**Bentonsport Timber trailhead** and parking are just northeast of the Presbyterian Church at the hill crest. This trail winds through 60 acres of prairie and woodland and alongside **a fishing pond**.

A few **Villages Folk School** instructors of artisan skills teach in Bentonsport. If you are interested, reserve your place in these enjoyable classes on the Internet at [villagesfolkschool.com](http://villagesfolkschool.com).



For birders, Bentonsport is a few miles from **Lake Sugema-Lacey Keosauqua Bird Conservation Area** where 250 bird species live, migrate or visit.



## Shops



On the north side of Hawk Drive, **Iron and Lace**, **Sweet Maple Mercantile**, **Greef General Store with Addie May Fudge**, and **Treen Woodworks** offer delightful pottery; ironwork; fiber-wood-glass artworks, antiques, fudge in several flavors, and handcrafted wood and iron gifts for that special memento from your trip. Down the street to the southwest is **Sisters Vintage & More**, on the first floor of the Odd Fellows Building. Antiques, vintage items, collectibles, and rare finds are here.

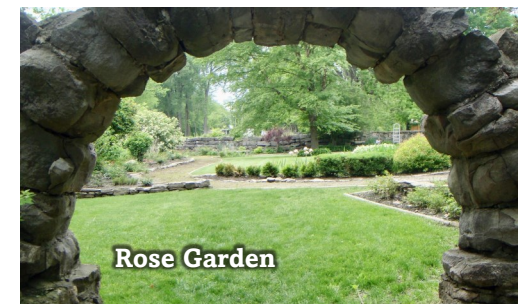


**Indian Artifact Museum**

## Fishing



The **Des Moines** River is home to channel catfish, flathead catfish, goldeye, northern pike, paddlefish, saugeye, shortnose gar, shovelnose sturgeon, smallmouth bass, walleye and white bass. **Lake Sugema** is stocked with largemouth bass, walleye, bluegill, black crappie, channel catfish, and saugeye.



**Rose Garden**



# Lodging

Bentonsport guest accommodations are open throughout the year and are spacious and comfortable. Reservations are recommended.

## Mason House Inn



Built in 1846 by Mormon craftsmen to serve steamboat travelers. It has also been used as a hospital three different times, and was a station on the Underground Railroad. Nine rooms with private baths. Caboose available for overnight stays. Wi-Fi and a full breakfast included. Ideal for reunions, retreats, murder mysteries and get aways. Contact: 319-592-3133 or email [stay@themasonhouseinn.com](mailto:stay@themasonhouseinn.com).

## Alexander's Cottage

This 1840s story and a half home was completely renovated into a two bedroom, one and one-half bath guest cottage. Decorated with antiques, the cozy accommodation includes full kitchen with open living and dining area, Wi-Fi and Smart TV. Relax in quiet surroundings on the deck or front screened porch. To rent, call 319-592-3152 or visit [alexandersbentonsportcottage.com](http://alexandersbentonsportcottage.com).



# Facilities

## Bentonsport Riverside County Park, Campground and Shelter House

Maintained by Van Buren County Conservation, this park runs along the river from the shady camp-ground to the Odd Fellows Bldg.

The camp-ground has 23 modern sites with gravel camp pads, fire rings, picnic tables, 30 and 50 amp electricity, and pit toilet. Adjacent to the campground is a playground and shelter house with restrooms and showers open 24/7 during warm weather. Walk ins welcome on non reserved sites. To reserve a site go to [my-countyparks.com](http://my-countyparks.com). To reserve the shelter house, contact the office at 319-293-3589.



## Historic Presbyterian Church

Constructed in 1855, this church has been maintained just as it was. The building is open to the public May 1 thru Oct. 31. Non denominational services are held Sundays at 9 am June thru September. The acoustics are exceptional, so it is a popular venue for music programs and weddings. To reserve call 319-592-3222 or email [bentonsportimprovement@gmail.com](mailto:bentonsportimprovement@gmail.com).



## The Stone House

Originally a two-story duplex built in the 1850s, the Stone House was recently rebuilt into a modern community meeting place. It accommodates up to 80 people, is accessible, and has a full kitchen. To rent call 319-592-3222 or email [bentonsportimprovement@gmail.com](mailto:bentonsportimprovement@gmail.com).



# Bentonsport National Historic District

Platted 1839

Today's Population 40

For more information and pictures of Bentonsport's lodging, events, shops and other facilities, go to [bentonsportheritage.org](http://bentonsportheritage.org)  
Also on Facebook

This brochure was produced by the Bentonsport Improvement Association. Photos were contributed by Cheryl Duke, Mavadene Kennedy, Sandi Dimmit, and Becky Kralicek. Written and designed by Mindy Kralicek.

