

FALL + WINTER 2026-2027

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↓
FRESH PERSPECTIVES
CHANGING COLORS,
CULTURAL LANDMARKS,
SEASONAL ESCAPES

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of
everything

OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL
CENTER, CHICAGO



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→
SCENIC BYWAY
The Great River Road hugs the Mississippi River for 550 miles in Illinois.

THE MIDDLE
OF EVERYTHING

WELCOME

As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, I'm reminded of just how special the autumn and winter seasons are in the Land of Lincoln.

Fall invites us to make the most of our days, take the scenic route, and discover (or rediscover) the people and places that define Illinois. This past summer, we excitedly marked the opening of the Obama Presidential Center on Chicago's South Side. More than a landmark, it's an homage to a presidency, our country, and the state the 44th president calls home (*page 60*). That spirit carries through our "Presidential Pathway" feature, tracing the journeys of four Illinoisans who rose to the White House



Enjoy Illinois:
Let's Go!
podcast is now
streaming on
your favorite
platform.

(*page 56*). And in our Q&A, former First Lady Michelle Obama reflects on some of her passions, including gardening, tennis, and her enduring love for Chicago (*page 18*).

Autumn is also a perfect time for exploration. Our seven scenic byways crisscross the state, each lined with can't-miss stops (*page 48*). Schedule your travels around lush apple orchards and pumpkin patches prime for picking. We've included a list of fall events and festivals to help you plan (*page 28*). Discover Illinois Made artisans crafting kitchen essentials (*page 22*), or pick up the pace with adrenaline-fueled adventures (*page 8*). Then slow things down with a nostalgic drive along Route 66 as the Mother Road celebrates its centennial November 11 (*page 32*).

As winter and its snowy serenity settles across Illinois, the landscape transforms into a prime destination for outdoor adventure and cool indoor activities. The journey is highlighted with cozy getaways (*page 34*), snowy weekends, and unexpected cold-weather fun (*page 64*). Check out "Twinkling Bright" for must-share snowy social backdrops (*page 80*). There is plenty of fun waiting to be had, including wintering bald eagles and other seasonal favorites.

This fall and winter, I invite you to step outside, explore something new, and make the most of these stunning seasons. Everyone is welcome in Illinois, the Middle of Everything!

Sincerely,

KRISTIN RICHARDS
DIRECTOR
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



**enjoy
illinois**

**FALL + WINTER
2026-2027**

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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OFFICE OF TOURISM

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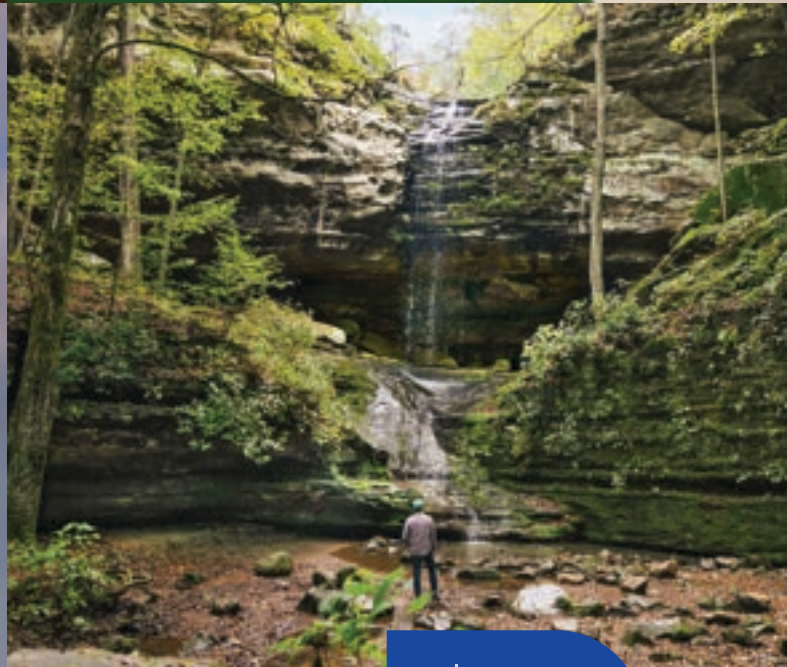
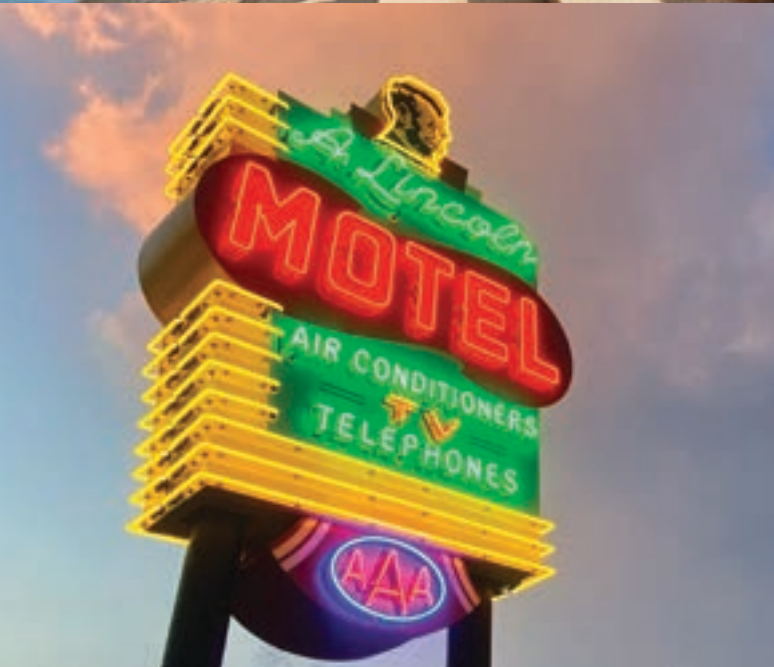
To step out on **The Ledge** — 1.5" glass floored balconies perched 4.3 feet outside, 103 stories above Chicago.



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Open Daily | 103rd Floor, Willis Tower



PRESS PLAY TO DISCOVER

ENJOY ILLINOIS: LET'S GO!

Join us while we explore the magic in the Middle of Everything—
cruise Route 66, meet Illinois celebs, visit city sites, hike the heartland,
step inside haunted spots, and laugh with comedy legends.



**FIND US
EVERYWHERE
YOU LISTEN**



EAT PLAY STAY

GUIDEBOOK

↓
*Fresh local
ingredients star
on the menu
at Woodlands
Restaurant at
Eagle Ridge Resort
in Galena.*



*Plan your
getaway with
these road
trip ideas and
itineraries.*

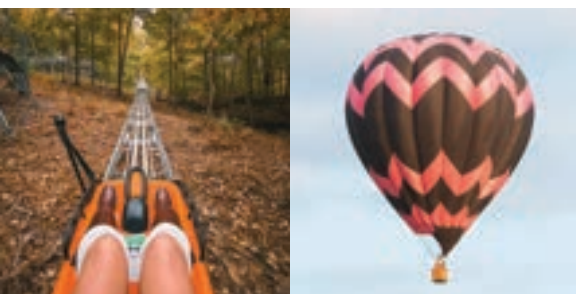
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📍
CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP

Shawnee
Bluffs Canopy
Tours, Makanda;
Galena on the
Fly, Eagle Ridge
Resort; Alpine
Coaster, Aerie's
Resort, Grafton



Autumn Adrenaline

*Fall in Illinois doesn't whisper.
It whooshes, rattles, tilts,
and drops. Pair leafy colors with
an elevated pulse at these
outdoor attractions.*

Aerial Excursions

Add some speed and height to this year's leaf-peeping quest.

On a zipline, fall color evolves from scenic to kinetic. And the thrill is accessible to all generations. "There's something special about seeing a great-grandmother and her grandson ziplining together—sharing in the excitement, surrounded by nature, completely unplugged," says Marc Miles, co-owner of **Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tours** in Makanda. Set within a Southern Illinois sanctuary, the course threads through a dense hardwood forest. At **Aerie's Resort** in Grafton, the Alpine Coaster rattles through the forest with seven hairpin turns. In Galena, **Chestnut Mountain Resort** keeps adrenaline alive through mid-October, sending zipliners above the landscape with leafy views. Segways and an alpine slide also await on solid ground. Nearby **Long Hollow Canopy Tours** propels riders over ravines where oaks and hickories stage a synchronized color drop. No matter the region, few experiences can match that brief, electric moment: Your stomach lifts, your feet leave the ground, and fall becomes an experience you soar through.

GALENA ON THE FLY

Eagle Ridge Resort

Above rolling hills, hot-air balloons rise with a puff of fire, adding their own color and magic to the scenery (through October).

i FLY

Rosemont; Naperville; and Lincoln Park, Chicago

Indoor skydiving makes gravity optional—and the weather nominal. Bonus element: a crowd of people cheering as you hover, spin, and laugh midair.

SKYDIVE CHICAGO

Ottawa

Free-fall above a checkerboard of farmland before your parachute blooms. As you drift back to solid ground, admire the Fox River snaking through peak color (through October).

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Sometimes that heart-racing rush comes while standing still, reminding yourself to breathe—and trusting the glass beneath your feet.

THE LEDGE

Willis Tower, Chicago

Step onto glass boxes extending from the 103rd floor of Chicago's tallest building. If you manage to keep your eyes open, street traffic shrinks like toy cars and courage becomes a muscle.

TILT

360 Chicago

Lean outward over Michigan Avenue as windows angle you toward the city—1,030 feet down to be precise—and autumn sunlight glints off Lake Michigan.



FROM LEFT

*Home Insurance Building (world's first skyscraper), Chicago;
The Ledge, Willis Tower, Chicago*



PHOTOGRAPHS: (HISTORIC) CHICAGO ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY, PUBLIC DOMAIN, (THE LEDGE) JOHN NOLTNER

ILLINOIS INSIDER The world's first skyscraper was built in Chicago, now home to five of the United States' 20 tallest buildings, including the Willis Tower, 875 North Michigan Avenue (aka John Hancock Center), and the St. Regis Chicago.



7

HOLIDAY POP UP BARS





Spooky Haunts and Jaunts

When days shorten, Illinois embraces the shadows, turning history into thrill rides best taken after dark.

GHOST TOURS

In Galena, Alton, and Springfield, ghost tours braid folklore with fact. Expect creaking staircases, river-town legends, presidential spirits, and guides who pause just long enough for your imagination to sprint ahead of them.

OTHER THRILLS

FRIGHT FEST

Six Flags Great America, Gurnee

Roller coasters meet roaming monsters, and screams come from both drops and things chasing you between rides.

OLD JOLIET PRISON

Joliet

Rusted bars, echoing cellblocks, and nighttime Flashlight Tours prove the former jail can still jangle your nerves.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Fright Fest, Six Flags Great America, Gurnee; Ghosts of the Library, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield; Old Joliet Prison, Joliet



GHOST STORY
Holograms share the stage with a historian during this nine-minute movie.





MADE FOR

winter fun

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Whether you're escaping the cold or embracing it, Navy Pier is ready for winter fun all season long. Skate, stroll, and sparkle at the return Winter Wonderfest, then warm up with a ride on the Centennial Wheel, where heated gondolas and breathtaking views bring the holiday spirit to new heights.



FROM TOP
Alto Vineyards,
Alto Pass; Giant
City State Park,
Makanda

ROCK CLIMBING

Trade leaf piles for handholds, testing your grip strength against stone warmed by the golden autumn sun.

The rugged canyons and rocky bluffs of Southern Illinois have lured rock climbers for decades.

Giant City State Park is the grandfather site in Makanda. "There's been a history of climbing there since the 1950s and 1960s," says Phillip Carrier, board member with the Illinois Climbers Association. Visitors savor easy access to top rope

and sport routes, plus a comfy lodge and restaurant famous for its all-you-can-eat fried chicken dinner.

Jackson Falls in Shawnee National Forest (near Vienna) has grown into the most extensive climber's paradise: more than 400 sport-climbing routes, overhang challenges, and primitive dispersed camping. "It is by far my favorite place to climb," Carrier says. Major climbing route development and trail improvements started in 2024 at **Ferne Clyffe State**

Park, which already boasts at least 100 climbing routes amid sandstone vertical walls, waterfalls, and a campground next to the town of Goreville. Climbers of all skill levels appreciate the area of **Quetil Trail** in Alto Pass, where a repurposed railroad makes a flat, easy approach.

ILLINOIS INSIDER

Climbers and spectators head for Pilgrimage at Holy Boulders, a hot spot for bouldering near Alto Pass (October 31). The annual competition blends technical problem-solving with campfire camaraderie.



SHAWNEE HILLS WINE TRAIL

Refuel along the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail, hopping between rolling vineyards and charming tasting rooms. You can book in advance with Shawnee Shuttle, Wrightway Transportation, and other local tour companies so that no one has to draw straws to drive.



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LaSalle County



Starved Rock

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Eagle Sightings

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Starved Rock Lodge

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Camp Aramoni

Boutique accommodations and events in a scenic setting



Streator's Arts Tour

Experience Streator's history and beautiful murals



Q | A

MICHELLE OBAMA

Shaped by Chicago's South Side, the former first lady recently helped redefine its skyline—inspiring others to dream big in the City of Broad Shoulders.

Among Michelle Obama's many impressive titles—from salutatorian of her Whitney M. Young Magnet High School class to first lady of the United States—her identity as a South Side Chicagoan remains core.

In her memoir, *Becoming*, Obama details a childhood rooted in family and set within the South Shore neighborhood where “everything that mattered was within a five-block radius” and a trip to the Chicago Loop “felt otherworldly.” Decades later, gliding along Lake Shore Drive in a police-escorted motorcade with daughters Malia and Sasha and then-President-elect Barack Obama, she felt a city, “familiar to [her] as a place could be,” transformed. On election night, 2008, the Obamas would make history as they greeted 200,000 supporters gathered in Grant Park.

Obama's leadership journey began long before she stood beside her husband at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, when he announced his candidacy for president. A Princeton University and Harvard Law School graduate, she launched her career in Chicago with the corporate law firm Sidley. She later worked for the City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development and as the founding executive director of the Chicago chapter of the national service organization Public Allies. Before moving to Washington, D.C., she served in multiple high-level roles at the University of Chicago in Hyde Park, near where the Obamas maintain their original home.

With the Obama Presidential Center's recent debut and its goal as a global hub for hope and a community destination, *Enjoy Illinois* asked Obama how much of herself visitors will find on the campus. She shared which special spaces link her White House priorities and childhood dreams, and highlighted hometown locations that remain close to her heart.

Q *The Obama Presidential Center (OPC) opened in June. What would a place like the OPC have meant to young Michelle growing up on Chicago's South Side?*

A Oh, so much. I would have loved a great sledding hill for the snowy Chicago winters and a community garden where I could get my hands dirty. I could see myself spending time with friends and family in the green space and exploring art displays and performances to get my imagination going.

