ENJOY ILLINOIS

THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING

FALL/WINTER 2023–2024
Pack up. Head out. We’ve been expecting you!
visitgalena.org
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Richardson Adventure Farm
Spring Grove, IL

@quachdavid

ENJOY ILLINOIS FALL/WINTER 2023–2024

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illinois the middle of everything

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Create new memories.

With exciting free events and programs throughout the year, there is something inspiring for everyone at Chicago’s top lakefront destination. Enjoy live music and dance performances, family-friendly workshops, picturesque views, and the changing seasons.

View the full calendar and plan your visit at navypier.org.
fall into fun

The colors, tastes and festivals of fall are fleeting. Get out and experience these iconic autumn activities at locations statewide before they disappear.

alpine rides The dual alpine slides at Chestnut Mountain Resort in Galena whip riders down a 2,050-foot-long track from the treetops to the banks of the Mississippi (weekends only from Labor Day to October 22). Ride a chairlift to the top for panoramic views that include Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. The state’s first alpine coaster twists above the riverbank and beautiful bluffs at Aerie’s Resort in Grafton. The year-round coaster (yep, ride even in winter) provides thrills for the whole family (ages 3 and older) with seven hairpin turns and eight waves/twisters on a ¼-mile track.

corn mazes You’ll need a flashlight for the after-dark adventure at the Great Godfrey Maze (September 15–October 28), but no flashlights are allowed at the Jonamac Orchard’s Haunted Corn Maze (October 6–29, Friday and Saturday nights) in Malta. Kroft’s Fall Harvest Farm in Waukegan enhances its corn maze with an educational game (mid-September to October 31).

arboretums Unearth inner peace beneath the Oak Grove canopy at the University of Illinois Arboretum in Urbana, during an after-hours tranquility walk at the Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden in Rockford, or in the center of The Morton Arboretum Maze Garden in Lisle.

Fun Fact! Dogs (on a leash) are welcome at Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden.

Dogs (on a leash) are welcome at Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden.
Thrill your senses and ease your mind while discovering Illinois’ Rockford region. Here authentic experiences and open spaces will create the adventurous getaway you’ve been waiting for.

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sunflower fields

Happiness is... collecting a bouquet of mums and yellow and autumn sunflowers from U-pick fields at Rendleman Orchards in Alto Pass (mums August 26 to October 8; yellow sunflowers, mid-September; autumn sunflowers following two weeks after; all weather dependent). Or get lost in the sunflower maze (through mid-November), and see fields of zinnias and cosmos at Von Bergen’s Country Market in Hebron.

orchards

A perky white-and-teal barn at Rockford’s Thyme and Again Farm is filled with crunchy apples (September 16–November 1). The trees of Elizabeth’s Dittmar Farms and Orchard are heavy and ripe for hand-picking (August 19–October 29). And the apple tree maze at Harvard’s Royal Oak Farm Orchard stands ready to confound (August 19–October 31).

farm animals

Discover baby goats and pony rides at Curtis Orchard in Champaign (last weekend of August through October 31). Catch barnyard activities, plus a corn maze, apple U-picks, pumpkins and cider doughnuts at All Seasons Orchard Amazing Adventure in Woodstock (August 26–October 29).

hikes

Follow trails through a bounty of autumn hues at the Waterfall Glen forest preserve in Darien or trek above the caves of Mississippi Palisades State Park near Savanna. Wander footbridges through bluffs on the Giant City State Park Nature Trail near Makanda.

pumpkin patches

Ride a wagon through The Great Pumpkin Patch (Wednesdays to Sundays, September 20–October 29 and October 9) in Arthur; hop on a free hayride after picking your pumpkin at Quincy’s Mill Creek Farm (September 30–October 29, weekends); or find your pumpkin by flashlight on a weekend sunset hayride to the patch at McHenry’s Stade’s Farm and Market (September 23–24, 30, October 1, 6–9, 13–15, 20–22, 27–29).

festivals

Fall festivals are stuffed with fun! Don’t miss the Halloween-themed parade (October 7) during the Scarecrow Daze festival in Shelbyville or the Scarecrow Festival (September 30) in Ottawa. Vote for your favorite handcrafted scarecrow at Scarecrow Weekend (October 6–8) in St. Charles.

