



# ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 30, 2005

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## **MAGNIFICENT ROAD TRIPS FOR EVERY WEEK DURING FALL-O-WEEN<sup>SM</sup>**

*Scenic drives along Illinois' byways offer festivals of fun and brushes with nature*

CHICAGO – Illinois' **Fall-O-Ween<sup>SM</sup>** season is as fruitful as its pumpkin patches, with harvest festivals, corn mazes, apple picking and more. Illinois' newest season, which runs from September 1 through Halloween, encompasses the essence of autumn, including costume parades, pumpkin carving, wineries and haunted houses.

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

Located at the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri rivers, the Meeting of the Great Rivers Byway stretches 55 miles and in early September offers gorgeous views of Southern Illinois' rich fall foliage. The route also allows visitors to discover the region's natural and historical heritage, particularly in the historic town of Alton. For instance, in 1673, French explorer Father Jacques Marquette discovered a large pictograph on the bluffs along the Mississippi that represented the Piasa bird, a monster in Native American folklore. Visitors can learn about the legend of the Piasa bird at the Alton Museum of History and Art and then follow the route southward to see a modern artist's rendition of the pictograph on the side of the cliff.

For families wanting to extend their time in Alton, also known as one of "America's Most Haunted Small Towns"<sup>1</sup> according to the Travel Channel and *Fate* magazine, local tour companies offer various haunted tours. One example is **Antoinette's Haunted History Tour**, which invites adventurers to board a trolley and visit haunted sites with a tour guide. Whether hunting for ghosts, learning about haunted history or speaking to spirits, the fright factor is plentiful in Alton. For another family-friendly activity, visitors can head to Godfrey starting September 3 and get lost in the 2.4-mile Great Godfrey Maze. This year the maze, made entirely of corn, is themed "The Wizard of Oz." (Southwest)

For more information, contact the Alton Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau (618-465-6676, [www.visitalton.com](http://www.visitalton.com)); Great Godfrey Maze (618-466-1483, [www.greatgodfreymaze.com](http://www.greatgodfreymaze.com)); Antoinette's Haunted History Tours (618-462-4009).

### **Ohio River Scenic Route**

If visitors are looking for rich fall colors there's no need to look any further than the Ohio River Scenic Route. The recommended time to explore is mid- to late-September when the Shawnee National Forest—a highlight along the 200-mile drive—reaches its fiery peak. The route winds through breathtaking nature, including heavily forested areas boasting bright red and gold hues, sculpted sandstone formations and towering bluffs. In fact, Tower Rock is a giant cliff rising 160

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<sup>1</sup> Haunted Alton has been the subject of many essays and books, including *Spirits of St. Louis*, Robbi Courtaway, October 1999 and *Favorite Haunts: Haunted Odyssey III*, Jim Longo, 2004

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feet above water level, providing unobstructed views of the rushing Ohio River. If hiking trails and dizzying heights are not among a visitor's interests they can find relaxation on another trail – the 25-mile Shawnee Hills Wine Trail, which extends throughout the rolling hills of the Shawnee National Forest, stopping at the award-winning wineries of Pomona, Von Jakob, Alto, Owl Creek and Winghill. The new Blue Sky Vineyard in Makanda, modeled after California's and Tuscany's best wineries, marries wine, art and architecture, and recently joined the trail. In celebration of Illinois Wine Month, the **Illinois Wine & Art Festival**, September 24 and 25, at Rend Lake, provides another opportunity to learn about and taste Illinois wine. In partnership with the Southern Illinois Artisans Program, the festival brings together nearly 15 Illinois wineries and 40 juried artists from across the state. (Southern/Southwest)

For more information, contact the Southern Illinois Tourism Development Office (618-998-9397, [www.adventureillinois.com](http://www.adventureillinois.com)); Alto Vineyards (618-893-4898); Owl Creek Vineyard (618-893-2557); Winghill Vineyard and Winery (618-618-WINE); Von Jakob Vineyard (618-893-4500); Pomona Winery (618-893-2623); Blue Sky Vineyard (618-995-9463); or visit [www.shawneewinetrail.com](http://www.shawneewinetrail.com) or [www.illinoiswine.com](http://www.illinoiswine.com).

### **Route 66**

Route 66 found a place in the history books and hearts of America through its many appearances in songs, movies and television. The road was immortalized in the film "The Grapes of Wrath," leading impoverished Americans to the promised land over "the Mother Road." Today, Route 66 is still one of the most famous and scenic drives in America, beginning in Chicago, traversing Central Illinois and ending at the Pacific Ocean near Los Angeles. Visitors to Illinois can experience Route 66 firsthand by seeking out traditional sites along the way, such as restored gas stations, the Route 66 Hall of Fame in Pontiac or the Funks Grove Maple Sirup Farm in Funks Grove. Hungry motorists can stop at one of more than 40 historic cafés and restaurants scattered along the route, including the Old Log Cabin Restaurant in Pontiac, home to countless Route 66 items and offering down-home cooking at affordable prices.

An ideal time to careen down Route 66 is during the **International Route 66 Mother Road Festival**, held September 30-October 2 in Springfield. This annual event gathers thousands of vintage car enthusiasts worldwide, and features hundreds of classic vehicles, live entertainment and one-of-a kind exhibits that line the streets of the state capital.

For more information, contact the Springfield Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-545-7300, [www.visit-springfieldillinois.com](http://www.visit-springfieldillinois.com), [www.route66fest.com](http://www.route66fest.com)); Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project (<http://illinoisroute66.org>).

