SPRING + SUMMER 2026

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES: ROUTE 66 LEGENDS NEON SIGN PARK, SPRINGFIELD

the middle of everything



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→ **STEPPING STONES** *In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps built the stairs from native stone.*

Bell Smith Springs, Shawnee National Forest

PHOTOGRAPH: STARBOARD AND PORT

ON THE COVER Route 66 Legends Neon Sign Park, Springfield. Photographer: Starboard and Port

THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING

WELCOME

I am continually in awe of the abundant beauty and seemingly never-ending number of attractions, events and activities that Illinois has to offer. Our state truly is *the Middle of Everything,* and this issue is your essential guide to making the most of it.

Spring is just the first act in our warm-weather season. Almost overnight, winter recedes and reveals colorful tulips along Chicago's Magnificent Mile, as well as verdant leaves surrounding miles of tree-lined trails throughout the state. On April 30, Route 66 turns 100 *(page 40)*. Communities along Illinois' 301-mile stretch of the Mother Road (from Chicago to the Chain of Rocks Bridge) are ready to welcome you. Nostalgia, history and kitsch—it's all here, and signs point to a spring you won't want to miss.

Summer's natural beauty saturates the senses with sparkling Lake Michigan shores, dramatic limestone bluffs around Lake Shelbyville and vibrant, activity-filled days on Rend Lake in Southern Illinois. Festivals hit full stride with lineups that celebrate smooth jazz, The Bard, Lollapalooza and much more.

Discover "Signs of Summer" *(page 36)* as multisensory experiences from Illinois artisans come alive across the state. Summer is also peak season for golf, and with more than 300 public courses, it's your chance to make "Par on the Prairie" at ten unforgettable destinations, including several along Route 66 *(page 12)*. From Chicago neighborhoods to a Hollywood courtroom, *Matlock* star Skye P. Marshall tells us about her favorite deep-dish pizza, her go-to pro sports team and more *(page 32)*.

This July 4, America celebrates its semiquincentennial—a celebration 250 years in the making. "A Matter of Time" *(page 62)* highlights some defining moments, people and places that shaped our great state. If you're searching for adventure, hit the trails in Illinois state parks in "Going Your Park Way" *(page 50)*, where the state's natural beauty is best experienced up close.



From Main Street Galena to the Shawnee National Forest and so much in between, I encourage you to make the most of our warm-weather months. This spring and summer, join us in *the Middle of Everything* and see why the sun shines a little bit brighter here in Illinois.

Sincerely,

CATIE SHEEHAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, OFFICE OF TOURISM

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SPRING + SUMMER 2026

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PHOTOGRAPH: PHECH COLATAT



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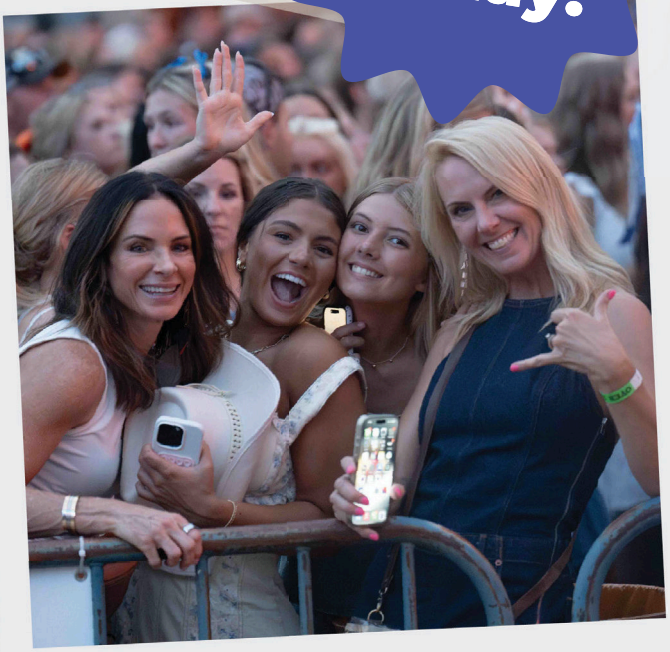

AUG. 28-SEPT. 7

ILLINOIS STATE FAIR

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EAT PLAY STAY

GUIDEBOOK



Plan your next Illinois getaway with these road trip ideas and itineraries.

Galena Cellars, Galena

PHOTOGRAPH: STARBOARD AND PORT

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Stay and Play Getaways

With a bounty of things to do and meals to savor, these amenity-rich lodgings make ideal one-stop vacations in Chicago and Galena. We've also included a few must-see spots within each town.


The Peninsula Chicago

CHICAGO

The Windy City's award-winning hotels wow guests with personalized, exclusive experiences. Connect with concierge professionals who go beyond dinner reservations to bring your downtown dreams to life.

THE PENINSULA CHICAGO

Expect curated programming via the hotel's Peninsula Academy programs as The Peninsula Chicago marks its 25th anniversary. Experience popular offerings at the hotel's restaurants, rooftop terrace and recently revitalized spa—or collaborate with staff to plan private moments. Chef Concierge Ruben Caraballo says chartering a yacht reveals a unique perspective of the city's skyline. He helped sync a guest's proposal to a stunning display over Navy Pier. "As the yacht glided onto Lake Michigan and the fireworks began to shimmer in the sky, he got down on one knee beneath a cascade of lights reflecting on the water and popped the question," Caraballo shares.

THE LANGHAM, CHICAGO

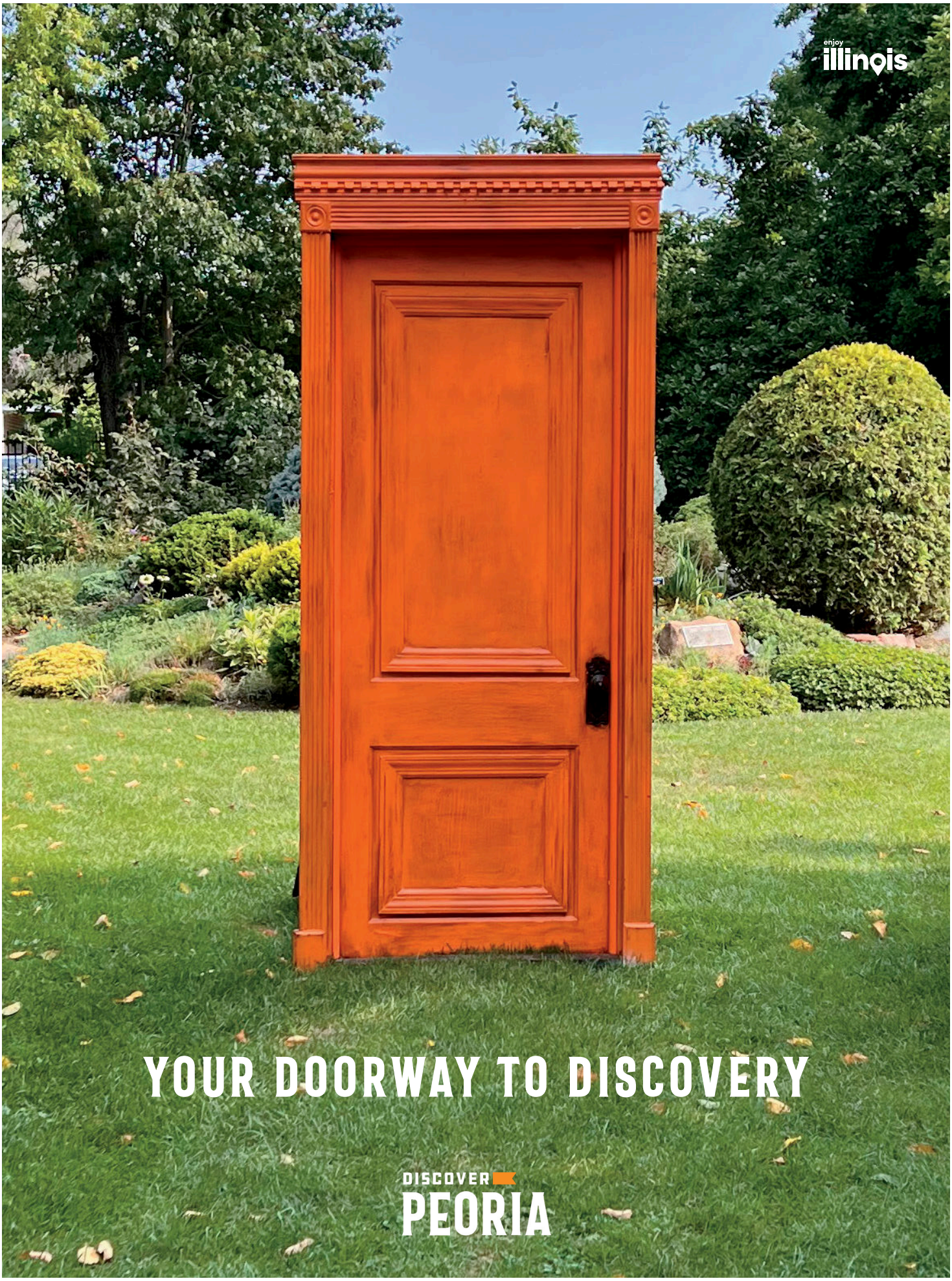
Set within a Mies van der Rohe-designed modernist structure, The Langham, Chicago embraces its location among architectural icons on the Chicago River. The Michelin Two Key hotel gives guests plenty of reasons to stay on-site, including the club lounge, formal afternoon tea at Pavilion, Chuan Spa treatments, an indoor pool, and private screenings in the cinema suite. For families with youngsters, the Kids Suite makes the perfect play area. It's also a convenient base for Resort in the City add-on experiences, like behind-the-scenes art tours, cocktail-making classes, a round at Harborside International Golf Center and a VIP helicopter adventure.

For more things to see and do along the Chicago Riverwalk, see page 66.

THE RITZ-CARLTON, CHICAGO

When families arrive at the Ritz-Carlton Gold Coast location, a staffer with a red wagon greets young guests, inviting them to choose a souvenir toy. A roving candy cart and designated children's pool also cater to the younger set. Adults appreciate the sophistication of the on-site spa and Torali Italian, a modern steakhouse with a 12th-floor rooftop bar. Booking a room with Club access unlocks exclusive amenities, including five daily food-and-beverage presentations and a dedicated Chicago hotel Club Concierge team.

STORY: BRIANNE SANCHEZ. PHOTOGRAPH: IOT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YOUR DOORWAY TO DISCOVERY
DISCOVER PEORIA

PARK HYATT CHICAGO

The Les Clefs d'Or concierge at Park Hyatt Chicago wants to learn the story behind each stay. Pre-trip conversations with guests help to craft experiences that feel considered and completely one-of-a-kind. With their popular Pedal and Picnic program, borrow bikes and an instant camera, personalizing a keepsake map with photos as you cycle between lakefront landmarks like Navy Pier and Millennium Park. On-site NoMI packs charcuterie and artisanal pastries to fuel your ride. If you prefer to stay in for an elevated meal, the restaurant's real standout is sushi, with fresh fish flown in from Japan. Staff suggest pairing a salmon avocado roll with their Watercolor Gin, a citrusy collaboration with local Wolf Point Distilling.



Park Hyatt Chicago

Stepping out CHICAGO

Coordinate special moments through your hotel concierge, but don't miss Chi-Town's most celebrated attractions. Purchasing a Chicago CityPass saves money on one-time admissions to five favorites, so you can splurge on other things like fine dining and take-home souvenirs. Use the pass to make a reservation at **Shedd Aquarium** and **Skydeck Chicago,** then pick three more from a list that includes **Adler Planetarium, Art Institute of Chicago, Field Museum, Griffin Museum of Science and Industry, Shoreline Sightseeing Architecture River Tour,** and **360 Chicago** observation deck. (Reservations are required at some attractions; contact them for more information.) Tickets are valid for nine days, starting on and including the first day you visit an attraction.



Adler Planetarium, Chicago

ILLINOIS INSIDER

Upgrade an extended stay for your pupper by booking a suite at K9 Resorts in Deerfield, a high-end pet hotel with spotless rooms and premium amenities.



K9 Resorts, Deerfield

GALENA

Destination-worthy accommodations dot Illinois' Driftless Region. These noteworthy properties forge a bond between people and place, inspiring you to plot your return trip right away.

IRISH HOLLOW

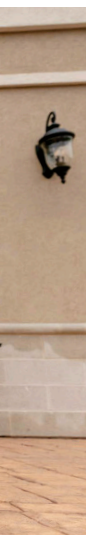
Wake up to dewy mornings in Irish Hollow's storybook valley, where chic private cottages with screen porches cluster around the two-suite inn. Early risers can meander through pastures, woodlands, wildflower fields and wetlands on the 500-acre estate and adjoining nature preserve before sitting down to a gourmet country breakfast delivered to your door each morning. Multicourse meals are prepared from the inn's organic gardens, with candlelight dinners in the Old General Store and private campfire suppers casting a romantic glow. Book a rejuvenating couples massage from the Body Work menu or add a seasonal floral arrangement to bring the spirit of the grounds inside.

JAIL HILL INN

In 2015, Matthew Carroll transformed a historic four-story brick jailhouse into an elegant escape. "We redid everything, and we did it in the best way, appealing to the modern, sophisticated traveler," Carroll says. The innkeeper's meticulous renovation paid off: Within four years, TripAdvisor named Jail Hill Inn the top-rated bed-and-breakfast in the country and second in the world, with high marks continuing to the present day. Carroll's impeccable hospitality attracts "repeat offenders" who return to celebrate special occasions, with many trying all six distinctive suites. Wine and cheese at welcome, gourmet breakfasts, plush king beds, fireplaces, and spacious decks contribute to the inn's five-star reviews.

EAGLE RIDGE RESORT AND SPA

Four championship golf courses get visitors into the swing of warm weather at Eagle Ridge. Select from a guest room at the inn, or choose from 150 distinctive homes and villas (with pickleball, pontoons and a pool) across The Galena Territory's rolling 6,800 acres. In June, the Great Galena Balloon Race launches here. Watch hot-air balloons ascend, or book a private sunrise or sunset flight and glide 3,000 feet up with Galena on the Fly (May–October). Then, center yourself at the recently expanded and reimagined Stonedrift Spa. Saturday nights, Woodlands Restaurant serves an all-you-can-eat prime rib buffet.





Irish Hollow, Galena

Stepping Out GALENA

Life in Galena's countryside moves at a more relaxed pace, but activities abound. Panoramic views reward hikers at **Horseshoe Mound Preserve,** where winding trails lead to sunrise and sunset overlooks. Plan a ruminant-related excursion with **Galena Goat Yoga** or **Hoof It Goat Treks** for up-close and personal interactions with curious creatures. Oenophiles cultivate a sense of contentment at a winery. Savor sweet Daffodil at **Massbach Ridge Winery** just outside Elizabeth, or toast with Giacomino Vino in the Tuscan-style atmosphere at Hanover's **Fergedaboudit Vineyard and Winery.** Start with a tasting at **Galena Cellars Vineyard and Winery,** then soak up the sights on the wraparound porch at golden hour.



Nine Generals Cigar Company, Galena

ILLINOIS INSIDER

Galena's historic downtown invites shop-hopping, with more than 125 boutiques and indulgent spots like Champagne on Main and Nine Generals Cigar Company.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (PARK HYATT, IRISH HOLLOW) STARBOARD AND PORT, (PLANETARIUM, NINE GENERALS) IOT, (K9 RESORTS) COURTESY OF K9 RESORTS



Par on the Prairie

Launch your tour of Illinois' nearly 300 public golf courses with these 10 memory-makers.

Cog Hill Golf and Country Club, Palos Park

Play a Fantastic Foursome

Of the course quartet at **Cog Hill Golf and Country Club** in Palos Park, No. 4 is the most famous, nicknamed Dubsdread for the fear it strikes in the hearts of high handicappers—think tight landing areas and heavily bunkered greens. Opened in 1964, Dubsdread has made lists of America's top public courses.

Practice Getting Up and Down

With a 289-foot elevation change over its 18 holes, The General course at **Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa** in Galena lets you play king of the hills. The signature par-4 fifth hole drops 175 feet from tee to green and offers a tristate view. In winter, the 10th hole is used for sledding.

Test-Drive a Tom Fazio Design

Renowned course architect Tom Fazio created **The Glen Club** in Glenview from a former naval air base on Chicago's North Shore, turning level runways into rolling fairways surrounded by mature trees, lakes, streams and native prairie grasses. "The earth moved to create the golf course and it's truly astounding," says Ethan Roush, head golf pro. "You would never expect so much elevation change on what used to be a starkly flat naval air base." Roush notes the course begins easy and finishes tough. "No. 1 has a wider driving area and allows for a gentler start to the round, while No. 18 has ruined many a good round with its two lakes and eight bunkers."

Quarry for Birdies

Nine newer holes at **The Highlands of Elgin** in Elgin flow around the 12-acre lake from an old stone quarry, joining the original nine in a diverse layout. An elevated tee at the par-3 seventh offers vistas of the lake and the Prairie-style clubhouse. Water guards the 15th green on three sides.

Sample Scotland

Loch St. James and 20 St. Andrews-style sod-wall bunkers make **Mistwood Golf Club** in Romeoville a Midwest version of Scottish links. The eighth hole, Royal Split, has been ranked one of the country's top par 5s. The par-three 14th hole, Kelpie's Lookout, starts a stretch of four holes named for the Scottish water devil.

Satisfy Your Jones for Golf

Legendary architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. turned marshland near a West Chicago airport into **Prairie Landing Golf Club.** "The entire site was transformed into rolling and meandering landforms completely from our imagination," says Bruce Charlton, president and chief design officer of RTJ II. Charlton's favorite holes are the fifth and the 11th, both drivable par 4s. On the fifth, Charlton says, "A heroic drive over the canal to the left can reach the green." On the 11th, he says, "The entire right side of the green and approach is guarded by an enlarged existing farm pond."

Discover hole-in-one deals and more courses throughout the state.

STORY: GARY THOMPSON. PHOTOGRAPH: CHARLES CHERNEY PHOTOGRAPHY



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Whether you're soaring above the skyline on the Centennial Wheel or dancing at a free festival, Navy Pier brings the fun all summer long. Take in stunning city and lake views, enjoy live music and cultural showcases, savor iconic Chicago flavors, and hop on classic rides that make you feel like a kid again. And of course, cap it all off with fireworks shimmering over Lake Michigan. From lakefront strolls to family adventures, Navy Pier is made for you.

Salute Architect Arthur Hills

Stonewall Orchard Golf Club in Grayslake was the first Illinois course by Arthur Hills, who left design footprints all over the Midwest. He incorporated thousands of trees and several small lakes, bringing water into play on 12 holes. The par-five 18th is a tough finisher, requiring three solid shots to a small green.