Fun Facts!

Morton, home to Nestle’s Libby’s Pumpkin, hosts a four-day festival that kicks off the canning season (September 13–16). Morton is known as the Pumpkin Capital of the World.

Morton, home to Nestle’s Libby’s Pumpkin, hosts a four-day festival that kicks off the canning season (September 13–16). Morton is known as the Pumpkin Capital of the World.
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EXPLORE LaSalle County

Escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life, visit LaSalle County. This oasis of unexpected natural wonders is home to the legendary Starved Rock State Park and picturesque small towns, lined with exciting eateries and boutique shopping opportunities. Whether you’re looking to tour museums and mansions, or sample locally made wine and craft beer, there’s an adventure awaiting you in LaSalle County.

- **DOWNTOWN STREATOR** - Murals, boutiques, dining and more
- **EAGLE WATCHING** - See beautiful bald eagles soar around Starved Rock
- **AUGUST HILL WINERY/ILLINOIS SPARKLING CO.** - Enjoy wine tastings at August Hill
- **CAMP ARAMONI** - Boutique camping accommodations
- **TANGLED ROOTS BREWING CO.** - Craft beer and food experience
- **DOWNTOWN OTTAWA** - Vibrant downtown and family-friendly fests
- **HEGELER CARUS MANSION** - Step back into history
- **STARVED ROCK STATE PARK** - 13+ miles of trails and famous ice falls
- **STARVED ROCK LODGE** - Cabins, hikes, tours, & outdoor dining

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Enjoy LaSalle County
Come for the Beauty, Stay for the Adventure.
rails-to-trails routes

More than 1,000 miles of former railroad routes crisscross Illinois, now providing a variety of mileage options on multiuse trails—with incredible scenery as a backdrop.

Bloomington to Normal
Constitution Trail
Miles 57
Trail Surface
Asphalt and concrete

This trail, with numerous branches and offshoots, links two university towns. The main route passes by the family-owned Beer Nuts factory, through neighborhoods and parks, and the Uptown Normal district, known for trendy shops and restaurants near Illinois State University.
It’s Christmas Time in the City... of Decatur!

The Decatur area offers so much during the holiday season.

To learn about these seasonal activities and more, call 800-331-4479 or visit www.decaturcvb.com.

Santa in the Transfer House
Christmas Card Lane
Trees on the Tees
Downtown Christmas Walk

Experience the rich arts and culture of Jacksonville, IL... starting with an art gallery housed in a Second Empire-style mansion. Reconnect with the rustic charm of the agritourism destinations growing fresh blueberries and pumpkins. Warm up with a delectable meal from wood-fired pizza on the square to farm to table cuisine in our historic train depot. No matter what your idea of a good time is, creating your own experiences comes as easily as discovering a bit of the past.
**lakefront trail**

**northern illinois**

**Oak Park**

**Grand Illinois Trail**

*Miles 535-mile loop*

**Trail Surface** Paved and limestone screening off-road trails, plus approximately 200 paved, on-road miles (mostly quiet and rural)

The state’s longest continuous bike route, including many of the state’s longest off-road trails, extends from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River, north to Savanna’s Mississippi Palisades State Park, and back across the northern border. Along the way, riders are treated with human-created wonders, like historic architecture in Chicago neighborhoods, as well as natural wonders—rivers, bluffs, forests and prairies. Most bicyclists tackle the trail in sections ranging from 40 to 80 miles, which helps minimize tired muscles and logistical challenges.

**e-bikes**

Electric pedal-assisted bikes make pedaling easier while still providing exercise and fresh air. Here’s a few places to try one out:

**CHICAGO**

Rent a Divvy pedal-assist e-bike and pop up to The Bloomingdale Trail. The 606 runs almost 3 miles from Wicker Park to Humboldt Park. If you’re downtown, try the Lakefront Trail.