Besides those obvious features, a campus like this—and the story behind it—shows kids growing up on the South Side like I did that anything is possible. My parents and community always encouraged me to set my sights high. Having a towering testament to that idea in my neighborhood? That can't be underestimated.

Q *Did you play a role in planning and design?*

A Barack took the lead on most of the planning. After leaving the White House, I've learned to let some things go! Beyond the sledding hill and the community garden, I feel connected to a few other spaces.

One is the atrium, which we named in honor of Hadiya Pendleton. She was a bright and beautiful 15-year-old girl from the South Side who was killed in a tragic shooting just a week after performing at the White House for Barack's second inauguration. I hope Hadiya's memory reminds us of our collective responsibility to help young girls like her grow up and find their place in the world.

Another is an exhibit called *Opening the White House*, which features scale replicas of spaces there where we brought people together. The exhibit honors my mom, Marian Robinson. She was with us every step of the way when we moved to D.C., and I wouldn't be who I am today without her. These rooms reflect the values she instilled in me: community, family, bringing people in, and creating a warm, welcoming space where everyone feels at home.

Q *What do you hope people feel when they walk onto the Center's campus?*

A You said it yourself: Hope. Not blind optimism that things will get better on their own, but real faith in the power of ordinary



WRITER: BRIANNE SANCHEZ. PHOTOGRAPH: MILES DIGGS

IN VOGUE
*Known for embracing
both emerging
designers and global
fashion houses,
Michelle Obama wore
a chic Chanel suit for
a recent event.*



“

I LOVE GARDENING WITH KIDS. THE GARDEN IS A PLACE FOR KIDS TO GROW—IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. IT'S ALWAYS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO SPEND TIME WITH THEM.

people to come together to do extraordinary things. That's the story at the heart of the Center. It's the story of our country. It's our hope that everyone who visits will see their own story as a part of that larger narrative.

Q Typically, presidential libraries and museums preserve archives. The OPC feels poised to open new chapters. Is that what you envisioned?

A From the very beginning, Barack and I wanted the Center to be a place where folks from all walks of life can come together and build community. While the museum is important, we knew it had to be so much more. Within the blueprints, we included spots for civic meetings. We designed a wide-open Great Lawn for playtime and picnics. We worked with artists to fill the space with pieces that

spark conversation. To the surprise of absolutely no one, Barack insisted on a full-size basketball court.

We hope everyone who visits finds something that sparks a commitment to bring change home.

Q This sounds like a continuation of the values your mom instilled, which shaped how you hosted in the White House. Why was a sledding hill included?

A When I was a girl growing up here on the South Side, shivering through winter in a mostly flat city, the thing I wanted most was to be able to put on my boots, grab a sled, and find a hill to barrel down. As we were designing the campus, making a big hill a central feature realized a childhood dream.

We're excited that so many South Side kids will get to make new friends and lasting memories at the OPC, even in the coldest months.

Q As first lady, helping caregivers raise healthy kids was a key initiative. Making physical activity look fun was part of spreading the Let's Move! message. How do you get physically active?

A I love playing tennis. Not only is the game a ton of fun, but playing it forces you to use so many different muscle groups—including your brain. It's a true lifelong sport. I also do a lot of yoga, and I try to go on hikes whenever I have a chance.

Q You made nutrition part of your platform too. Can you remind us how that came to be, and share how those efforts continue at the Center?

A When we were living in Hyde Park, Barack and I were both so busy that we struggled to find the time to put good, healthy meals on the table. Families across the country were facing the same issues. We needed to do something to help kids get the nourishment they needed. Creating the White House Kitchen Garden was one of my favorite parts of that initiative. We welcomed kids to learn about healthy food and how to grow it themselves.

I wanted to continue that mission at the OPC by building a community garden. We established a dedicated area where families can come together to plant seeds, tend to them, and harvest vegetables. It's so important that kids see where and how their food is grown. It gets them excited about fresh fruits and vegetables from an early age. Plus, it's good for kids to get outside and get their hands dirty!

Q What brings you joy when you're gardening?

A I love gardening with kids. The garden is a place for kids to grow—in more ways than one. It's always a breath of fresh air to spend time with them. They bring so much wonder and laughter. Young people are the reason I do most of my work. They focus and inspire me.

Q What's one small wellness habit you've started that made a big impact in your life?

A Barack and I set a rule in our home that worked like a charm. When the girls were growing up, they could snack on fruits and vegetables as much as they wanted, whenever they wanted. Our fridge was always full of carrots, apples, and other favorites. We found setting a rule and stocking healthy

snacks much easier than having constant battles about what to eat and why. Over time, the habit might even lead your kids to prefer fresh snacks.

Q What's something a local taught you that no guidebook, tour, or travel show ever could?

A When I was growing up, my grandfather lived around the corner from us. My older brother and I fittingly nicknamed him "Southside." Nearly every weekend, Grandpa would gather his friends and family at his house. He'd cook up a delicious meal, get a game of whist going, and blast jazz on his record player. You had to shout to be heard over the Count Basie and Thelonious Monk albums, chatter, and laughter. Those are still some of my most precious memories.

For me, that lesson—about family, about community, about opening your home and your heart—is a big part of what makes Chicago so special.

Q In your opinion, what does Illinois do better than anywhere else—but is too modest to brag about?

A Barack often says that Illinois gives you a taste of every part of this country. I agree. We have big cities, small towns, and expansive rural areas. You'll see massive industrial centers, college campuses, and vast cornfields. We stretch from the Great Lakes to Kentucky. We're home to Black folks, white folks, Hispanic folks, Asian folks, and immigrants from all over the world. The lifeblood of any place is its people—and Illinois holds a mirror up to America.



Valois Restaurant

Where Chicago feels like home

Cultural icons and neighborhood eateries: Here are Michelle Obama's favorite places in the city.

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

111 S. Michigan Avenue
"The Art Institute is a place that's buzzing with creativity, innovation, and inspiration," Obama says. "Just like the extraordinary people of Chicago. And, it's where Barack and I went on our first official date."

CHICAGO LAKEFRONT TRAIL

Ardmore Avenue south to 71st Street
"Take the trail, and you'll find an endless supply of unforgettable food, world-class cultural institutions, and the best people on the planet," Obama says.

She adds, "there's so much great food on the South Side," including:

LEM'S BAR-B-Q
311 E. 75th Street

ITALIAN FIESTA PIZZERIA
1306 E. 47th Street

VALOIS RESTAURANT
1518 E. 53rd Street

A Closer Look

STYLE IS SUBSTANCE

Like the woman herself, Michelle Obama's latest book, *The Look* (Crown), combines authenticity, inspiration, and glamour. Yes, this 300-plus-page coffee-table tome is a sumptuous chronicle of a fashion icon, but it's also a testament to the way, as Obama notes, "clothing can make you feel like the best version of yourself."

BEHIND THE SCENES

In addition to Obama's intimate storytelling and personal photos, designers and stylists who've worked with the first lady for decades share their sketches, recollections, and fashion tips for dressing with confidence in couture or off-the-rack.





Kitchen Essentials

Transform food prep and cooking into an art form by outfitting your kitchen with handmade tools and ingredients. For a finishing touch, upgrade your tableware too.

↑
HOT SPOT
Turn up the heat with a dash of Gindo's Spice of Life.

←
ON THE BLOCK
Juice grooves catch and hold liquid on the John Boos board.



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IN THE PANTRY

GINDO'S SPICE OF LIFE

St. Charles

Locally grown peppers, sea salt, and the genius of co-owners Chris and Mary Ginder enliven more than 500 hot sauce varieties and a weekly new release. Vampire Slayer Hot Sauce features 13 pounds of garlic in every batch, along with reaper, ghost, and scorpion peppers. "At the shop, on our Wall of Sauce, you'll find at least 50 flavors," Mary says.

GLACIERS END

Marion

Libby and Derek Ervin source wild and cultivated plants from their farm to create pickles, syrups, drinking vinegars, and hot sauces. Sorghum molasses and five chilies deliver sweet heat in their Old Squirrel Hot Sauce.

JANIE'S MILL

Ashkum

Certified organic grains, many grown by Janie's Farm, are stone-milled into flours and grits for at-home and professional bakers at this family-owned business.

PINK TIGER FARM

Goreville

Amazing flavor and cultural significance characterize spices grown by owners Brian Elias and Kyle McAdams. To optimize freshness, peppers (like ancho, poblano, jalapeño, cayenne, and Calabrian chili) go from the field to cold storage in less than 30 minutes. Create a seasoning blend with their grind-to-order option.



IN THE FIELD

Janie's Mill
co-owners **Harold**
and **Ross Wilken**.

SARAH BETH'S HOMEMADE DIPS

Hanna City

A memory of pretzels and her mom's homemade dill dip ignited Sarah Beth's passion for dip-making. Decades later, mixes—like Chipotle Bacon Ranch and Key Lime Pie Dessert—draw in sweet-and-savory flavor seekers.

home cooks to serious foodies and professional chefs," bladesmith Taylor Mathews says.

GALENA SPOON COMPANY

Galena

Carve a wooden spoon or select one of Paul Pendola's works of art. One-of-a-kind spoons, both right- and left-handed, provide comfort and aesthetic charm. Intricately patterned gallery boards captivate guests as the charcuterie disappears.

ON THE COUNTER

EDGE OF NORMAL WORKSHOP

Bloomington

The Mathews family keeps things sharp with hand-built blades and shears. Curate the perfect blade and handle for a custom knife. "Because everything we do is handcrafted, our customers range from

JOHN BOOS AND COMPANY

Effingham

Both home and professional chefs have sought out the beauty and utility of sustainably crafted cutting boards since 1887. Customers can select a wood type and either edge-grain (made from long wood strips) or end-grain (a checkerboard look made from the wood's cross sections).



FARM GROWN
Sweet-tart
Glaciers End
syrup pairs well
with vanilla ice
cream. Or try
it by the spoon.



CHASE GRAPENESS



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ILLINOIS
WINESM





ON THE EDGE
*Swoon over a set of
four wine glasses on
a walnut stand from
Swoon Living.*



Discover
more creative
Illinois Made
Makers.

FUNCTIONAL
ART
*Dishes from Alto
Clay Works elevate
every meal.*

ON THE TABLE

ALTO CLAY WORKS

Alto Pass

Steve Grimmer creates beautiful and functional wood-fired pottery in a former school-turned-studio. Watch Grimmer at his wheel, see the kiln, and check out the showroom full of pots for sale.

LEAF LIVESTOCK WOOL COMPANY

Geneseo

Anne Sammons and her family annually harvest more than a thousand pounds of wool from their diverse sheep flock, thrilling fiber artists nationwide. With an eye for pattern and color, Sammons also weaves stunning mug rugs, place mats, blankets, and scarves.

PICKARD CHINA

Antioch

Since 1893, four generations of Pickards have crafted hand-painted fine china. Their clientele, often requesting customizations, includes presidents, international organizations, and people who want elegant place settings. It flourishes as the only company still producing made-in-America fine china.

SWOON LIVING

Chicago

The online-only boutique highlights the connection between form and function with “revolving” glassware made by Patrick Fitzpatrick. Artfully angled wine decanters and three sizes of glasses spin to aerate liquid without spilling a drop. Order a specialized coaster to cradle a glass upright.





WHERE THE MOTHER ROAD *Meets the River Road*

Celebrate 100 years of road tripping in the only place in America where the Mother Road of Route 66 meets the scenic beauty of the Great River Road. Follow the neon signs to the It's Electric Neon Sign Park, dine at historic Route 66 roadside cafes, take a walk through the river bluffs and prairies and relax with a glass of locally crafted wine beside the Mighty Mississippi River.

Your one-of-a-kind adventure begins at www.RiversandRoutes.com.



UNCOVER THE *Possibilities*

The best-kept secrets in Central Illinois come at a more relaxed pace with the changing seasons. Find a cozy escape from the chilly temps in comfortable indoor settings that offer idyllic views of charming city scenes and seasonal landscapes – all while staying warm and out of the elements. Absorb the rich and colorful history of our community at the Jacksonville Area Museum, the Governor Duncan Mansion, and Underground Railroad sites. Shop and dine across distinctive boutiques and restaurants lining the breathtaking, historic Central Park Square. No matter how you envision a good time, creating your own memorable experiences comes as easily as discovering a bit of the past.



• JACKSONVILLEIL.ORG •

→
For tasty treats,
visit the Rendleman
Orchards Farm
Market in Alto Pass.

A TASTE
OF FALL

DATEBOOK

*Find the flavors
of autumn at apple
orchards and U-pick
pumpkin patches.
Tasting rooms and
farm-fresh fun will
keep everyone in
your family busy.*



Through October
**RENDLEMAN
ORCHARDS**
Alto Pass

Don't forget to brush apple cider doughnut crumbs from the corner of your mouth before posing for a photo beside the sunflower patch.

Through October
**GOEBBERT'S
FARM**
Pingree Grove

Live giraffes aren't the tallest orange animals on the farm—that honor goes to the Pumpkin Eating Dinosaur, a unique robot attraction that picks up gourds with its mouth. While here, take a spin on the carousel and kiddie rides.

Through October
**ALL SEASONS
ORCHARD**
Woodstock

Pigs dash through the fenced-in racetrack in the barnyard, while children can clamber over Tire Mountain and ride the train.

Through October
**ROYAL OAK
FARM ORCHARD**
Harvard

Putt your way through the orchard's minigolf course. Each hole celebrates parts of the property, including the petting zoo and U-pick apples and flowers.

Through November
**TANNERS
ORCHARD**
Speer

More than 11,000 trees grow 17 apple varieties at this orchard. The corn maze opens in September and October. Visit on weekend

Festival Days to take a covered wagon to the U-pick area.

Through December 23
**CURTIS
ORCHARD
AND PUMPKIN
PATCH**
Champaign

Activities evolve with the season: Pet kittens and goats, pick zinnias, go down the giant slide, and hop on the jumping pillow in July—apple and pumpkin picking start in August and go through October. Fresh-made doughnuts and pies are available daily.

September–October
**BENTGTON'S
FARM**
Homer Glen

Classic amusement park rides get a farm-themed makeover (imagine a drop tower with seats

designed like cracked eggs) at Bengtson's.

September–October
**JONAMAC
ORCHARD**
Malta

Kick back after apple and pumpkin picking with a flight of house-made ciders on the Cider House's sun-soaked patio.

September–October
**OKTOBERFEST
NATION**
Chicago

Don your lederhosen to sip beer imported from German brewery Hofbräuhaus, eat steaming bratwurst, and dance to jaunty oompah bands.

