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### **All Signs Point To Illinois This Fall**

*Scenic byways, heritage paths, historic routes and a wine trail take travelers for a ride*

**CHICAGO (July 2, 2003)** – Looking for a picture perfect backdrop for your fall getaway? Then follow the roads in Illinois this fall to see and experience some of the Midwest's most picturesque spots. In Illinois, visitors can travel nearly every region of the state to take in breathtaking views on five national scenic byways: Great River Road, The National Road, Ohio River Scenic Route, Meeting of the Great Rivers Byway and the Lincoln Highway. In addition, the state is home to several well-known heritage trails and scenic drives including Route 66 and Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive, as well as the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail for those who – literally – want a taste of fall.

According to the Travel Industry Association of America, 70 percent of Americans are planning a scenic byway trip this year. And with nearly 30 percent of the U.S. population residing within a 500-mile radius of the Land of Lincoln, all signs point to Illinois as a perfect destination for fall drives.

Illinois' five national scenic byways include:

#### **Great River Road**

Breathtaking fall scenery and notable destinations line this scenic byway, which stretches more than 550 miles along the eastern shore of the Mississippi River. From East Dubuque in Northern

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Illinois to Cairo in the south, the Great River Road offers quick access to a number of Illinois state parks, such as the Mississippi Palisades State Park. Attractions along the scenic byway include Rock Island's Black Hawk State Historic Site, Quincy's historic 1800s homes, and a series of rustic barns and scenic bluffs interspersed down to Alton. For more information, contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (217/782-6302, <http://dnr.state.il.us>); Black Hawk State Historic Site (309/788-9536); Quincy's Convention and Visitors Bureau (800/978-4748, [www.quincy-cvb.org](http://www.quincy-cvb.org)); and Alton (800/258-6645, [www.altoncvb.org](http://www.altoncvb.org)). (Northern, Western and Southwest)

### **The National Road**

Follow settlers' footsteps along US-40 from Marshall near the Indiana border across the state to Collinsville. The route, named by the pioneers who first made their way through this 165-mile stretch, passes through fields and small farm towns. It is emblazoned with stately oaks and craggy maples which are eventually replaced by golden corn and lush soybean fields. The winding route is a great trip for those interested in quiet strolls along Midwestern Main Streets, visits to specialty shops including one of the largest antique malls in southeast Illinois in Greenup, and tours of historic places such as the Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site in Lerna. For more information, contact the National Road Association ([www.nationalroad.org](http://www.nationalroad.org), 217/849-3188); Effingham Convention and Visitors Bureau ([www.effinghamil.com](http://www.effinghamil.com), 800/772-0750); or the Collinsville Convention and Visitors Bureau ([www.discovercollinsville.com](http://www.discovercollinsville.com), 800/289-2388). (Central, Southwest)

### **Ohio River Scenic Route**

The 200-mile drive follows the Ohio River south from Old Shawneetown to Cairo, winds through historic towns on the water's edge and passes parks filled with natural wonders such as Cave-in-Rock, a 55-foot-wide limestone cave carved by water thousands of years ago, and the Garden of the Gods in the Shawnee National Forest. For more information, contact Cave-in-Rock State Park (618/289-4325); Garden of the Gods State Park (618/287-2201); or Southern Illinois Tourism Development Office (618/998-9397, [www.adventureillinois.com](http://www.adventureillinois.com)). (Southern)

### **Meeting of the Great Rivers Byway**

Bearing the footsteps of early voyagers including Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, the 55-mile Meeting of the Great Rivers Byway is located at the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers. The byway stretches from Kampsville to Alton in Southwest Illinois and includes the historic towns of Elsah and Hartford, where Lewis and Clark departed 200 years ago on their famed expedition. Hartford is now home to the newly opened Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, which memorializes the national landmark with a 14,000-square-foot facility and a replica of a 1800s keelboat. For more information, contact the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center (618/251-2680 Ext.15, [www.hartfordillinois.net](http://www.hartfordillinois.net).) (Southwest)

### **Lincoln Highway**

The 179-mile byway stretches across Northern Illinois connecting Lynwood with Fulton, showcasing the area's rich countryside of rivers and prairies. Highlights along the drive include Chicago Heights' 90-year-old Arche Fountain, adorned with a giant penny; shows at Joliet's

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Rialto Square Theatre, an elaborate, vaudevillian movie palace; and the charming neighborhoods and antiques in Geneva. For more information, contact the Lincoln Highway Association (815/456-3030, [www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/info/il/](http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/info/il/)). (Chicagoland, Northern)

Other not-to-miss Illinois drives and tours include:

### **Shelby County Fall Color Tour**

Beginning at Eagle Creek Resort in Findlay near Lake Shelbyville, the tour continues through the Thompson Mill Covered Bridge in Cowden – one of only five covered bridges remaining in Illinois – to Moweaqua, an area known for its harvest stands and antiquing. The Shelby County Fall Color Tour concludes in Sullivan, a treasure trove of Amish furniture and crafts. For more information, contact the Eagle Creek Resort (217/756-3456, [www.eaglecreekresort.com](http://www.eaglecreekresort.com)); Shelbyville Chamber of Commerce (217/774-2221, [www.shelbyville.net](http://www.shelbyville.net)); Thompson Mill Covered Bridge (217/774-2244); and Central Illinois Tourism Development Office (217/525-7980, [www.visitcentralillinois.com](http://www.visitcentralillinois.com)). (Central)

### **Knox County Scenic Drive**

The self-guided Knox County Scenic Drive, taking place from October 3-5 and October 10-12, traverses through rural areas and small towns. Visitors will encounter two one-room schoolhouses, four buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a log cabin dating back to 1832, chapels more than 100 years old, and museums. Those who snap a captivating image along the drive can submit it to the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Knox County Scenic Drive Photo Contest.

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Participants are judged in five categories, including best close-up, best fall colors, best country cookin', best living history and best overall. For more information, contact Knox County Scenic Drive, Inc. (309/343-2485, <http://home.grics.net/scenicdrive>). (Western)

### **Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive**

Experience more than 130 miles of Western Illinois' tree-covered rolling hills on a journey down the Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive. The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Festival takes place October 4, 5, 11 and 12 throughout Fulton County and attracts 100,000 visitors annually. Among the many highlights along the scenic drive are old mill wheels, Dickson Mounds Museum, and the Major Newton-Walker home, where Abraham Lincoln spent time. For more information, contact Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive Associates, Inc. (309/647-8980, [www.spoonriverdrive.org](http://www.spoonriverdrive.org)). (Western)

### **Route 66**

Historic Route 66 winds its way 295 miles southwest from Chicago through Illinois with a series of remarkable towns and attractions offering memorable sights and events beyond the leaves along the way.

Beginning in downtown Chicago at Lou Mitchell's Restaurant – the easternmost stop on the Mother Road – travelers can fuel up with a hearty pancake breakfast. Heading southwest to Wilmington, the 28-foot-tall Gemini Giant – donning a space helmet – beckons visitors to a local favorite, the Launching Pad Drive-In. Other great attractions along the road are Bill Shea's Gas Station Museum and the Cozy Dog Drive-In, both in Springfield. Owner Bill Shea still greets

visitors from around the world in his converted petrol station – now a gallery packed with vintage gas pumps, signs and Route 66 memorabilia – as he has for more than four decades. Further down the road, the Cozy Dog Drive-In serves up their famous breaded hotdogs on a stick, dipped in a secret batter and deep-fried.

Visitors traveling the famed Mother Road this fall will want to consider planning a trip in conjunction with Springfield's International Route 66 Mother Road Festival, September 26-28. The event offers five stages of live music, children's activities, a parade of more than 600 cars, and an expo featuring travel information on 60 Central Illinois towns and attractions. For more information, contact the International Route 66 Mother Road Festival (866/RTE-66IL, [www.route66fest.com](http://www.route66fest.com)); or the Central Illinois Tourism Development Office (217/525-7980, [www.visitcentralillinois.com](http://www.visitcentralillinois.com)). (Chicago/Central)

### **Shawnee Hills Wine Trail**

In addition to scenic drives and heritage pathways, Illinois also has its own wine trail, offering visitors the chance to taste, tour and shop through the southern part of the state. Beginning just south of Carbondale and looping past the rolling hills of the Shawnee National Forest, the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail includes the award-winning wineries of Pomona, Von Jakob, Alto and Owl Creek. The Union County Colorfest, October 10-12, is a great time to visit Southern Illinois and sample the unique vintages – including a blueberry wine. Orchards and wineries throughout the county team up with local communities to offer visitors fall foliage tours and special events. For more information, contact Alto Vineyards (618/893-4898); Owl Creek Vineyard (618/893-2557); Winghill Vineyard and Winery (618/618-WINE); Von Jakob Vineyard (618/893-4500);

and Pomona Winery (618/893-2623); or log onto [www.shawneewinetrail.com](http://www.shawneewinetrail.com). (Southern)

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on scenic drives and fall festivals, events and attractions. All are available by calling **800-2CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting the bureau's Web site at **[www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com)**. The fall issue of *Illinois Now!*, a seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel in Illinois, will be available mid-September for fall travel planning. The magazine can be obtained by calling 800-2CONNECT or by visiting the bureau's Web site.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Statewide photography is available electronically or in slide format. Information on Illinois' haunted happenings will be distributed later this year as a separate release. For artwork, contact Jennifer Elving at 312/240-2813.

*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism  
manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and  
quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.*

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