**GALENA**

Rent a bike from Nuts Outdoors and cruise from downtown to Galena Cellars Winery, where you can enjoy a free glass of wine. A shuttle will take you and your bike back to town.

**SHAWNEE HILLS NATIONAL FOREST**

Shawnee Hills E-bikes in Jonesboro stocks a foldable Rad Power Bike for rental or test ride. They also deliver bikes to local bed-and-breakfasts.

**BIKE SAFE**

Scan the code to learn the rules of the road.
Adventures await you every season in Kankakee County.

VisitKankakeeCounty.com

Engage your Senses in Springfield, IL

See and shake hands with living legends along the route; Hear the roar of engines; Taste and smell the local culinary favorites.

A weekend full of cars, food, music and fun!

Let's Get Social!

@visitspringfield
Joliet to Chicago Heights
Old Plank Road Trail
Miles 22
Trail Surface Asphalt
Reconnect with nature on this path as you pedal through prairies and wetlands and the southern suburbs of Chicago. Grab a bite to eat in New Lenox or at Frankfort’s trail namesake Old Plank Trail Tavern. In the spring, more than 200 unique prairie plants grow alongside the trail.

Alta to Toulon
Rock Island Trail State Park
Miles 26
Trail Surface Crushed limestone
Ride with the wind at your back along the northern portion of this trail, pedaling south beneath a canopy of trees and through a tallgrass prairie. A trestle bridge crosses the Spoon River, plus there’s a depot marking the spot railroad passengers frequented a century ago.

Algonquin to Aurora
Fox River Bike Trail
Miles 44
Trail Surface Mostly asphalt and concrete
Fuel up at Van’s Frozen Custard and Burgers in East Dundee on this north-south route along the Fox River and through historic towns like Elgin and St. Charles. Look for eagles and herons while cruising through two forest preserves and the Hawthorne Hill Nature Center.

Harrisburg to Karnak
Tunnel Hill State Trail
Miles 45
Trail Surface Mostly concrete, also crushed limestone
Slicing through the Shawnee National Forest, Tunnel Hill’s name comes from the 543-foot-long tunnel once used by railcars. There’s also 23 trestles to cross from a mere 34 feet to 450 feet long. Near Karnak, pedal past swamps with ancient cypress and tupelo trees at Cache River State Natural Area.
Explore Adventures
In the Elgin Area

There's no better place to see the colder seasons than in the Elgin Area! From Nightmare on Chicago Street in October to the festivities throughout, see more at: ExploreElginArea.com

Visit Effingham
A Midwestern Getaway

www.visitEffinghamil.com
handcrafted wellness

Treat yourself (and friends and family) with locally created self-care products from these Illinois Made makers.

“Basic, simple skin care is approachable, affordable and can be such a relaxing part of your daily ritual,” says Scratch Goods cofounder Maureen McClure (above, right). She and Elizabeth Leipold, friends from high school, started a skin care line with locally sourced, plant-based ingredients more than a dozen years ago. From selling on Etsy to pop-ups, the two now have a permanent space in Chicago’s West Loop neighborhood.

“Developing a ritual around your skin care can be very meditative. It can help clear your mind, connect with your senses and anchor your day with meaningful alone time,” McClure says. Yes, please!

The Mask Bar
Book a seat at Scratch Good’s 44-person Mask Bar and receive guidance from staff as you experiment with handmade masks and face oils.

Natural Ingredients
The face oils, body scrubs and soaks use edible ingredients from ethical sources, including local producers and family farms.
Fall is in the air and that means it’s the perfect time to discover the legends and lore along the Last 100 Miles of Route 66 in Illinois. Delight in the dazzling fall colors as you discover the new Route 66 Postcard Mural & Monuments Trail found in the only place in America where the Mother Road of Route 66 meets the Great River Road.
PURE PLEASURES
Water Sweets Soap Company creates bath and body products free from preservatives and detergents. While natural skin care goods are a boon for all, it’s especially important for people with sensitivities or skin conditions. That’s why their Bare line’s soaps and lotion bars are either unscented or scented with essential oils only. For a luxurious first experience, try the Bubble Scoops during your next soak. You’ll find both in the Edwardsville and O’Fallon stores or online.