September–October
**RICHARDSON
ADVENTURE
FARM**
Spring Grove

Clamber into the 11-foot-tall inflatable ball

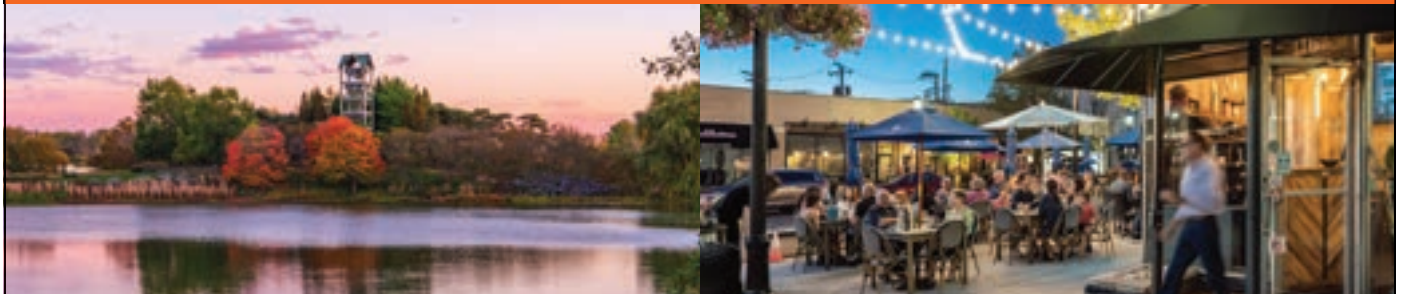


CHICAGO'S
NORTH SHORE
CITY LIFE,
ELEVATED



Scan for more info

Bordering Chicago along Lake Michigan, Chicago's North Shore is the perfect spot to base a Chicago visit with easy access to the city and North Shore attractions.



Find events, hotel packages and more:
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@chicagonorthshore

enjoy
illinois

An advertisement for the Explore Elgin Area. It features a large, ornate stone archway (a Hindu temple) under a blue sky. The text "Find your Weekend Road Trip Vibe" is written in a stylized font. Below it, a smaller text says "Experience the perfect weekend exploring unique architecture and sampling Elgin's culture and cuisine." At the bottom, it says "Plan Your Road Trip at ExploreElginArea.com". There is a QR code in the bottom left and logos for "EXPLORE ELGIN AREA", "Kankakee County", and "enjoy illinois".

An advertisement for Kankakee County promoting a winter break. The top half shows three children sledding down a snowy hill. The text "Break away" is written in a large, red, cursive font. Below the image, a map of Illinois has a red arrow pointing to Kankakee County. The text reads: "This winter break, try something refreshingly easy: an escape to Kankakee County. Just a short trip from anywhere in Illinois, it's where holiday magic feels easy again—and where families can rediscover what time off is really about." Below this, it says "No long drives. No stress. Just more time together." At the bottom, it says "VisitKankakeeCounty.com". There is a QR code in the bottom left and logos for "Visit KANKAKEE COUNTY" and "enjoy illinois".



Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular, Springfield

ILLINOIS INSIDER Morton claims the title of Pumpkin Capital of the World. The Libby's plant processes 95 percent of canned pumpkins in the U.S.

and experience the rush of rolling downhill. Once your head stops spinning, stroll through the sunflower field.

September 4–October (weekends)

SHADES OF AUTUMN FALL FESTIVAL

McHenry

Shrieks of delight ring out at Stade's Farm and Market as kids whiz by on ziplines, but nothing drowns out the horn signaling the launch of another gourd from the pumpkin cannon.

September 10–October 31 GAIL'S PUMPKIN PATCH

Beason

Take home more than pumpkins—the Popcorn Wagon brings families out to a field with dried corn (still in the husk) that can be popped in the microwave.

September 16–19

MORTON PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Morton

Much like in a pumpkin patch, you'll have your pick of how to celebrate the 60th anniversary of this fall fair: a pickleball tournament, foam party, parade, and more.

September 16–October 31 (Wednesday to Sunday)

THE GREAT PUMPKIN PATCH

Arthur

The family farm yields 300 varieties of pumpkins, 5,000 mums, and a menagerie of animals. Take a wagon ride through the pumpkin patch before visiting the one-room schoolhouse-turned sweets shop.

September 18–19

BELLEVILLE OKTOBERFEST

Belleville

Gaze upon sleek vintage cars and show off your strength with a washer toss during the annual festival's tournament. Celebrate your victory with a pint.

September 18–20

OKTOBERFEST PEORIA

Peoria

Want to use German to cheer on your buddies in the stein-holding contest? Stop by the Heritage Tent for a vocabulary lesson. (Dachshund race competitors won't care which language you use.)

September 24–27

CHICAGO GOURMET

Chicago

Windy City culinary luminaries like Stephanie Izard and Rick Bayless join forces for a food-focused party with events such as burger cook-offs and wine-pairing competitions.

Late September–early October

SIX FLAGS GREAT AMERICA OKTOBERFEST

Gurnee

Save downing an ale and noshing on a soft pretzel bigger than your face for after the beyond-vertical drop on Wrath of Rakshasa.

Late September–October

ECKERT'S COUNTRY STORE AND FARMS

Belleville

Pluck the perfect carving or baking pumpkin fresh from the vine on the farm, then buy ripe apples in the country store, open year-round.

October 7–11, 14–18, 21–25

NIGHT OF 1,000 JACK-O-LANTERNS

Glencoe

Artists carve vampires, skulls, and other intricate visages on pumpkins, which line a path at the Chicago Botanic Garden.



Glass Pumpkin Patch, The Morton Arboretum, Lisle

October 9–11

GLASS PUMPKIN PATCH

Lisle

Craftspeople perform glassblowing and flame-working demonstrations at The Morton Arboretum. Buy one of the delicate pumpkin sculptures as a souvenir.

October 9–11

SCARECROW WEEKEND

St. Charles

Navigate the inflatable corn maze as more than 120 handmade scarecrows look on.

October 16–17

JACK-O-LANTERN SPECTACULAR

Springfield

About 2,000 pumpkins carved by community members grin at visitors under the watchful eye of the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon tower.

October 21–25

SYCAMORE PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Sycamore

No one knows if carnival rides, the pie-eating contest, or the parade earns more cheers from families, but cheekily decorated pumpkins net the most smiles.

October 24

FLANNEL FEST

Champaign

Honor the quintessential fall fabric at West Side Park with a variety of giggle-inducing events, like a live lumberjack show and a facial hair competition that has a baby division.

November 20–21

GALENA NOUVEAU WEEKEND

Galena

Galena Cellars Vineyard and Winery turns the bottling of the season's first wine into a town-wide fete, complete with wine tastings and live music in the tasting room.



PHOTOGRAPHS: SCOTT THOMPSON

A photograph of the Johnnie's Beef restaurant building, which has a sign that says "JOHNNIE'S Charcoal Broiled ITALIAN SAUSAGE & BEEF". There are picnic tables in front of the building.

 **JOHNNIE'S BEEF, ELMWOOD PARK**

craving
CHICAGO-STYLE?
find it

DO WEST OF CHICAGO
Explore
OAK PARK & BEYOND

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

Kicks on 66

As Route 66 turns 100 this year, Illinois revisits its role of defining the American road trip. Here, roadside rituals began, stories took root, and you can still chase the romance of the open highway.



THEN

When the Mother Road opened November 11, 1926—spanning 2,400 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica, California—American travel changed forever. Automobiles replaced railcars, and small-town hospitality became a promise made in neon signs, diner coffee, and open doors. “Our Mother Road represents history, culture, and what once was,” says Casey Claypool, executive director of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway. And the best parts still remain.

NOW Today, travelers meet the past with their eyes, taste buds, and more. Visit the repurposed Ambler’s Texaco Gas Station in Dwight. Pose below the Gemini Giant in Wilmington. And enjoy the daily special at The Ariston Cafe in Litchfield (left). “It’s about all the stories embedded in these communities,” Casey Claypool says. Newer spots like Route 66 Motorheads Bar and Grill, Museum, and Entertainment Complex in Springfield revive the nostalgia as modern lore.



ILLINOIS INSIDER Time a 2026 getaway for the official centennial birthday bash November 10–11 (Veterans Day) in Springfield, featuring a dinner, live entertainment, and a Route 66 conference.



**Find more
Route 66
road trip
ideas here.**

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Tourism

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Discover Adventure in
MACON COUNTY, IL

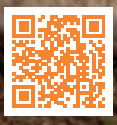
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📍 Rainbow Ranch Petting Zoo, Nashville

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illinois



*Irish Hollow,
Galena*

Upgrade Your Way to Bliss

Across Illinois, luxury overnights prove romance blossoms in the details. Celebrate your sweetheart with decision-free dinners, after-hours spas, and concierges who specialize in making magic happen.

IRISH HOLLOW, GALENA

Dinner here routinely stretches past two hours, partly because it arrives without menus or a reason to rush. Every stay includes a seven-course chef's-choice tasting

dinner served in the restored general store dining room or delivered quietly to your cottage. The slower gustatory pace borrows from the owners' properties in Italy and Buenos Aires, where long meals are standard practice. Much of what's served comes from the property itself: on-site-raised beef, garden produce,

and cheeses made with cream from neighboring farms. Five standalone stone cottages, complete with wood-burning fireplaces and custom furniture, spread across 500 acres. "You don't have to make decisions here," says co-owner Bill Barrick. "You get the luxury of time."



UP THE ROMANCE

Schedule side-by-side massages, have wine and cheese delivered to your cottage, or move dinner outside to a lantern-lit campfire (year-round) or a private table near the property's old iron bridges.

STORY: KELLY AIGLON. PHOTOGRAPHS: IOT



Irish Hollow, Galena

QC, THAT'S WHERE WINTER IS WORTH THE TRIP



The Quad Cities brings people together, even in the heart of winter. Our cold-weather lineup has something for everyone. From glowing light displays to unexpected outdoor adventures and eagle-watching thrills, there's always something happening and trust us, you won't want to miss a moment! **Get started at VisitQuadCities.com**





*Deer Path Inn,
Lake Forest*

DEER PATH INN, LAKE FOREST

The detail that tells you everything: Guests can find handwritten notes with a welcome greeting in their room. Opened in 1929 after a private home was transformed into a hotel, this Tudor-style enclave still feels like a lived-in English country estate, complete with crackling fireplaces, afternoon tea as a standing ritual, and high-touch service that caters to every guest. The Buckingham and Cornwall suites feature freestanding tubs that fill from the ceiling and fireplaces built for lingering. Downstairs, The Bar hums with locals ordering some of the North Shore's best sushi and classic cocktails.

↑ **UP THE ROMANCE**
Request a fireplace suite, arrange a personalized turndown with sweet treats or keepsakes, borrow a Barbour waxed coat, or have a handpicked book waiting bedside with A Good Book and Spot of Tea package.

THE HERRINGTON INN AND SPA, GENEVA

Dinner, a walk along the Fox River, a quiet moment by the fireplace, and a long soak—that's the rhythm most nights follow here. The 60-room inn rests by the water in downtown Geneva, close enough to the action for daytime

wandering but designed to turn inward once evening arrives. Its small scale shapes the experience. "We're intentionally a more intimate property, and it's easy to feel like you're in a Hallmark movie," says catering manager Racquel Balcita. The cinematic Atwater's, the inn's 10-table restaurant overlooking the water, opens each night with a surprise amuse-bouche before settling into seasonal classics like filet, risotto, and seafood. The restaurant is also open for breakfast and lunch. Upstairs, upgraded rooms lean into comfort, with fireplaces, oversized whirlpool tubs, marble floors, and river-facing balconies.

↑ **UP THE ROMANCE**
Book a massage at The Spa, add charcuterie with champagne, or return from dinner to rose petals and a bath already drawn.

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL CHICAGO

The most sought-after reservation at Four Seasons Hotel Chicago isn't a table; it's the spa, after closing time. The

hotel's Night Spa experience gives couples private access to the spa and pool in the evening, complete with massages, champagne, and canapés. "Guests rent the entire space—it's quiet and completely theirs," chef concierge Kristen Klus says. That same all-access approach runs throughout the hotel. The concierge team curates insider experiences, such as guided dining tours of restaurants featured in *The Bear* (complete with a historian-led narrative), and commissions-engraved glassware or custom florals to mark anniversaries. In warmer months, couples can book the hotel's private yacht charter, complete with catering, onboard staff, and chauffeured transport to the dock.

↑ **UP THE ROMANCE**
Reserve the Night Spa buyout, book a private city or food tour, or customize a turndown with florals, candlelight, and commemorative details.



*Four Seasons
Hotel Chicago*

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA

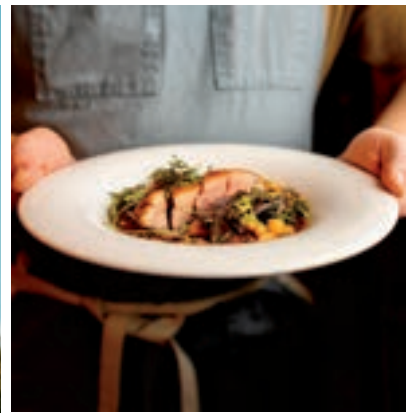
Fall tastes **brilliant** here.

This is where fall means meeting reindeer, picking our rich bounty, sipping the local harvest, and savoring one more farm-fresh bite.

Plan your **brilliant** fall weekend today.

EXPERIENCE CHAMPAIGN URBANA

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Something New

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There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays...

Friendly faces that greet you at the door, a cup of something warm and cozy put in your hand and a vibe that's part nostalgic, part magical... Stay awhile, and you'll find there's no place like home for the holidays...

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**VROOMAN
MANSION,
BLOOMINGTON**

The most romantic move here might be renting the entire carriage house and disappearing for the weekend. Built in 1869 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Vrooman Mansion has just five guest rooms in the main house, plus the two-suite Carriage House that can be booked as a private retreat. Inside the Carriage

House, Victorian bones meet modern comfort with exposed brick, heated brick floors, antique furnishings, fireplaces, and a copper-lined claw-foot tub paired with a walk-in rain shower. What guests often underestimate is how easy it is to step out for a great meal. “If guests add a Treat Her or Treat Him package, we’ll grab gift cards from restaurants our guests are excited about and build them into the stay,” co-owner Pam Kowalewski says, pointing to nearby Epiphany Farms Restaurant and The Mystic

Kitchen. Back at the property, experiences are customized with locally made bath products, in-room massages, and flexible add-ons tailored to each stay.

↑ **UP THE ROMANCE**
Book the full Carriage House, add a bath package with local organic products, schedule an in-room massage, or opt for a Treat Her or Treat Him package with flowers, champagne, and dinner out.