Tee It Up Like a Pro

Built for pros and host to the PGA Tour's annual John Deere Classic, **TPC Deere Run** in Silvis was designed by Illinois native D.A. Weibring, three-time winner of the tourney's forerunner, the Quad Cities Open. The course showcases the Rock and Mississippi rivers' valley landscape—elevation changes, hardwood trees, deep ravines and small ponds.

ILLINOIS INSIDER

This year, Medinah Country Club northwest of Chicago hosts the prestigious Presidents Cup. For more information, visit **presidentscup.com**

Forest Bathe on Your Backswing

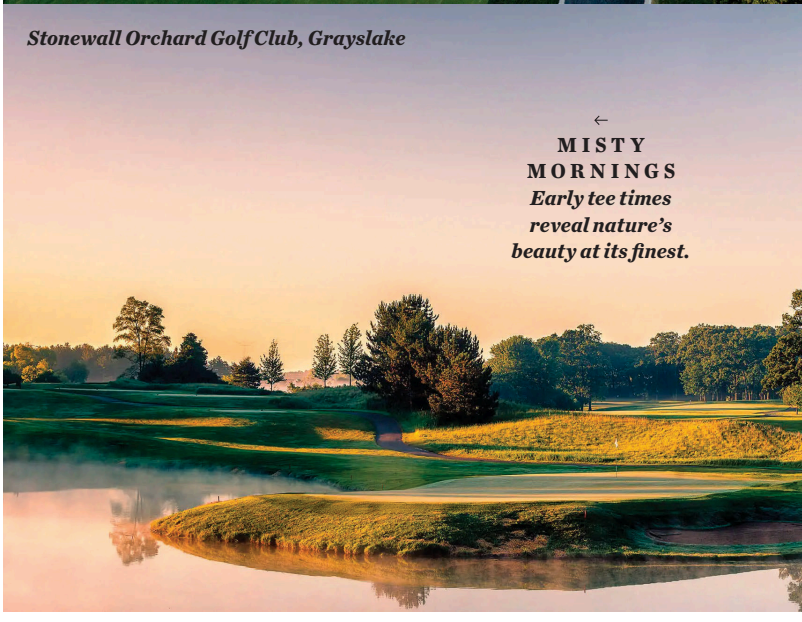
For **ThunderHawk Golf Club** in Beach Park (47 miles north of Chicago), Robert Trent Jones Jr. sculpted a scenic yet challenging course at a Lake County Forest Preserve. One of those, the eighth hole, has a short par 4 that requires accuracy off the tee to stay on the fairway with wetlands. The final hole combines all of Mother Nature's natural elements, including a wetland, mature trees and a rock-lined stream.

Swing Dramatically

The team of Hurdzan-Fry wove **WeaverRidge Golf Club** in Peoria out of farmland, routing holes around wooded valleys, creeks and lakes. Elevations change dramatically on the back nine, beginning with the downhill 10th hole and ending with a lofty tee shot at the par-five 18th. The par-three 12th features another delightful drop.



Medinah Country Club, Medinah



Stonewall Orchard Golf Club, Grayslake

← **MISTY MORNINGS** *Early tee times reveal nature's beauty at its finest.*

STICKS ON 66

Celebrate the Mother Road's centennial by carding a 66—or at least breaking 100—on these courses along the route.

Is Dubsdread too daunting? Three other courses at **Cog Hill Golf and Country Club** in Palos Park are tamer. **Bolingbrook Golf Club** in Bolingbrook is another beauty from designer Arthur Hills. With 10 ponds dotting **Naperbrook Golf Course** in Plainfield, you'd better pack extra golf balls. Built in the 1930s, **Highland Park Golf Course** in Bloomington is almost as old as Route 66. Of the nine holes at Atlanta's **North Greens Golf Course,** seven have water hazards. Since it opened in 1996, **Piper Glen Golf Club** in Springfield has been known for being tough but fair—and fun. The 18th at **Arlington Greens Golf Course** in Granite City is one of the area's most difficult finishing holes.

For more things to do while driving—or puttering—on Route 66, turn to page 28.

Find more golf courses along the Mother Road.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (MEDINAH) COURTESY OF MEDINAH COUNTRY CLUB, (STONEWALL) STONEWALL ORCHARD GOLF CLUB



VOTED
BEST BIG CITY
9 YEARS IN A ROW

Condé Nast Traveler
READERS' CHOICE AWARDS
2025

CHICAGO

On Stage

With the spotlights ablaze at historic theaters, state-of-the-art auditoriums and outdoor venues, all of Illinois is truly a stage.

BROADWAY IN CHICAGO
Chicago
Don't throw away your shot to celebrate *Hamilton's* 10th anniversary of its Chicago debut along with America's 250th when the megamusical returns (March 4–April 26), this time to CIBC Theatre.

CORN STOCK THEATRE
Peoria
During their summer season (typically five shows, May through August), this community theater brings the music, comedy and drama to a massive tent in Laura Bradley Park. It will be the company's first full summer season under their newly replaced tent in 2026.

ILLINOIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Bloomington
Hamlet promised "the play's the thing." Judge for yourself during an outdoor production on the grounds of Ewing Cultural Center, where a professional repertory company and emerging artists stage classic plays by the Bard and others (late June through early August).

THE SPOTLIGHT THEATRE
Moline
With six main-stage productions (*West Side Story* rumbles through June 12–21), a children's company and improv comedy shows every Friday and Saturday night, this beloved community theater is a reliable crowd-pleaser.

STEPPENWOLF THEATRE COMPANY
Chicago
The scrappy ensemble that has included Gary Sinise, Laurie Metcalf, John Malkovich and dozens of other acting luminaries wraps up its 50th season of ground-breaking performances with the drama *Catch as Catch Can* (June 4–July 12) in their Lincoln Park theater.

THEATRE IN THE PARK
Petersburg
Honestly, Abe would be proud of the players at "Illinois' Official State Theatre," who present a summerlong blend of musicals, comedies, classics and history plays on an outdoor stage at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site (May through August).

ILLINOIS INSIDER
After focusing on backstage upgrades to the Hunter Pavilion at Ravinia in Highland Park, a multiyear $75 million renovation will give audiences bigger seats (with cup holders), richer acoustics and more dynamic lighting.



Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Bloomington



The Spotlight Theatre, Moline

Discover creative and cultural things to see and do.

STORY: BRIAN KRAMER. PHOTOGRAPHS: (SHAKESPEARE) PETE GUITHER/ILLINOIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL. (SPOTLIGHT) COURTESY OF THE SPOTLIGHT THEATRE

start at the Beginning

Your next road trip adventure begins on **The First Hundred Miles** of Route 66 in Illinois



TheFirstHundredMiles.com







ILLINOIS US 66 The First HUNDRED Miles

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HERITAGE CORRIDOR DESTINATIONS

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Happily Ever After

Couples can find romantic destinations in Illinois for every stage of their relationship, including blissful courtships, memorable proposals, upscale wedding venues, cozy honeymoon spots, pampering babymoon retreats and anniversary outings.

Luxury Stays

Thoughtful details turn a typical overnight into an elevated experience. At **The Herrington Inn and Spa** in Geneva, "our team loves to prepare a room for romance with rose petals placed in a heart shape on the bed," says director Lisa Van Bortel. "Champagne and house-dipped chocolate strawberries are a great touch too." She recommends the inn's River Elite rooms, in particular, for their canopy beds, plush bedding and riverfront balconies. You'll find similarly swoon-worthy perks at Lake Forest's **Deer Path Inn,** where in-room facials and breakfast are part of their customizable Babymoon Getaway.

Discover more luxurious stays on page 8.



The Herrington Inn and Spa, Geneva



Pere Marquette Lodge and Conference Center, Grafton

Resorts

Chestnut Mountain Resort in Galena stands ready to facilitate every romantic phase. After the scenic bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River inspire couples to say "I do," they can host a next-day jaunt to the on-site mountain biking park and/or treat wedding guests to one of the resort's river cruises. At **Pere Marquette Lodge and Conference Center** in Grafton, weddings can be held in the historic Great Room, with its 50-foot-high ceilings and 700-ton limestone fireplace. A few miles from Nebo, a hunting lodge doubles as a B&B and resort. Each of **Heartland Lodge's** knotty-pine-and-cedar cabins has a king-size bed, fireplace and heart-shape jetted tub inside, along with a private deck and firepit to roast marshmallows and make your own s'mores. "Our private luxury cabins are a favorite among honeymooners and anniversary couples," says Zach Jumps, Heartland Lodge's marketing director.

STORY: ANDREA MINARCEK JESSUP. PHOTOGRAPHS: (THE HERRINGTON) IOT, (PERE MARQUETTE) KEVIN J. MIYAZAKI/REDUX

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UNCOVER THE
Possibilities

The best-kept secrets in Central Illinois come with a deep breath of fresh air. Explore stunning outdoor spaces perfect for biking, hiking, and fishing at Nichols Park and Lake Jacksonville. Soak in the rich and colorful history of our community at the Jacksonville Area Museum, the Governor Duncan Mansion, or Underground Railroad sites. Shop and dine across distinctive boutiques and restaurants lining a breathtaking, historic square. No matter how you envision a good time, creating your own memorable experiences comes as easily as discovering a bit of the past.

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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.

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OF SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS

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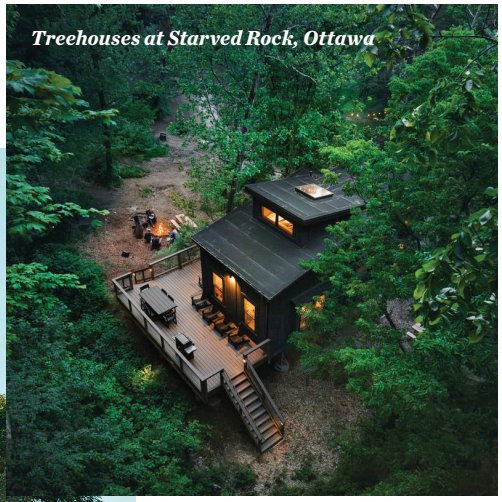
ILLINOIS 66
WOW-2026
100 YEARS


Treehouses at Starved Rock, Ottawa

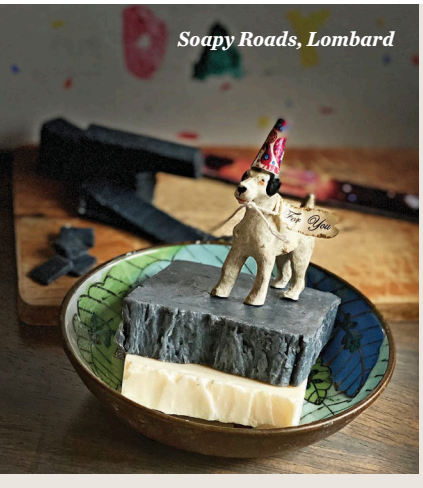


NATURE QUEST
Outdoor activities abound at Camp Aramoni. Paddle a canoe on the pond, explore the property on complimentary bikes, play lawn games or bring binoculars to watch the birds.

Camp Aramoni, Tonica

Natural Beauty

Cottage-style gardens surround **Rocky Comfort Cabins'** three one-bedroom rentals in Makanda, engulfing guests in natural wonders. "The native wildflowers attract hummingbirds, and butterflies love the zinnias," owner Edward Cook says. Guests can take a leisurely stroll along the sun-washed field to Blue Sky Vineyard. In Ottawa's **Treehouses at Starved Rock,** lovers of the outdoors can explore 13 miles of hiking trails to canyons and waterfalls in the adjacent Starved Rock State Park and sleep in a spacious, modern-rustic tree house. Nearby **Camp Aramoni** in Tonica offers a similar blend of high-end and rustic, with safari-style tents along the Vermilion River.


Soapy Roads, Lombard

A TOUCH OF ILLINOIS

Commemorate your love with these special made-in-state indulgences.

Founded in 1929, **Underbrink's Bakery** in Quincy turns out bespoke cakes, pies and iced cookies well suited for weddings, baby showers and anniversary celebrations. **Voilà! Macarons** in Peoria personalizes macaron cakes, and **Happy by Chocolate** in Roselle specializes in vegan goodies. You can pair your sweets with a bottle of bubbly from **Illinois Sparkling Co.,** which hosts weekend concerts and wine-cave tastings at its hillside vineyard in Peru. In Chicago, **Scratch Goods** specializes in indulgent skin care (think face oils, clay masks and sugar scrubs) handcrafted from edible ingredients sourced from local businesses and small family farms. You'll find a similar focus on fresh ingredients at **Soapy Roads** in Lombard, where the Sip n Soap experience for two lets you savor an organic tea service while creating a signature-scent soap to celebrate your relationship or give as a gift to wedding guests. In Forest Park, Fred Bryant and Ann Hanson make custom jewelry at **Accents by Fred.** They're also masters at repairing things, like heirloom timepieces.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (TREE HOUSE) COURTESY OF TREEHOUSES AT STARVED ROCK, (CAMP ARAMONI) IOT, (SOAPY ROADS) COURTESY OF SOAPY ROADS



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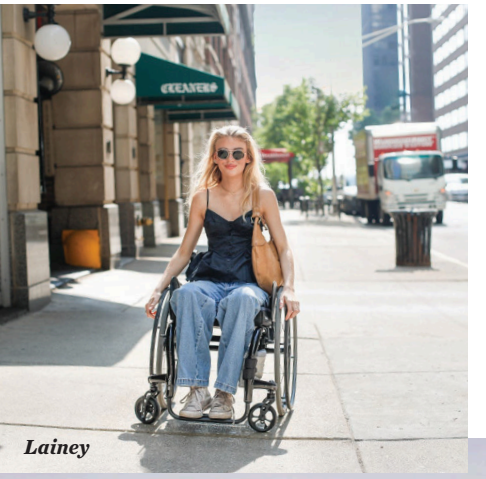
THREE DAYS IN THE WINDY CITY

All Aboard the Chicago Express


Lainey

Two traditions—a train trip to Chicago and a growing must-see list of destinations, museums and restaurants—have become the highlight of one family's summer travels.

When I moved our family from Florida to my home state of Michigan, one of the first things on the pro list made me smile: We'll be closer to Chicago. The deal sweetened further when I realized our new house was minutes from the Amtrak station. Thus was born an annual three-day adventure with my children—Lainey (18), Nella (15) and Dash (12)—and a bucket list based on past favorites, along with some suggestions crowdsourced through social media.

The four-hour train ride to Chicago sets the tone for our time together with card games, watercolor paint books and disposable cameras we use to capture moments once we arrive at Union Station. A quick 2-mile cab ride takes us to our Gold Coast destination.

We choose The Drake Hotel for its proximity to many of our favorite attractions as well as its history and elegance, a guaranteed way to dazzle my kids. My oldest daughter is an ambulatory wheelchair user, which can be a daunting experience in a big city. Staying in the heart of our exploration area has eased accessibility concerns and allowed Midwest hospitality to shine through. Everyone we've encountered on our trips has been helpful and accommodating.

Over the course of three days, we've been able to check off every one of our list experiences and then some, elevating our Chicago trip to fabulous family getaway.


Chicago Sunset Cruise

KELLE HAMPTON *is the author of* **The New York Times** *bestselling memoir and a native Michigander. She documents everyday joys and encourages others to turn moments into memories on her Instagram account @etst.*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS: KELLE HAMPTON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*Some attractions are seasonal. See website for dates and hours of operation.


Nella

Here are some favorites from our Windy City bucket list ...

CHICAGO SUNSET CRUISE

We've enjoyed other architectural boat tours along the Chicago River, but this evening ride is more laid-back. After grabbing a quick dinner at Coq d'Or at The Drake Hotel (the kids loved the phyllo-wrapped mozzarella sticks), we boarded a 90-minute sightseeing cruise. The double-decker Wendella boat travels into Lake Michigan, where you can savor the sunset accompanied by a family-friendly playlist and then return to port with the skyline aglow. The bar on the lower level offers snacks and drinks, including kid-friendly options like hot chocolate.

GRIFFIN MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

I'm still captivated by my own childhood memories of exhibits from this museum, and it's thrilling to watch my kids share that fascination. A few favorite permanent exhibits we all enjoyed: *YOU! The Experience, Take Flight,* and *Science Storms.* We were all captivated by the human cross-section specimens in *YOU! The Experience,* and found the stories of athletes who persevered despite disabilities inspiring. My plane-obsessed son loved exploring a section of a United Airlines Boeing 727 in *Take Flight,* and convinced his sister to join him for an interactive flight simulation (an additional ticket purchase). In the *Science Storms* exhibit, the 40-foot tornado stole our attention and answered a lot of our questions, followed by the miniature DIY vortices we were able to create with the countertop fogger.

HIDDEN GEMS

Seneca Park is one of my favorite lesser-known spots, buried in the heart of the city next to Chicago Fire Department Engine 98 (an architectural treasure that resembles a castle) near Chicago Water Tower. The park features two playgrounds that are clean and quiet in the morning, making this the perfect place to sip a coffee while the kids burn off some early-morning steam. A 15-minute walk away on North State Street, P.O.S.H. is a delightful boutique with European flea market vibes, including pantry items, vintage goods, housewares and unique children's gifts.

ICONIC EATS

More than anything, we look forward to the food on our trips! Our family strives to sample the holy trinity of Chicago eats—Giordano's pizza, Garrett Popcorn and Stan's Donuts. Although there are several Giordano's in the city, we love the Rush Street location. Since the wait time is a little longer for deep-dish pizza (worth it!), we pull out our card games and fill the time. Garrett Popcorn—also available in several locations—is a great last-day visit to stock up on popcorn for the train ride home, as well as a souvenir treat for family and friends. We can never decide between the caramel and cheese popcorn, so Garrett Mix, a combo of the two, is our favorite. And don't plan to go to Stan's without leaving with multiple doughnuts. Their selection of flavors is so enticing, you'll want to try them all. The Le Stan Croissant and the Nutella doughnut are always among our picks. We often choose the Millennium Park location so we can take a box of doughnuts to the park and enjoy them while we people-watch.



PHOTOGRAPHS: KELLE HAMPTON, (PRINCESS DIANA) GETTY/TIM GRAHAM

DINING DISCOVERIES

Two new-to-us destinations from recent visits will definitely make future lists. After a full day of adventuring, the cozy, family atmosphere of Quartino Ristorante delivered the relaxed evening we needed with shared pasta plates, candlelight and delicious wine. Cindy's Rooftop, located on the 13th floor of the Chicago Athletic Association, charmed with its upscale yet family-friendly atmosphere and great menu. Their truffle fries and lamb shawarma bowl were big hits at our table. The stunning views of Millennium Park and Lake Michigan alone were enough to make Cindy's a five-star experience.