FUEL YOUR DAY
Local artwork and a tile mural featuring an adventurous goat nibbling from a coffee tree adorn the walls at Mad Goat Coffee, along with a colorful sign proclaiming, “Enjoy our coffee and your community.” Cofounder Sam George believes in fostering connections between customers and staff, and also among coffee-lovers. “Besides bolstering emotional health, grabbing a favorite coffee or latte provides an accessible and affordable way to treat yourself,” George says. If you’re in the Danville area, choose from two locations: The Flagship Cafe and Roastery on South Gilbert and The Original coffee shop on North Vermilion. Or sign up to have fresh-roasted beans shipped to your home with a coffee subscription.

FIELDS OF FLOWERS
Cherished for its calming properties, lavender not only smells fantastic but also enhances well-being. Take a field trip to Shawnee Hills Lavender in June to fully experience the blooming season. The aromatic plants grow on a hillside in Cobden that’s been farmed by co-owner Charlotte Clover’s family for more than 200 years. She and her husband, Doug, tend 12 plant varieties and more than 1,000 plants. Teas, home accessories and a bounty of other products are available year-round at Annabelle Market in Anna and online.

All in the Family
Water Sweets Soap Company founders Lisa and Alex Sutterfield, a mother-son duo, list every ingredient for all their products on their website.

VISIT THE MAKERS
Scan the code to learn more about all of the Illinois Made makers.

Fresh from the Field
In early summer, visitors to Shawnee Hills Lavender can cut their own lavender bundles, sip lavender lemonade and peruse the gift shop.

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Known for her roles in TV shows *Dexter* and *Lucifer*, this Latina actor is grateful for her Midwest roots—and the Chicago theater scene that started her passion.

Aimee Garcia practically grew up onstage, making her debut at the age of seven as a dancer in *Cinderella* at Chicago’s iconic Auditorium Theatre, then going on to star as Clara in the Arri Crown Theater’s production of *The Nutcracker*.

Shifting her talents from live performance to film and television, Garcia landed her first break-out role on the *George Lopez* show, then portrayed a variety of characters until she became doting nanny Jamie Batista on *Dexter*. Fantasy fans then fell in love with her portrayal of indefatigable forensic scientist Ella Lopez on *Lucifer*. Last year, she channeled a similar high energy as a surprisingly down-to-earth pop star in the Netflix film *Christmas with You*, starring opposite Freddie Prinze Jr.

Garcia’s latest movie, *The Cases of Mystery Lane*, currently on Hallmark Movies and Mysteries channel and streaming on Peacock, combines the comic timing of some of her best roles with clever detective work that would make Ella proud.

Though her shooting schedule keeps her busy in Los Angeles, Garcia ensures that she spends plenty of time back home in Chicago. We managed to catch up with her to discuss her favorite city restaurants, throwing out the first pitch at (several) Cubs games and her Chicago holiday traditions.

_Hometown Proud_

“People from Chicago are just really nice, salt of the earth, grounded, friendly people. You know once you’re from there that’s it. It’s like you carry the city with you everywhere you go,” Garcia says.
On the case

Garcia and Paul Campbell star as Birdie and Alden Case, amateur sleuths with some secrets of their own.

You grew up sitting in the cheap seats at Wrigley Field. What was it like to come back and throw out the first pitch at a Cubs game?

I’ve thrown the first pitch a few times. It was so cool to be in the middle of that field, because it has so much history. My dad had me go out and practice on my old little league field, and he was like: “You gotta aim for the catcher’s head. You gotta practice. You gotta remember you’re on a mound, so you have to aim high.”

My first throw was great. I mean, it wouldn’t win any awards, but it made it to the plate, and I was very excited. My second one was a bit of a grounder, but the catcher made me look good. And my third one was just... Bad News Bears. It’s nerve-racking because you just have one shot.

Oak Park was also a big part of your childhood. Is there something that draws you back there?