*Vrooman Mansion,
Bloomington*



*Havisham
Bourbon Bar,
Alto Pass*

**HAVISHAM
HOUSE,
ALTO PASS**

You don’t expect a 300-plus-bottle whiskey bar tucked beneath an 1860s flour mill, but Havisham House trades in exactly those kinds of surprises. Spread across a cluster of restored buildings on the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail, the property rewards a little exploring. In the basement, you’ll find the Tasting Room and Bourbon Bar, a low-slung, beam-lined space carved out by hand. On the main floor, an unmarked door leads to the Conductor’s Office, reserved for small, private dinners. Choose from a selection of 40 kinds of cigars in the hallway. Upstairs, the suites keep the building’s quirks intact with floors that tilt just slightly, thick timber posts, and balconies made for a slow drink at dusk. “We kept the imperfections,” co-owner Jerri Schaefer says. “That’s where the character is... it tells you what the building’s been through.” Guests can book private Bourbon 101 tastings for small groups, complete with guided pours, or arrange for engraved mini barrels to take home.

↑ **UP THE ROMANCE**
Ask for mimosas waiting on arrival, cigars paired with whiskey on the balcony, and even spa add-ons like facials and massages.

Experience UPTOWN NORMAL

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In the heart of Illinois, Uptown Normal is a modern hub with authentic Midwestern charm — where boutique shopping, eclectic restaurants, cultural events, premier lodging and state-of-the-art transit are all located within a vibrant, walkable district designed for discovery. Explore, experience and enjoy all that awaits when you visit Uptown Normal.

Calendar, directory and more!
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Southland
Just Beyond the City Limits

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Metropolis



The Gwen, Chicago

The CONCIERGE Connection

If you've ever been handed a room key and thought, *I should've asked for more*, turn to the concierge.

A concierge is the hotel's on-the-ground local expert—someone who helps guests plan, book, and troubleshoot logistics, with things like hard-to-get reservations, tickets, and special in-room arrangements.

"No task is too small and no idea is too large," says The Gwen's chef concierge and Guest Experience Manager Ramon Gomez. "If it's legal and within our control, we can make it happen." That mindset leads to sky's-the-limit enhancements. Just reach out before your stay, discuss what you're celebrating, and share preferences rather than instructions.

"Some guests want champagne and chocolate,"

Gomez says. "Others want something completely unexpected." You could land perks like a room upgrade, a late checkout, personalized turndowns, or access-only extras that never show up on a booking page. Gomez says the key is early communication and trust: "When guests give us creative freedom, that's when we really lean in."



The Gwen, Chicago

ILLINOIS INSIDER The Sports Illustrated Resort takes over the former Virgin Hotel in the Loop. The approximately 250-room hotel features a fitness center, sports bar, and coffee shop.

THE GWEN, CHICAGO

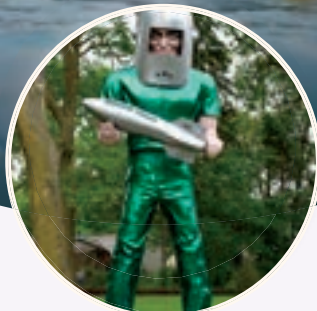
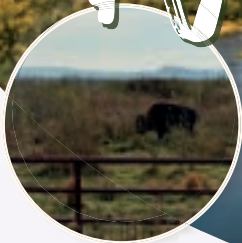
If you want to know how seriously this hotel takes romance, ask the concierge how many times they've filled a pool with rose petals. (Yes, it's happened.) The Art Deco property above Michigan Avenue has the space and

staff to make just about anything possible—all backed by a willingness to turn the common into something far more memorable. Winter brings curling on the outdoor terrace paired with Swiss-inspired fondue served under the stars. Inside, turndown can be as simple as candles and petals or as elaborate as floral installations, custom-scented bubble baths,

or even a build-your-own-sundae cart rolled into your room.

↑ **UP THE ROMANCE**
Book the seasonal curling-and-fondue experience, collaborate on a custom turndown or in-room menu, or reserve a private terrace setup with skyline and Lake Michigan views.

DISCOVER Wilmington



EXPLORE

- ✓ Historic Downtown
- ✓ Vibrant Community Events
- ✓ Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
- ✓ Route 66 Americana

WHERE THE RIVER MEETS THE ROAD

Discover Wilmington – The Island City! Strike a pose with the Gemini Giant, explore our charming shops & dining or wander through prairie trails. Wilmington has the small-town charm and classic road trip spirit you've been looking for on your next adventure.



WILMINGTON
PARK DISTRICT



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www.wilmington-il.gov

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

THE MORE THE MERRIER

Don't let the winter blues keep you from dreaming of a warm group outing at Splash Kingdom! From corporate gatherings to birthdays, book your party today and put something to look forward to on your calendar — and take a few swings at our year-round driving range in the meantime.



KnightsActionPark.com

See website for dates and hours of operation.

Norge Ski Club
Fox River Grove, IL

MCHENRY Co.
**WHERE
WINTER
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NATURALLY
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naturallymchenrycounty.com

Cold Play

Winter hobbies abound in Illinois, where barriers to entry remain delightfully low. Rent gear, schedule a lesson, and fall in love with a new cold-weather passion.

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Days at Northerly
Island Park,
Chicago*

“

Polar Adventure Days is a symphony of what the Chicago Park District does best: elevating community arts and nature year-round. We are thrilled to invite patrons to enjoy an exciting winter recreational activity while exploring the rich ecological history of Chicago's lakefront and southeast side.”

CARLOS RAMIREZ-ROSA
General Superintendent
and CEO
CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT



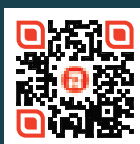
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STAY+ PLAY

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Prairie
PARK**

WEST OF PEORIA

wildlifeprairiepark.org

**Private Animal
Feeding & Encounter**

Have you ever slept
in a caboose?



SKI AND SNOWBOARD

Pause before speeding down Chestnut Mountain Resort's Apache run, a favorite of intermediate skiers. "We have a three-state view," says Stewart Stoffregen, marketing director of the Galena resort. "Across the river, you have Iowa, and up north, you have Wisconsin. Of course, you're standing in Illinois. So you'll have beautiful vistas." Closer to Chicago, rent gear at Four Lakes Alpine Snowsports in Lisle, take a lesson, and ski or snowboard under the stars. Cap off the day with a post-mountain massage at Hotel Indigo Naperville Riverwalk's spa.

SNOWSHOE AND CROSS-COUNTRY SKI

Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa's pro shop trades golf clubs for snowshoe rentals in Galena each winter. Use those to march across miles of trails at the Nordic Center, or bring your own cross-country skis to glide over the snow-covered golf course. In DuPage County, the Forest Preserve District team grooms select trails for cross-country skiing when conditions allow. Rent equipment at Wheaton Park District's Arrowhead Golf Club beside Herrick Lake Forest Preserve, or tour through prairies, savannas, and oak-maple woodlands on the gently rolling-to-hilly 9.5-mile main loop at Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve in Darien. "It just looks a little different than some of our other preserves do, because of the variety of topography," Ranger Operations Manager Marty Jandura says.

GAZE AT THE STARS

Chilly nights yield extra-clear skies, says Matt Kuntz, site superintendent for the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, Illinois' only International Dark Sky Park near Rantoul. He recommends wandering the Dark Sky Trail system: "It's very easy to walk at night, when special dark-sky light bollards help show the way," Kuntz says. Steak served at the I Hotel and Illinois Conference Center's restaurant in Champaign whets appetites before stargazing. At Anna's Davie School Inn, a historical schoolhouse-turned-hotel, astronomy pupils dream of constellations spotted from the Ferne Clyffe State Park lake's parking lot nearby.



GROUNDHOG DAYS

Unlike Bill Murray's *Groundhog Day* character, you'll want to relive time in Woodstock, where the movie was filmed. The town hosts an annual Groundhog Days Festival (January 29–February 2), complete with a walking tour of cinematic locations, like the blue-trimmed Cherry Tree Inn B&B. Peel off to expand your vinyl collection at The Records Department in Historic Woodstock Square.

EAGLE WATCH

Each winter, bald eagles snatch fish from Illinois' unfrozen tributaries. Witness the hunt from Grafton's Pere Marquette Lodge's terrace overlooking the Illinois River, or take a tour through Pere Marquette State Park. "Throughout the area, guests have seen up to 50-plus eagles," says Arielle Niemeyer, the lodge's director of marketing and events. Farther north, visit the Rock Island Arsenal, an active U.S. Army installation on a Mississippi River island that attracts eagles and bird-watchers alike. The latter warms their bellies with whiskey cocktails nearby in The Axis Moline Hotel lobby bistro and bar.



ILLINOIS INSIDER The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers counts the eagles visiting locks and dams each winter. In 2026, Lock and Dam 13 in Fulton reported spotting 324 adult eagles.

Maggie Daley Ice Rink, Chicago

ICE-SKATE

Giggles echo through the chilly air in Chicago's Millennium Park. The first rink is a squiggly ice ribbon looping through the northwest corner of the Maggie Daley Park section. The turns are gentle, but if your balance needs more work, keep it simple at the McCormick Tribune Ice Rink, a classic oval beside a towering Christmas tree. Whichever free experience you choose, pick up a salty-sweet turtle mocha from the North Pole Coffee Company for a dose of warmth.



*Winter activities
abound in the
Land of Lincoln.*



enjoy the holidays

Discover award-winning theater and Chicagoland's favorite seasonal attractions in the Fox Valley region of Illinois.

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Photo by Brynlynn

AURORA AREA

Kane County

Scan here!

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COLOR TOURS

RESPLENDENT FALL DAYS CALL FOR ROAD TRIPS. THESE SEVEN ROUTES MERGE WORTHWHILE WINDSHIELD TIME WITH DOZENS OF REASONS TO PULL OVER AND STRETCH YOUR HORIZONS.

WRITER BRIANNE SANCHEZ

PHOTOGRAPH: JCT



GREAT RIVER ROAD

550 MILES

Key Towns: Savanna, Rock Island, Nauvoo, Quincy, Ellis Grove, Chester

Make storied Mississippi River towns your checkpoints on an epic journey along Illinois' western edge. In Chester, take a walk on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to learn about their epic journey, or honor hometown hero (and Popeye's creator) Elzie Crisler Segar on the Popeye and Friends Character Trail.

5 MUST-SEE STOPS

Mississippi Palisades State Park, Savanna Cliffs arrayed in streaks of dark orange and brown, rock climbing on dolomite limestone, and a rugged 15-mile trail system reward visitors with rich autumnal vistas reflecting off the river. Watch for wild turkeys.

Mississippi River Visitor Center, Rock Island Arsenal Watch one of the world's largest roller dams move barges and boats (after passing an on-site background check). The museum and viewing platform are within a military installation.

Nauvoo Temple, Nauvoo Sacred and historically significant for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this locally quarried white limestone building gleams at sunset. Across the street, a new visitors center shares the significance of the Temple, which is not open to the public.

Historic Quincy Founded 201 years ago, this border town artfully blends modern businesses and fascinating museums, including one of the nation's first documented Underground Railroad sites.

Fort Kaskaskia State Historic Site, Ellis Grove Picnic or make camp along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, a confluence where the famed Corps of Discovery expedition added men and resupplied.



Relax in the Holiday Inn Rock Island pool and sauna, then order room service. Or walk to nearby Skellington Manor for an escape room experience.

MEETING OF THE GREAT RIVERS NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

33 MILES

Key Towns: Grafton, Alton, Hartford

Inspiring intersections amplify the allure for drivers and cyclists where the Great River Road meets Route 66—and where the Missouri, Mississippi, and Illinois rivers converge.

5 MUST-SEE STOPS

Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail Sections of the 20-mile trail run parallel to the byway. Start pedaling toward Grafton from the Pere Marquette State Park Lodge or Alton's Piasa Park.

Grafton SkyTour, Grafton Soaring in an open-air lift or enclosed gondola, leaf-peep fiery reds and rich rustic browns from

a fresh perspective while ascending to The Terrace restaurant on Aerie's Resort.

Melvin Price Locks and Dam and the National Great Rivers Museum, Alton Interactive exhibits interpret the importance of the mighty Mississippi River's impact on the environment, economy, and communities.

Piasa Park, Alton See the Native American bluff painting of the mythological, dragon-like Piasa Bird.

"The Byway Discovery Center at Great Rivers Park is designed to be a true gateway to exploration as the first orientation center of its kind. Visitors will be immersed in all four seasons of the byway region from the viewpoint of an eagle and dragonfly."

—CORY JOBE *Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau CEO*

Lewis and Clark Confluence Tower, Hartford Three viewing platforms highlight stories of the surrounding area. New murals adorn the exterior walls of the Tower amphitheater.



Raise a toast to your trip at Old Bakery Beer Company with daily specials and a full pub menu before lodging at the Cracker Factory, with views of the Mississippi, in Alton.

HISTORIC ROUTE 66

301 MILES

Key Towns: Joliet, Pontiac, Springfield, Livingston, Madison

On November 11, America's Mother Road officially turns 100. Concerts, parties, cruise-ins, drone flights, and more special events mark this icon's birthday along Illinois' portion of the 2,448-mile route.

5 MUST-SEE STOPS

Old Joliet Prison, Joliet Made famous by *The Blues Brothers* movie, the notorious former penitentiary hosts self-guided tours. Plus, there are spine-tingling evening flashlight events for adults in the fall.

Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum, Pontiac Let memorabilia, travel resources, and artwork inspire your own trip along America's Main Street. Make sure to pose with the largest painted Route 66 Shield.

Route 66 Legends Neon Park, Springfield After sunset, displays in the Illinois State Fairgrounds Route 66 Experience glow. Towering vintage restorations and re-creations evoke classic midcentury nights cruising to the drive-in.

Sam Vadalabene

Bike Trail, Alton





**Mississippi Palisades
State Park, Savanna**

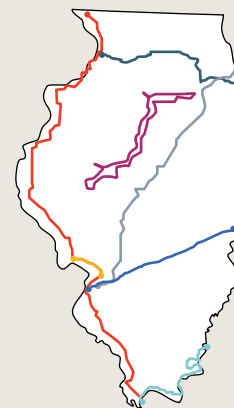
The Pink Elephant Antique Mall, Livingston Hunting for throwback treasures? Quirky fiberglass giants direct nostalgic shoppers to this 30,000-square-foot antiques mall. (Early birds, rejoice. The attached Twistee Treat Diner now serves breakfast.)

Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, Madison Amble across one of the few pedestrian-only bridges—stopping to soak in



panoramic views of fall color—that spans a great American river. Built for cars in 1929, it's known for an unusual turn.

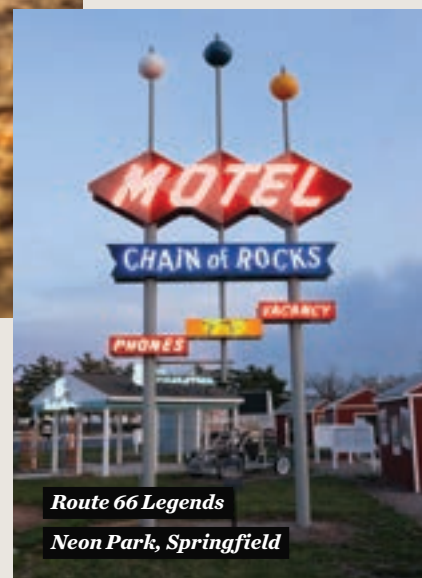
Just blocks from the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield, a DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Obed and Isaac's Microbrewery and Eatery pours thirsty passengers amber pints of Mother Road APA.



