This four-day, three-night tour explores the life and creations of “America’s Architect,” Frank Lloyd Wright. Join us to visit iconic buildings that figured prominently in Wright’s life, including his home and studio in Oak Park, Illinois; his Wisconsin home and studio, Taliesin; and his masterpiece house in Chicago, the Frederick C. Robie House.

Bob Myers, our director of education at the Historical Society of Michigan, plans and leads all of our Michiganders on the Road tours. These custom-designed excursions include motor coach transportation, lodging, admission fees, all dinners and breakfasts, taxes, and gratuities. We even take care of the bus driver’s tip! We learn a lot, eat more than is good for us, and return with great memories.

4-DAY, 3-NIGHT TOUR

$799*

*Price is per person based on double occupancy. Includes motor coach transportation; all lodging; all dinners and breakfasts; some lunches; and all admission fees, taxes, and gratuities. Historical Society of Michigan membership required.
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT was a brilliant architect and a problematic personality. Controversy, scandal, and even murder swirled through his life. He designed buildings that have become World Heritage Sites, created new architectural styles, and integrated his structures with the surrounding landscape. He also undercut his first employer; made impossible demands on builders; left his wife for a married woman; and suffered the loss of his wife, friends, and home in an arson-murder. Wright’s biography is more astounding than fiction—and we’ll experience the whole story on our tour.

TOURING THE WRIGHT HOME AND STUDIO

We’ll begin our discovery of Frank Lloyd Wright’s world when we depart Lansing bright and early on Saturday morning, with pickup stops en route at Michigan Department of Transportation “Park and Ride” lots in Kalamazoo and Stevensville. We’ll arrive at the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio in Oak Park, Illinois, in time for a boxed lunch (included in the tour fee) before beginning a guided tour there.

Wright, a Wisconsin native, attended the University of Wisconsin—Madison, though he never graduated, and then joined the firm of famed Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. Wright married his first wife, Catherine “Kittie” Tobin, in 1889. Sullivan provided the young couple with financial stability by signing Wright to a five-year contract and then loaned him $5,000 to build a house in Oak Park. Wright’s expensive tastes left him constantly short of cash, so he accepted under-the-counter commissions for house designs in violation of his contract with Sullivan. When Sullivan learned of Wright’s additional projects, he promptly fired him. The young architect soon opened his own office in the Schiller Building in Chicago, designed, ironically enough, by Sullivan himself.
In 1898, Wright moved his studio into his Oak Park home and added an addition onto the house. It served as his private residence and workplace from 1889 to 1909, the first 20 years of his career. Wright used it as an architectural laboratory, experimenting with design concepts that contained the seeds of his architectural philosophy. He and his associates developed the new Prairie School of architecture and designed 125 structures, including famous buildings such as the Robie House, the Larkin Building, and the Unity Temple. The Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust has restored the site to its appearance in 1909, the last year that Wright lived in the house and worked in the studio.

In 1903, scandal erupted when Wright began an affair with Mamah Cheney, the wife of his Oak Park neighbor and client Edwin Cheney. Kittie Wright refused to grant her husband a divorce, but Mamah Cheney eventually spent two years in Europe to secure a divorce from her husband on grounds of desertion.

During that turbulent period of his personal life, Wright designed numerous houses in the “Prairie Style.” The new architectural style broke with earlier designs with an emphasis on open floor plans, horizontal lines, low-pitched roofs, built-in cabinetry, extensive use of natural materials, and integration with the landscape. Publication of two of Wright’s designs in the Ladies’ Home Journal helped win him a national reputation.

We’ll spend much of the afternoon touring the Wright Home and Studio and then drive west to Elgin, Illinois, for dinner and lodging. Dinner tonight will be at the Grumpy Goat Tavern, with lodging at the nearby Hampton Inn. Those familiar with our Michiganders on the Road tours know that our dinners are always at locally-owned restaurants, not chain establishments.
A Trip to Taliesin

We leave the next morning for Spring Green, Wisconsin, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s home and studio there, Taliesin. Our travel route takes us through the beautiful Wisconsin scenery toward Madison. We will have time along the way for Bob’s Useless Trivia Games, in which you can win a fantastic prize and awe everyone with your command of worthless knowledge. At Taliesin, we’ll enjoy a sandwich lunch buffet (included in the tour fee) at the Riverview Terrace Café and be ready for our tour.

Taliesin, which means “radiant brow” in Welsh, is steeped in scandal and murder. Wright situated his Wisconsin home and studio just south of the village of Spring Green on land that originally belonged to his mother’s family. Because his affair with Mamah Cheney had hit the newspapers and forced him out of his Oak Park home and studio, Cheney and the still-married Wright moved into Taliesin after its completion in 1911.

In 1914, catastrophe struck when a deranged employee of Wright’s set fire to Taliesin and murdered Cheney, her two children, and four other employees as they ran from the house. Wright was working in Chicago when he received word of the tragedy.

Wright rebuilt Taliesin, dubbed Taliesin II, but used it only sparingly, for he was working on construction projects in foreign countries. He returned to Taliesin in 1924, but an accidental fire destroyed most of the building the next year. Wright again rebuilt and made his home in Taliesin III for the rest of his life, though he began wintering at another home and studio in Scottsdale, Arizona, that he named “Taliesin West” in the late 1930s.
Scandal continued to rock Wright’s personal life. In 1923, after Kitty Wright finally granted him a divorce, Wright married another mistress, Maude “Miriam” Noel. The couple separated within a year due to Noel’s addiction to morphine. In 1924, Wright met a young dancer, Olga Hinzenburg, at a Petrograd Ballet performance in Chicago, and they moved in together at Taliesin III. Wright divorced Noel in 1927 and married Hinzenburg the following year. His third marriage lasted until he died in 1959.