Millennium Park

MILLENNIUM PARK

Come for an iconic photo at the Bean and stay to wander the park's other attractions, including Crown Fountain and the Jay Pritzker Pavilion. Faces are projected on the fountain's two glass towers, which bookend a reflecting pool. (Bring bathing suits for the kids—there's a nearby accessible public bathroom.) If you time your visit right, you may be able to listen to a rehearsal of the Grant Park Orchestra or catch one of the many free events and festivals produced by Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events throughout the summer months.

NAVY PIER

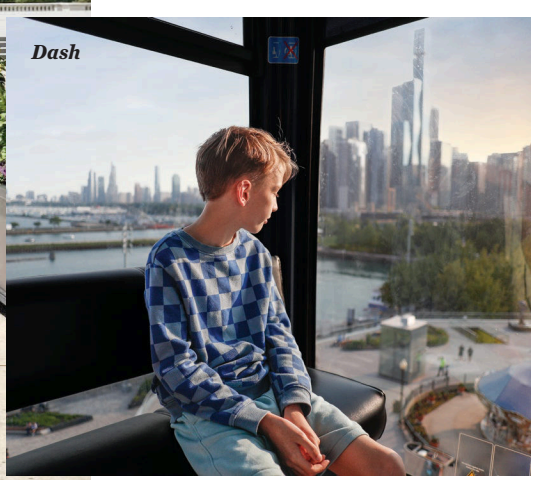
The skyline backdrop at this lively venue is great for family photos, while the rides delight my thrill-seeking youngest child. The Centennial Wheel is always a family favorite, and the ride is long enough that you can relax and enjoy some of the best views of the city.

OHIO STREET BEACH

A 1-mile walk from The Drake Hotel, this sandy spot bustles with summertime energy and serves up a beautiful slice of Lake Michigan. The kids love watching the volleyball players and hunting for lake glass.

At the end of our visit,

leaving the city is always the hardest part—but definitely more palatable after we've successfully checked off so many great adventures. Fortunately, next summer promises another train ride and a new list of memories waiting for us.



Dash



A ROYAL NOTE: REMEMBERING PRINCESS DIANA'S CHICAGO VISIT

In June 1996, Princess Diana graced Chicago with a three-day visit to raise funds for cancer research. During her stay, the beloved royal called The Drake Hotel home, specifically Suite 550, now affectionately known as the Princess Diana Suite. This elegant 1,500-square-foot retreat features a stately living room, cozy reading nook, kitchenette, spacious bedroom and one-and-a-half baths. Expansive windows frame sweeping views of Lake Michigan and the city's magnificent skyline. For a true royal experience, reserve afternoon tea at the hotel's legendary Palm Court, where both Princess Diana and Queen Elizabeth II once sipped and savored.

Diana's Chicago itinerary also included the Field Museum, where today, visitors can see Máximo, the towering titanosaur that stands 28 feet high and 122 feet long. Don't miss SUE, the world-famous *T. rex,* or the museum's immersive ancient Egypt exhibit.

During her visit, Diana traveled in style: a 1996 Rolls-Royce Silver Spur, now part of the collection at the Volo Museum in Volo. The royal vehicle is displayed in Showroom 5, along with hundreds of other classic collector cars and more than 60 Hollywood favorites, including the Family Truckster from *National Lampoon's Vacation*.

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Retro Eats and Roadside Treats

The thrill of the open road, the satisfaction of fabulous food. Plan your Route 66 road trip around places to dine and drink, plus catch a few nearby iconic landmarks.



Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket, Willowbrook

ILLINOIS INSIDER
The 2,448-mile Route 66, stretching from Chicago to Los Angeles, was established November 11, 1926.

START HERE
Kick off your Mother Road road trip with a hearty omelet (choose from 23 options) from Chicago's **Lou Mitchell's,** one of the original Route 66 restaurants.

FRIED CHICKEN FANATICS
The fried chicken recipe at **Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket** in Willowbrook has not changed in 80 years. Order the chicken basket, which comes with french fries and homemade slaw.

ALL ABOUT THE SIDES
While Romeoville's **White Fence Farm's** house specialty is flash-fried chicken, all entrees come with a bevy of sides, plus your choice of mac and cheese or potato.

SHAKE IT UP
Braidwood's **Polk-A-Dot Drive In** features statues of famous figures like Elvis Presley, who could be professing his love for the eatery's popular milkshakes via his song "All Shook Up."

ALL DAY, EVERY DAY
Open 365 days a year, the **Old Route 66 Family Restaurant** in Dwight serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Nostalgic decor includes signs and vintage gas pumps. Cross the street to see **Ambler's Texaco Gas Station,** one of the oldest continuously operated gas stations, now open as a visitors center.

BREAKFAST, BURGERS, A BUFFET AND MORE
Since 1928, **Dixie Family Restaurant** in McLean has been satisfying hungry road-trippers. The down-home restaurant is part of the **Dixie Travel Plaza,** the oldest continuously operating Route 66 truck stop.

LAND OF GIANTS
Lumi, a 19-foot-tall statue of a waitress with cat-eye glasses, holds an apple pie outside of **Country-Aire Restaurant** in Atlanta. The family-style establishment is known for its daily specials. Discover more fiberglass statues three blocks away at the **American Giants Museum,** across the street from the **Bunyon Giant.**

STORY: KRISTIN HAGENSON. PHOTOGRAPH: RYAN DONNELL

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↗ **SOMETHING SPECIAL**
The Everyday Special includes two Cozy Dogs and a medium fry. Order a bottle of their Route 66 Root Beer.

START YOUR ENGINES
It's bumper-to-bumper memorabilia at **Route 66 Motorheads Bar and Grill, Museum and Entertainment Complex** in Springfield. The car-themed menu includes apps, burgers, wraps and sandwiches, pizza, and nightly specials (like lobster tail and garlic shrimp). After dinner, motor over to the **Route 66 Drive In,** which shows feature flicks on two screens.

WHITE-LINEN DINNER
Traditional decor—dark-wood paneling, stained glass and a tin ceiling—complement the fresh ingredients (herbs grown on the rooftop) of **Maldaner's Restaurant.** It's been open since 1884 in downtown Springfield.

DIPPED DOGS ON STICKS
Ed Waldmire debuted his battered and fried hot dog on a stick at the Illinois State Fair in 1946. His grandson, Josh, owns and operates **Cozy Dog Drive In** in Springfield. His best advice for road-trippers is to plan ahead, as a lot of small businesses are closed on Sundays. Less than 2 miles away, a 20-foot-tall Muffler Man holds a flag at **Lauterbach Tire and Auto Service.**

A SIGN OF THE TIMES
While a drive-thru feels almost obligatory on a road trip, **Maid-Rite** in Springfield was one of the first U.S. restaurants to have one in 1924. In the last century, not much has changed at the converted caboose restaurant serving up loose-meat sandwiches. Continue down memory lane at the **Route 66 Legends Neon Sign Park** in the Illinois State Fairgrounds.



Ariston Cafe, Litchfield

100-PLUS YEARS OF HISTORY
The **Ariston Cafe** in Litchfield reigns as one of the oldest operating Route 66 restaurants. Locals love the weekly specials, like the prime rib on Fridays and Saturdays. The nearby Vic Suhling Gas for Less neon sign leads to more local and Route 66 history at the **Litchfield Museum and Route 66 Welcome Center.**

DOWN-HOME DIGS
Signs and photos from previous incarnations line the walls of **Weezy's Route 66 Bar and Grill,** a yellow-and-brown brick roadhouse in Hamel.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (COZY DOG) RYAN DONNELL, (ARISTON) STARBOARD AND PORT



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Q|A
SKYE P. MARSHALL

Passion for the performing arts—and a determination to challenge herself—shaped every step of this breakout actor's journey from a Chicago striver to Hollywood success.

Watch Skye P. Marshall stride through scenes as Olympia Lawrence in the critically acclaimed CBS legal drama *Matlock,* and the actor's background as a dancer and airman makes sense. Her complex character cross-examines witnesses with grace and grit—two attributes Marshall gained coming of age in Chicago in the '90s.

When her parents separated, Marshall's East Coast childhood ended. She and her two siblings returned to Chicago's North Side with their mom. The move challenged and changed Marshall. She learned to navigate, then embrace, the City of Big Shoulders.

Staying busy as a teen kept Marshall on track for success. She credits dancing (foot-working, hip-hop and street jazz) with deepening her appreciation for Black culture. High school jobs at FAO Schweetz (the candy store) and Shedd Aquarium taught her the value of hard work. Before landing film and television roles, Marshall's star power shone as the Lincoln Park High School prom queen.

The Northeastern Illinois University grad describes a dramatic performance at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre as a career-inspiring experience. "I was moved in a way that was so different from what I was expecting," Marshall says.

Now based in Los Angeles, she and her husband, *Chicago Fire* actor Edwin Hodge, return often to visit family.

INTERVIEW: CLAIRE CONNORS. STORY: BRIANNE SANCHEZ. PHOTOGRAPH: DAION CHESNEY

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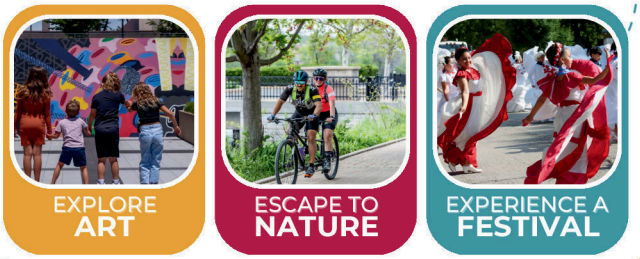

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Q ***You were born in Chicago but spent your early life on the East Coast before returning to the North Side during middle school. What was that like?***

A We lived in Lake View Towers at the intersection of Wilson and Clarendon. When I drive through that area today, I'm blown away. It's a cool part of the city now. I grew up there before the neighborhood was transformed into condos, cafes and dog parks. My siblings and I had to quickly learn how to fit in with the right mindset and friend groups. My siblings still reside in Chicago.

Q ***Who was your home team, as a '90s Chicago teen?***

A Bulls. I grew up watching Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen. We won so many times, I thought celebrating the NBA Championship was a national holiday.

Q ***Before you began acting in film and TV, you were a dancer. Do any of those early performances stay with you?***

A Preparing for the annual Bud Billiken Parade was my equivalent to the Emmys. We were celebrated, citywide, for our unique performances—for the culture in the projects and predominantly Black public middle and high schools.

My favorite memories from my time in Chicago are wrapped around my fellowship with Full Effect and U-Phi-U dance troupes. We would battle other dance teams all over the city. Before there was twerkin', we were footworkin'!

Q ***Those moves are legendary. How did your Chicago upbringing help shape your sense of self?***

A Chicago taught me how to survive and thrive through hard work and the performing arts.

At the young age of 13, I had to learn how to take the L train and bus to school with my sister. At 15, I started my first job at FAO Schweetz inside Water Tower Place.

Chicago taught me adaptability, resilience and independence. It exposed me to the vastness of my culture in a way that the silver-spoon life in Virginia didn't. I fell in love with my Blackness, my body and my saucy spirit.

Q ***Why did you enlist in the Air Force before turning to acting?***

A I joined the military in 2000 to pay for college. I understood at a young age how crippling debt could be for young adults, and I didn't want that for myself. I used the GI Bill to pay for my education. Mission accomplished.

Q ***Countless stars come from Chicago. Why do you think the city produces incredible talent?***

A What makes Chicago such a fertile ground for creativity and drive is the unique blend of grit, soul and working-class resilience. Chicago is a blue-collar city at heart. It teaches its artists to hustle. To show up, even when the odds are against them.

Q ***Did using your middle initial in your performing credits help you stand out?***

A "P" is for Patricia, my incredible mother's name. My mother is my angel and my favorite person on earth. Thanks to the success of *Matlock,* I was able to purchase her a house near family. I visit quite often, or she travels to wherever I am.

Q ***Speaking of* Matlock*, you and Kathy Bates have fantastic chemistry. How do you account for the show's success?***

A Kathy Bates is one of the realest people in the game. We led with respect, preparation and admiration from the start. I've been blessed to hit the lottery with my fantastic cast and phenomenal crew.

When I read the first script, I knew it was going to be something unique and exciting for audiences. Every day when I show up, I trust my instincts and let my inner child play.

Q ***Each episode packs so much drama into an hour. Any hints for fans leading into Season 3?***

A Exactly! So much drama, with even more twists and turns that will have you feeling every emotion.

Scenes from Skye's Youth

These iconic Chicago locations cue fond memories for* Matlock *actress Skye P. Marshall.

SHEDD AQUARIUM
1200 S. DuSable Lake Shore Dr.
Marshall held the dream high school job: Leading tours in the beluga habitat.

MARGATE PARK
4921 N. Marine Dr.
Dance rehearsals and after-school hangouts made this spot near Montrose Beach "a sanctuary" for Marshall.

CLARENCE F. BUCKINGHAM MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN
Grant Park
Marshall had her first date at this rococo-style landmark, known for water-jet displays and colorful light shows.

LAKE SHORE DRIVE
toward Hollywood and Sheridan
Marshall's favorite scenic experience? Cruising northbound on Lake Shore Drive toward Edgewater.

JIM'S ORIGINAL
1250 S. Union Ave.
An Original Maxwell Street Polish Sausage was Marshall's go-to meal as a teen.

WATER TOWER PLACE
1835 N. Michigan Ave.
A Mag Mile landmark and location of her first job.

PHOTOGRAPH: GERSON LOPES


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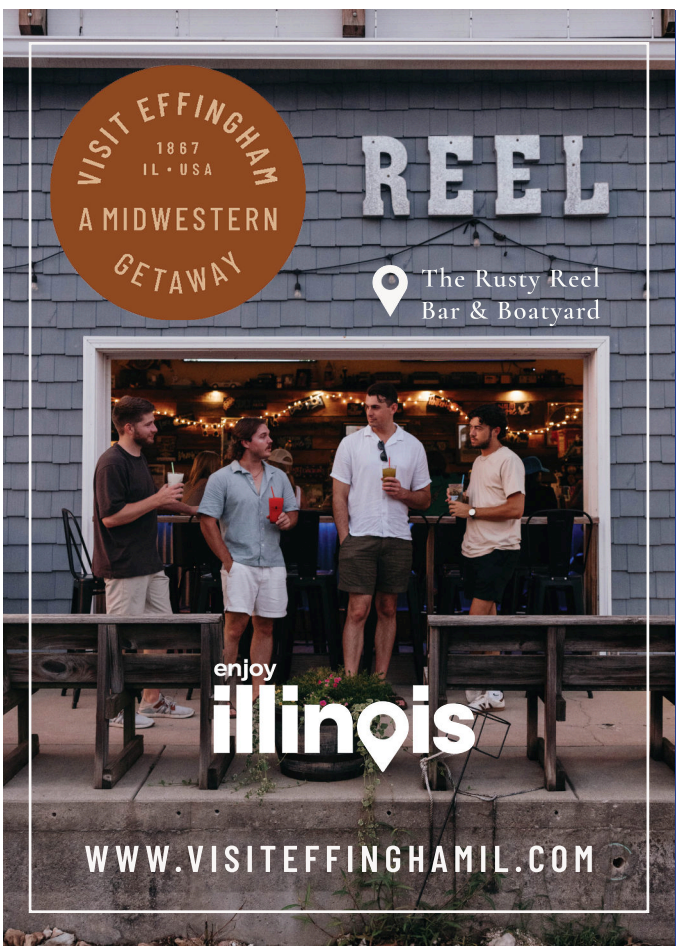
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Signs of Summer

These multisensory experiences from around the state come to life as the weather warms and the days lengthen.

JUST PICKED

Harvesting herbs and fruits from the farm (or the farm's store) yields unbeatable tastes and smells.

ECKERT'S COUNTRY STORE AND FARMS

Belleville

A continuous cascade of fruits draws U-pick enthusiasts beginning with strawberries in early May, and blackberries and ripening peaches in mid-June, while the farm store abounds in crave-worthy treats. Wish you could drink in all the peachy goodness? Try a can of Eckert's Peach and Quiet hard cider.

RENDLEMAN ORCHARDS

Alto Pass

Roots run deep at this EcoCertified orchard, where five generations have nurtured stone fruit trees. Fuzz-skin peaches and their smooth-skin cousins, nectarines, dazzle with color from June through August. Hand-select your sweet gems from their Farm Market or get free shipping on a peach gift box.

TENDERLOIN FARMS

Edwardsville

Lavender reigns supreme on this aromatic farm, where sisters Kim Hansen and Kris Straub transformed their family farm—primarily used for animal farming for more than 100 years—into a purple paradise. Craft a bloom bundle featuring multiple varieties from the U-pick fields or take home a plant or lavender sachet. Lavender season typically runs late May through June.



Rendleman Orchards, Alto Pass

→ **SCENT-SATIONAL**

In the off season, Tenderloin Farms' lavender products are available at area markets and online.



STORY: BECKY ULLOM NAUGLE. PHOTOGRAPHS: (BUTTERFLY) @NINAWILSONPHOTOGRAPHY. (LAVENDER) KELSEY HANSEN


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DESTINATION Kane County ILLINOIS
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Photo by Drew Pertl


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COOL TREATS

Illinois Makers tame heat and humidity with carbonation or cream-based concoctions—and an occasional dash of spirits.

DAIRYHAUS
Rockton
Owner Brent Murray's team delights in showcasing local ingredients, like Rockford Roasting Company coffee in its ice-cold treats. Offering dairy-free options and eliminating artificial colors help Murray widen the welcome and benefit the community.

EXCEL BOTTLING COMPANY
Breese
Few family businesses began as a cash reward from capturing a bank robber, but that's how Lefty Meier had money to purchase a used bottling machine in 1936. Excel produces Ski soda with real lemon and orange juices and cane sugar. If you'd like all that with a cherry on top, crack open a Cherry Ski.

YENI'S PALARTE MEXICAN ICE CREAM
Peoria Heights
The fruit-sweetened ice cream is handmade daily in specialties like Starry Night, boasting blueberries, blackberries and cream. The flavor honors Vincent van Gogh and raises mental health awareness. For something stronger, check out the boozy ice cream.



→
HOMEMADE GOODNESS
Try a shake made from hand-scooped ice cream.

FIRE UP THE GRILL

Experiment with mouthwatering flavors or feast on sizzling cuts prepared by masters.

JONES BOYS MARKET
Ashland
Classic and unusual bratwurst varieties impress at the market, an Ashland staple since 1932 under the guidance of four generations. Customers seek out apple brats—available in four flavors (original, cheddar, lager and sea salt-caramel). If you're firing up the grill, add a few hand-cut steaks.