ILLINOIS' 7 NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS

- Great River Road
- Meeting of the Great Rivers
 - Historic Route 66
- Historic National Road
- Ohio River Scenic Byway
 - Lincoln Highway
- Illinois River Road

*Plan your
Route 66
Centennial
trip today!*



**Route 66 Legends
Neon Park, Springfield**

HISTORIC NATIONAL ROAD

164 MILES

Key Towns: Marshall, Casey, Effingham, Vandalia, Collinsville

Find early Lincoln history and a massive helping of kitsch—like the World's Largest Catsup Bottle in Collinsville—along this stretch of the first federally funded road.

5 MUST-SEE STOPS

Autumn Fest, Marshall Mural-filled Marshall hosts its annual Autumn Fest (September 18–20).

Big Things Small Town, Casey Supersized roadside attractions turned a place with a population less than 2,500 into a worthwhile attraction. Miniaturize yourself in photos with dozens of whimsical, larger-than-life items.

“Casey is the perfect place to see a Big Thing, because many of them are interactive. You can go inside the World's Largest

Mailbox, and a flag will go up when you drop a letter in.”

—MEGAN BANNISTER

Travel author and roadside oddities aficionado

Cross at the Crossroads, Effingham

Erected 25 years ago, this symbol of triumph over suffering spans 113 feet and stretches skyward nearly 200 feet. New walking paths and a welcome center invite interstate travelers.

Vandalia State House, Vandalia

The state's oldest surviving Capitol features a first-floor exhibit outlining Abraham Lincoln's connection as a state representative. For special events, costumed interpreters wear 1830s period dress.

Cahokia Mounds, Collinsville Once the largest pre-Columbian city north of Mexico, only remnants remain. Download the augmented reality tour app before visiting the 10-story Monks Mound and trails.



Eco-chic travelers appreciate the elevated menu (and EV charging station) at Effingham's Firefly Grill. Overnight at Lofts at the Exchange 1890, a bank converted to Airbnb apartments.

Vandalia State House,

Vandalia

Cache River State Natural

Area, near Belknap

OHIO RIVER SCENIC BYWAY

188 MILES

Key Towns: Equality, Karbers Ridge, Herod, Metropolis, Belknap

Simple road maps won't illustrate the splendor of these bucolic backroads leading to bluff-tops and a bayou, terminating at the confluence of the Ohio River and Mississippi River.



5 MUST-SEE STOPS

Ohio River Visitor Center, Equality

Volunteers staff the center (open through October on weekends) and the 276 Art Exchange, with works from local artisans (open year-round on Fridays and Saturdays). Fuel up at The Red Onion restaurant with a fire-grilled ribeye and cheesy potatoes.

“Equality was a historic center of the salt industry, and we’re right on the border of the Shawnee National Forest. Double M Campground nearby caters to equestrians.”

—**MARK YORK**

President, Gallatin County Tourism

Rim Rock National Recreation Area and Trail, near Karbers Ridge

Tight squeezes and steep passages on the canyon’s lower trail lead to Ox-Lot Cave.

Observation Trail, Shawnee

National Forest, near Herod Perched high over other woodlands, this short, popular Garden of the Gods flagstone loop yields awe-inspiring views, where red and orange leaves pop against the naturally sculpted sandstone formations.

Fort Massac State Park, Metropolis

During a mid-October Encampment festival at Illinois’ first state park, costumed reenactors portray 18th-century life with demonstrations

and battles around the replica Fort’s museum and visitors center.

Cache River State Natural Area, near Belknap

Known as Illinois’ hidden bayou, these internationally important wetlands hold incredible biodiversity. Follow the floating interpretive boardwalk at Heron Pond Trail through the cypress-tupelo swamp.

Bet on hospitality and river views in Superman’s hometown. At Harrah’s Metropolis, Vegas-style gaming, deluxe rooms, pet-friendly amenities, and two on-site restaurants greet guests.



LINCOLN HIGHWAY

179 MILES

Key Towns: Joliet, Franklin Grove, Dixon, Rochelle, Fulton

Drivers stop to shop upscale outlets and town-square boutiques along this segment of America's first cross-country roadway, blending bright lights with delightful rural detours.

5 MUST-SEE STOPS

Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet A century after opening as a vaudeville movie palace, this architecturally ambitious venue

continues to host headliners. Want a glimpse backstage? Take a tour on select Tuesdays. (Check website for tour dates.)

Nachusa Grasslands, Franklin Grove

Nachusa's restored habitats tell a story of native plants and wildlife returning to northern Illinois. See it during Nachusa Grasslands Fall Festival (September 19).

John Deere Historic Site, Dixon Learn the backstory of a thriving manufacturing business through artifacts, demonstrations, and tours. This free attraction details how Deere's steel plow ingenuity transformed modern agriculture (April to October).

1918 Standard Oil Filling Station, Rochelle The first Illinois filling station

on the transcontinental Lincoln Highway, this restored landmark now hosts The Spark Shop, an incubator for emerging local retail businesses.

Windmill Cultural Center, Fulton

Pulling up to an authentic, working windmill on a flood-control dike feels like driving to the Netherlands. Inside, see Dutch and other European display models.



Celebrity chefs like Rick Ortiz, Giada De Laurentiis, and Stephanie Izard contributed to dining concepts within the expansive new Hollywood Casino Joliet.





**Peoria Riverfront
Museum, Peoria**



**Starved Rock
State Park, Oglesby**



**Nachusa Grasslands,
Franklin Grove**

ILLINOIS RIVER ROAD

150 MILES

Key Towns: LaSalle, Oglesby, Peoria, Hanna City, Havana

With more than 100 historical and educational waypoints and abundant natural attractions, this route across the ancient Illinois River Valley invites motorists to step outside.

5 MUST-SEE STOPS

I&M Canal Visitor Center, LaSalle

Snag a warm beverage or cup of soup from Lock 16 Cafe before immersing yourself in stories about this engineering achievement, linking waterways between New York and New Orleans.

Starved Rock State Park, Oglesby Day hikers looking for a quick jaunt (0.3 miles) should head from the visitors center to the top of Starved Rock for beautiful views of orange, red, and yellow foliage along the Illinois River. Then, take the boardwalk up Eagle Cliff Overlook (0.8 miles).

Peoria Riverfront Museum, Peoria

Merging art, science, and history, this Smithsonian-affiliated multidisciplinary museum celebrates creativity alongside educational learning. Stop in for special U.S. 250th activities and exhibitions.

Wildlife Prairie Park, Hanna City

Observe bison, bobcat, black bear, wolves, and other animals native to Illinois on wooded walking trails, or ride the Prairie Zephyr Train through diverse habitats (March to October).

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge,

Havana Millions of migrating birds seek sanctuary in these wetlands. From October to November, duck calls and quacks ring out. Watch waterfowl from plentiful viewing platforms.

Put a cherry on top of your Friday Night Date Night and order the filet mignon special, which includes cherries jubilee, at Jim's Steak House. Then walk to a luxury suite at the restored Peoria Marriott Pere Marquette.







★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PRESIDENTIAL PATHWAYS

Illinois provided the right place at the right time for these go-getters, propelling them all the way to the White House. Connect with the fascinating personal transformations of presidents Lincoln, Grant, Reagan, and Obama on history-rich getaways.

WRITER BRIAN KRAMER



1861–1865

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

16th President | *Springfield*

Although it had recently been selected as the state capital, Springfield in 1837 was a frontier town with chickens in the streets when self-taught lawyer Abraham Lincoln arrived by horse with a small library and a few personal items purchased on credit. Over the next 24 years, Lincoln established his legal career, started a family with well-to-do Mary Todd, served in the state legislature, and campaigned (unsuccessfully) for the U.S. Senate against Stephen Douglas. “This is the first place he can call home,” says Daniel E. Worthington, director of The Papers of Abraham Lincoln at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. “Lincoln finds Springfield and Springfield finds him.” And even though he left for Washington, D.C., in 1861, “everything points to Lincoln returning to Springfield after his presidency. His goal seems to be returning one day and practicing law with his son Robert. He never became entitled; he was a Midwesterner through and through.”

PLACES TO VISIT

Start your Springfield time-travels at the **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum**, which combines personal artifacts and documents (including original copies of the Gettysburg Address) with life-size dioramas and state-of-the-art immersive presentations. Inside the recently reopened **Old State Capitol**, Lincoln argued more than 200 cases before the Illinois Supreme Court and delivered his “House Divided” speech. Although closed for renovations (the visitors center reopens in mid-June), the nearby **Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices** is the last standing building where Lincoln

practiced law. The only house Lincoln ever owned is the centerpiece of the **Lincoln Home National Historic Site**, a neighborhood with preserved buildings still connected by gravel streets and wooden boardwalks. At the **Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site** in Oak Ridge Cemetery, step inside the final resting place for Lincoln, Mary, and three of their sons—and be sure to rub Abe’s prominent nose on the bronze sculpture outside for good luck.



1869–1877

ULYSSES S. GRANT

18th President | *Galena*

Seeking business opportunities after retiring from the military, Ulysses S. Grant moved to the river port of Galena in 1860 to take a traveling clerk position with his father’s leather goods business. The start of the Civil War in 1861 proved a more potent career boost than the buying and selling of hides: Grant was soon commissioned a colonel of a Union infantry regiment, which initiated a string of military achievements that culminated with Confederate

Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendering to Gen. Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. Grant was welcomed back to Galena as a war hero, gifted with a beautiful home, and quickly drawn into Republican politics. After winning the presidency, Grant returned only briefly to Galena, but the town’s Civil War-era luster shines on in its still-vibrant downtown district and array of historic homes.

PLACES TO VISIT

The Grant family lived in the Italianate mansion at the **Ulysses S. Grant Home State Historic Site** for just three years following the Civil War, but the rooms are fully furnished with dozens of original pieces and Grant family artifacts. Learn the story of one of Grant’s most powerful backers with a tour of the stately **Elihu B. Washburne House**. Since 1980, the brick-and-stone building where Jesse R. Grant ran his leather shop has been home to **Honest John’s Trading Post**, a family-run business with gifts, clothing, and home decor. Treat yourself to a history-infused cocktail, meal, or overnight stay at **DeSoto House Hotel**, Illinois’ longest-operating hotel and the headquarters (rooms 209 and 211) for Grant’s 1868 presidential campaign. While strolling along the river through **Grant Park**, inspect the historic cannon collection and survey the downtown from the gazebo perched on the crest of the hill. The city and the general share the stage at the **Galena and U.S. Grant Museum**. In addition to Grant’s boots and a reproduction of the family leather goods shop, the museum has a new exhibit, *Peace in Union*, to celebrate Galena’s 200th birthday.



Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Springfield



1981–1989

RONALD REAGAN

40th President | *Dixon Area*

The only president actually born in Illinois was welcomed to the world in tiny Tampico in 1911. Over the next nine years, Jack and Nelle Reagan moved frequently throughout the state before settling in Dixon in 1920. Younger son Ronald, affectionately known as Dutch, thrived in the small city that straddles the Rock River from ages 9 to 22. In his personal writings, Reagan paints an idyllic portrait of a boyhood spent raising rabbits, playing football, excelling in drama productions, and working as a lifeguard. (He's credited with 77 saves.) While attending Eureka College (87 miles south of Dixon), Reagan was elected student body president, which added politics to his list of passions. In 1932, Reagan left Illinois to pursue sports announcing, followed by film acting, but he always considered Dixon his hometown and returned throughout his Hollywood and political career.



ILLINOIS INSIDER Follow Barack Obama's path to the White House at the newly opened Obama Presidential Center. (See page 60.)

PLACES TO VISIT

The unassuming second-floor apartment and the First National Bank below it in downtown Tampico have been restored and now serve as the **Ronald Reagan Birthplace and Museum**. The Reagans resided in several homes in Dixon, but the **Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home** offers tours by donation and a newly remodeled visitors center. Swimming in **Lowell Park's** Rock River, where Reagan once worked as a lifeguard, is no longer permitted, but you can launch kayaks and paddleboards from a small dock, walk four trails, and picnic in one of six stone shelters. Along with fossils, pioneer tools, and Civil War weapons, **Loveland Community House and Museum** hosts a Reagan exhibit with photos, movie memorabilia, and his lifeguard chair. Commemorating Reagan's 1987 "Tear Down This Wall" speech delivered near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, **Ronald Reagan Peace Park** encourages reflection on a turning point in global politics with a replica section of the Berlin Wall and an abstract marble sculpture entitled *The Wings of Peace and Freedom*.



Ronald Reagan Peace Garden, Eureka



Grant Park, Galena

PRESIDENTIAL CROSSROADS

Although separated by centuries, the lives of presidents with ties to Illinois intersect in surprising moments:

DeSoto House, Galena Lincoln gave a speech from a balcony overlooking Main Street in 1856; Grant managed his presidential campaign here.

Parks throughout Dixon Lincoln's enlisting in the Illinois militia during the Black Hawk War is honored with a statue (the only statue of him in uniform) at President's Park; Reagan's 77 saves as a lifeguard are commemorated with a plaque and a renovated bathhouse in Lowell Park.