After Wright’s death, Taliesin was donated to the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. We’ll spend much of the day at Taliesin, where we’ve booked two tours for our group. The House Tour takes us through the home where Wright lived for many years and which he kept changing until he died. The Hillside School Tour is a professionally guided tour of the drafting studio, the theater that Wright used for musical and theatrical performances, the assembly hall, and the exhibit room.

Dinner tonight is at the Old Feed Mill, a restaurant located in a stone gristmill listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Parts of the building date back to 1857. Owners Dan and Nancy Viste bought the crumbling mill in 1992, restored and renovated it, and opened it as a restaurant and bakery. They offer excellent meals and even mill their own flour! Lodging will be at the AmericInn in Madison.
Day 3
August 19, Monday

MUCKING AROUND MADISON

Madison, Wisconsin, features several iconic Frank Lloyd Wright designs. We’ll start our third day with a tour of one of Wright’s most famous buildings: the First Unitarian Meeting House. The First Unitarian Society commissioned Wright, the son of one of its founders, to design the building in 1946. Construction began in 1949 and was completed in 1951. Architectural historians recognize the Meeting House as one of the world’s most innovative examples of church architecture. In 1960, the American Institute of Architects designated it one of 17 buildings to be retained as an example of Wright’s contribution to American culture. It went on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and in 2004, the National Park Service declared it a National Historic Landmark.

The “country church” was situated on a knoll overlooking university farmland and Lake Mendota, although now it’s surrounded by the city. Taliesin Associated Architects designed two later additions, the Religious Education Wing in 1964 and the Lower Meeting House in 1990. The Meeting House is still an active church, but we’ve arranged a special group tour.

Afterward, we’ll drive over to the state capitol. You can grab lunch at one of the many restaurants around the capitol and then reboard the bus for a short ride to Monona Terrace, our next destination.

What is Monona Terrace? It’s a convention center that Wright designed in 1938, yet it did not open until 1997, nearly 60 years later. World War II and various funding challenges interrupted the proposed construction, but work on the building finally began in 1995. It hosts about 600 conventions, meetings, and weddings every year and was home to Wisconsin Public Radio’s variety program, Michael Feldman’s “Whad’Ya Know?”

After touring Monona Terrace, we’ll head back south toward Chicago for dinner at the Palm Court in Arlington Heights, Illinois, and lodging at the Holiday Inn Express in nearby Hillside.
Day 4

AUGUST 20, TUESDAY

ON THE ROAD TO CHICAGO

We’ve saved a couple of highlight destinations for the last day of our Frank Lloyd Wright Tour: the Unity Temple and the Robie House.

Wright designed the Unity Temple in Oak Park after a fire destroyed the congregation’s first church building. Construction lasted from 1905 to 1908. Many architects have deemed the Unity Temple the world’s first modern building because it combined aesthetic intent and structure through the use of a single material—reinforced concrete. The concept profoundly influenced later architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

We’ll tour the Unity Temple in the morning and then drive into Chicago for a boxed lunch (included) and a tour of a true Frank Lloyd Wright gem, the Frederick C. Robie House.

The Robie House is situated on the University of Chicago campus and ranks among the most important buildings in the history of American architecture. Wright designed the house in his Oak Park studio for businessman Frederick C. Robie. Completed in 1910, the building is a masterpiece of the Prairie style and renowned as a forerunner of modernism in architecture. Tours of the site offer a firsthand experience of its modern-looking interior and the restoration work that is returning the house to its original appearance.

The Robie House is the last architectural stop on our tour. We should be back in Lansing by 6 p.m., with our drop-off stops along the way in Stevensville and Kalamazoo.

We hope you can join us for our America’s Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright Tour! Give us a call at (517) 324-1828 or e-mail us at hsm@hsmichigan.org if you have any questions.
Yes! I(we) want to join Michiganders on the Road for the America’s Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright Tour for $799* per person.

*Includes motor coach transportation; all lodging; all dinners and breakfasts; some lunches; and all admission fees, taxes, and gratuities. Historical Society of Michigan $39.95 membership required. Price is per person based on double occupancy. We encourage the purchase of travel insurance in case unforeseen events force you to cancel at the last minute. Deposits or payments made after the reservation deadline of July 6, 2019, cannot be refunded.

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- I would like to pay the full tour price of $799 per person. Price is based on double occupancy.
- I would like to pay the $150 per person deposit for the tour. The balance of $649 per person will be due on or before the reservation deadline of July 6, 2019. Deposits are fully refundable on or before July 6, 2019. Deposits or payments made after the reservation deadline cannot be refunded.

Are you a member of the Historical Society of Michigan? (Membership is required to participate in this tour.)

- Yes, I am already a member.
- I want to become a member for $39.95 so I can go on this tour. This membership includes Michigan History magazine.

- I am a single person and would like single-room accommodations. I understand there will be a $160 surcharge for this service.
- I am a single person and would like to be paired with another single of the same gender so that my reservation can be based on double occupancy.
- I am a single person, and I am traveling with ________________________________ so that my reservation can be based on double occupancy.
- I would like to have vegetarian meals.

- A check for $__________________ is enclosed, payable to Historical Society of Michigan.
- Please charge $__________________ to my credit card listed below.

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