



Destination Ann Arbor SATW Pre-Conference FAM Proposal

Destination: Ann Arbor, Michigan

FAM Dates: September 8-10, 2025

Story Angle: *Fall in Love with Ann Arbor*

Activity Level: 1-2 (Low to moderate activity, with walking tours and standing for short periods)

Accessibility: This tour is accessible to participants who use mobility devices. All venues and transportation will be ADA-compliant. Please notify us in advance with any specific access needs.

Overview

Destination Ann Arbor is excited to host a pre-conference FAM tour for the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) conference. This exclusive, small-group experience will immerse travel writers in the vibrant culture of Ann Arbor -- home to the University of Michigan Wolverines, the 2024 College Football Playoff National Champions -- while highlighting the destination's blend of Big Ten energy, world-class dining, fall-themed outdoor recreation, and creative arts and culture.

Recently named the #1 Best Place to Live for Quality of Life in the U.S. by U.S. News & World Report (2024), Ann Arbor offers a mix of small-town charm and globally recognized innovation, making it a must-visit destination for travelers.

Group Size

- A minimum of 4 writers and a maximum of 7 writers for an intimate, highly engaging experience

Experience Highlights

The itinerary will offer a mix of guided tours, interactive hands-on experiences, and personal time for free exploration, allowing writers to explore multiple story angles.

- **Big Ten Experience** – Behind-the-scenes tour of Michigan Stadium (The Big House), the largest stadium in the U.S., and access to other iconic U-M landmarks



- **Fall-Themed Outdoor Recreation** – A visit to Dexter Cider Mill, Michigan’s oldest continuously operating cider mill, along with other scenic spots to enjoy an authentic autumn experience
- **Dining Scene** – Ann Arbor’s award-winning food scene, including James Beard-recognized chefs and innovative new restaurants
- **Arts & Culture** – Interactive workshops, galleries and creative spaces showcasing Ann Arbor’s vibrant arts community
- **Local Shopping** – Explore historic shopping districts, unique stores and boutiques in Ann Arbor’s walking downtown, including the 100+ year-old Nickels Arcade, a beautifully preserved shopping destination.
- **Accessibility** – Featuring Wheel the World’s Destination Verified attractions and showcasing Ann Arbor as Michigan’s first Destination Verified community for accessible travel

Logistics & Support

- **Transportation:** Provided between locations and round-trip from Detroit for convenience
- **Meals & Activities:** Covered as part of the hosted experience
- **Cost to Participants:** \$500
- **Please note:** Dates and activities are subject to change slightly based on SATW feedback and final availability.

Media Assets

A curated selection of high-resolution images to support the proposal:

<https://visitannarbor.canto.com/s/QD0C8?viewIndex=0>

Contact Information

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Day 1 – Monday, September 8, 2025

Theme: Arrival + Ann Arbor Nightlife

Arrival Window: Please plan to arrive at Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) between 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM. Ground transportation will be provided from DTW to Ann Arbor for all participants arriving during this time window.

Afternoon Arrival – Writers arrive in Ann Arbor; check-in at the Vanguard Hotel (check-in begins at 4:00 PM) - Ann Arbor's newest hotel, opened in May 2025, offers boutique luxury accommodations with refined service and modern amenities.

Welcome Dinner at Echelon Kitchen & Bar

Enjoy one of Ann Arbor's newest and most anticipated restaurants, offering a veggie-forward, stylish dining experience on Main Street.

Live Performance at The Ark – Enjoy live music at The Ark, celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2025, one of the country's most respected acoustic venues offering over 300 live shows a year and a cornerstone of Ann Arbor's music scene.

Day 2 – Tuesday, September 9, 2025

Theme: Creative Culture + Culinary Discovery

Breakfast at the Vanguard Hotel (covered by Destination Ann Arbor)

Guests are welcome to enjoy breakfast at the hotel at their leisure.

Morning – Motawi Tileworks Tour

A behind-the-scenes look at one of the nation's premier art tile studios. Learn about their design process and craftsmanship.



Late Morning – U-M Museum of Art (UMMA)

Explore global art collections and thought-provoking exhibitions at one of the country's leading university art museums.

Lunch at Zingerman's Delicatessen

Savor world-famous sandwiches and explore this iconic culinary institution, a cornerstone of Ann Arbor's food scene.

Free Time for Personal Discovery

Wander through Ann Arbor's walkable downtown — pop into independent bookstores, galleries, coffee shops, or just soak in the early fall college-town energy.

→ We'll provide a curated list of suggested stops (Nickels Arcade, Literati Bookstore, Found, etc.).

Pre-Dinner – Ann Arbor Distilling Co. Cocktail Class

A hands-on cocktail experience using locally distilled spirits with seasonal flair.

Dinner at The Chop House – Wrap up the day at an upscale steakhouse known for elevated hospitality and a premier dining experience.

Day 3 – Wednesday, September 10, 2025

Theme: Fall Flavors + Big Ten Energy

Breakfast at the Vanguard Hotel (covered by Destination Ann Arbor)

Guests are welcome to enjoy breakfast at the hotel at their leisure.

Morning Visit to Dexter Cider Mill

Taste fresh-pressed cider and house-made donuts at Michigan's oldest continuously operating cider mill, nestled along the Huron River.

Scenic Drive Along Huron River

Enjoy fall colors and the natural beauty of the region in route back to Ann Arbor.

Guided Tour of Michigan Stadium (The Big House)

Get exclusive access to the largest stadium in the U.S. — home to the 2024 College Football Playoff National Champion Michigan Wolverines.



Wrap-Up Lunch at Miss Kim

Dine at this nationally acclaimed Korean restaurant led by Chef Ji Hye Kim, recognized as a Food & Wine Best New Chef and a James Beard Award semifinalist. Chef Ji Hye plans to greet the group and share the inspiration behind Miss Kim's bold Korean flavors, rooted in traditional techniques and crafted with seasonal Michigan ingredients.

Depart Ann Arbor

1:30 PM – Depart for Detroit

2:00 PM – Arrive at The Westin Book Cadillac Detroit

Check-in for the SATW conference and prepare for the evening's welcome reception.