### **Knox County Scenic Drive**

Illinois is rooted in rural culture and traditions. Every year, thousands gather to celebrate the arrival of autumn and rustic heritage by participating in the Knox County Scenic Drive. The self-guided drive, held on two weekends in October (October 1 & 2 and 8 & 9), is 100 miles long and allows participants to relive the "old days." Communities peppering the Western Illinois countryside organize educational activities along the route, such as teaching city dwellers to make butter the old-fashioned way and weave a basket like a pro. Visitors specifically interested in how rural pioneers lived can enjoy tours at two renovated one-room schools, a log cabin built in 1832, an old jailhouse, a restored 1865 barn and the Old Knox County Courthouse.

If visitors schedule their drive during the first weekend in October they can also pay a visit to the **Third Annual Galesburg Scarecrow Festival**. Held at the Standish Park Arboretum in Galesburg, the festival offers many children's activities, live country music and delicious harvest treats. Festival attendees can even play judge by voting for their favorite homemade scarecrow in the annual contest. (Western)

For more information, contact Knox County Scenic Drive, Inc. (309-343-2485, <http://home.gallatinriver.net/scenicdrive>); Galesburg Convention and Visitors Bureau (309-343-2485, [www.visitgalesburg.com](http://www.visitgalesburg.com), [www.galesburg.org/commercecenter/dgba/scarecrow.html](http://www.galesburg.org/commercecenter/dgba/scarecrow.html)).

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

The Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive offers visitors and residents alike a self-guided tour that is breathtakingly beautiful and romantic. Every year, nearly 100,000 people drive along 130 miles of the Spoon River Valley where nature is truly in its glory. This year's hilly drive is part of the **38<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Festival** in Fulton County, taking place October 1 & 2 and 8 & 9 throughout Fulton County. With a distinct culinary focus, both the drive and festival offer many opportunities to satisfy the taste buds, including fresh apple butter at London Mills, old-fashioned chicken and noodles at Smithfield's Red Brick School, funnel cakes at Lewistown and baked goods at Duncan Mills. (Western)

For more information, contact Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive Associates, Inc. (309-647-8980, [www.spoonriverdrive.org](http://www.spoonriverdrive.org)).

### **Great River Road**

The Great River Road, with its foliage in full splendor in late October, offers motorists more than 550 miles of Mississippi River views, quaint neighborhoods and fall festivals. At the north end of the road is Galena, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century boomtown that has been beautifully preserved as a living museum. Once a bustling port, the town is now lined with restored mansions, bed & breakfast inns, antique stores and art galleries. Once drivers arrive in Galena they can enjoy a spectacular view of the area, which is surrounded by colorful foliage and high-flying hot-air balloons. The **Galena Halloween Balloon Fest**, October 29 and 30, launches more than 25 hot-air balloons from the downtown river levee, making children "ooh" and "ahh" when they are not trick-or-treating.

Traveling south, motorists can stop at Rock Island's Black Hawk State Historic Site, one of the largest Native American centers in the nation, or the old railroad town Savanna, where the Savanna-Sabula Bridge covers an impressive vista sweeping over the Mississippi River. (Northern, Western and Southwest)

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); Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau (877-464-2536, [www.galena.org](http://www.galena.org)).

### **Lincoln Highway**

This 179-mile trek is best traveled in late October when the weather is crisp and the colors riotous. Stretching across Chicagoland and Northern Illinois, the Lincoln Highway offers countless attractions and activities, including the I&M Canal State Trail, historic movie palaces, hiking and biking trails, architecturally significant houses and Ronald Reagan's boyhood home in Dixon.

A must-stop along the Lincoln Highway is in Sycamore for its annual **Pumpkin Festival**, October 26-30. In 1956, Wally Thurow, known as Sycamore's "Mr. Pumpkin," began what was to become the Sycamore Pumpkin Festival when he displayed a few decorated pumpkins on his front lawn. After years of growth, the festival now takes place at the local courthouse lawn with thousands of decorated pumpkins on display. Additional activities include arts and craft shows, a pie-eating contest, a carnival and a parade on Sunday afternoon. (Chicagoland, Northern)

Just a two-hour drive from Sycamore is the pumpkin capital of the world, Morton. Home of Nestle/Libby's pumpkin packing plant, Morton processes 80 percent of the world's canned pumpkin. The community celebrates the beginning of the canning season every September with a family festival honoring this autumnal symbol. September 14-17 will mark the festival's 39<sup>th</sup> year and offers carnival rides, craft shows, a parade and, of course, pumpkins! Morton is also home to the **Punkin Chuckin' Contest** October 22 and 23, where a variety of machines catapult dozens of pumpkins across the sky. (Central)

For more information, contact the Lincoln Highway Association (866-455-4249, [www.lincolnhwyil.com](http://www.lincolnhwyil.com)); Sycamore Pumpkin Festival Committee (815-899-3157, [www.sycamorepumpkinfestival.com](http://www.sycamorepumpkinfestival.com)); Morton Chamber of Commerce (888-765-6588, [www.pumpkincapital.com](http://www.pumpkincapital.com)).

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on **3-Day Getaways**, scenic drives, fall festivals, events and attractions. All are available by calling **1-800-2CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting the Bureau's Web site at [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com). Also, Illinois fall color updates will be available starting early September through the Fall-O-Ween season on [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com), allowing visitors to schedule their scenic drives when color is the most brilliant in a particular region.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Media materials and downloadable images are now available on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism online media center at [www.illinoismediacenter.com](http://www.illinoismediacenter.com). Additional photography, available electronically, may be obtained by contacting Katie Markese at [katie.markese@edelman.com](mailto:katie.markese@edelman.com), 312-297-7561 or Julie Connolly at [julie.connolly@edelman.com](mailto:julie.connolly@edelman.com), 312-233-1246.

*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.*