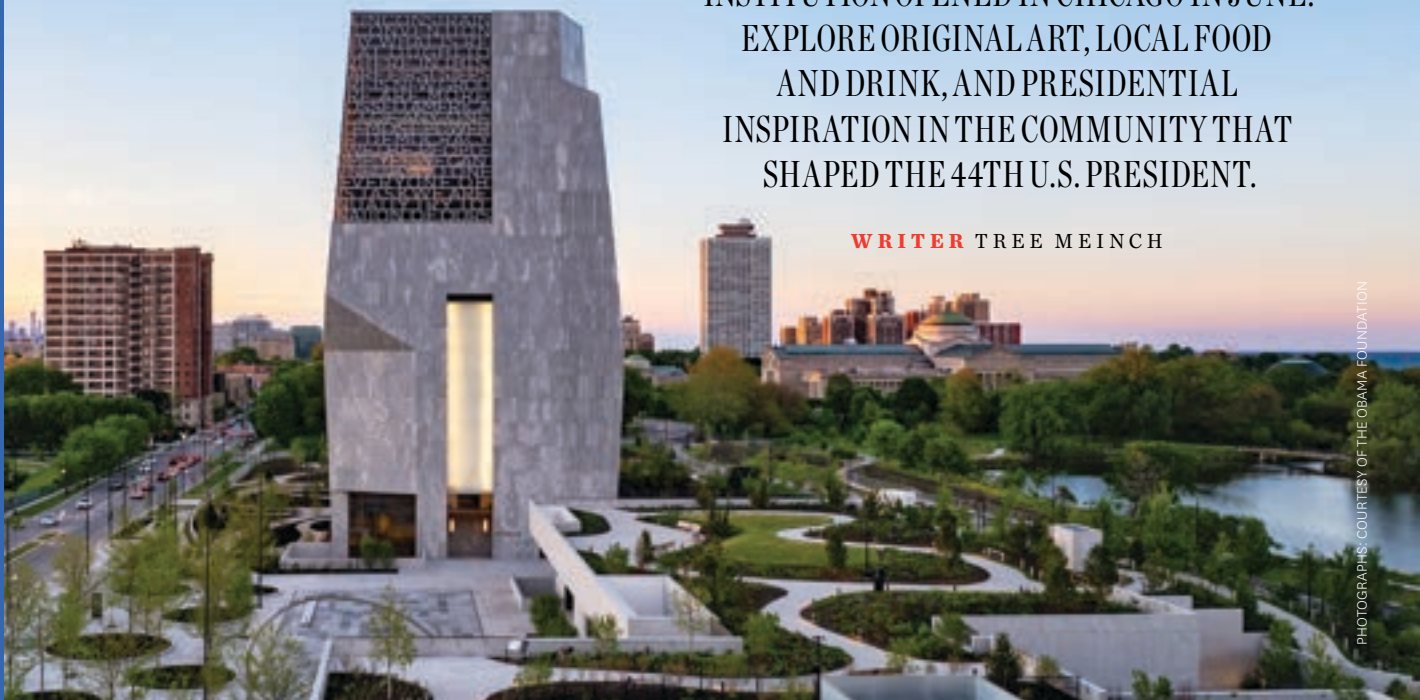
Old State Capitol, Springfield Lincoln argued dozens of cases and voted as a state representative here; Obama launched his 2008 presidential candidacy from the limestone steps.



THE OBAMA PRESI

AFTER MANY YEARS OF PLANNING,
BARACK OBAMA'S LEGACY CULTURAL
INSTITUTION OPENED IN CHICAGO IN JUNE.
EXPLORE ORIGINAL ART, LOCAL FOOD
AND DRINK, AND PRESIDENTIAL
INSPIRATION IN THE COMMUNITY THAT
SHAPED THE 44TH U.S. PRESIDENT.

WRITER TREE MEINCH



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE OBAMA FOUNDATION



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Home Court boasts an
 NBA-regulation basketball court.
 Mark Bradford's *City of the
 Big Shoulders* hangs in the
 Hope and Change Lobby. Obama
 tours the OPC. Five-foot-tall letters
 spell out a passage from Obama's
 "You Are America" speech.

DENTIAL CENTER





YOU CANNOT GRASP A CLEAR PICTURE OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA WITHOUT DELVING DEEP INTO THE STREETS OF CHICAGO.

That's why the Barack Obama Presidential Center represents far more than bold design and novel amenities in Chicago's South Side.

This new architectural marvel rises eight stories above Jackson Park as a beacon to the timeless legacy and core values of America's first Black president and First Lady Michelle Obama. "This is the community that the Obamas came from—that first gave them their chance to lead," says Michael Strautmanis, chief corporate affairs officer with the Obama Foundation. "They wanted to bring the world here."

Obama himself selected this 19.3-acre campus near the Lake Michigan waterfront. The project combines a museum, gardens, art, a gym, a new branch of the Chicago Public Library, and other attractions. It also runs exclusively on clean energy while setting new standards for inclusive design in cultural institutions, based on The Americans with Disabilities Act. "Rather than a mausoleum, it's a living, working space that gives people opportunities," Strautmanis says.



WHEN YOU VISIT

Map out your path in advance to prioritize some cornerstone experiences in the expansive Center.

①

Examine personal Obama artifacts in the Obama Presidential Center Museum (entry fee) before contemplating how to

"be the change" from the top-floor Sky Room (free and open to the public), featuring Lake Michigan views.

②

Catch a live show, like the Chicago Philharmonics' American Mavericks concert, in the 300-seat Elie Wiesel Auditorium.

③

Dine at the on-site restaurant. Chicago's Peaches restaurant owner Chef Cliff Rome is the mastermind.

④

Wander the sprawling grounds, which connect a fruit and vegetable garden, wetland walk,

woodland paths, and other green spaces.

⑤

Check out the latest programming in the athletic center.

⑥

Take public transportation or a rideshare—parking is limited.

2009–2017

BARACK OBAMA

44th President | Chicago

Before becoming the president, Barack Obama's life and career blossomed in Chicago. He moved to the city as a community organizer in the South Side, where Michelle Obama was born and raised. He taught for more than 10 years at the University of Chicago before launching into politics as a U.S. senator in 2004. Recreationally and socially, the president left his mark at the East Bank Club, where "you could always find him at the basketball court," Strautmanis says. These deep roots inspired the president and Mrs. Obama to select the South Side's Jackson Park for the Obama Presidential Center.

PLACES TO VISIT Try to find the plaque in Hyde Park marking where Barack and Michelle Obama had their first kiss. Some details have barely changed at the South Shore Cultural Center, where the Obamas celebrated their wedding in 1992. In the Loop, nearly a quarter million people packed inside Grant Park for Obama's presidential victory speech on election night November 4, 2008.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (OBAMA) GETTYIMAGES.COM, (RESTAURANT) COURTESY OF TOPOLOBAMPO, (ARTWORK) COURTESY OF THE OBAMA FOUNDATION



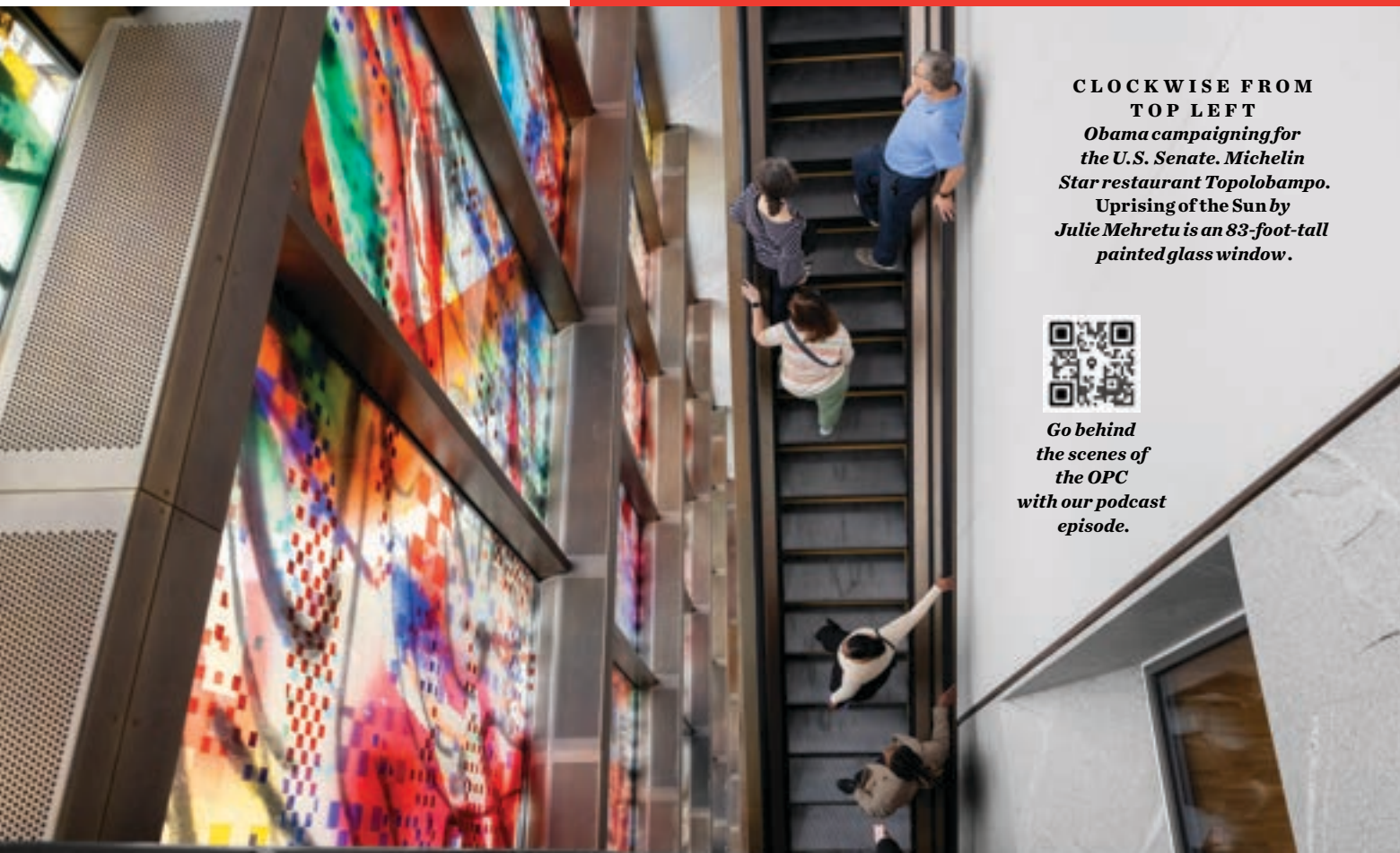
OBAMA'S FAVORITE EATS AROUND CHICAGO

The soul food haven of MacArthur's Restaurant on the city's west side got a coveted shout-out in the president's book *The Audacity of Hope*.

Find Obama's signature preserved on a table at Valois' cafeteria-style restaurant—plus his go-to orders are flagged on the menu (Mediterranean omelet or steak and eggs).

Rick Bayless' Topolobampo Mexican restaurant has been a beloved stop for both Barack and Michelle Obama.

Rather than Chicago-style deep dish, Obama says he prefers the tavern-style pies from Italian Fiesta Pizzeria in Hyde Park for his pizza fix.



CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT

Obama campaigning for the U.S. Senate. Michelin Star restaurant Topolobampo. Uprising of the Sun by Julie Mehretu is an 83-foot-tall painted glass window.



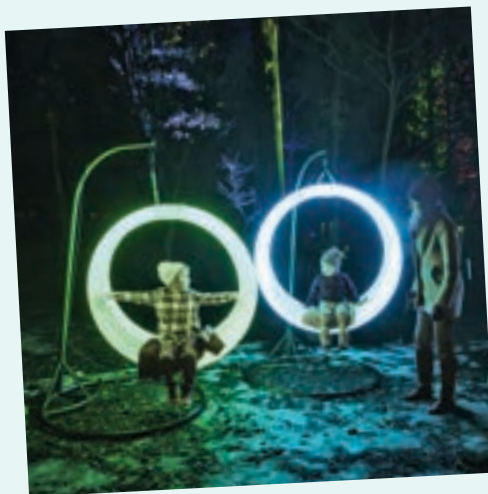
Go behind the scenes of the OPC with our podcast episode.

Five **Winter** *Weekend Getaways*

Winter break isn't just for the kids. Make the most of your cold-weather downtime with these five family-friendly and adult vacation ideas.

Writers ANDREA MINACREK JESSUP & KELLE HAMPTON

**CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP
FAR RIGHT**
*Matthiessen State
Park, Oglesby;
Great Wolf Lodge,
Gurnee; Magnificent
Mile, Chicago;
Shawnee National
Forest; Allerton Park
and Retreat Center,
Monticello*



PHOTOGRAPHS: (WATERFALL) GETTY/DAREK101; (WATER PARK) IOT; (CHICAGO) STARBOARD AND PORT, (SHAWNEE) ALAMY.COM/TODD BANNER, (ALLERTON) SCOTT THOMPSON



Getaway One **Sip and Stroll Through Snow-Covered Vineyards**

Bed-and-breakfast suites at a rural winery are an ideal base camp for exploring the trails of the Shawnee National Forest.

You could devote an entire weekend to tasting reds, whites, and rosés at the 11 wineries along the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail—or mix in a bit of variety among the varietals and try some beer and ciders too. At **Von Jakob Winery and Brewery** in Alto Pass, sample their rich chocolate-milk stout; spicy, tropical-tinged Hefeweizen; crisp hard ciders; and award-winning, white-oak port. Then stretch your legs on a stroll through the apple orchards and vineyards. Two bed-and-breakfast cottages are a short walk from the tasting room. Each suite has a whirlpool tub and king-size bed, with views of the **Shawnee National Forest**.

A 20-minute drive north, you'll find a trio of trails to suit every energy level. "**Pomona Natural Bridge** is a great option for families," says Shawn Gossman, founder of Hiking with Shawn. A mile-long trail affords views of the sandstone bridge, along with deer, red fox, and the occasional beaver. Spot frozen waterfalls along nearby **Cove Hollow Trail**, which borders Cedar Lake, or opt for a longer trek on the 3-mile loop trail through Shawnee's **Little Grand Canyon**. (Check the weather first; Gossman says the canyon trail can be tough to navigate if there's wintry precipitation.) You'll pass sandstone cliffs and skyscraper beech and sycamore trees on a 365-foot climb through the canyon to panoramic views of the Big Muddy River.

Getaway Two **Savor Holiday Cheer and Heated Pools**

Soak up the festivity of Chicago's holiday light displays, sample world-class eats in the Fulton Market District, then unplug and recharge at a swanky hotel pool.

From November to the new year, strings of white lights adorn nearly every tree and lamppost along the **Magnificent Mile**, from the photogenic 1869 Chicago Water Tower all the way to **Millennium Park**, where a massive, illuminated evergreen anchors an outdoor ice-skating rink and pop-up holiday market of local vendors. You'll find more great shopping and dining a short jaunt west in the **Fulton Market District**, including designer clothing at **RSVP Gallery**, hand-pulled noodles at Chinese restaurant **Duck Duck Goat**, and memorable cocktails at basement bar **The Press Room**.

The nearby **Aire Ancient Baths Chicago** provides a tranquil change of pace with traditional Roman, Greek, and Ottoman baths in a restored 1902 factory. You can float in the plunge pools ensconced by the original brick walls, wood-beamed ceilings, and steel columns illuminated by candlelight. The serenity continues at **The Langham, Chicago**, where the ceiling above the 67-foot-long indoor swimming pool is studded with pin lights that mimic the Milky Way. The hotel's wellness center also has a hot tub, Asian-style steam room, and Himalayan salt sauna. On-site **Chuan Spa** has specialty treatments for extra indulgences, like a micro-magnet facial, which uses gold-plated magnets meant to boost collagen and hydration, and a hot-stone massage, in which heated Himalayan salt stones replace traditional basalt and are placed along the back to improve circulation and to detoxify.

Getaway Three **Recharge in a Wooded Glamping Sanctuary**

Cozy up in a chic cabin surrounded by icicle-laden canyons and snow-shrouded pines and cedar.