17TH STREET BARBECUE
Murphysboro
Magic Dust, the Mills' family dry rub, packs a taste punch with 18 herbs and spices. Grill masters pursuing bigger flavors can layer Mike's Original, Apple City Red or Little Kick sauces. No time to grill? Get a 17th Street Barbecue Feast delivered, complete with multiple meats, beans, sauce and Magic Dust.



PHOTOGRAPHS: KELSEY HANSEN, (DAIRYHAUS) BRENT MURRAY, (GOAT) APRIL DUDA PHOTOGRAPHY



Rosewood Farm, Sugar Grove

ON THE FARM

Farming and good times pair perfectly: Pick flowers with friends, savor farm-to-table meals or hike alongside frisky goats.

EPIPHANY FARMS

Bloomington

Ken Myszka, an ascending star in the culinary world, realized he wanted to use "the dinner table as a platform for social change," and returned home to Central Illinois. Regenerative farming practices guide stewardship of the farm's plants and animals, which become the organic ingredients necessary to host a handful of late summer Farm Dinners.

LOCAVORE FARM

Grant Park

Seeking deeper connections to people and the land, former urbanites Christopher and Rachael Jones rooted their farm in Kankakee County. Dine on the Land dinners showcase farm-fresh food prepared by nationally known chefs, while Thursday evening Harvest Hangs (late May through late October) are more casual. This summer, send your kids to Farm Camp. Both the one-day and weeklong camps immerse young ones in farm life with hands-on experiences.

PRAIRIE FRUITS FARM AND CREAMERY

Champaign

Goats really are the GOAT here. Their milk goes into cheese and soap, while the animals melt hearts during outdoor guest experiences. Tuesday's Happy Hour Goat Hike includes a drink, while Saturday's Goat Hike features cheese samples. Snap a selfie with a baby goat during a Goat Yoga session.

ROSEWOOD FARM

Sugar Grove

Feed your curiosity and creativity through hands-on experiences. Kiddos can explore the garden and learn animal care during Farm Camp, while adults dive deep into making pasta, pickling and canning, or taking a sourdough master class. U-pick flower sessions let you design your own bouquets (July to September).



←

GOURMET GIFT

Prairie Fruits Farm's cheese box (sausage, cheese, chèvre, crackers, honey and jam) makes the perfect base for a picnic.

Discover more inventive and creative Illinois Made Makers.

MILESTONE MEMORIES

DATEBOOK

Join the festivities as Illinois marks the 100th anniversary of Route 66, America's 250th birthday and more important dates—like Opening Day at Wrigley Field.



American Giants Museum, Atlanta

ROUTE 66

As the highway's state of origin, Illinois delivers with celebrations, markets and peeks into the past.

April–October
ROUTE 66 MAIN STREET MINGLE
Virden
Once a month, vendors hawking handcrafted wares, such as beaded earrings and herb-infused soaps, congregate on the town's square alongside food trucks.

April 30
ROUTE 66 CENTENNIAL NATIONAL KICK-OFF
Joliet
Joliet is one of five cities hosting events, such as The Big House Ballgame at the Old Joliet Prison, to mark the route's 100th anniversary.

May 2–3
RED CARPET CORRIDOR
15 towns between Joliet and Bloomington
The communities along the 100-mile stretch welcome visitors to join their Route 66 revelries.

May 23–24
AMERICAN GIANTS WEEKEND
Atlanta
Two newly restored towering statues join their fiberglass brethren at the American Giants Museum this year.

June–July
ANNUAL ROUTE 66 GINGERBREAD HOUSE CONTEST
Atlanta
A spicy-sweet scent wafts through the Atlanta Public Museum's halls after competitors submit confectionary depictions of structures along the highway.

June 13
ROUTE 66 FESTIVAL
Edwardsville
Trolley tours and the roar of classic cars charging down a stretch of Route 66 mingle with shrieks of delight from the bounce house and petting zoo.

June 20–28
THE GREAT RACE
Springfield
The 2,300-mile race begins in the capital city as 120 antique cars

STORY: ANGELA UFHEIL. PHOTOGRAPH: STARBOARD AND PORT



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.





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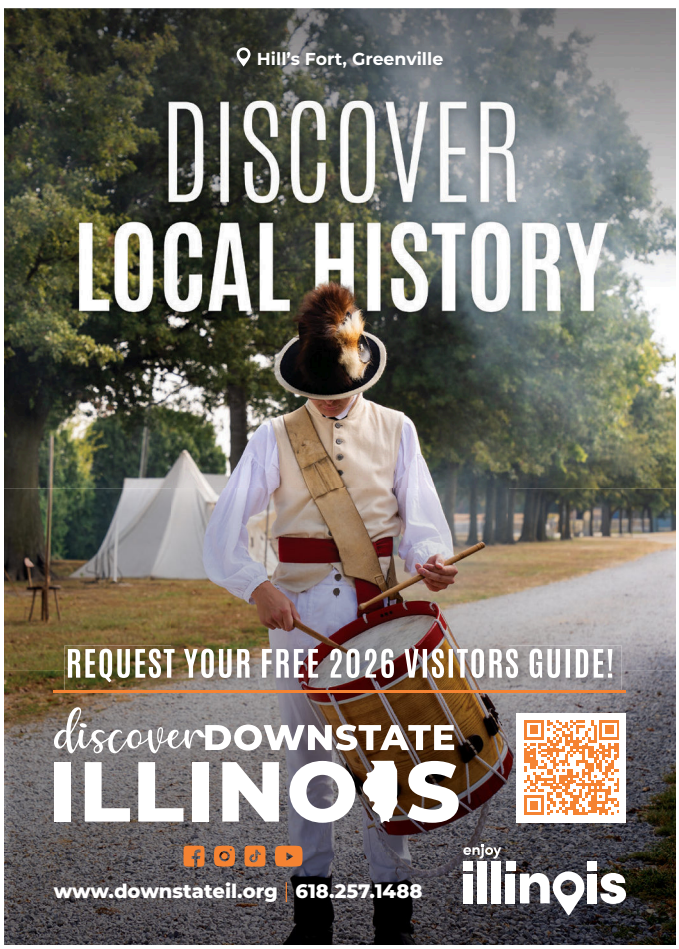
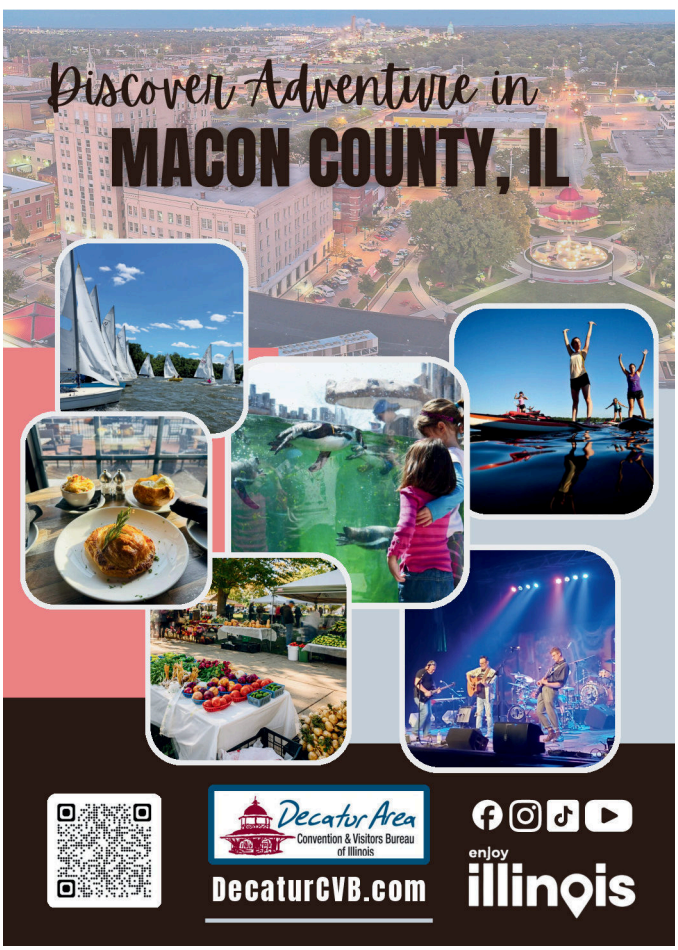




ROUTE 66 CRUISES

Few roads beg you to roll down your window like the Main Street of America. Communities along the road host monthly cruises, complete with live music, food and contests. Here are some to join throughout the summer.

May–August
SUMMER CRUISE IN
Docs Just Off 66, Girard

May–September
PONTIAC CRUISE NIGHTS
Pontiac

May 25
HOP ON THE ROAD: A CELEBRATION OF ROUTE 66
Normal

June 2–August 17
DOWNTOWN PLAINFIELD SUMMER CRUISE NIGHTS
Plainfield

June 20
ROUTE 66 CAR CRUISE EXTRAVAGANZA
Livingston

June 23–24
MAIN STREET OF AMERICA, A ROUTE 66 CENTENNIAL CARAVAN
(Illinois portion)

Mid-July
RUMBLE ON 66
Motorheads, Springfield

August 29
BERWYN ROUTE 66 CAR SHOW
Berwyn

Mid-September
HAMEL ROUTE 66 CAR AND BIKE SHOW
Hamel

drive the Mother Road. The first overnight town, Collinsville, coincides with the World's Largest Catsup Bottle Festival.

August 13–23
ILLINOIS STATE FAIR
Springfield
Bask in the neon glow of classic signs dotting the fairground's Route 66 Experience, a walking tour of the road's highlights.

August 28–29
ILLINOIS BALLOONS OVER 66 WEEKEND
Lincoln
Hot-air balloons hover above festivalgoers enjoying steaks sizzling on the grill while a band plays. The Lincoln Arts Institute hosts an art fair on the square.

September 25–27
INTERNATIONAL ROUTE 66 MOTHER ROAD FESTIVAL
Springfield
Cars practically pirouette over pavement, kicking up smoke, during the festival's burnout contest. Audience enthusiasm decides the winner, but save some vocal energy to cheer on live-music performers during the 25th annual festival.

October 10–11
THE LAST 100 MILES FESTIVAL
Virden to the Chain of Rocks Bridge
Multiday events highlights the last hundred miles of Route 66 in Illinois with town festivals and events.

November 10–11
ILLINOIS ROUTE 66 SCENIC BYWAY AWARDS GALA STATEWIDE CONFERENCE AND BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Springfield
Between shows and presentations about Route 66 history, view relics up close: Route 66 Motorheads Bar and Grill's owner has packed the restaurant with vintage cars, motorcycles, photos and more.



Route 66 Legends Neon Sign Park at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield

PHOTOGRAPHS: (NEON PARK) STARBOARD AND PORT, (WRIGLEY FIELD) ALYSSA SCHUKAR

AMERICA 250

Patriotic concerts, historic exhibits and more in Illinois honor the semiquincentennial.



Wrigley Field, Chicago

All Year
PEORIA RIVERFRONT MUSEUM
Peoria
Ken Burns, guest curator of *The Promise of Liberty* exhibit, will have more than 100 documents, artworks and objects that tell the story of America. Other exhibits include items that changed America, including the 1776 Declaration of Independence, a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

May 9
AMERICA 250 CONCERT
Rockford
The bright plucking of mandolin strings in a concerto inspired by Appalachian bluegrass and the galloping beat of Aaron Copland's "Rodeo" take listeners on a cross-country musical tour.

May 16
ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Palos Heights
The soaring notes of quintessential American composer John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever," among other patriotic tunes, fill the Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College.

June 1–September 30
AMERICA GROWS
Glencoe
This Chicago Botanic Garden exhibition showcases the ways gardens hold a special place in American culture and community. The immersive multimedia displays illustrate American resilience through the self-sufficiency of Colonial kitchen gardens, strength of post-emancipation gardens, ingenuity of wartime victory gardens and more.

June 2–27
AMERICA 250: A MUSICAL JOURNEY
Chicago
The Chicago Symphony Orchestra's monthlong lineup honoring the country's most beloved music starts with jazz and ends with a battle between light and dark—a live performance of *Star Wars: A New Hope's* soundtrack while the movie plays.

June 18–July 4
AMERICA AT 250 CONCERT SERIES
Alto Pass and other nearby locations
Listen to three centuries of American composers as part of The Southern Illinois Music Festival. The series includes five orchestral programs and five patriotic pops concerts. Fireworks cap off the Saturday evening patriotic concerts.

August 29
BICENTENNIAL CORN BOIL
Galena
For 20 years, the local VFW held a legendary corn boil. This year, the tradition returns in honor of the city's 200th birthday. Bring the family; there's plenty of activities and games, food and drink, live music, and more.

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES

America and Route 66 aren't the only icons to celebrate milestones.

March 26
CUBS HOME OPENER
Chicago
Cheer from the stands or step where baseball legends once trod with a tour of the 112-year-old Wrigley Field.

Late April–late October
SIX FLAGS GREAT AMERICA
Gurnee
Celebrate 50 years of heart-pounding thrill rides like the Wrath of Rakshasa, new in 2025, plus family favorites like the Columbia Carousel. In honor of the Golden Jubilee, an all new kids area is opening.

July 4
NAVY PIER
Chicago
Admire the city from the top of the Centennial Wheel to kick off the Pier's 110th anniversary. In conjunction with the country's 250th anniversary, Navy Pier will host a special fireworks presentation.

July 27–September 20
WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE
Springfield
Catch the inaugural season of WPB at Robin Roberts Stadium.

Be a part of the America 250 events.



Dovetail Brewery

Hops on Foot

With eight breweries packed into a walkable 2-mile stretch, Chicago's Malt Row entices craft-beverage fans with its easygoing charm and impressive variety.



Half Acre

Roughly a decade ago, breweries and distilleries began setting down roots in Ravenswood, drawn by the neighborhood's welcoming vibe and its stock of historic industrial buildings with soaring ceilings, ample room for tanks and barrels, and plenty of character. Today, Malt Row offers a flavorful cross-section of the community.

Start your tour just north of Irving Park Road and wander up Ravenswood Avenue to Balmoral. Along your stroll, sip your way through an array of stops, from Chicago's first legal post-Prohibition distillery to a cozy wine-tasting room—and even a taco spot boasting an expansive mezcal menu.

1. DOVETAIL BREWERY
The master brewers focus solely on Continental European styles and traditional methods that tempt your senses. Learn more during a 90-minute tour of the brewery (Saturdays).

2. BEGYLE BREWING
Come for the monthly trivia and bingo, stay for diverse brews, like Free Bird Pale Ale, and a dog-friendly patio.

3. HOP BUTCHER FOR THE WORLD
Hops is the word at this taproom with exposed brick walls and a selection of more than 15 house-made pale ales and double and triple IPAs.

4. HALF ACRE BEER COMPANY
One of the Windy City's largest breweries, Half Acre boasts an expansive beer garden, seasonal food menu and weekly beer flights, plus year-round drafts like the iconic Daisy Cutter.

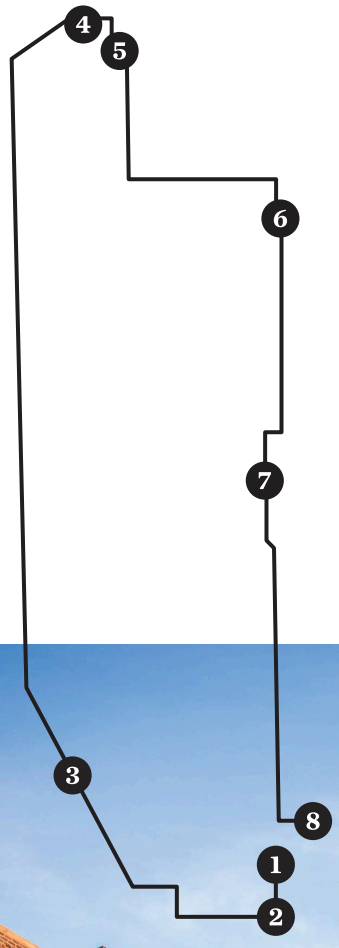
5. SPITEFUL BREWING
Sip the crisp, dry flagship beer, Spiteful IPA, on the patio or head inside this industrial, dog-friendly taproom for a round of darts.

6. IS/WAS BREWING
What a saison-style beer tastes like now is most likely to change the next time you visit, hence the brewery's name.

7. CULTIVATE BY FORBIDDEN ROOT
Chicago's first botanical brewery creates innovative flavors inspired by ingredients such as strawberries and basil. Taste the results in Strawberry Basil Hefeweizen, a fruity wheat beer.

8. DEMO BREWING COMPANY
This husband-and-wife team loves to experiment, which is a perfect fit for their nano brewery with an ever-changing tap list.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (DOVETAIL) STEPH BYCE, (HALF ACRE) COURTESY OF HALF ACRE, (KOVAL) COURTESY OF KOVAL DISTILLERY, (IS/WAS) JOSEPH GUZZO, (RAVENSWOOD ON TAP) CORY DEWALD



Three More to Try

Koval Distillery
The city's first distillery to open since the mid-1800s, Koval uses a grain-to-bottle approach by sourcing ingredients for its whiskey, gin and specialty spirits from trusted farmers.

Vin312 Winery
Look for the red door behind Cultivate by Forbidden Root. What began in the owner's basement has grown into a tasting room with popular monthly events like jazz and salsa nights.

Rojo Gusano
Handmade corn tortillas and salsas star on the menu, along with mezcal made from 100 percent agave. On the weekend, pop in for brunch or dine on the patio (summer only).



Koval Distillery


Is/Was Brewing



EAT • PLAY • STAY

CRAFT BEER & MUSIC FEST

Every July, Ravenswood on Tap hosts a two-day festival with live music, tasty street food and of course, craft beer and cocktails.

Pick Up Pickleball

A sport with a barrier to entry as low as the net height, pickleball combines elements of tennis, badminton and Ping-Pong—and has gained itself quite the following in Illinois.



History

Eager to keep his kids entertained in 1965 but unable to find a full set of badminton rackets at his home outside Seattle, Joel Pritchard got creative. He swapped in Ping-Pong paddles and a bouncy plastic ball, lowered the badminton net and, together with friends and family, invented the game known today as pickleball.

Roundup of Outdoor Courts

Public parks incorporate free, permanent arenas around the state for pickleball showdowns.

Swing by the nine courts in Bloomington's Rollingbrook Park, Duncan Park's six in Springfield, or the eight at Champaign's Centennial Park. Averse to waiting? The 25 courts at Plummer Family Park in Edwardsville make lines unlikely. Warm up on the trail near the four courts in Peoria's Charter Oak Park, and serve after sunset at the 16 spotlit spaces in Chicago's Grant Park.



