



FARM STAYS

THE NEW AGRITOURISM FRONTIER

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The Washington Post says, "As more people are planning trips again and getting vaccines to do so safely, "normal" travel may resume later this year. But travel industry insiders are still predicting road trips to be popular, and not just for their utility. People are looking forward to the Great American Road Trip, even as the masses return to flying."

What does this have to do with agriculture? All these travelers are looking for unique places to stay, and farms have now landed at the top of the lodging list.

A farm stay (or farmstay) is any type of accommodation on a working farm.

Some farm stays may be interactive. Some are family-focused, offering children opportunities to feed animals, collect eggs and learn how a farm functions. Others don't allow children and instead offer a peaceful retreat for adults. For the accommodations, guests normally pay rates similar to area bed & breakfasts or vacation rentals, although pricing varies considerably.





Worldwide host site Airbnb said in a Vox report from 2019 that from February 2018 to February 2019, 943,534 guests stayed at a farm they found on Airbnb, booking more than 745,000 nights. Hosts with farm listings earned more than \$81 million.



Airbnb works by providing a platform for hosts to accommodate guests with both short-term lodging and also with local tourism-related activities. Guests can search for lodging using filters such as lodging type, dates, location, and price, and can search for specific types of homes, such as bed and breakfasts, vacation homes, and unique homes; which is where the farmstays come in.

HIPCAMP



HipCamp is the go-to site for tent campers. "Hipcamp is a growing community of good-natured people and the most comprehensive resource for unique outdoor stays. We work with landowners to offer tent camping, RV parks, cabins, treehouses, and glamping—everywhere from national parks to blueberry farms" says the statement on the front of the website. "By creating opportunities for landowners to earn money hosting nature lovers, Hipcamp works to support those who care for the land and get more people out under the stars."



There are now 1,885 plus locations in the lower 48 United States, Canada, Alaska, and Baja California, that belong to a network of wineries, breweries, distilleries, and farms called Harvest Hosts that invite RVers to stay in their on-farm camping sites.

“The RV and van life industry has been growing every year, with more than 1 million people living in RVs; the lifestyle has become more popular than ever”, says the Explore.com blog.



So what does this look on the farm?
What are the success stores and what
are the challenges?

Positive Points

Farm Stays are great resource for additional farmer income, tourism dollars for the local community, a use of green space, and education.

Agritourism is on the rise, and farm stays are in demand

Maryland Farm Bureau's HipCamp campaign -

https://www.mdfarmbureau.com/hipcamp/?fbclid=IwAR11TyP72jnQx2-Xq_eqYWpSCKcyyenQ3RhzeDBgHP3j9H-xHwWBLf9e1FM

What Farmers in Maryland Are Saying

- “We get a lot of guests from urban areas that come to enjoy the peace and beauty of a working farm.”
- “People have come from near and far to stay on our property. We have had people stay for as little as one night, and for as long as two weeks. Bookings have been pretty steady and it's turned out to be a great source of passive income; we've generated more income hosting folks through Hipcamp than we ever did making hay in that field.”
- “I was reticent to try it, but have subsequently found it rewarding to know I am sharing our little valley with others that see and reap pleasure from its nature as do I. What I thought might be little pocket change with little effort has become more than that for me – it has been a fresh and broad connection to the outside world during this time of concern and restrictions.”

Challenges

- Zoning/permitting
- Toilets- septic, porta john, compostable, pumped tank, RV self-contained
- Seasonal & Year-Round designations
- Occupancy

Discussion Points

- Statewide definition of an Agritourism Farm Stay - include thoughts on real farms using this, not just homeowner with backyard space. Ancillary to farm use...etc??
- Statewide legislation on the above definition and use??
- Specific approach to the State Health Dept on the toilet issue?



Thank You!

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