

illinois

Southern
Great Rivers Country



birds of winter paradise

take a breath of fresh air

Be one with nature along Southern Great Rivers Country. Take in the wildlife, and see a flock of over 1,500 swans. Go bird watching to see other avian varieties, like the majestic bald eagle at the Nature Institute. Then head down a hiking or biking trail to breathe in the crisp winter air.



3 days
89mi
(Approx)

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Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge



Grafton Winery & Brewhaus



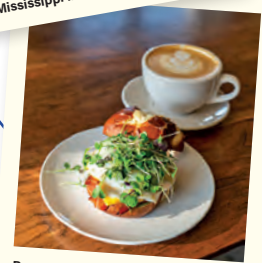
Pere Marquette Lodge



Alton Audubon Eagle Festival



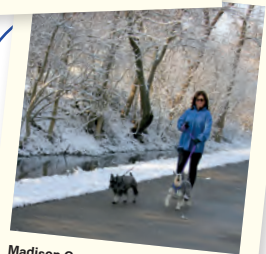
Mississippi Mud Pottery



Post Commons



My Just Desserts



Madison County Transit Trail



Kruta Bakery

Many places have reopened with limited capacity, new operating hours or other restrictions. Inquire ahead of time for up-to-date health and safety information.

📍 Day 1 Brussels, Grafton, Godfrey

Your day begins at **Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge** in Brussels where you can see majestic trumpeter swans. These beautiful birds come to the area from the northwoods of Wisconsin starting in early December and typically stay until February when they return to their homes to nest. More than 1,500 swans have been counted in the area over the winter showcasing the comeback of a once nearly extinct species.

Afterward, head over to Grafton for some cross country skiing and hiking in **Pere Marquette State Park**, Illinois' largest state park. Whether you're a beginner or seasoned hiker, Pere Marquette has the perfect trail for you.

Grab takeout or eat on the covered patio at **Grafton Winery & Brewhaus**. Located in the quaint river town of Grafton, along the Great River Road Scenic Byway, this winery and brewhaus overlooks the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. Pro tip: visit during sunset hours - you won't regret it!

Overnight at the historic **Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center**, the perfect cozy spot to warm up after a day of wintry adventures. The rustic Great Room features a 700-ton stone fireplace and life-size chess set. The Lodge restaurant is known for its family-style chicken dinner and seasonal Sunday brunch buffets.

In Godfrey, pay a visit to **The Nature Institute**, a non-profit land conservation and environmental education organization. During the winter, bald eagles come down from the north looking for open water and fish. There are also trumpeter swans year-round and residents like turkey vultures, red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks and many more. All are much easier to see without leaves on the trees. Please note hiking trails are closed from December to March to allow a rest period for wildlife and for any necessary property maintenance.

📍 Day 2 Alton

Jump on over to neighboring Alton just in time for eagle watching season along the beautiful Mississippi River, which officially kicks off on January 2, 2021 and lasts until late February. The new Eagle Passport Program will be announced during the virtual **Alton Audubon Eagle Festival** on January 2.

After getting your nature fix, head to downtown Alton to shop, eat and enjoy! Stop by **Mississippi Mud Pottery** for unique pieces that are handcrafted right in the store. While in town, check out one of the many great places to grab a bite to eat. If you need a caffeine fix head to **Post Commons** for a coffee to-go. Get some lunch takeout at **The Brown Bag Bistro** and try one of their fresh salads or warm hearty soups. Of course, you can't go a day in Alton without stopping by **My Just Desserts** and picking up some homemade pie or brownies to-go. End your day with carryout from **Old Bakery Beer**, a certified organic brewery with amazing food options. Rest your head at the **Best Western Plus Parkway Hotel** to get ready to explore more of Southern Great Rivers Country.

📍 Day 3 Collinsville, Edwardsville

Spend your day hiking or biking along the iconic **Madison County Transit** (MCT) through Edwardsville and Collinsville. The well maintained trails wind through the communities and provide great winter hiking opportunities.

All of that hiking and biking will have you ready you for lunch. Grab carryout from **Bandana's BBQ**, a southern-style barbecue joint specializing in amazing smoked meats. On your way out of town, make sure to pick up something at Illinois Made maker **Kruta Bakery**, known for their eastern European treats. It will definitely be a sweet way to end your journey.