5 Reasons to Play

Erin L'hommedieu-Neavor recommends pickleball to anyone who travels often. "Wherever I visit, I can find a court. And if you walk up by yourself with your paddle, people are generally welcoming," the director of community relations for the Central Illinois Pickleball Club says. She bounced a few other reasons to play our way:

1. The area of play is smaller than a tennis court, so it's accessible to competitors of a wide range of fitness levels.
2. Courts have popped up all over Illinois. To keep up with demand, various public park districts are transitioning from tennis to pickleball courts and building exclusive pickleball courts.
3. The essential gear is affordable and easy to acquire: paddle, ball, court shoes and protective eyewear.
4. It's a more fun cardio workout than a hotel's treadmill.
5. Open play sessions let you compete against many soon-to-be vacation friends.

STORY: ANGELA UFHEIL. PHOTOGRAPHS: (ARCHIVE) MAGNOLIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, (EQUIPMENT) ADOBESTOCK

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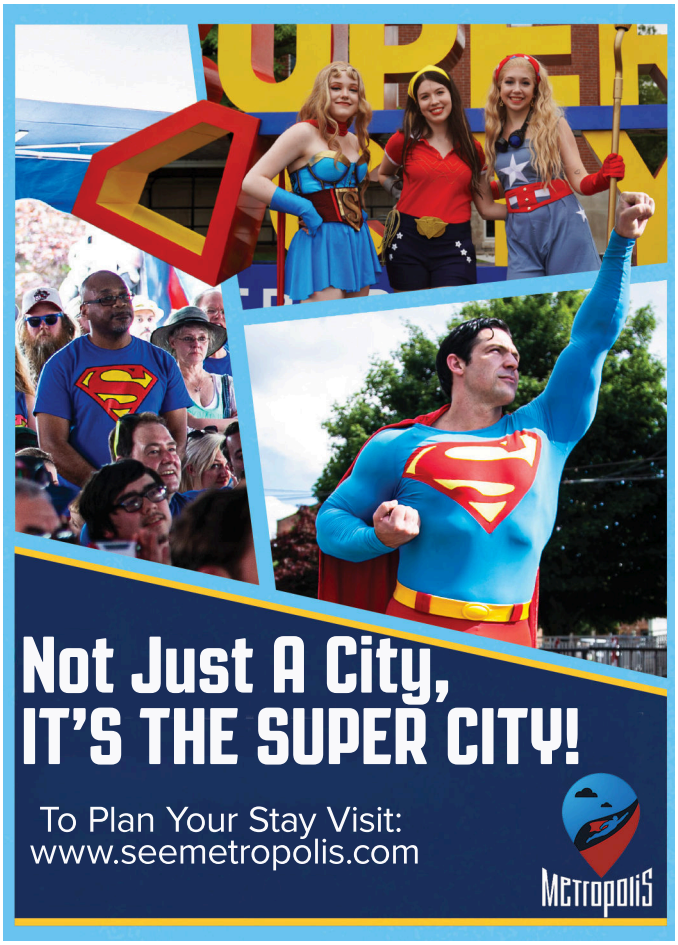

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Metropolis

Pier-fect Getaway

As Navy Pier marks its 110th anniversary this summer, the Chicago landmark is just as family-friendly, appealing and cutting edge as ever.



THEN

Much has changed since Navy Pier opened July 1916, but some key things remain. The pier was built on 20,000 logs driven into the lake bed to support the structure. The same pilings remain more than a century later, along with enhancements to ensure structural integrity.

↘

NOW "The Centennial Wheel is the perfect way to see the city," says Navy Pier Vice President of Advancement Elizabeth Halajian about the nearly 200-foot-high attraction. "And now we have Flyover in Chicago, a 4D experience that sends guests swooping through skyscraper canyons and soaring to sights no one ever sees, in a fully immersive exploration of our incredible city and the iconic places, fascinating people and unbreakable spirit that make it great."

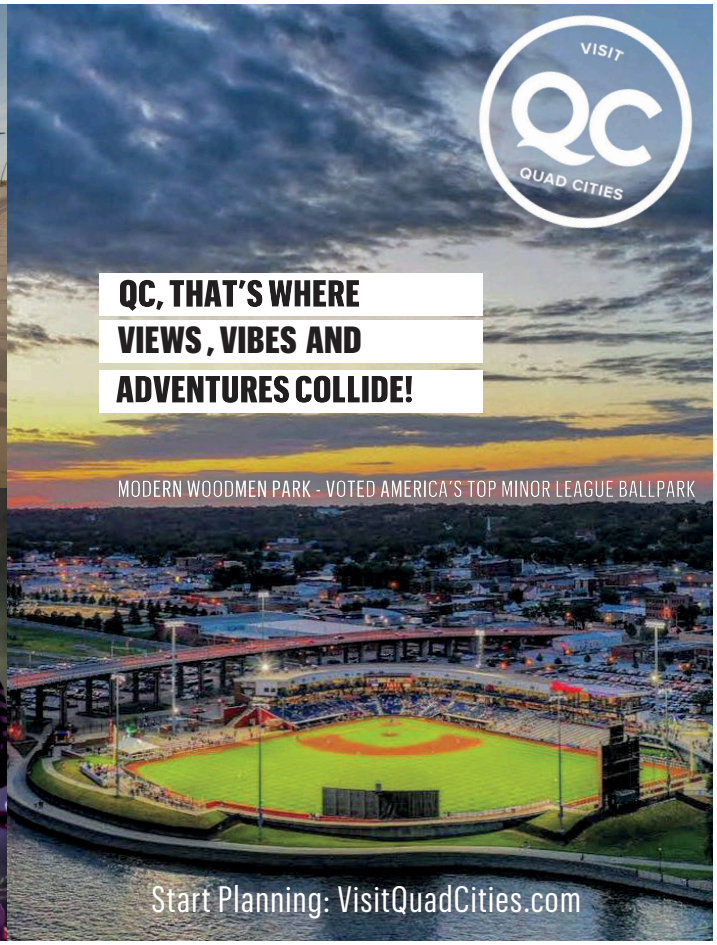
Navy Pier visitors can take in a play or musical performed by the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, a free fireworks show on Wednesdays and Saturdays (Memorial Day to Labor Day), or one of the Live on the Lake! free summer concerts. Bike and Roll Chicago rents pedal bikes, e-bikes and quad bikes for exploring the Pier on a car-free paved trail and adjoining 18 miles of the Lakefront Trail, while Tall Ship *Windy* offers seasonal excursions.

The 233-room Sable at Navy Pier, a boutique Hilton hotel, has maritime ties as well. It's named after the aircraft carrier *USS Sable,* where former President George H.W. Bush trained during WWII when Navy Pier was used as a naval training facility.

STORY: ANDREA MINARCEK JESSUP. PHOTOGRAPHS: (THEN) CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM IMAGES; (NOW) IOT







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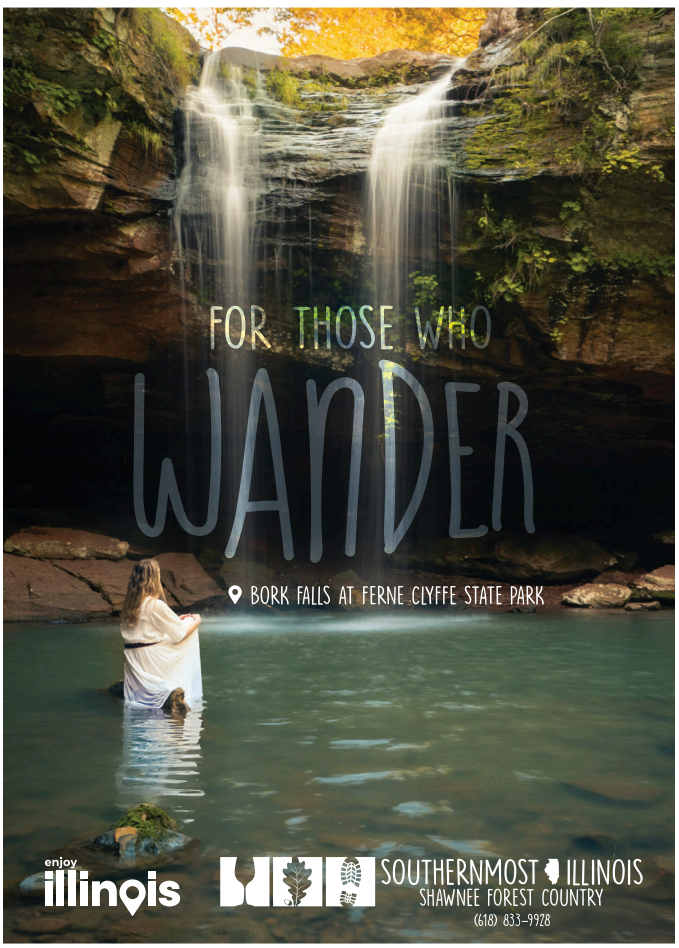




Garden of the Gods Recreation Area, Herod

SWING OF THINGS
Relax in the Garden of the Gods within Shawnee National Forest.

GOING YOUR PARK WAY

Pick a Path

Find a fresh start with getaways that meander through Illinois' state parks. Choose an active northern route or a southern itinerary that winds through a national forest.

WRITER BRIANNE SANCHEZ

PHOTOGRAPHS: IOT

Buffalo Rock State Park, Ottawa

NORTHERN TIER, FOUR DAYS, 157 MILES

TRIP #1

Play in the Parks

Access thousands of acres of public land across postcard-worthy stops without ever pitching a tent—unless you want to!

PANORAMIC VIEWS
From the Lookout Point observation deck, spot wildlife soaring over the Mississippi River.



Mississippi Palisades State Park, Savanna

PHOTOGRAPHS: (MISSISSIPPI PALISADES) STARBOARD AND PORT. (WHITE PINES) REELCREATIVE. (*PRIDE OF OREGON*) JASON DONNELLY. (TIMBER LAKE RESORT) COURTESY OF TIMBER LAKE RESORT



White Pines Lodge, Mt. Morris



The Pride of Oregon, *Oregon*



↑
ALL ABOARD
Cruise the Rock River on a 102-foot paddlewheel boat.

DAY 1

Start with bird's-eye views from Mississippi Palisades State Park's four scenic overlooks. Massive cliffs and formations along the Mississippi and Apple rivers provide a rich habitat for raptors like bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, ospreys and kestrels. The 2,500-acre park features 15 miles of hiking trails, plus vertical routes for climbers at Twin Sisters, Indian Head, and the Sentinel.

OVERNIGHT In addition to water with plentiful bass and bluegill, Timber Lake Resort and Campground in Mt. Carroll is well stocked with theme weekends, rock concerts and amenities like the poolside margarita bar. Choose from fully equipped cabins, RV sites or rustic tents, all with Wi-Fi access. Across the road, the 371-seat Timber Lake Playhouse stages professional productions (May 29–August 30).

DAY 2

Continue east to the Rock River Hills region, unpacking lunch at Valley View Picnic Area within Castle Rock State Park in Oregon. It's one of the few places in Illinois to find exposed St. Peter sandstone, and home to dozens of fern species. Then, double back to White Pines Forest State Park in Mt. Morris. Fording Pine Creek gets your wheels wet, but you're rewarded with verdant views of moss-covered bluffs. Keep your eyes peeled for fleeting spring blossoms like trout lily and hepatica.

OVERNIGHT Step back in time when you stay at the White Pines log cabins in Mt. Morris. Originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, renovations enhanced these landmarks by preserving character while adding modern conveniences such as air-conditioning, TVs and mini fridges. Catch a show at the Playhouse Theater and wake up hungry for homestyle cooking at The Lodge restaurant.



Timber Lake Resort, Mt. Carroll

DAYS 3–4

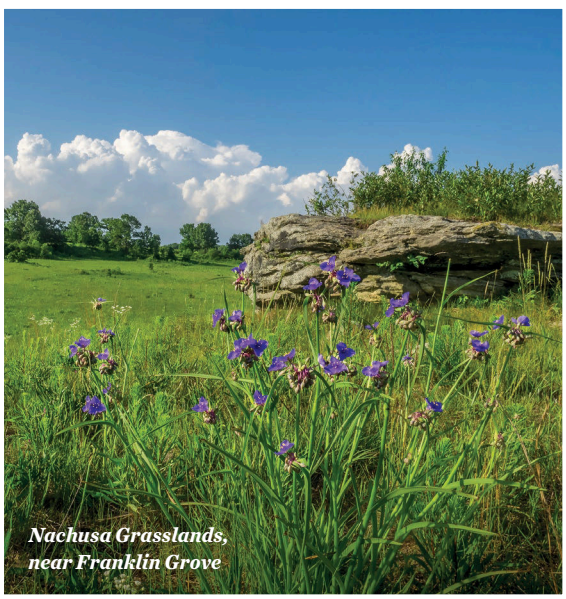
Linger in LaSalle County, where seasonal waterfalls and cool canyons attract visitors to a trio of state parks within 10 miles of one another along the Illinois River. Matthew Klein, cofounder of the organization Starved Rock Hikers, recommends visiting less-frequented trails at the east end of Starved Rock State Park. His favorite spot is Council Overhang, a large sandstone cavern. Feet beat? Rent an e-bike at Buffalo Rock State Park near Ottawa to zip along the I&M Canal State Trail. In order to snap stunning waterfall photos in Matthiessen State Park, just follow the sound of rushing water from the parking lot to nearby Lake Falls. Back at Starved Rock, board a themed trolley tour or a relaxing sunset cruise, both departing from the Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center.



The Veranda at Starved Rock Lodge, Oglesby

OVERNIGHT Toast to a memorable trip with a sunset meal at The Veranda, a lodge diner, or by adding a celebratory basket to your Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center reservation. Sweet dreams follow bubbly, whether you're staying in a cabin or a room in the historic lodge. (Check their website for package details.)

↑ **ON STAGE** *Kick back and listen to live music on select Friday and Saturday nights.*



Nachusa Grasslands, near Franklin Grove

HOME ON THE RANGE

DAY 3 DETOUR

Rare and endangered plants and wildlife flourish at Nachusa Grasslands, a 4,100-acre Nature Conservancy preserve open from dawn to dusk in Franklin Grove (20 minutes south of Oregon). Bison, Blanding's turtles and regal fritillary butterflies benefit from The Nature Conservancy's ongoing ecosystem restoration efforts.

Bring binoculars and venture beyond the visitors center walking loop via five marked trails. Nachusa Grasslands hosts occasional guided hikes through remnant prairie, woodlands and wetlands, as well as free bison tours Saturdays and Sundays, May–October.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (VERANDA) STARVED ROCK LODGE AND CONFERENCE CENTER; (NACHUSA GRASSLANDS) CHARLES LARRY; (GIANT CITY STATE PARK) IOT



SOUTHERN TIER, FOUR DAYS, 81 MILES

TRIP #2

Rock Out in the Park

Scramble over impressive stone features and watch for reptiles on this trip along the hilly highways and winding roads of Shawnee National Forest.

Giant City State Park, Makanda

DAY 1

Begin your journey on the western edge at Giant City State Park in Makanda, where one-hour guided horseback trail rides depart from the stables three times a day. For those on foot, spring visits offer scenic advantages. Ephemeral waterfalls pop up after rain showers, and bright blossoms dot Trillium Trail. Natural Resources Coordinator Jennifer Randolph-Bollinger considers this rugged 2-mile loop a premier wildflower trail in the region. "Usually by mid-April, we're in full, glorious bloom," she says. Lush, green vegetation fills out the woodlands by summer. On the 1-mile Giant City Nature Trail, visitors thread through skyscraper-like sandstone formations that house small creatures in crevices.

OVERNIGHT After adventuring, recover with reservations at the historic Giant City Lodge and Restaurant, known for its all-you-can-eat fried-chicken dinners. Thirty-four comfortable cabins surround the Civilian Conservation Corps-era lodge, outdoor pool and lookout tower. Swing by "the mushroom rock" Devil's Standtable and interpretive displays at Giant City Visitor Center before you leave the area.

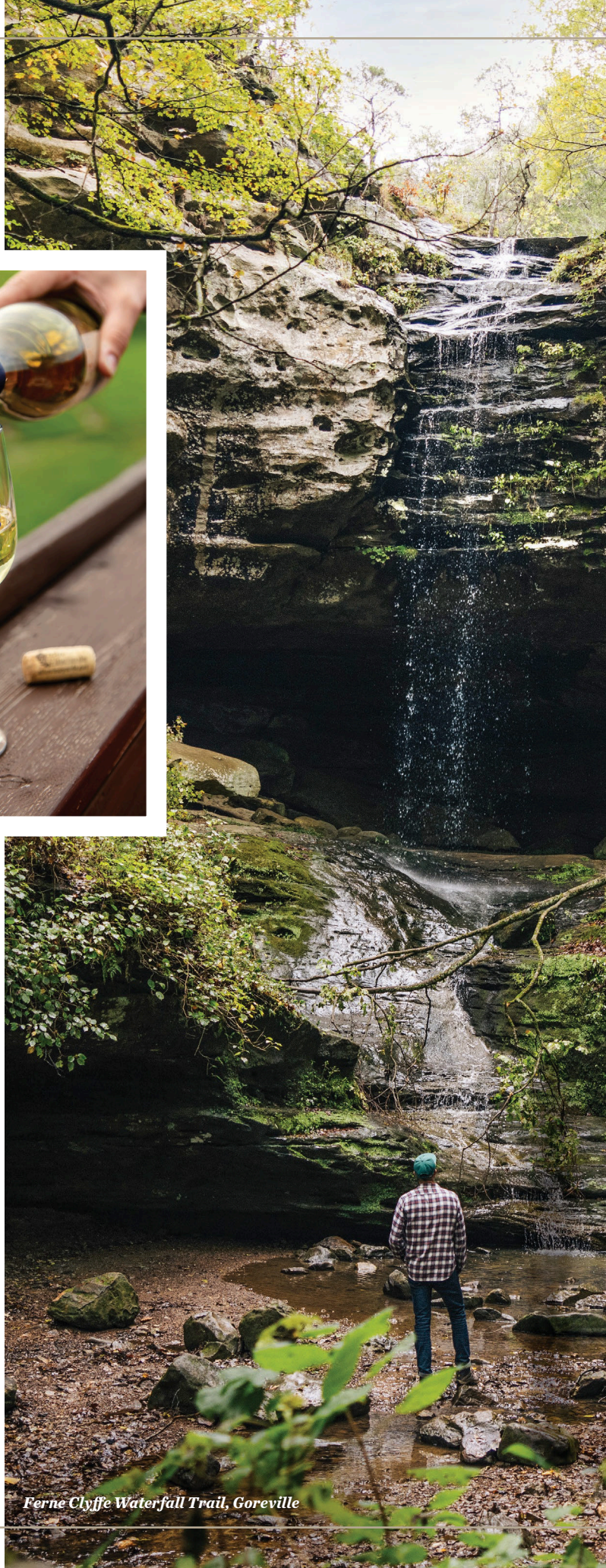


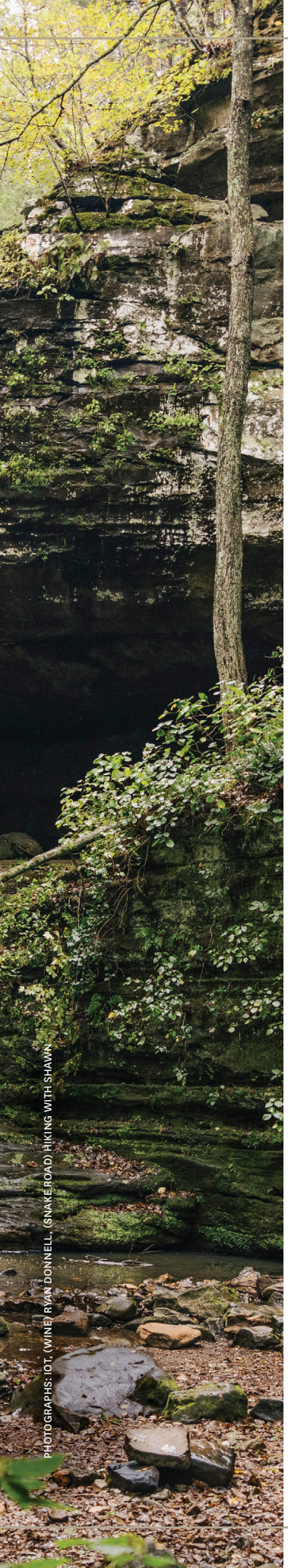
Alto Vineyards, Alto Pass

ON THE TRAIL

WINE NOT?