Postcard Cabins Starved Rock are just a two-hour drive southwest of Chicago, but they feel a world away from the bustling Windy City. The 58 knotty-pine cabins are secluded in a 250-acre wooded reserve in quiet Ottawa, alongside **Starved Rock State Park**. Each cabin is dog-friendly and has a private firepit and s'mores provisions, an indoor bathroom, a queen-size bed, kitchenette, heating system, and coffee supplies, making them an ideal bridge to camping for anyone accustomed to the perks of a hotel. Guests can walk to a pond on the property or venture to

nearby **Starved Rock, Matthiessen, or Buffalo Rock** state parks for more ambitious outdoor revitalization. At Starved Rock, steep sandstone walls are prone to Instagram-worthy, skyscraper-size icicles in the winter months, where you might spot ice climbers ascending with crampons.

For heartier meals, **The Lone Buffalo** by **Tangled Roots Brewing Company** in Ottawa has elevated pub fare and beer brewed on-site. Copper brewing kettles that resemble giant pumpkins stand out against the redbrick walls of the 1888 dining room, where you can tuck into flatbreads, tacos, and steak while sampling Tangled's lagers, IPAs, and ales.

Getaway Four **Spot Wildlife by Moonlight**

Explore an artist's estate and savor small-town comforts in Monticello.

The **Allerton Park and Retreat Center** southwest of Champaign typically closes at sunset, but visitors have two chances to linger and experience Allerton in a special way. Guided nighttime hikes take you through the park's 1,500 acres of oak and hickory forests, home to barred owls, deer, and bobcats. In December, **Holiday Glow** showcases light installations and metal sculptures commissioned by artists along a mile-long walk through Allerton's formal gardens and woodlands.

Overnight in the property's 1900 mansion, once the private estate of artist Robert Henry Allerton. Morning coffee is served in the solarium, where a wall of windows overlooks the pond and meadow. In nearby Monticello, shop for handblown glass ornaments, vases, memorials, and artwork at **Prairie Fire Glass**, then nosh on a fresh-baked snickerdoodle and seasonal Winter Wonderland latte (a mix of white chocolate and peppermint) at **KayBee Community Cafe**, housed in a former church more than a century old. "Our downtown is awesome in fall and winter," says KayBee owner Aundie Morillos Owens. "There are holiday light displays and caroling around the historic courthouse—it has that cozy, small-town feel."



**CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT**
*Tangled Roots
Brewing
Company, Ottawa;
Millennium Park,
Chicago; Pomona
Natural Bridge,
Shawnee National
Forest; Allerton
Park and Retreat
Center, Monticello*



ALL
PHOTOS
Great Wolf
Lodge, Gurnee



TRAVEL JOURNAL

Getaway Five

Ride the Wave of Fun

One out-of-state family trades snow boots for swimsuits at a cruise-on-land resort.

When our family moved from sunny Florida to the Midwest, we soon learned one of the few drawbacks: single-digit temps and snow. We needed a break from winter's chill and found it at **Great Wolf Lodge**, the largest indoor water park in the state. Even better, Gurnee is less than a half-day's drive from our Michigan home. While my college freshman daughter (Lainey) and I started packing our bags, my 7th-grade thrill-seeking son (Dash) and 16-year-old daughter with special needs (Nella) started bingeing videos of previous guests' epic rides to plan their aquatic bucket lists.

Checking into our Kid Cabin Suite, the kids each claimed a bed in the log cabin-inspired clubhouse sleeping area with its own television. They loved the woody vibe of the room, and Lainey, my somewhat introverted daughter, loved the escape the built-in bunk beds offered for reading and journaling. Great Wolf Lodge's quick and seamless check-in system involved providing wolf ears to every member of the family (never too old for wolf ears!) as well as issuing each guest an RFID-enabled waterproof wrist band which works as a room key and water park pass. As a parent of older kids always seeking independence, I appreciated the option of adding a cashless payment method to the kids' bands, which allowed me to give them their own budget for food and games. They enjoyed making their own choices;

I enjoyed not being asked numerous times for money or room keys.

On the drive into town, we passed plenty of restaurants, but this weekend was all about staying put and enjoying the warmth of a full-service indoor resort. Great Wolf Lodge offers a variety of on-site restaurants, many with call-ahead ordering and pick-up. Our first night we settled in with in-room movies while eating salad and Brooklyn-style pizza (apologies to Chicago deep dish!) from Hungry as a Wolf. For breakfast, Campfire Kitchen offers a buffet with all the trimmings, but we skipped the lines and used the QR code on our bathroom mirror to order coffee and breakfast sandwiches from the on-site Dunkin'.

We spent most of the rest of the weekend—easily six hours a day—inside the water park, where it's always a balmy 84 degrees. For mindless relaxation, I floated on a blue inner tube around Crooked Creek, a lazy river that snakes through the park. Nella loved climbing Fort Mackenzie, a four-story fort with body slides and a giant bucket that dumps water when the bell rings. Dash lost count of the number of times he swirled around Coyote Cannon, where a 40-foot drop plunged him into a whirling basin. As a family, we loved River Canyon Run and Double Whirlwind, both multiperson raft rides with numerous thrilling turns and dips (and fog in Double Whirlwind, which the kids loved) that had us all laughing and screaming together.

Lounge chairs (and lockers for purchase) in the water park make for an effortless all-day hang, boosted by plenty of snack options and The Watering Hole for blended beverages, with both alcoholic and mocktail/soft drink options.

When we needed a change of pace, the Wolf Pass package gave us access to a wide

variety of on-site attractions outside the water park. While Lainey and Nella panned for gemstones at Oliver's Mining Company, Dash set his sights on higher ground, conquering the 28-foot Rustic Ride Climbing Wall before weaving through the multilevel obstacles of Howler's Peak Ropes Course. Our entire crew competed in a round of Howl in One Mini Golf, and the kids stayed up late playing games at Three Northern Lights Arcade, or as we called it, Kid Vegas. Also included in the Wolf Pass package is a bowling game at Ten Paw Alley and a Vellera Wand that activates live-action experiences hidden throughout the lodge as part of their imaginative and immersive MagicQuest game, which Nella especially loved. For those who still want more fun, Great Wolf hosts daily gatherings with appearances from their Great Wolf Pack as well as arts and crafts hours and kid yoga classes. There's also a Kid Delight Trifecta on the main floor: Wood's End Creamery, Great Wolf Candy Company, and Build A Bear.

After two days of chasing thrills and sinking into the kind of cozy that only a winter getaway can offer, we packed our bags and faced the snowy drive home. An hour short of arriving, I received a notification that school was canceled the following day. Dash's response: "So you're telling me we could have stayed another night at Great Wolf Lodge? Nice." Our weekend away offered just what our family needed—the perfect blend of snug retreat, wild adventures, and refreshing water—to pull us out of our post-holiday slump and reenergize for the remainder of a Midwest winter.

Kelle Hampton, author of The New York Times best-selling memoir and a native Michigander, documents everyday joys and encourages others to turn moments into memories on @etst, her Instagram account.

TRIP IDEAS AROUND

*Ready for a
road trip?
Here are places
to go and
things to do.*





CHICAGO & BEYOND
GREAT RIVERS COUNTRY
LAND OF LINCOLN
TRAILS TO ADVENTURE

**GOLDEN
GLOW**
*Peak color arrives
in Southern
Illinois in late
October.*



*Ewing
Cultural
Center,
Bloomington*

STORY: GARY THOMPSON. PHOTOGRAPHS: (PARK) JOHN NOLTNER, (CULTURAL CENTER) SCOTT THOMPSON



Cliff View Park, Alto Pass

THE STATE



CHICAGO & BEYOND

DeKalb Area

Rooted in agriculture yet still within Chicago's western outskirts, the DeKalb area is a history-rich, rural-urban hybrid. You're never far from towering cornstalks—or skyscrapers.



Jonamac Orchard, Malta



POPULATION

City of DeKalb
40,290

DeKalb County
100,420

OF NOTE

Ellwood House, the 1879 mansion of barbed-wire baron Isaac Ellwood, is now a museum open for tours.

Located about 60 miles west of Chicago, DeKalb is named for Johann de Kalb, a major general in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. (He gets a shout-out in the recent Ken Burns PBS documentary.) Settlers arrived in the 1830s, drawn by the area's fertile soil, which helped agriculture become a big local industry. DeKalb farmer Joseph Glidden innovated barbed wire, an inexpensive way to protect crops, corral livestock, and mark property boundaries. And DeKalb seed corn started here. Today, DeKalb grows on you with its bumper crop of historical and cultural attractions. **The Lincoln Highway**, the U.S.'s first

transcontinental automobile route, passes through downtown DeKalb (see page 54). A new interpretive mural at the corner of Seventh Street and State-38 integrates the highway's namesake, President Lincoln, and the Declaration of Independence. DeKalb's portion of the Lincoln Highway passes Glidden's homestead, now a historical center, and **Northern Illinois University**, originally a teachers college and now a premier research institution. The highly successful NIU football program joins the Mountain West Conference in 2026, playing (and hosting) teams like Air Force, Hawaii, Nevada, San Jose State, and Wyoming.

DO

Pick your own apples, pumpkins, and flowers at **Jonamac Orchard** in Malta, and navigate a maize maze. Their on-site **Cider House** serves hard cider, plus apple wines.

The performing arts thrive in DeKalb. Catch shows at the historic **Egyptian Theatre**, the **Sandwich Opera House**, the **Stage Coach Players** community theater, and NIU campus venues.

EAT

Come for a tour and a tasting at **Whiskey Acres Distilling Company**, Illinois' first seed-to-spirit distillery. They craft bourbon, rye, and vodka from fine grains grown on-site.

The sliced pies at Malta's **Old School Pizza**, a former K-12 building, are a tasty way to review fractions. The venue is packed with pop culture memorabilia, like a McDonald's Apple Pie Tree.

STAY

Retro meets eco at **Genoa Guest House**, an 1880s home that's now a bed-and-breakfast. A sensitive remodeling preserved vintage charm, added modern amenities, and reduced the building's carbon footprint.

Home2 Suites by Hilton DeKalb puts you close to NIU and the Lincoln Highway. Enjoy an in-room kitchen, free Continental breakfast, and heated indoor saline pool.

DO

See a show at the historic **Wildev Theatre**, which premiered in 1909 as an opera house. After closing in the 1980s, it was renovated and reopened for movies and live performances.

The Gardens at SIUE stage a colorful show of their own in fall, thanks to Mother Nature. The 36-acre property includes walking paths, benches, bridges, and student-designed sculptures.

EAT

Enjoy upscale, locally sourced comfort food in a casual setting at **Cleveland-Heath**. The bone-in pork chop and BLT both feature meat from nearby Rensing Farms.

Italian restaurant **Mio Osteria** leads a double life—neighborhood sandwich shop by day (try the Italian beef), upscale bistro by night (the chicken piccata is a fave).

STAY

Two women transformed an 1887 downtown building into **Urban Collective Boutique Hotel**, eight chic suites with eight different themes. The Ivy League room exudes vintage preppy vibes.

Relax amid warm contemporary decor at **Holiday Inn Express and Suites**, close to the SIUE campus. The heated pool is warm, too, as are the gooey cinnamon rolls at breakfast (free).



GREAT RIVERS COUNTRY

Edwardsville

Storied Route 66 leads to Edwardsville, where the Mother Road yields a mother lode of ways to get your kicks downtown, on campus, and in nature.

Illinois' third-oldest city, Edwardsville, lies about 30 miles northeast of St. Louis. It's steeped in history yet in step with the present—and nature. The town is a stop on historic **Route 66**, the Chicago-to-California highway celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2026 (see page 50). Find Mother Road memories at **West End Service Station**, a spot that fueled motorists for decades, then became another kind of filling station—a dental practice. Now it's a visitors center. Check out the colorful **Route 66 Postcard Mural** and the **Route 66 Shield Monument**, with its pic-friendly cutout numbers. Speaking of picture perfect, if downtown Edwardsville looks like it came straight out of a movie, that's

because it's been used as a backdrop for many Hollywood films, including *The Lucky Ones* starring Tim Robbins and Rachel McAdams. Credit historic architecture and blocks of storefronts housing charming coffee shops, artisan bakeries, craft breweries, and boutiques. Farther out, the **Watershed Nature Center** offers more than 40 acres of prairie, forest, and wetland habitats. Paved trails open year-round allow views of native flora and fauna. More natural vistas await on the **Southern Illinois University Edwardsville** campus, 2,600 acres of woodlands atop bluffs overlooking Mississippi River bottomland. It's home to more than 12,800 students.



POPULATION
26,808

OF NOTE
Leclaire National Historic District preserves a late 1800s village created by plumbing manufacturer N.O. Nelson for his employees.



Cleveland-Heath



LAND OF LINCOLN

Bloomington-Normal

Like sibling rivals, twin cities Bloomington and Normal vie for your affection with a host of cultural attractions. The winner in their friendly, family competition? You.



POPULATION

Bloomington

78,680

Normal

52,736

OF NOTE

Abraham Lincoln was first encouraged to run for president in 1858 at a still-standing Bloomington building.

All roads (seemingly) lead to Bloomington-Normal. The neighboring cities are crisscrossed by interstates 39, 55, and 74, plus iconic Route 66 left its legacy in both towns. Mother Road landmarks include **Casey's Garden Shop and Florist** in Bloomington and **Sprague's Super Service Station** in Normal. The original 1926 alignment of Route 66 followed Main Street in Normal, passing what's now called Illinois State University. Founded in 1857 with papers drafted by Abraham Lincoln, it's the state's oldest public university. Today, though enrollment is about 22,000, the school retains a friendly, small-campus feel. The grounds are a delight to explore. **Fell Arboretum**,

spread over 490 acres, features thousands of trees representing more than 225 species—their colors are amazing in fall. **Redbird Plaza**, behind Fell Hall, beckons with a bronze statue of the school's Redbird mascot. It's a tradition to rub the beak (and take selfies). Near campus, the revitalized Uptown Normal district buzzes with restaurants, retail, and nightlife. It's anchored by the restored 1937 **Normal Theater** and its glowing marquee. Bloomington has headquartered State Farm Insurance since 1922—the company's original Art Deco building still stands downtown. Beer Nuts snacks were born in Bloomington in 1937 and continue to be produced there.

DO

Tour Bloomington's **David Davis Mansion**, the beautifully preserved 1872 Victorian home of the U.S. Supreme Court Justice who befriended and mentored Abraham Lincoln.

Ewing Cultural Center in Bloomington also includes a historic mansion to tour, plus lush gardens and an outdoor theater. On Halloween, the center hosts trick-or-treating on the grounds.

EAT

Come for craft beer (like the Deadhead IPA series) and stay for creative pub fare (like the gyro pizza and schnitzel sandwich) at **Destihl Brewery and Beer Hall** in Normal.

For delightfully old-school supper club ambience, try **Jim's Steakhouse** in Bloomington. Order a rich ribeye and a salad with their famous Brittany dressing.

STAY

Relax in your room's cozy nook at **Hyatt Place**, set amid up-tempo Uptown Normal. A corner king suite has curved, city-view windows. Enjoy free breakfast and an indoor pool.