I love trees. I’m obsessed with these beautiful oxygen makers that just instantly relax you. And birds, there are tons of birds out that way. If they’re in season, you can see cardinals, which is very romantic because they’re always in pairs.

We hear you are also part owner of a hometown soccer team?

Yes, the Red Stars. I’m very proud of them. Honestly, when they approached me about part ownership, I really just wanted to support women in Chicago. They play at the SeatGeek Stadium in Bridgeview. It’s a great place to watch a game. It’s very open, so everyone has a good seat and can feel like they’re close to the action. These women are strong and athletic—and just total champions.

What are some of your favorite traditions when you come home to Chicago?

I go to Little Village and get conchas, which are Mexican sweet bread rolls, and I’ll go to Casa Central to have Puerto Rican food. Then I’ll hit downtown, especially the Art Institute and Jazz Showcase on Plymouth Court. They always have incredible jazz musicians, and it’s very intimate. If I’m having a night out with my friends from Northwestern, I’ll go to Soho House.
As a founding member of Soho House Chicago, what do you think of that incredible rooftop pool?

A It’s a 360-degree view. You’re looking out at the Willis Tower and toward the lake. It’s really nice, especially during the summer.

You were a triple major at Northwestern. What was it like to go to school so close to home?

A I’m a very family-oriented person so I wanted to stay close to them. We would have dinner every Sunday, and all my college friends would come. Latin families are just very warm and open, so anyone who didn’t have a home, we’d take them home and feed them. It was like an extended family.

Northwestern struck me as a well-rounded school where you could be artistic and academic. I majored in economics, journalism and French, but I also played Morales in A Chorus Line.

Tell us about your production company and its Chicago ties.

A AJ Mendez (The New York Times bestseller author of Crazy is My Superpower) and I created Scrappy Heart Productions to elevate diverse voices across all media and tell the stories we didn’t have growing up. AJ and I love brainstorming at The Wormhole Coffee. The 80s-inspired artwork inspires us! We wrote our first comic, Glow, there.

What was it like breaking into the performing arts in Chicago at such a young age?

A I was really lucky to have a place like Lifeline Theatre. I got my theater break there, but Chicago also gave me my TV break. I did McDonald’s commercials with Michael Jordan and Sammy Sosa when I was just 12 years old. I remember Jordan loved strawberry milkshakes. I got to spend 12 hours with a living legend. But Chicago keeps you humble. There’s no believing your own hype when you’re from the Midwest. Roll up your sleeves, focus on the work and be respectful.

Start (or end the day) with a Red Stars soccer match at SeatGeek Stadium. You can go with the whole family. The venue’s Branding Iron Bar and Grill is good. Nearby, there’s a cute little place called Billy Jo’s Drive-Thru. They have burgers, subs and butter garlic fries (definitely not diet food).
Welcome to Chicago, where you can’t help but feel the magic of the holidays. With its festive atmosphere, twinkling lights, and unforgettable celebrations, Chicago is bustling with excitement and events all season long.

1. **THE MAGNIFICENT MILE**
   Shop for gifts in one of the world’s most famous shopping districts, decorated for the holidays with one million twinkling lights.

2. **MILLENIUM PARK**
   Take a spin around the ice in the shadow of The Bean or skate through a snow-covered park on the whimsical Skating Ribbon.

3. **LINCOLN PARK ZOO**
   ZooLights, a beloved winter tradition, transforms this historic zoo into a dazzling wonderland with holiday activities for the whole family.

4. **DALEY PLAZA**
   Step inside Christkindlmarket, a traditional German holiday market filled with authentic food and drinks, artisan crafts, and lots of charm. Daley Plaza is also where you’ll find the giant Menorah lit up for Hanukkah.

5. **THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY**
   Don’t miss the Christmas Around the World and Holidays of Light exhibits, where you can discover holiday customs from all over the globe.

6. **CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS**
   The city’s neighborhoods are all decked out for the holidays, with tons of local shopping and unique boutiques in Andersonville, Hyde Park, Wicker Park, Pilsen, and beyond.

