

# Agritourism as an Enterprise Unit to your existing farm or ranch operation.

*By Todd and Molly Barkley, Barkley's Home Grown LLC*

Agritourism can be useful to help sustain existing farms and ranches. Sustainable has many different meanings. I like this one from vocabulary.com “if something is sustainable it can be maintained or continued.” Sustainable Agriculture is basically using the resources your land provides in a manner in which they will continue to produce. So what happens when we practice good sustainable agriculture but our ranch is not sustainable? We either sell our land and find another job or find other ways outside traditional sustainable agriculture to make up the difference.

Are you a producer on the edge of not being sustainable, wanting to transition to the next generation but not enough economic resources for everybody, neighboring property is for sale and it is really close to working financially, want to maximize profits on land you already have, want to educate the public and become an “Agvocate” on the ways you produce food? If you are that producer, Agritourism is an option for sustainability. There are many different examples of Agritourism offerings and I would venture to say that all operations have something to offer the public. We have seen many of these examples throughout the state from small-scale farms to larger commodity-size operations.



Agritourism can be an important aspect of sustainable agriculture in Montana. We come from a generational ranch that has been in our family over 100 years. We have added to it and leased neighbors' land so we could stay sustainable. There are well over 20 homestead sites scattered over our ranch and the ranches we lease; some are hardly noticeable with just a dug-out in the side of a bank, some have remnants of old buildings. Some of the more recent acquisitions still have people living at the farmstead but they don't operate the farm any longer. Sadly, for every producer we replaced, we lost a part of our community. As we all know, it is getting hard to add land, and we need to look outside of traditional agriculture to stay sustainable. What is unique with landowners is that we already have space to accommodate tourists, properties have told and untold history, producers have passion (some different than others) of certain aspects of their operations. Landowners can provide space to explore, nature to observe, a place to stay, just to name a few examples.

## In this guide you will find:

- A demonstration of planning your agritourism operation
- An explanation of how an agritourism start-up doesn't have to cost a lot
- How agritourism can fit onto most farms and ranches

# Where to Start: An Example

We've decided we are going to do agritourism. Some of the parameters we have to follow are we can not have a lot of initial cash out-put, have limited free time to dedicate to the project and the protection of our natural resources is a must. Now what? Here are some next steps with our example.



## 1 What it is we will offer

Nature and Historical Hike.

This hike will allow access to the Barkley Farm and Ranch. The opportunity to view wildlife Eastern Montana has to offer such as whitetail and mule deer, pheasant, partridge, sharptail and sage grouse, turkey, hawks, eagles, owls and numerous song birds. It also has most of the creepers, crawlers, and slitherers Montana has to offer. Will also be able to visit old homestead sites, climb buttes, star gaze at night, etc.



## 2 Options with additional charge

1. Camping areas without hookups
2. Historical story of the ranch
3. Guided tour of the ranch
4. Guided tour of the farm
5. Guided tour of the greenhouse
6. Side by side rental (on designated roads only)
7. The use of e bikes or old fashioned pedal bikes
8. Pets
9. ?

## 3 What we will supply you with

Map of ranch with

1. Roads and two tracks
2. Historical trails
3. Camping sites with gps coordinates
4. GPS coordinates of interesting finds from other guests (this will build over time)
5. Emergency phone numbers, contact information, our phone numbers and contact information.
6. f. ?



## 4 Other options for visitor revenue

1. Products from our greenhouse
2. Products from our freezer
3. Products from our land just ask
4. Most things are for sale, leave them in place, mark them with gps, and we can deal later.
5. ?

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## 5 Exceptions

1. Weather is always a factor. We will not allow our natural resource to be compromised
2. If there is more than one party we will split the ranch up into grids so as not to interfere with each other.
3. This is not a complete list we reserve the right to make decisions at any time
4. ?



It's all coming together. We need to spend a little time building a map and putting a few final touches on some camping sites and things should be a go. Where to go from here.

## 6 Establishing a Code of Conduct

1. A description of how they treat your property.
2. How their pets will be handled and controlled.
3. ?

## 7 Make an Advertising and Marketing plan

1. Social Media
2. Traditional Media
3. Word of Mouth
4. ?



Follow **Barkleys Home Grown** on Facebook to see what's happening on our farm!

**Some factors we need to work out on our new enterprise unit:**

## 9 Income

1. What to charge for base rate
2. What to charge for add-on options
3. ?

## 8 Expenses

1. Costs for advertisement
2. Costs for maps
3. Costs for added insurance
4. Hidden costs
5. Credits given for neat finds left where nature put them and GPSed for other visitors to appreciate.
6. ?



**And finally...**

## 10 Plan for the Unexpected

1. Customers who don't follow rules
2. Weather events while guests are on property
3. Refunds
4. Emergencies
5. ?

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## About the authors:

We farm and ranch 15 miles Southwest of Baker, Montana on a place we bought in 2007. We lease the original Barkley farm, which was started in 1922 by Todd's great grandfather. We also lease from three other neighbors. In 2021 we built a geothermal greenhouse and started marketing some of the products we raise under Barkley's Home Grown LLC. We belong to local and state organizations that involve agriculture and community. Our farm, ranch, and greenhouse mission statement is to enhance diversity above and below ground using regenerative agriculture practices. Our ranch and greenhouse have been used by NRCS, EMRA, local 4-H clubs and FFA chapters for educational tours. We are excited to add Agritourism as another way to diversify income and educate the public about how our products are produced. We also look forward to sharing what nature has to offer on the land we cherish.



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Regenerative Ag Products



Healthy Soils, Healthy Plants, Healthy Animals  
**Healthy Communities**

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## More Resources:

- Montana Agritourism Fellows: [www.montanaagritourism.com](http://www.montanaagritourism.com)
- Barkleys Home Grown LLC: [www.barkleyshomegrown.com](http://www.barkleyshomegrown.com)