



Modernism in Iowa

DOCOMOMO TRAVEL TOUR

May 30–June 1

In collaboration with [Iowa Architectural Foundation](#)

Once a modest trading post in the mid-19th century, Des Moines, Iowa, rapidly expanded with the rise of rail transport and a burgeoning insurance industry, paving the way for its architectural development. From the progressive campus designs at Drake University to the diverse collection of art and architecture at the Des Moines Art Center and notable Frank Lloyd Wright creations in the surrounding suburbs, the transformation of this Midwest capital city from a small river settlement to a vibrant cultural center offers a surprisingly rich and varied tour of Modernism in the Midwest. Tour highlights include the Des Moines Art Center, designed by renowned architects Eliel Saarinen, I. M. Pei, and Richard Meier.

Since opening in 1948, the Art Center has undergone several expansions that emphasize its modernist design while maintaining a harmonious connection to the surrounding environment. Saarinen's innovative approach Modernism is evident in the clean lines and open spaces of the buildings. Spend a half-day exploring the Drake University campus, whose master plan was developed by Eliel Saarinen in the late 1940s, making stops at notable sites such as Eero Saarinen's Oregon E. Scott Memorial Chapel, Meredith Hall by Mies van der Rohe, and several buildings by Harry and Ben Weese. Finally, drive further afield to Oskaloosa to view several historic Modern homes, including two early prairie-style houses by Frank Lloyd Wright – architectural gems that offer a rare glimpse into his transformative designs.

SCHEDULE

Please note: Modernism in Iowa begins in Des Moines, at 4pm on Friday and ends at 4pm on Sunday. Please consider travel plans and flights carefully as to not miss a segment of the tour.

FRIDAY, MAY 30

Guests meet for welcome at the hotel at 3pm, before departing on a 4pm, guided downtown walking tour of Des Moines. Stops include the Catholic Pastoral Center (Mies van der Rohe, 1962) and the headquarters of the American Enterprise Group (AEG), an eight-story office building designed by Gordon Bunshaft, while at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). The building was completed in 1965 and received an AIA Honor Award for Architecture in 1967. Happy hour to follow.

SATURDAY, MAY 31

Guests enjoy breakfast on their own, then meet at 8:45am, to board the bus for a full day of architectural tours. First stop: the Des Moines Art Center (Eliel Saarinen, I. M. Pei, and Richard Meier). This Modernist masterpiece reflects the city's dynamic blend of art and architecture. After lunch at the Art Center, we head to our next stop: Drake University. Spend the afternoon exploring the historic charm and Modern design of the campus. Eliel Saarinen developed the master plan in the 1940s, emphasizing functionality, spatial harmony, and an organic relationship between buildings and their surroundings. Later, Eero Saarinen, contributed his design for the Oreon E. Scott Memorial Chapel. Additional stops on campus include Mies van der Rohe's Meredith Hall and several buildings by Harry and Ben Weese. We cap the day with a reception at a local modern home before heading back to the hotel.

SUNDAY, JUNE 1

Meet as a group bright and early to board the bus at 8:45am, and visit two private homes designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, further afield in Oskaloosa. After a boxed lunch (provided), we travel back to Des Moines to visit the 1937 Butler House described at the time as "the world's most modern house."

Photos: Des Moines Catholic Pastoral Center, Des Moines Art Center, Drake University Oreon E. Scott Memorial Chapel and Meredith Hall



DOCENTS

TIM HICKMAN, AIA, LEED AP

Tim Hickman is a principal and owner at Substance Architecture, a design-focused firm in Des Moines, where he works on university, transportation, and workplace projects. He was educated at Iowa State University and Yale, with studies in Fontainebleau, France. Tim has volunteered at the Des Moines Art Center since the 1980s and now serves on the board as chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee.



ROD KRUSE, FAIA, LEED AP

Rod Kruse is a nationally recognized architect known for resource-responsible designs that enhance performance and achieve design excellence. His diverse portfolio spans higher education, corporate, cultural, and residential projects, earning over 70 design awards, including multiple National AIA Honor Awards and an AIA COTE Top 10 Award. A recipient of AIA Iowa's Medal of Honor, Rod has also served on prestigious AIA juries and contributed to leading architectural publications.



J. MARK SCHMIDT, AIA-E, CSI-E

A Des Moines native, Mark Schmidt enjoyed a 40-year architectural career. He worked at HLKB Architecture (2001 AIA Firm of the Year) before retiring from Invision Architecture. His notable projects include the Des Moines Civic Center, the downtown Des Moines Central Library, and the Salisbury House restoration. An avid remodeler, Mark transformed his longtime home into a contemporary design. He also enjoys tennis and biking, having cycled on five continents.



STEVE STIMMEL, AIA

Steve advocates for design and historic preservation as a volunteer for the Iowa Architectural Foundation. Now retired, his interest in Modernism and preservation began as a student at Iowa State University in the late 1960s. As an architect, Steve worked at two firms, including BBS Architects | Engineers in Des Moines. A career highlight was his role in rehabilitating the Mies van der Rohe-designed Home Federal Savings and Loan building.



REGISTRATION

PROGRAM RATE*

Weekend Tour (Fri–Sun)

LOCAL (NO TRANSPORTATION): \$895 per person

MEMBER: \$995 per person

NON-MEMBERS: \$1295 per person

*Includes: \$500 non-refundable deposit; a comprehensive educational land program; entrance to all locations and sites, as detailed; transport between the preferred hotel and daily sites; two lunches and one reception. Guests are responsible for airfare, accommodations, drinks and meals unless specified, and transportation to/from airport.

HOTEL

Docomomo US has reserved a room block at the Surety Hotel for May 29–June 1. Guests are welcome to book any hotel, but please note that the buses only pick up and drop off at this hotel. We recommend extending your stay through Monday, June 2, to see the homes on Sunday in Oskaloosa.

Surety Hotel: \$219 plus tax | [BOOK HERE*](#)

*Must book by Tuesday, April 29, to receive preferred rate.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Modernism in Iowa is presented in collaboration with the Iowa Architectural Foundation. Schedules and program details are provided in good faith based on available information. Changes to the itinerary, accommodations, or arrangements may occur at Docomomo US's discretion, with or without notice. Docomomo US reserves the right to cancel this event at any time if it cannot be held safely, for any reason. In this case, Docomomo US would refund participants the cost of their registration but is not be responsible for any other costs incurred as a result of its decision to cancel the event. Registrants may cancel through May 2, 2025, for a refund, less the \$500 deposit. Cancellations after May 2, 2025, will not be refunded. Email info@docomomo-us.org to cancel your registration.

ABOUT DOCOMOMO TRAVEL TOURS

Docomomo Travel Tours offer a unique travel experience in a small group setting, with access to modern homes and buildings off the beaten path or not ordinarily open to the public. contact us at info@docomomo-us.org for more information on tours.