The **Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center** makes dinner and a show easy. Dine at on-site Jesse's Grille, then walk around the corner to the Normal Theater.



David Davis Mansion

DO

Hiking among the massive sandstone formations at **Giant City State Park** is like wandering streets trod by behemoths. In fall, the park's towering trees turn colossally colorful.

Shops on the **Makanda Boardwalk** showcase one-of-a-kind art. Rainmaker Art Studio offers metalwork and a sculpture garden. Makanda Trading Company stocks global treasures.

EAT

Find the romance of Italy in the Shawnee Hills while sipping red or white wine at **Blue Sky Vineyard**.

A tiled-roof villa with stucco walls and hand-hewn beams creates a rustic yet refined setting.

Try the famous fried chicken at **Giant City Lodge**, which was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The restaurant traditionally closes from mid-December to early February.

STAY

Cozy is the word at **Rocky Comfort Cabins**, swaddled by the woods near the Shawnee National Forest. Sit by a fire, soak in a private hot tub, and walk a "secret" path to Blue Sky Vineyard.

With its eco-conscious architecture, **Makanda Inn** seems to have grown organically from its secluded forest setting. Inn suites and separate cottages wrap you in nature and luxury.



Makanda Boardwalk



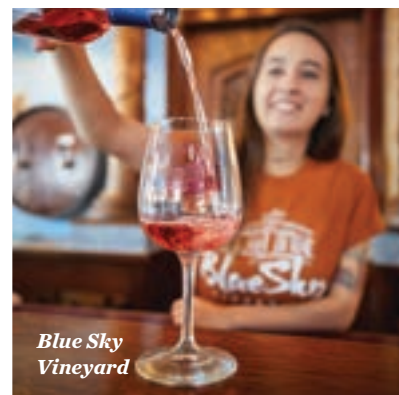
TRAILS TO ADVENTURE

Makanda

Ironically, tiny Makanda abuts a place named Giant City. Surprisingly, the village holds outsized appeal for lovers of eclectic art and tranquil encounters with nature.

Makanda could well be called Phoenix, after the legendary bird that rose from its ashes to live another life. The village is a survivor, starting in the 1840s as a construction camp for the Illinois Central Railroad, and thriving in the early 1900s as the "Star of Egypt," a nod to Southern Illinois' "Little Egypt" nickname. Over the years, Makanda reinvented itself after floods, fires, and the decline of the railroad industry. In the 1960s and 1970s, artists and free spirits in the counterculture movement revitalized the town, making it a colony for creatives—it's still celebrated today as the "hippiest town in Illinois," especially for the

funky shops, studios, and galleries along the **Makanda Boardwalk**. Through all the changes, Makanda's close ties to nature have remained constant. It's the gateway to **Giant City State Park**, one of the region's most beloved and accessible natural areas, which lies within **Shawnee National Forest**. Makanda is also near **Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge**, plus two other big water rec spots: **Cedar Lake** and **Devil's Kitchen Lake**. The **Shawnee Hills Wine Trail** and scenic **River to River Trail** pass right through Makanda. And due to its southern location and mild weather, golf courses stay open late into the season.



Blue Sky Vineyard



POPULATION
547

OF NOTE

A bow tie on the town's water tower memorializes former U.S. Senator Paul Simon, a Makanda resident.

EXPLORE

Check out these inspiring places across Illinois.



FIND FUN IN ALEDO

Find live music, fall activities, and holiday events in a historic downtown with 11 styles of architecture, plus shopping, dining, and adventure. Explore all the ways you can Find Fun in Aledo.

AledoIL.gov

CityofAledoOfficial



PADDLE WHERE THE FOX GOES

Visit the Fabulous Fox! National Water Trail through Kane County. Our website has online tools: Water Trail maps, itineraries, launch points, and lists of things to do along the Trail.

WheretheFoxGoes.com

KaneFFWT
 fabfoxnationalwatertrail_kane



CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE IN STEPHENSON COUNTY

Diverse entertainment, cultural spaces, interesting attractions, and fantastic food. Choose your adventure in Stephenson County, where miles of trails, historical locales, beautiful parks, unique shopping, and fantastic dining await!

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GreaterFreeportPartnership
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PLAY IN PONTIAC, CELEBRATE THE CENTENNIAL

Don't just drive Route 66, experience it in Pontiac! Plunge into the history of the Mother Road and more. Snap iconic photos with our murals. Live the good life in the slow lane.

VisitPontiac.org

VisitPontiacIL



WHERE AMERICA'S ROOTS RUN DEEP, VISIT UNFORGETTABLE FORGOTTONIA

Macomb

From Lincoln's legacy and Monopoly's foundation to rock and roll's roots, experience America's history in Macomb. Play the world's largest Monopoly game, explore historic landmarks and scenic trails, and savor small-town charm.

VisitForgottonia.com

VisitForgottonia



WHERE ILLINOIS ROCKS THE ROAD *Discover Music History on Route 66!*

Plan your visit to the Illinois Rock & Roll Museum—where culture meets community, and every beat tells a story. Explore exhibits that celebrate Illinois' rock pioneers, chart-topping stories, and unforgettable moments that shaped America's sound. Located on historic Route 66 in downtown Joliet, open year-round.

RoadtoRock.org

illinois_rockrollmuseum
 IllinoisRockandRollMuseum



LAKE SHELBYVILLE

Hike, bike, boat, swim, canoe, kayak, wine, dine, stay, play, and more ... Explore, relax, and rejuvenate while you enjoy the possibilities!

LakeShelbyville.com

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CELEBRATION RIVER CRUISES

Experience the Mississippi River in style aboard Moline's family-owned *Celebration Belle*, offering lunch, dinner, sightseeing, themed events, and all-day excursions between the Quad Cities and Dubuque, Iowa. Groups welcome. Charters available.

CelebrationBelle.com

CelebrationBelle



JOHN DEERE PAVILION

Visit the John Deere Pavilion in Moline for equipment you can experience up close, interactive displays, and larger-than-life exhibits. Admission is always free!

VisitJohnDeere.com

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John-Deere



IMMERSE YOURSELF IN HISTORY

*Naper Settlement, a
13-Acre Outdoor History
Museum in Naperville*

Step back in time to visit the blacksmith at the forge, watch living-history demonstrations, explore immersive exhibits, enjoy guided walking tours, and more at Naper Settlement, an award-winning outdoor history museum.

NaperSettlement.org

NaperSettlement

naper-settlement



WHERE THE BACK ROADS BECKON

Explore the perfect blend of outdoor recreation, arts and culture, retail, dining, events, and small-town charm, which creates an unforgettable experience for both locals and visitors.

ExploreHenryCounty.com

ExploreHenryCounty

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THE WORLD FAMOUS VOLO MUSEUM

An hour northwest of Chicago sits 75 acres of amazing attractions and exhibits for all ages, including classic collector and Hollywood cars, a 15,000-square-foot dinosaur park, and a Titanic museum!

VoloFun.com

VoloMuseum



Travel Resources

Visitors Bureaus

CHICAGO & BEYOND

Aurora Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

630/256-3190,
enjoyaurora.com

Chicago's North Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau

847/763-0011,
visitchicagonorthshore.com

Choose Chicago

312/567-8500,
choosechicago.com

DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau

877/335-2521, 815/756-1336,
dekalbcountycvb.com

Discover DuPage

800/232-0502, 630/575-8070,
discoverdupage.com

Explore Elgin Area

847/695-7540,
exploreeelginarea.com

Explore Oak Park and Beyond

773/519-0966,
oakparkandbeyond.org

GoRockford

800/521-0849, 815/963-8111,
gorockford.com

Heritage Corridor Destinations

844/944-2282, 800/926-2262,
hcdestinations.com

Meet Chicago Northwest

800/847-4849, 847/490-1010,
chicagonorthwest.com

Naturally McHenry County

815/893-6280,
naturallymchenrycounty.com

Rosemont Convention and Tourism Bureau

847/993-8297, rosemont.com

Visit Chicago Southland

888/895-8233, 708/895-8200,
visitchicagosouthland.com

Visit Kankakee County

815/935-7390,
visitkankakeecounty.com

Visit Lake County

847/662-2700,
visitlakecounty.org

Visit NW Illinois

815/201-0321,
visitnorthwestillinois.com

GREAT RIVERS COUNTRY

Discover Downstate Illinois

618/257-1488, downstateil.org

Discover Peoria

800/747-0302, 309/676-0303,
peoria.org

Experience Galesburg

309/343-2485,
experiencegalesburg.com

Explore Henry County

309/937-3426;
explorehenrycounty.com

Galena Country Tourism

815/776-9200, visitgalena.org

Great Rivers and Routes of Southwest Illinois

800/258-6645, 618/465-6676,
riversandroutes.com

See Quincy

800/978-4748,
217/214-3700, seequincy.com

Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau

618/833-9928,
southernmostillinois.com

Visit Unforgettable Forgottonia

309/833-1315,
visitforgottonia.com

Visit NW Illinois

815/201-0321,
visitnorthwestillinois.com

Visit Quad Cities

800/747-7800,
visitquadcities.com

LAND OF LINCOLN

Bloomington-Normal Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

800/433-8226,
309/665-0033, visitbn.org

Danville Area Visitors Bureau

800/383-4386, 217/442-2096,
visitdanvillearea.com

Decatur Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

800/331-4479, 217/423-7000,
decaturcvb.com

Discover Downstate Illinois

618/257-1488, downstateil.org

Effingham Convention and Visitors Bureau

800/772-0750, 217/342-5310,
visiteffinghamil.com

Experience

Champaign-Urbana

800/369-6151, 217/351-4133,
experiencecu.org

Jacksonville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

217/243-5678,
jacksonvilleil.org

Lake Shelbyville Area Visitor Bureau

217/774-2244,
lakeshelbyville.com

Logan County Tourism Bureau

217/735-1218,
destinationlogancountyil.com

Visit Springfield

800/545-7300, 217/789-2360,
visitspringfieldillinois.com

TRAILS TO ADVENTURE

Discover Downstate Illinois

618/257-1488, downstateil.org

Mt. Vernon Tourism

618/242-3151,
enjoymtvernon.com

Rend Lake Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

618/435-4000, rendlake.com

Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau

618/833-9928,
southernmostillinois.com

VisitSI

800/433-7399, 618/997-3690,
visitsi.com

*Big Lincoln, the
AI Travel Assistant,
is online and
ready to help you
make plans
24/7. Find him at
enjoyillinois.com*



TRAVELER INFORMATION

DRIVING IN ILLINOIS

Illinois highways and roads are well maintained and provide posted signage for drivers, so taking a road trip is a breeze. Chicago is a day's drive or less from major cities including Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Toronto.

State law requires everyone age 8 and older to wear a seatbelt when traveling by car. Passengers under age 8 must be secured in an appropriate child restraint system as covered by the Child Passenger Protection Act. Speed limits are posted in miles per hour (mph) and vary between 70 mph on interstate highways outside urban areas, 65 mph on rural interstates, and 55 mph on urban interstates and freeway.

You may not use your cell phone for texting while driving, and you must use hands-free technology to make calls.

For construction updates, maps, seasonal road conditions, and other information, visit gettingaroundillinois.com

ILLINOIS TOLLWAYS

Some northern Illinois highways require tolls for use. Rates vary; toll plazas do not have attendants. Electronic toll collection is available through I-PASS or any transponder that's part of the E-ZPass system.

Drivers who miss tolls have 14 days to pay online. Note the license plate, date, time, and locations of unpaid tolls—that information will be required when submitting payments online.

For maps, rates, online payment options, and other info, visit illinoistollway.com

REST AREAS AND WELCOME CENTERS

The state of Illinois serves drivers with 30 rest areas and 11 welcome centers, located on highways throughout the state. Open 24 hours a day, they offer restroom facilities, picnic areas, lighted walkways, maps, security cameras, and parking for recreational vehicles, among other services. For locations, visit gettingaroundillinois.com

ARRIVING BY PLANE

Domestic travelers can fly to destinations including Belleville, Bloomington-Normal, Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, Marion, Moline, Peoria, Quincy, Rockford, and Springfield, as well as Chicago.

Once you land at either of Chicago's two major airports, Chicago Transit Authority trains can get you downtown. For info, go to transitchicago.com

Regular shuttles to many Chicago downtown hotels leave from each airport. You can also get a taxi or rideshare. For more information on getting to and from Chicago's airports (including renting vehicles or arranging car services), visit flychicago.com

From O'Hare International Airport, the Blue Line elevated train (known as the L) takes passengers to downtown Chicago in about 45 minutes. Follow the CTA Trains or Trains to City signs at the airport. If you arrive at the international terminal, follow the signs to the Airport Transit System, where you can get a free ride to Terminal 2 and then catch the L into the city.

From Chicago Midway International Airport, the CTA Orange Line L train takes about 25 minutes to get to downtown Chicago.

OTHER TRANSIT AROUND CHICAGO

Metra runs commuter rail services from downtown Chicago to outlying suburbs and surrounding cities. For maps, schedules, alerts, and more, visit metra.com

The Regional Transportation Authority serves Chicago and its many suburbs. Its RTA trip planner can help you figure out how to get where you want to go. The Regional Day Pass allows riders to travel on all three transit systems with one purchase. Visit rtachicago.org

Amtrak runs trains to more than 30 cities in Illinois, and Greyhound Lines serve most major Illinois cities. Go to amtrak.com or greyhound.com

21 AND OLDER

Legal statewide, alcohol, gambling, and marijuana use by adults may vary by city or municipality.



If you drink, don't drive. Instead, hail a cab or use a rideshare app. The state's legal limit for blood alcohol is 0.08.



Seventeen casinos operate throughout the state; some of these are riverboat casinos.



The Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act legalizes the lawful use of cannabis for adults (21 years and older).

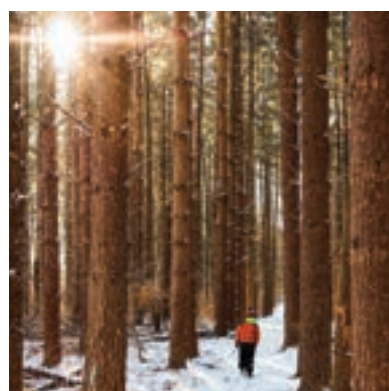


The Smoke-Free Illinois Act prohibits smoking and vaping in most public places, including indoor theaters, museums, casinos, restaurants, and bars.

📍
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TWINKLING BRIGHT

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT → Chriskindlmarket, Chicago @heydaywithbae; Woodstock Square Historic District, Woodstock @rivandrophoto; Night of the Luminaria and Living Windows, Galena @visitgalena; Christmas in the Village, Peoria @heatherbeanoyler; Hidden Springs State Forest, Strasburg @meghangarriott; Nature's Treasures, Stockton @visitgalena; Christmas in Carterville, Carterville @thomasfamilygoes; Garden of the Gods Recreation Area, Herod @discover618



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