



Iowa State Fair: Country Comes to Town

Thomas Leslie

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More than 150 years old and still going strong, the Iowa State Fair is an American institution that was recently selected by bestselling author Patricia Schultz as one of the *1000 Places to See Before You Die*. Once an opportunity for country folk to come to town, experience the community of fellow farmers, and show off the fruits of their labor, today the fair attracts more than one million attendees from urban, suburban, and rural locales. They are all longing for an authentic American experience, a celebration of the abundance of our land, and the talents of our people. *Iowa State Fair* is the first comprehensive history of this extraordinary confluence of cows and corn dogs, midwestern culture, and classic Americana.

Iowa State Fair samples every flavor at the fair, from the fairy tale State Fair of the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical to the surreal site of staged locomotive collisions to Norma Duffield Lyons 2000 pound butter sculpture of *The Last Supper*. Beauty-queen contestants, fans of Kid Rock and Kenny Chesney, 30,000 annual blue ribbon winners, and deep fried Twinkie eaters fill its pages with visual delight. Author Thomas Leslie brings the fair to life, recounting its fascinating background and noting why today it is more popular than ever.

Like the fair itself, this book celebrates the state's agricultural heritage and provides a heartwarming portrait of an event that is, quite literally, as American as apple pie. *Iowa State Fair* will please the fairgoer in all of us. Last year's 1,013,063 attendees can't be wrong.

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