Midway between Giant City State Park and Snake Road, Alto Pass is a hub on the 45-mile, 11-stop Shawnee Hills Wine Trail. Alto Vineyards and Von Jakob Winery and Brewery span a five-minute stretch. Pay a small tasting fee at each for locally produced samples.


Ferne Clyffe Waterfall Trail, Goreville



PHOTOGRAPHS: (OT, (WINE) RYAN DONNELL, (SNAKE ROAD) HIKING WITH SHAWN

DAY 2

Before arriving in Goreville, study the map of Ferne Clyffe State Park to determine your preferred pathways among 11 varied trails. If it's hot outside, cool off behind the flow on Bork's Waterfall Trail. Day-trippers delight in an easy, half-mile hike to the 60-foot falls. Extending through to Cedar Bluff links routes for a 10-mile challenge. Climbers take Rebman Trail to a designated rappelling area, where trad, sport and toprope fans approach dozens of named and graded routes. At sunset, follow twinkling fireflies into Round Bluff Nature Preserve, just past Lake View Shelter, to marvel at its enchanting ecosystem.

OVERNIGHT Family vacations on Lake of Egypt in Goreville inspired Kris and Matt Shellabarger to open Red Roof Retreats. This cluster of one-of-a-kind rental properties and a tiny gift shop serves visitors seeking a lakeshore getaway. Steep wooden stairs lead to a shared dock, where paddleboards and other water toys await.



Timber Ridge Outpost, Elizabethtown

DAY 3–4

Relax into the trip's back half with a sunset visit to Garden of the Gods Recreation Area near Herod. Panoramic views make the Observation Trail the most popular hike in the Shawnee National Forest. This quarter-mile interpretive trail features steep grades leading to bluff-top vistas. Stay cautious along the cliffs as you snap photos with Camel Rock, Table Rock and Devil's Smokestack as your backdrop. Rim Rock National Recreation Trail is also a 10-minute drive from Timber Ridge Outpost, with an accessible upper segment and a lower portion that leads to Ox-Lot Cave. The overhang was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

OVERNIGHT An online search of "tree house resorts for sale" brought Andrew Hoffman and his extended family to Southern Illinois from Alaska in 2022. Now co-owners of Timber Ridge Outpost and Cabins, they welcome visitors to treetop and cabin lodgings. The Outpost offers Bigfoot souvenirs, ice cream and a small hot food selection.

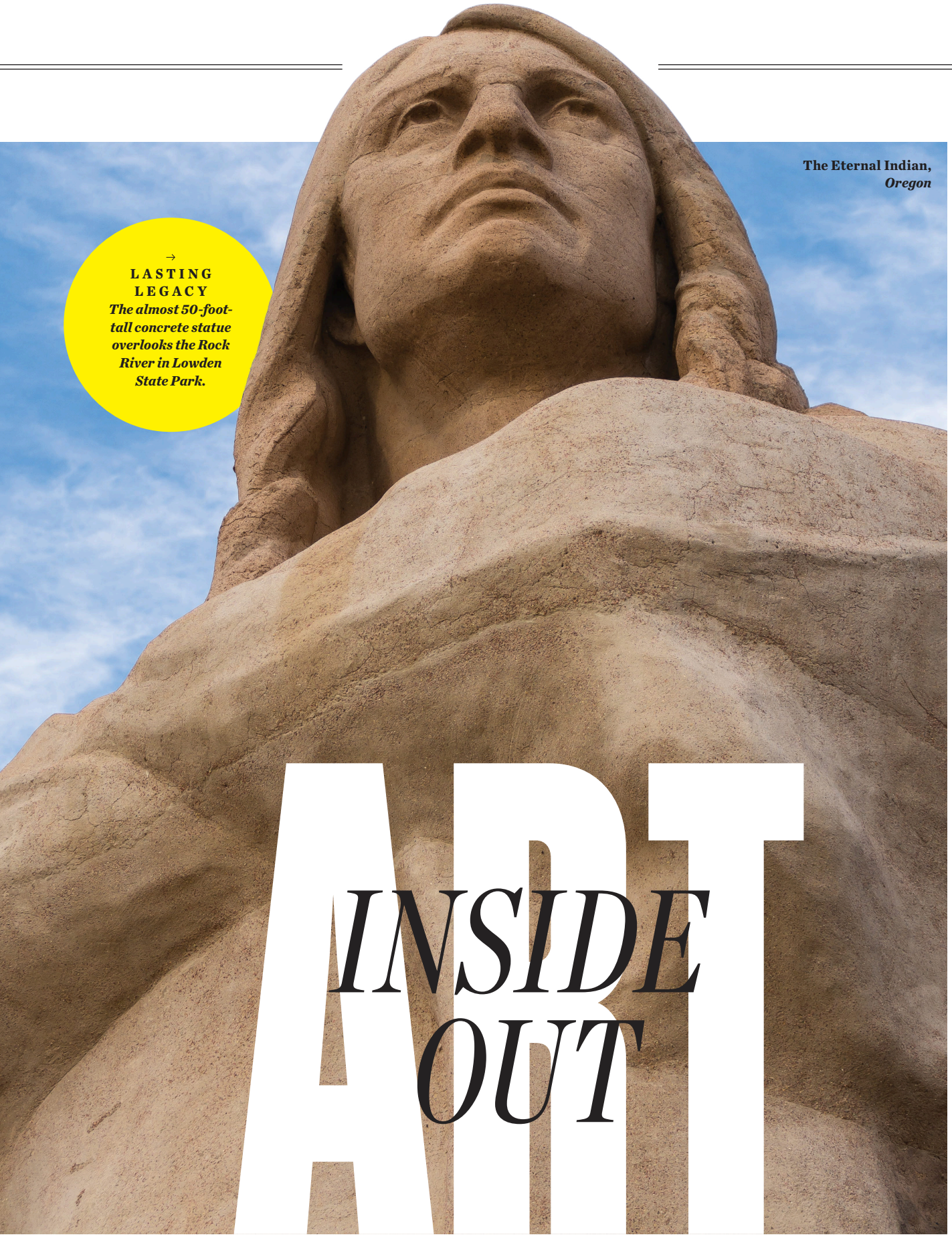


Snake Road, LaRue-Pine Hills

'TIS THE SEASON

SNAKES ON A ROAD

West of Alto Pass at LaRue-Pine Hills, the spring reptile migration overtakes a closed-off segment locals call Snake Road. Bring binoculars to safely spot slithering cottonmouths and other species swapping rocky hibernation spots for wetland feeding grounds. Hobby herpetologists also delight to hear frog and toad mating calls fill the air.



→
LASTING LEGACY
The almost 50-foot-tall concrete statue overlooks the Rock River in Lowden State Park.

The Eternal Indian, ***Oregon***

INSIDE OUT ART

PHOTOGRAPHS: (THE ETERNAL INDIAN) ADOBE STOCK/EJ RODRIQUEZ, (CROSS) ADOBE STOCK/SHERI ARMSTRONG, (SCULPTURE PARK) COURTESY OF WEST STREET SCULPTURE PARK

Discover art in unexpected places—tucked away in a park, incorporated into a garden or prominently displayed along a Main Street. These small towns, each with a unique vibe, welcome you to embrace the creativity found both inside and out. **WRITER** KRISTIN HAGENSON



The Cross at the Crossroads, Effingham



West Street Sculpture Park, Galena

EFFINGHAM

This vibrant, arts-friendly community sits at the interchange of interstates 57 and 70, where you'll find The Cross at the Crossroads, a soaring 198-foot-tall memorial. Head downtown, where every year, about 25 new pieces of art are selected for Sculptures on the Avenues, part of a self-guided walking tour. Another self-guided tour takes visitors through the Effingham Art Guild galleries found at the library, Effingham County Museum and Effingham Performance Center.

GALENA

While this former iron ore river-port town turns 200 this year, it has retained much of its elegant 19th-century architecture. More than 125 independent restaurants, boutiques and galleries line downtown. Finishing Touches of Galena showcases original paintings and jewelry from regional artists. Just outside of downtown, find artist John Martinson's steel sculptures at West Street Sculpture Park. Follow paths to discover 50 works, both large and small, across 2 wooded acres.

←
WALK IN THE PARK
Pick up a map to discover a secret path and visit the artist studio and shop near the parking lot.

GRAFTON

At the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers sits this town of less than 700 people. The population reached its peak of 10,000 during the 1850s, when limestone was quarried from the surrounding bluffs for buildings like the one that now houses the Grafton Art Gallery. The space features works from more than 40 local and regional artists with an emphasis on being a place of connection, community and creativity. A block away, kids clamber on a giant turtle, frog and catfish at Lighthouse Park along the Mississippi.

MAKANDA

In the 1970s, artists like Dave Dardis moved into this former railroad hub surrounded by the natural beauty of the Shawnee National Forest. Dardis helped revitalize the Boardwalk, a strip of shops dating to the late 19th century. Rainmaker Arts and Entertainment sells his handmade water fountains and jewelry—and serves as a portal to a magical outdoor garden behind the shop. Follow twisting, sometimes mazelike, paths to discover whimsical sculptures, architectural salvage and a peaceful koi pond.

OREGON

An impressive, almost 50-foot-tall concrete statue, *The Eternal Indian* (also known as the Black Hawk Statue), gazes from the bluffs above the Rock River just outside of town. It's a stunning creation by sculptor Lorado Taft, who founded the Eagle's Nest Art Colony in 1898. Follow the Sculpture Trail to see his statue and 18 additional works of art, or head downtown to the Coliseum Museum, which houses almost 1,600 pieces, including pottery, glassware and wood carvings.



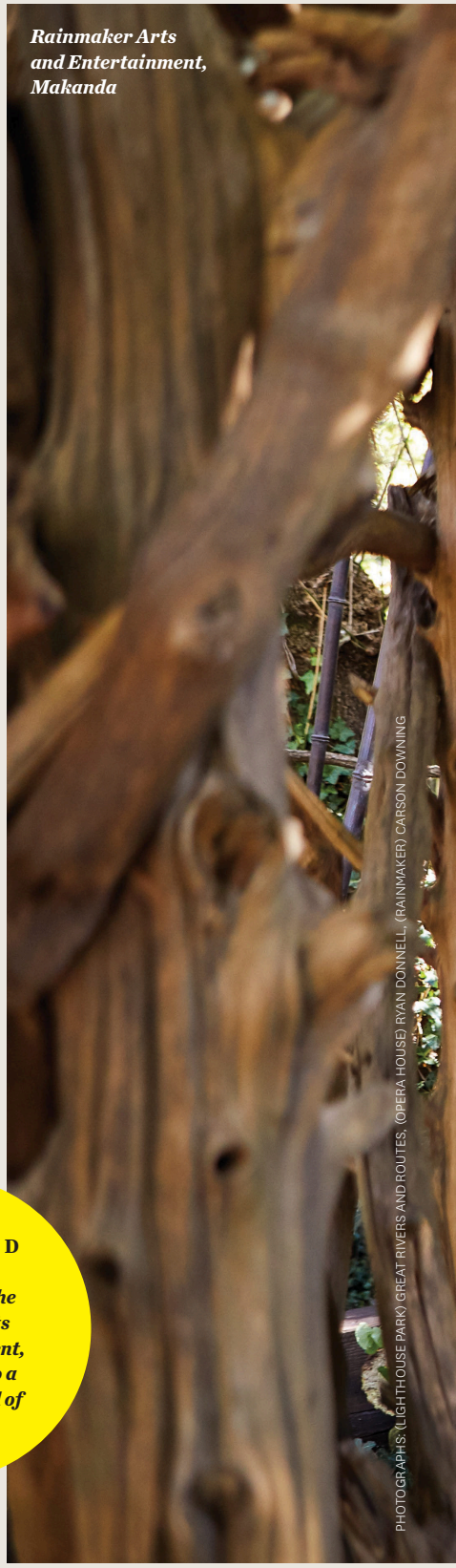
Lighthouse Park, Grafton



Woodstock Opera House, Woodstock

WOODSTOCK

With an iconic town square and ornate 19th-century Victorian architecture, Woodstock is possibly best known as the backdrop for Bill Murray's 1993 movie *Groundhog Day*. The town installed a permanent sculpture, *Whorled,* by Bobby Joe Scribner, that reflects the city's appreciation for public art on the main roundabout. Every month, the 1889 Woodstock Opera House showcases a new exhibit. Upcoming themes include nature photography and watercolor painting.



Rainmaker Arts and Entertainment, Makanda

→ **ENCHANTED GARDEN**

When visiting the Rainmaker Arts and Entertainment, step outside into a wonderful world of make believe.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (LIGHTHOUSE PARK) GREAT RIVERS AND ROUTES; (OPERA HOUSE) RYAN DONNELL; (RAINMAKER) CARSON DOWNING


USE CAUTION
IN GARDEN



Cahokia Mounds World Heritage Site, Collinsville

A MATTER OF TIME

July 4 marks America's 250th anniversary of independence. In honor of the country's semiquincentennial, explore a dozen historically significant destinations that helped shape the Land of Lincoln.

WRITER KRISTIN HAGENSON



800–1400 A.D.

Outside of Mexico, the largest pre-Columbian settlement in North America exists near Collinsville. The **Cahokia Mounds World Heritage Site** culture was in existence for almost 1,000 years as of the signing of the Declaration, and the descendants still here today are represented by multiple tribes.



1778

Local townspeople celebrated their independence from Britain by ringing a brass bell on July 4 when Virginia troops captured Kaskaskia during the Revolutionary War. The **Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial** later became known as the Liberty Bell of the West.

1803

Lewis and Clark spent two days at the now **Fort Massac State Park** in Metropolis. While there, they recruited an interpreter and prepped for their winter encampment at Camp Dubois (now the **Lewis and Clark State Historic Site** in Hartford). This modern interpretive center tells the story of the Corps of Discovery, which was Thomas Jefferson's vision of liberty and expansion after 1776.

1837

A mob murdered newspaper editor Elijah P. Lovejoy, an advocate for free speech and the abolition of slavery, in Alton. The **Lovejoy State Memorial** stands near his grave at the Alton City Cemetery. About 65 miles north in Jacksonville, **Woodlawn Farm** operated as an Underground Railroad site. The now living-history museum is open for tours (May to September) with programs about freedom and inclusion.

1838

The U.S. Army forced thousands of Southeastern Native Americans to relocate to reservations in Oklahoma. Following a rugged trek through Southern Illinois, some members of the Cherokee, Creek and Chickasaw nations were trapped at makeshift winter camps south of the state forest. A harsh winter and lack of food caused thousands to die. To mark this tragic event, the forest in Jonesboro was renamed **Trail of Tears State Forest.** Historic sites like this serve as a reminder of the gap between the Declaration of Independence's promises and the U.S. policy toward Indigenous peoples.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (CAHOKIA) CARSON DOWNING, (KASKASKIA BELL) CHARLENE NOTGRASS, (LOVEJOY) GREAT RIVERS AND ROUTES TOURISM BUREAU, (STATE CAPITOL) RYAN DONNELL, (OBAMA) GETTY



250 AMERICA ILLINOIS

Commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

1858 Speaking at the Republican State Convention, senatorial candidate Abraham Lincoln gave his "House Divided" speech on June 16 at the now **Old State Capitol State Historic Site** in Springfield. He declared his belief that the U.S. could not remain half slave and half free, and that the trend was toward legalizing slavery. The issue eventually led to the Civil War.

1879 Frances Willard was elected president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Under her direction, the WCTU became the largest women's organization in the U.S. and tackled social reform issues beyond temperance, including women's suffrage, labor and prison reform, and age of consent. Learn more at the WCTU's headquarters, the **Frances Willard House Museum** in Evanston. Forty years later, Illinois became one of the first states to ratify the 19th Amendment.

1886 A national campaign for an eight-hour workday brought about worker strikes and demonstrations throughout the U.S. Following an incident in Chicago that resulted in the deaths of unarmed striking workers, supporters gathered for a public meeting at Haymarket Square. A bomb was thrown into the crowd, and police responded with gunfire. More than 10 people were killed and dozens more wounded. Afterward, event organizers, speakers and others with unpopular political views were arrested, tried and some sentenced to death. Chicago's **Haymarket Memorial** invites people to reflect on free speech, labor and assembly rights.

1889 Cofounder of Chicago's Hull House, Jane Addams was more than just an advocate for the poor. She worked for women's suffrage, peace and immigrant rights, broadening liberty and equality to those groups left out in 1776. Free and open to the public, the **Jane Addams Hull-House Museum** offers public tours twice a week. Admirers seeking reflection on her legacy can visit the **Jane Addams Burial Site** in the Cedarville Cemetery (120 miles northwest of Chicago).

1894 Labor Day is just one of the results of the Pullman Strike, which pitted labor against the government. In Chicago, workers led a strike against the Pullman Palace Car Company. The strike affected much of the U.S. railways and the delivery of mail. Federal troops under the guise of a court injunction were sent to the Windy City to end the strike. Learn how the Pullman Strike reshaped American labor relations at the **Pullman National Historical Park** in Chicago.

