

## Freeman Tour: Day Trip to Freeman

ISWNE 2025

The Waltner Family – Tim and Mary and their children, Jeremy and AnnaMarie – have been active with ISWNE since 1993. Tim is the retired publisher of the Freeman (S.D) Courier; Jeremy is the current publisher/editor. AnnaMarie, who lives in Kentucky, helped present a program on libraries and newspapers at the 2023 ISWNE Conference in Lexington.

The Waltners helped host the 2007 conference held at Rapid City and in response to requests from people who were curious about Freeman, the Waltners hosted a pre-conference visit in Freeman (in the opposite side of the state). When plans for the 2025 Brookings conference were announced, the Waltners were again encouraged to repeat the Freeman component and have agreed to host another gathering in their home community.

Freeman, population 1,311, is located about an hour southwest of Sioux Falls and about 100 minutes southwest of the South Dakota State University campus.

Here's what's planned for the Freeman Experience

The pre-conference Freeman visit (July 7-8) will precede the Brookings Conference. Registration (\$60/person) will be an option on the 2025 summer conference form with the same deadline. It includes meals, admission/tours; (preschool children are free). Those coming to Freeman will be responsible for their own transportation and housing; there are two motels in Freeman (details below). Other lodging options include Sioux Falls or Yankton, about 35 minutes south of Freeman.

### **Monday, July 7**

Check-in at motel/visit/tour/explore Freeman on your own. Jeremy invites you to visit the Courier office while you're in town.

Informal late afternoon/evening backyard picnic hosted by the Waltners.

### **Tuesday, July 8**

**8 a.m.** Continental breakfast at the Freeman Prairie Arboretum Interpretive Center (FPAIC). The arboretum, which has three ponds, flower gardens and more than a mile of walking paths is free and open for visitors at any time.

**9 a.m.** Presentation at the adjacent Heritage Hall Museum & Archives on Freeman's history including details about the Germans-from-Russia migration from the area we know today as Ukraine to southeastern Dakota Territory that began in the 1870s. This includes those from Amish, Hutterite and Mennonite traditions; we'll dig a bit deeper into Hutterites.

Hutterites are a communal group that emerged nearly 500 years ago as part of the Anabaptist movement that grew out of the Reformation in Europe. Colonies are self-sufficient communal agricultural communities of 100-120 people; there are more than 550 colonies in the Northern Plains of the U.S. and Southern Plains of Canada. There are more than 60 colonies in South Dakota with many in our area. We've arranged for a unique behind-the-scenes visit to one of them later that day and will give you some background in advance.

**9:30 a.m.** Opportunity to tour the museum including two large exhibit halls, archives/library and four historical buildings as well as the arboretum. The museum is filled with artifacts and exhibits that share the history of the community.

**11:30 p.m.** Noon meal. A group of community members will provide a potluck-style meal with a focus on ethnic foods unique to this community and join the conversation.

**12:30 p.m.** Visit two local organic farms in rural Freeman – Prairie Roots Produce and Berrybrook Organics – and learn about their operations, which are unique in a community rooted in traditional agriculture.

**3:15 p.m.** Leave for Oaklane Hutterite Colony for a guided tour and evening meal. Oaklane is about 35 minutes northwest of Freeman.

Following the evening meal at Oaklane, guests are on their own to either return to Freeman (nothing formally planned) or head to Brookings where they can check into their dorm rooms in advance of Wednesday's conference. Oaklane is about 95 minutes southwest of Brookings.

## **Lodging in Freeman**

### ***Freeman Country Inn***

<https://www.freemancountryinn.com/>

(605) 925-4888 or (605) 929-3582

[freemaninn@goldenwest.net](mailto:freemaninn@goldenwest.net)

### ***Fensel's Motel***

605-925-4204 or 605-351-4747

## **Online links**

### **City of Freeman**

<https://www.cityoffreeman.org/>

### **Freeman Community Development Corporation**

<https://experiencefreemansd.com/>

### **Freeman Courier**

<https://www.freemansd.com/>

### **Heritage Hall Museum & Archives**

<https://heritagehallmuseum.com/>

### **Hutterites**

<https://hutterites.org/>