



Krause Berry Farms is one of several farms on the Circle Farm Tour, which gives a self-guided tour that leads tourists through a wide variety of farming experiences.



## It's All About the Farm Experience

Each summer, rows of bright red strawberries attract thousands of guests to Krause Berry Farms in Langley, British Columbia. Visitors usually head to the U-pick section first, but they always end up back on the front porch. Here, they settle into rockers to enjoy fresh-from-the-oven blueberry shortcakes or berry milkshakes.

For years, the farm was just a simple U-pick operation, but eight years ago owner Alf Krause saw the opportunity to add special events and new products to the operation.

A big believer in agritourism, Alf says one of the trend's best aspects is that it gives farmers a chance to add value to their farm products. "Directly selling to the customer and expanding our product line is a prescription for success," he explains.

Ever since his farm expanded into agritourism, he says they've been growing at a rate of 20 percent per year. His growth is a result of three things: a quality product, friendly atmosphere and effective marketing techniques. One of his best marketing tools has been participation with Circle Farm Tour, a marketing

partnership designed to increase tourism in British Columbia. The Circle Farm Tour is a self-guided tour that leads guests through the country to specialty farms, artisans, farmer's markets, and restaurants and inns.

The tour, started in 2000, now includes 61 farms across six different counties. Allison Longshore, the Regional Circle Farm Tour representative, believes more tourists are coming in order to fulfill a traveler's most basic desire—to make a connection. "People want to come home with a story," she says. "They want to have an experience with something, and Circle Farm Tours give them that opportunity."

Helping to foster that sense of connectedness, most farmers deal directly with their customers—an aspect that Alf says is often the most rewarding and challenging aspect of agritourism. People skills are essential because not all customers will be easy to deal with. "If that's not your strength and you're not going to have a good time with it, then it might not be for you," he says. "The bottom line is, don't do something you won't enjoy." [www.circlefarmtour.com](http://www.circlefarmtour.com)