1936 Best known as Mother Jones, Mary Harris Jones was a labor organizer who fought for better conditions for mine workers and championed child labor reforms in labor struggles and liberty in the workplace. Miners built the **Mother Jones Monument** at her burial site in the Union Miners Cemetery in Mt. Olive, alongside miners who died in the 1898 Battle of Virden.



2007 "This campaign can't only be about me," said Barack Obama to a crowd of 17,000 as he stood on the steps of the **Old State Capitol State Historic Site** in Springfield, announcing his campaign for presidency. Obama became the first African American U.S. president (2009–2017).

CHICAGO'S

RIVERFRONT *REVIVAL*

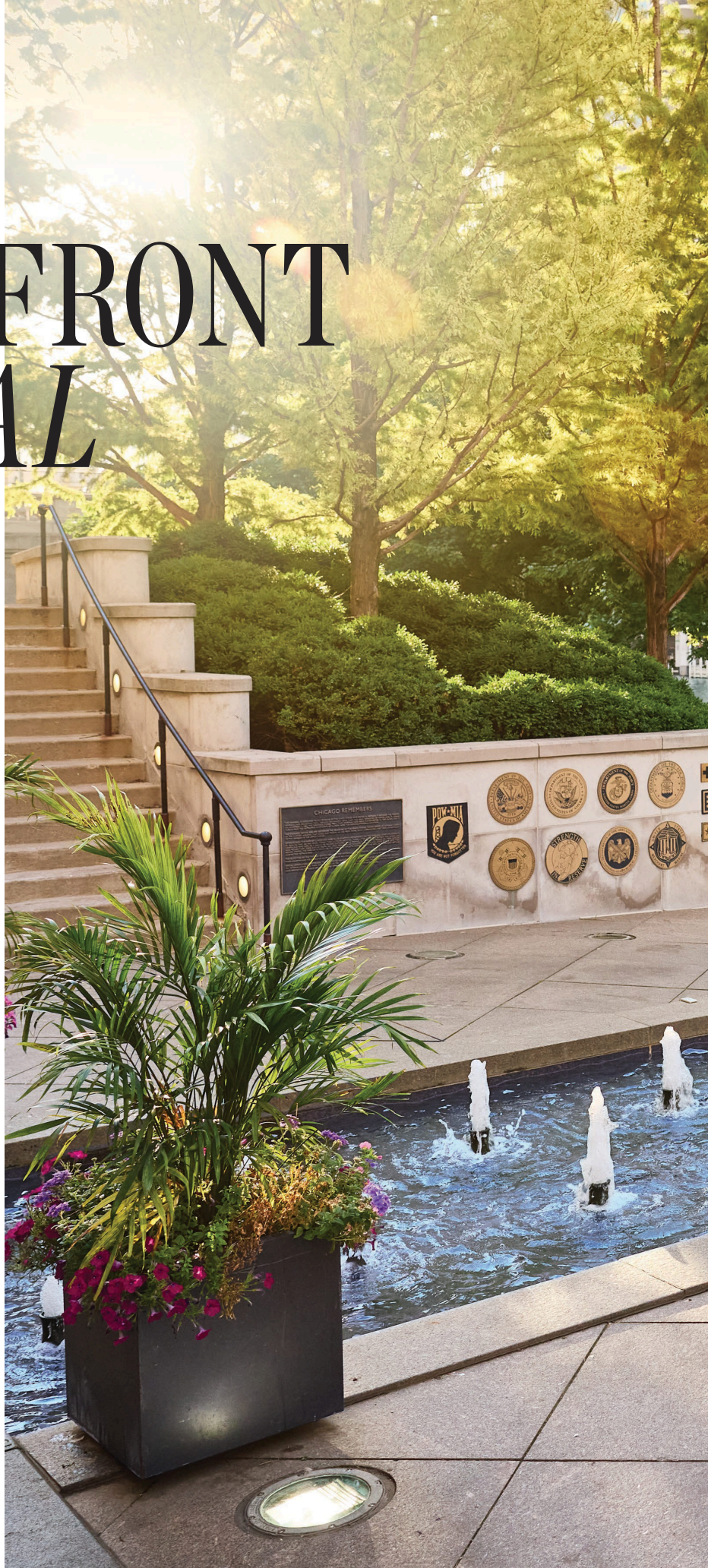
The Chicago River has anchored many eras of urban change over the past 150 years. Decades of restoration work and investment have turned it into a photogenic destination for play, culture and history.

WRITER TREE MEINCH

Long before Wrigley Field, Navy Pier and the Willis Tower skyscraper, a meandering prairie stream rippled through this stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline. Without the waterway—and the commerce it facilitated—the thriving Windy City may have never sprouted here. "This river served as the conduit into the expanding United States," says John Quail, a director with Friends of the Chicago River.

Some of the Chicago River's past expressions were bright and shiny. Others cast dark shadows, like the era of meatpacking plants discarding waste into the water. During the early 1900s, a system of canals and locks literally reversed the river's flow away from Lake Michigan. This altered flow remains the norm today, as does strategic clean-up and conservation initiatives radically reviving the river.

In its latest form, the Chicago River is an epicenter for aquatic creatures, Chicago residents and all types of water-loving visitors. Revitalization efforts, notably the vibrant 1.25-mile Chicago Riverwalk, have generated a hub for food and drink, paddling and boating, lodging, and soaking up some of the city's most iconic urban scenery.





RIVERWALK REMEMBRANCE
Visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the lower level near Wacker Drive and State Street.

PHOTOGRAPH: STARBOARD AND PORT



1



2

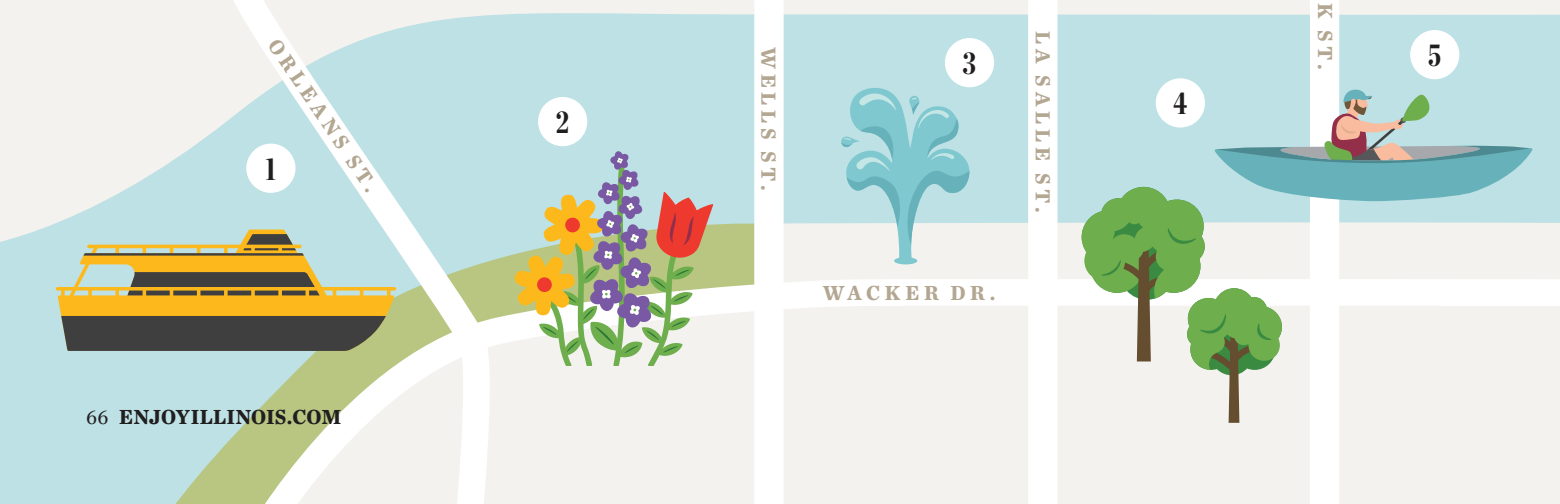


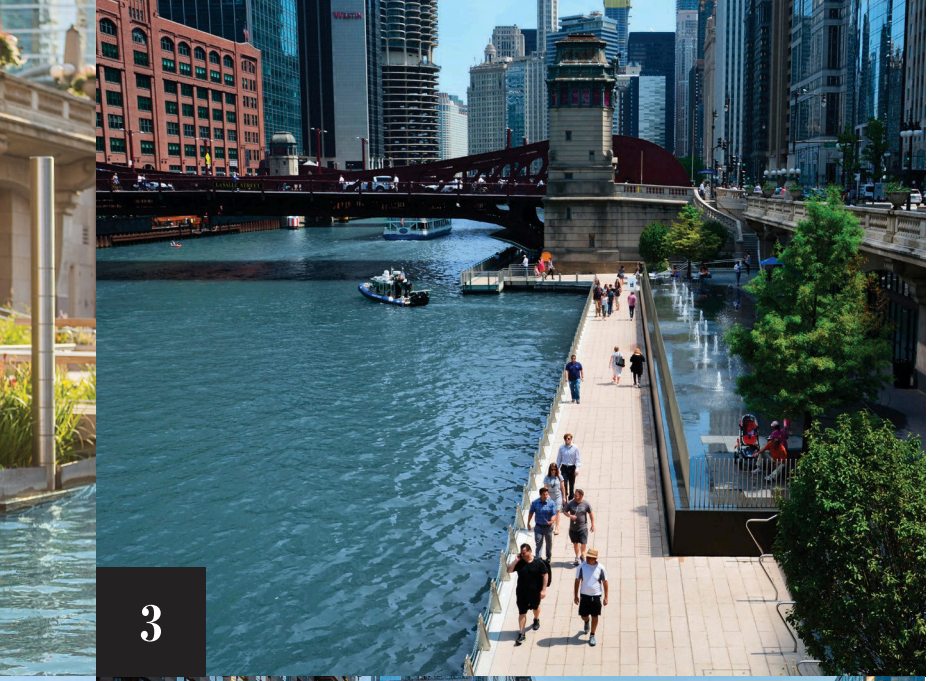
4



5

Wander the Riverwalk





3



6



STATE ST.

DEARBORN ST.

6

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL



WALK THIS WAY

The 1.25-mile Riverwalk has six distinct block-long sections. Use the map above as a guide to see them all.

ILLUSTRATIONS: MATT ZACK, (BLUE SHIP) ADOBE STOCK. PHOTOGRAPHS: BOB STEFKO, (3 AND 6) ALAMY

1. THE CONFLUENCE
Three Chicago River branches converge in the scenic meeting point with a Great Lawn and accessible walkways.

2. THE JETTY
Learn river ecology and water monitoring basics via the floating wetland gardens featuring native plants.

3. THE WATER PLAZA
Families with children can't resist the riverside zero-depth fountain for splashing and cooling in the midday sun.

4. THE RIVER THEATER
An expansive sculptural staircase incorporates trees for shade and ramps for accessibility, inviting everyone to kick back for quiet reflection.

5. THE COVE
Concrete benches and slabs resemble beach features and natural landscapes in this recreational nook for lounging and paddling.

6. MARINA PLAZA
Stairs descend nearly to the water throughout this vibrant Riverwalk hub for luxury food and drink as well as private boat access.

Green Renaissance

Bubbly Creek, the nickname for the South Fork of the South Branch of the Chicago River between the Bridgeport and McKinley Park neighborhoods, got its label nearly 100 years ago from a disturbing phenomenon caused by stockyard waste decomposing below the surface. Today, that history is hard to fathom, due to efforts from Friends of the Chicago River and other conservation groups who have improved water quality and conservation. "It's a great spot to talk about reclaiming the river," John Quail says. Bubbly Creek now hosts rowing teams, The Bridgeport Art Center, and Canal Origins Park. The city is partnering with Shedd Aquarium and others to restore natural wetlands and enhance wildlife habitat for beavers, fish and birds.

CHICAGO'S LANDSCAPE OF SKYSCRAPER CANYONS, ELABORATE SCULPTURES AND LAKEFRONT PARKS IGNITES WHEN YOU TAKE IT IN ALONG THE WATER—OR FLOATING ON TOP OF IT.

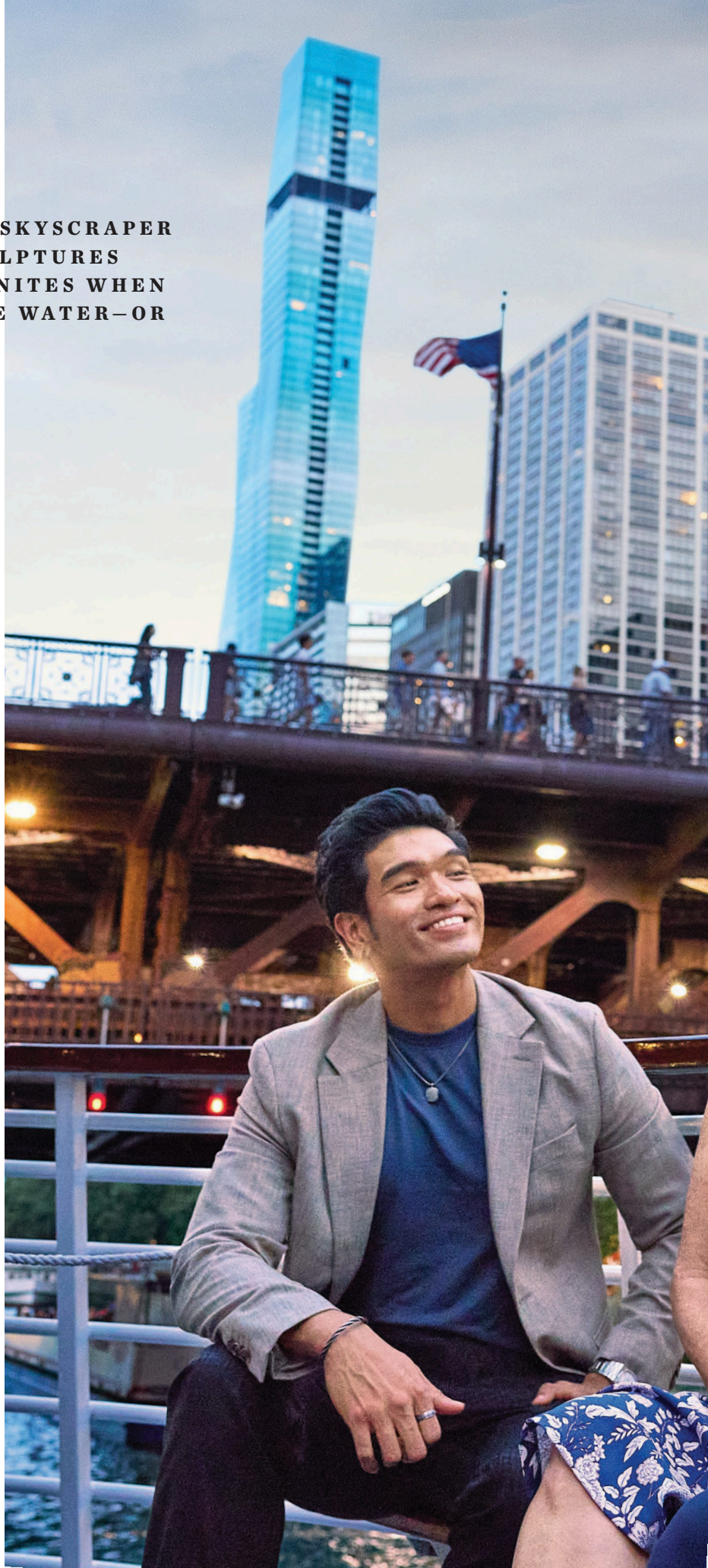
ON WATER Aboard one of the many architectural tour boats, expert guides layer history and factoids over the photogenic scenery. "Visitors regularly say the best $45 they spent in Chicago is going on one of the boat tours," John Quail says.

Family-owned Wendella Tours and Cruises launched the first architectural boat tour in 1935. Ninety years later, the company offers a full menu of specialized tours, along with Chicago River Boat Architecture, the Chicago Architecture Center and other operators showcasing the dazzling skyline and water.

Alternatively, with a simple $10 one-way ticket between any two dock locations, visitors and locals hop aboard the Chicago Water Taxi for aquatic transportation to dinner in Chinatown or iconic city landmarks. For the most intimate and immersive experience, Urban Kayaks presents rentals and guided paddling tours on the bustling, historic waterway. "People are always amazed by how natural the river feels when you're down in it in a kayak or canoe," Quail says.

ON LAND It's basically a scientific fact that food and drink tastes richer when paired with a sparkly waterfront view. The Chicago Riverwalk serves up a bounty of all three across more than 1 mile of urban scenery in the heart of the city. Add twice a week DJs to the decadence with a stop at City Winery Riverwalk. Or diversify your fermented libations in the open air at The Northman Beer and Cider Garden with free live music daily throughout the summer.

For an educational moment, the McCormick Bridgehouse and Chicago River Museum spirals five stories above the Riverwalk. Step inside to grasp the engineering and inner workings of Chicago's world-famous moveable bridges. Just a couple of blocks away, you can pause at the frothy fountain in Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza with a tribute to those who served. Whether you're cruising on foot, skates or bicycle, plan extra time to linger with the many public art offerings. Consider starting at the Riverwalk Gateway murals under Lake Shore Drive before working your way west.





SUNSET SITES
Tour operators, like Wendella, offer boat cruises on the Chicago River.

PHOTOGRAPH: STARBOARD AND PORT

TRIP IDEAS AROUND

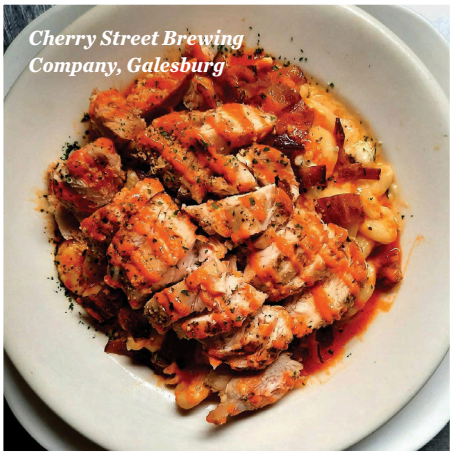
In the mood for a road trip? Here are places to go and things to do.



→
FLOAT ON THE FOX
The casino offers exceptional river views and 24/7 gaming.

