



## Encouraging Iowa tourism

BY MATT MILNER Courier staff writer

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— FAIRFIELD — Patty Judge's visits to Iowa communities are designed to get the state's residents mobile this summer.

Summer is, Judge said, "traditionally the time when people pack up the suitcase and decide to spend a little time away from home." Gas prices have stayed relatively moderate this year, especially in comparison to 2008. But the economy hasn't cooperated in the least.

Iowa's lieutenant governor and other state officials hope the economic stress offers a window to remind people about what lies in their backyards. She is touring sites around Iowa in hopes people will take the time to explore their home state rather than spend the money to go elsewhere.

In Fairfield, Judge had a larger audience in geographic terms than anyone could have predicted when she planned the itinerary. Mayor Ed Malloy brought along a delegation from Turkmenistan who happened to be in town to take a look at steps the city is taking toward sustainable energy.

It's hard to say whether any of the delegates will ever make it back to Iowa after this visit. But Judge tried her best to sell them.

"I thought I had seen the state," she said, referencing her Iowa childhood and travels throughout her government career. And, in truth, she had seen a good part of the state. But this trip is different. "I am seeing things every day that are just incredible."

Tourism is not the primary economic engine for Iowa. It doesn't have the same pure volume as agriculture, the state's traditional economic base, or the newer money found in banking and insurance. But Judge is trying to counter the idea that tourism has no impact. Each year visitors bring an estimated \$6 billion in money as they come to Iowa and take the time to explore.

The good news is that Iowa tourism is having a relatively good year, Judge said. People are staying closer to home. That keeps money in the state and makes anything coming in from outside a bonus.

It's not all play this summer. Judge's tour works a few days of travel in between a few days at the capitol in the lieutenant governor's office.

"I do," she said, "have a day job."

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Photos



"Are you sure?" asks Lt. Governor Patty Judge as the cast of The Pirates of Penzance tries to convince her to wear a pirate hat for a media photo Wednesday. Judge was in Fairfield as part of her tour showcasing the fun places to travel in Iowa. Courier photo by Mark Newman