Grand Victoria Casino, Elgin

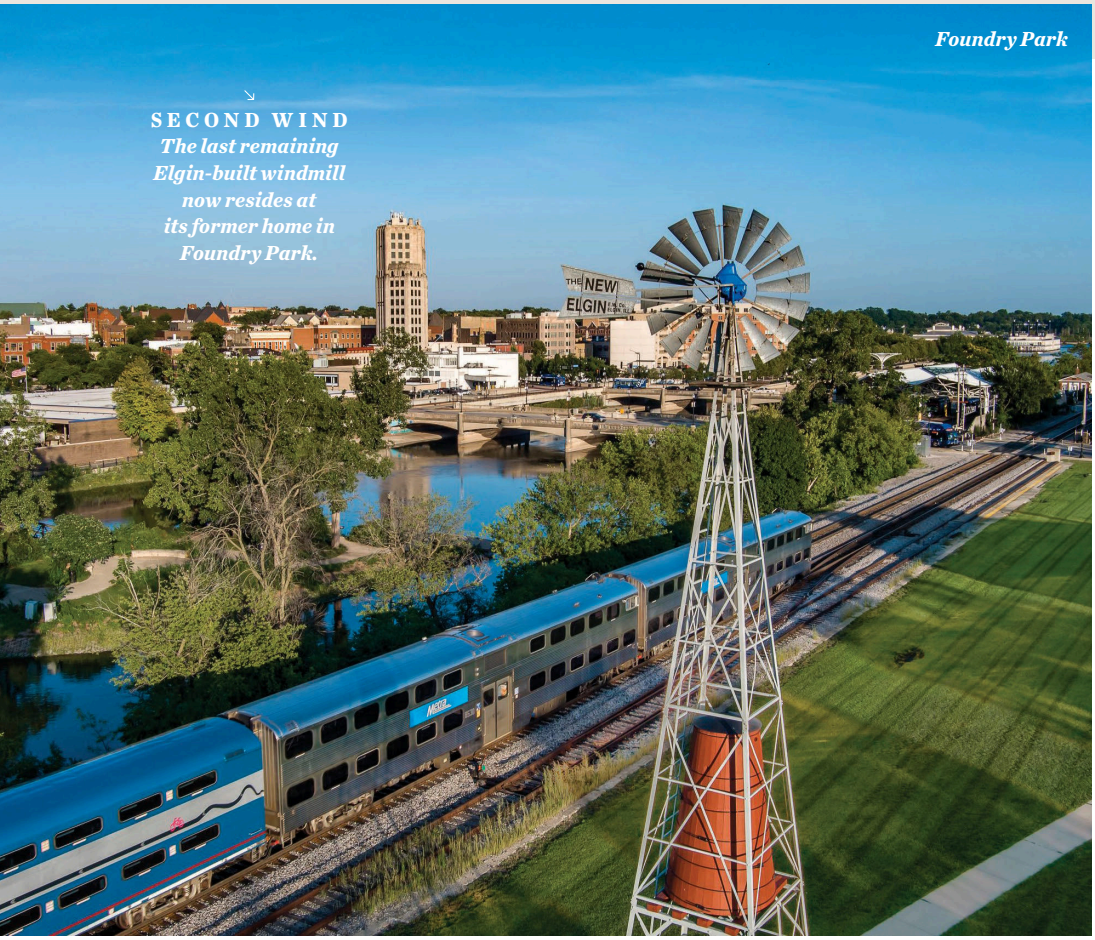
STORY: GARY THOMPSON. PHOTOGRAPHS: (CASINO) EXPLORE ELGIN AREA; (FOOD) COURTESY OF CHERRY STREET BREWING COMPANY



Cherry Street Brewing Company, Galesburg



THE STATE



Foundry Park

SECOND WIND
The last remaining Elgin-built windmill now resides at its former home in Foundry Park.

CHICAGO & BEYOND

Elgin

History and nature dance together in Elgin, a city named for a song—and in step with the rhythms of time.

POPULATION
114,797

OF NOTE
The name "Elgin" comes from a Scottish hymn, "The Song of Elgin," city founder James Gifford's favorite tune.

About 40 miles northwest of Chicago along the Fox River and historic Route 20, Elgin beckons with a harmonious blend of small-town and urban vibes. The self-proclaimed City in the Suburbs was once known as the Butter Capital of the World, home to the famed Elgin National Watch Company and producer of the first self-oiling windmill.

Experience the rural side in Hampshire at **Muirhead Farmhouse,** the only farmhouse designed and built by Frank Lloyd Wright. Still belonging to the Muirhead family, this example of Wright's Usonian architecture is open for tours on select dates from May through October.

Elgin's **Historic District** includes original parts of the town as laid out by founder James Gifford in the 1840s. Many Queen Anne homes here were owned by watch company executives, and the all-brick First Universalist Church was designed to resemble a pocket watch. Elgin also has several Sears catalog homes from the early 1900s; neighborhood self-guided walking tours are available.

Outdoor recreation is big in Elgin, thanks to the Fox River. The waterway draws paddlers, while the **Fox River Trail** that runs beside it offers 40-plus miles of biking and hiking routes. Not far from downtown, **Lords Park** encompasses a museum, nature trails and a zoo.

ILLINOIS INSIDER
Fresh flavors and fun await every summer Friday at the open-air Downtown Elgin Market (3 to 7 p.m.).

DO

If gambling floats your boat, Elgin's **Grand Victoria Casino** offers 750-plus slots, Vegas-style table games and fine dining on the Fox River. Despite its Christmasy name, **Santa's Village Amusement and Water Park** in East Dundee is a summer wonderland of thrill rides, waterslides and animal encounters. And you can meet the Man in Red during his offseason.

EAT

Since 1954, **Herb's Bakery** in Elgin has been handcrafting raised and cake doughnuts, Kringles, coffee cakes and other sweet treats. Try their soft Bavarian pretzel roll. The beer garden at **Diamond Jim's Tavern and Gas Grill** in East Dundee is the place to be in summer. There's a Friday fish fry and live music on Saturdays and Sundays.

STAY

The newly renovated, full-service **Holiday Inn and Suites Chicago Northwest** in Elgin has an indoor pool for the kiddos and on-site Bennigan's restaurant with a VIP Lounge and TVs to catch all the action. In West Dundee, wake up on plush sheets at the newly renovated **Best Western Plus,** which offers a complimentary full hot breakfast and state-of-the-art gym and pool.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (WINDMILL) CITY OF ELGIN; (ROCK) JAY WILDE, (COLLEGE) KNOX COLLEGE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

ILLINOIS INSIDER
The inventor of the Ferris wheel, George Washington Gale Ferris Jr., was born here.

GREAT RIVERS COUNTRY

Galesburg

Still a busy railroad hub, Galesburg adds new chapters to its rich history. The city is home to Carl Sandburg and Knox College.

It's easy to reach Galesburg by car—the town sits along Interstate-74, about 45 minutes south of the Quad Cities and about three hours from both Chicago and St. Louis. But for an authentic Galesburg experience, consider taking the train. Founded in 1837, centrally located Galesburg grew into a railroad center not long after the first Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad arrived in 1854. Today, eight Amtrak passenger trains (four eastbound, four westbound) serve Galesburg on national and regional routes, and the town still has one of the nation's busiest rail yards. From **Icehouse Park,** you can watch more than 130 trains pass through each day.

Before the Civil War, Galesburg was a stop on a more secretive route—the Underground Railroad. The town was founded in 1837 by antislavery advocates who simultaneously established **Knox College** and one of the first antislavery societies in Illinois. Knox College would later become famous for hosting the fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858. Galesburg native Carl Sandburg won three Pulitzer Prizes, two for his masterful poetry and one for his highly regarded biography of Lincoln. At the **Carl Sandburg State Historic Site,** celebrate the writer's legacy by visiting the three-room cottage where he was born in 1878.

DO

Artifacts inside the **Galesburg Railroad Museum** include dining-car china and employee uniforms. Outside, see a steam locomotive and other rolling stock. Outside the Old Main building at **Knox College,** stand where Lincoln debated Stephen Douglas in 1858 and see the window Abe climbed through to reach the stage.

EAT

Cherry Street Brewing Company has been Galesburg's party place since 1984, ensconced in a storied 1870s building. Try their chicken wings with a house-brewed RubiRita Cherry Cream Ale. Come for the cocktails, stay for a fine-dining experience at **Craft on Seminary Street.** Expect attentive service, warm ambience and fresh takes on classic steaks and seafood.

STAY

The **Best Western Prairie Inn and Conference Center** welcomes four-legged family members. Some of the rooms have private patios that access a courtyard with a gazebo, yard games and putting green. **Holiday Inn Express and Suites** offers a free hot breakfast and an indoor pool, plus a 24-hour coffee station and a lobby market for snacks and beverages (including beer and wine).

POPULATION
30,052

OF NOTE
Each June, Galesburg Railroad Days celebrates the town's rail roots with a carnival, food, live music and train-themed events.


Remembrance Rock, Carl Sandburg State Historic Site

Knox College



Krannert Art Museum



Riggs Beer Company

LAND OF LINCOLN

Champaign-Urbana

These campus towns aren't just for students, parents or alums. Consider your visit a chance to take a crash course in fine art, good eats and warm hospitality.

POPULATION
126,638

OF NOTE
Outside the university's Foellinger Auditorium, there's an "echo spot" where your voice reverberates.

The twin cities of Champaign-Urbana (Chambana to some locals) have long been anchored by the **University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.** With an enrollment of 60,000, it's one of the country's largest public universities, and the sprawling campus (6,000-plus acres) is dotted with historical buildings, striking modern structures and peaceful green spaces. **Krannert Art Museum** and **Spurlock Museum** are perennial favorites, as is the **Illinois Arboretum,** with more than 100 acres of beautiful botanical gardens and other serene natural spaces. The Arboretum's Japan House features Sen Cherry Tree Allée, a stunning canopy of cherry blossoms that typically peaks in mid-April.

Gies Memorial Stadium, home to Fighting Illini football, is also one of 45 points on the **Champaign County African American Heritage Trail,** which traces 170 years of local African Americans' contributions to society. Among the names etched in the stadium's 200 stone columns is that of William F. Earnest, the first African American from Champaign County to die in World War I. **State Farm Center,** the on-campus basketball arena, doubles as a concert venue, part of Champaign-Urbana's vibrant live-music scene. The **Rose Bowl Tavern** in downtown Urbana, **Pour Bros.** in downtown Champaign, and near-campus **The Canopy Club** are some of the hottest evening spots.

ILLINOIS INSIDER
See the stars at the state's only International Dark Sky Park, Middle Fork River Forest Preserve.

DO

At **Meadowbrook Park** in Urbana, marvel at large-scale works in the Wandell Sculpture Garden. The **Krannert Art Museum** collection spans continents and eras. Andy Warhol's pop-art portrait of Marilyn Monroe is a highlight. The **Spurlock Museum** houses artifacts from across the globe, including a barong dance costume, an ornate lion design from Bali.

EAT

Premium steaks, fresh seafood and classic cocktails are all on the table at **Hamilton Walker's** in downtown Champaign. With locations in Champaign and Urbana, **Black Dog Smoke and Ale House** has you covered for Southern-style barbecue and craft beer. At **Riggs Beer Company** in Urbana, taste the farm harvest at their beer garden.

STAY

On-campus **I Hotel and Illinois Conference Center** rooms surround you in warm contemporary style in Champaign. Put the high in **Hyatt Place** when you book an upper-floor room with views of downtown Champaign. Start the day with their breakfast bar, then grab a burger or sandwich from The Placery in the lobby.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (KRANNERT) JASON LINDSEY, (RIGGS BEER) IOT, (COFFEE) CROWN BREW COFFEE CO., (REFUGE) PAUL NORDMANN

ILLINOIS INSIDER
Kokopelli Golf Club, a challenging 18-hole course, has received rave reviews.

TRAILS TO ADVENTURE

Marion

Marion is one of the state's fast-growing areas, yet it's a great place to slow down and savor nature, the arts, sports and treats.


Crown Brew Coffee Co.


Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge

DO

Concerts, plays, films and pageants bring audiences to the **Marion Cultural and Civic Center,** a 1,094-seat performance venue on Tower Square Plaza, where the historic Orpheum Theater once stood. **Perfectly Posh Boutique** stocks trend-forward fashions and accessories, while **Lavish Bath Box** bubbles over with balms, bombs, scrubs and soaps. Escape to **Mandala Gardens,** a botanical sanctuary that invites you to go for a walk (there's a labyrinth) or sit in reverie.

EAT

Taste world-class coffee crafted with unique brewing methods at **Crown Brew Coffee Co.** It's served in an atmosphere designed to build community one cup at a time. Invest in breakfast or lunch at **The Vault Cafe on the Square,** located in a former bank. The vault is still there—and you can eat at a table inside it.

STAY

Indulge in Vegas-style luxury, glamour and gaming 30 minutes from downtown Marion at **Walker's Bluff Casino Resort** in Carterville. High-style rooms come with personal service and access to fine dining, a pool and a spa.

Marion not only serves as the Williamson County seat but also enjoys a front-row seat to a parade of traffic crisscrossing Interstate-57 and Route 13. Travelers with a smart exit strategy can trade miles of high-speed pavement for acres of natural beauty and the relaxed pace of a small town rich in culture and charm. The jewel in the crown—and it's an emerald, given the green lushness—is **Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge,** 44,000 acres of diverse flora and fauna. It's a place to unplug from tech and reconnect with nature by hiking, canoeing, photographing wildlife and bird-watching. Experience varied ecosystems, too, like oak-hickory upland forest, bottomland hardwood forest, grazing areas, brushland, prairie, wetlands and lakes.

Speaking of water, it's fine year-round at **The Hub Recreation Center's** indoor aquatics center. Glide down a two-story waterslide, loll on a lazy river, or let kids splash in a zero-depth entry pool with a small waterslide. Serious swimmers work out in a 25-yard lap pool, and there's a hot tub for soothing soaks. Sports fans can watch fast cars at the **Southern Illinois Raceway** and fastballs at **Mtn Dew Park,** the home field of Marion's collegiate baseball team, the Thrillville Thrillbillies.

POPULATION
16,855

OF NOTE
The Williamson County Historical Society Museum, on the National Register of Historic Places, used to be the county jail.

EXPLORE

Check out these inspiring places across Illinois.



FIND FUN IN ALEDO

Live music, the Annual Rhubarb Festival (June 5–6), a historic downtown with 11 styles of architecture, shopping, dining and adventure. Explore all the ways you can Find Fun in Aledo this summer.

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!

GreaterFreeport.com/Visit

GreaterFreeportPartnership

@greaterfreeportnow



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

Lake.Shelbyville
@lakeshelbyville



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

JohnDeereUSCA
JohnDeere
@JohnDeere
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
explorehenrycountyil



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,
exploreelginarea.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
847/823-2100, 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
815/946-2108,
visitnorthwestillinois.com

Visitor Information Centers

Prairie View South *I-57, rest area southbound, Monee*

Turtle Creek *I-90, rest area southbound, South Beloit*

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

Macomb Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
309/833-1315,
visitforgottonia.com

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

Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau
618/833-9928,
southernmostillinois.com

Visit NW Illinois
815/946-2108,
visitnorthwestillinois.com

Visit Quad Cities
800/747-7800,
visitquadcities.com

Visitor Information Center

Homestead *I-55, rest area northbound, Hamel*

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
800/593-5678, 217/243-5678,
jacksonvilleil.org

Lake Shelbyville Area Visitor Bureau
800/874-3529; 217/774-2244,
lakeshelbyville.com

Logan County Tourism Bureau
217/732-8687,
destinationlogancountyil.com

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

Visitor Information Centers

Cumberland Road *I-70, rest area westbound, Marshall*

Salt Kettle *I-74, rest area westbound, Oakwood*

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

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

Visitor Information Centers

Fort Massac *5402 Hwy. 45 S, Metropolis*

Rend Lake North *I-57, rest area northbound, Whittington*

Rend Lake South *I-57, rest area southbound, Whittington*

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 you to wear a seatbelt when traveling by car. Speed limits are posted in miles per hour (mph) and vary between 70 mph on rural interstates and freeways and 55 mph on urban interstates and freeways.

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 53 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 ***idot.illinois.gov***

ARRIVING BY PLANE

Domestic travelers can fly direct 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 30 cities in Illinois, and Greyhound Lines serves 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 theaters, museums, casinos, restaurants and bars.



For more Illinois government information, visit *illinois.gov*

#ENJOYILLINOIS

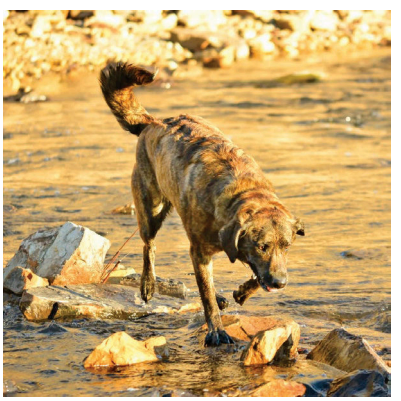
SUMMER FUN

Follow @enjoyillinois on Instagram to see pics from around the state. Tag #enjoyillinois for your chance to be featured.










CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT → Chicago ***@josephalcantara.1;*** Starved Rock State Park, Oglesby ***@heidi_ruehle;*** Prairie Moon Farm, Knoxville ***@23rdave;*** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign ***@lowkey__dree;*** Garden of the Gods, Herod ***@familyboardingpass;*** Kinkaid Lake, Jackson County ***@baileytoo4;*** Levitt AMP Springfield Music Series, Springfield ***@1221_photography;*** Galena on the Fly, Galena ***@markbaumer***

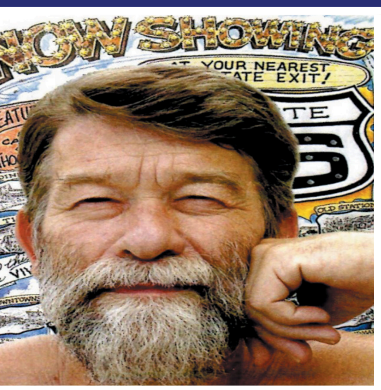


OverNight In The Heart of Illinois

ROUTE 66

Murals, Wayside Exhibits, Culinary Delights and so much more await you in legendary Springfield! Visit the new Bob Waldmire Art Exhibition, on display thru December 2026 and walk a quarter-mile stretch of uncovered original Route 66 pavement at the Carpenter Park Alignment along the Sangamon River! All this along with world-class Abraham Lincoln sites.

LEGENDARY SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS









VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

Visit Springfield Illinois
WE'RE More THAN ONE DAY

Let's Get Social!
@visitspringfield

enjoy illinois



MEET CHICAGO NORTHWEST

CHICAGO NORTHWEST

Arlington Heights | Elk Grove Village | Itasca | Rolling Meadows | Roselle | Schaumburg | Streamwood | Wood Dale

On the edge of **ORD** and in the middle of everything—**Chicago Northwest** is beyond the skyline. Start your adventure with a round on the links at **Schaumburg Golf Club.**

CHICAGONORTHWEST.COM

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