Discover more one-of-a-kind holiday experiences in Chicago.
Beer requires just four ingredients—grain, hops, yeast and water. Brewmasters heading up the many destinations on Illinois’ beer trails, however, prove it’s an endlessly riffable recipe.

Find farm-to-foam brewing along the Heritage Corridor Ale Trail.

THE LONE BUFFALO BY TANGLE ROOTS BREWING COMPANY OTTAWA
Live music every day.
Fall festivals that celebrate all cultures.
Public art and free museums.

Request your free guide and plan your fall getaway to the Champaign-Urbana area.
Northwest Illinois Ale Trail
Freeport and Galena Area

Two of the seven taprooms harness local bounty. Generations Brewing Company in Freeport has Pretzel City Amber Ale, which is brewed with bits of locally made pretzels. Freeport is known as Pretzel City thanks in part to German settlers and their love for the twisty snack. Wishful Acres Farm and Brewery grows hops, pumpkins, basil and other ingredients for its small-batch beers in Lena.

Northwest Illinois Ale Trail
Freeport and Galena Area

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Lake Count Libation Trail
Chicago’s North Suburbs

Stop by Lake County’s first brewpub, Mickey Finn’s Brewery, to try suds made on-site. (Ask about cask and growler offerings.) Ravinia Brewing Company’s rotating taco menu and its ever-shifting craft beer offerings warrant repeat trips. Receive discounts at the nearly 30 participating breweries, wineries and distilleries during the area’s Spooks and Spirits celebration in October.

Rock Island Ale Trail
Peoria to Toulon

Cyclists may need some extra time to travel the 26-mile Rock Island State Trail connecting downtown Peoria and Toulon, thanks to the six breweries worth visiting along the way. In Peoria, change a flat tire at the bike repair station at Obed and Isaac’s, a microbrewery housed in an 1889 church, or quaff the prickly pear cactus-spiked Desert Juice at Bearded Owl Brewing.

Southern Illinois Beer Trail
Alton to Cobden

This extensive trail with 15 taprooms is divided into three loops: red, blue and green. A few faves from each include dog-friendly Old Bakery Beer Company (red loop), St. Nicholas Brewing Company (in a Mark Twain haunt on the blue loop); and Apple Knocker Hard Cider (green loop), which celebrates the classic fruit.

In Chicago, the Ravenswood Industrial Corridor (aka Malt Row) presents its own distinctive take on the craft at 10 independent breweries. Find a grapefruit-tinged IPA at Spiteful Brewing, a honey-laced Blizzard of ’67 pale ale at Hop Butcher For the World, and botanical-infused ales at Cultivate by Forbidden Root. Not a hop fan? Try gin or whiskey at KOVAL, Chicago’s first after-prohibition distillery, or sip on a Cabernet Franc at VIN312 Winery’s tasting room.
Experience the Historic
Enjoy the Contemporary!

Arts • Entertainment • History
Shopping • Food • Family Fun

Visit Geneva, Illinois...
ALWAYS IN SEASON!

Anytime is the right time to visit Geneva! Some of Chicagoland’s finest shops, restaurants and taverns are here for you to enjoy year-round. In the fall, our Festival of the Vine offers the perfect blend of good wine, good food and good fun for the whole family. Celebrate a sparkling winter season to remember at our annual Christmas Walk & House Tour. Whatever the season, Geneva is here to welcome you! Go to visitgenevaill.com for event details and ticketing information.

Festival of the Vine Sept. 8-10
Christmas Walk Dec. 1
House Tour Dec. 1 & 2
illinois on ice

Winter in the Land of Lincoln makes an art out of contrasts. To wit: Each thrilling outdoor adventure pairs with cozy lodging and dining to create the perfect combo of play and stay.
Warm up to colorful fun in Lake County

Lake County, just north of Chicago, offers countless ways to enjoy its family-friendly fun. From pumpkin patches and Halloween activities to holiday light shows and Great Wolf Lodge’s amazing indoor waterpark, there’s something for everyone. Book your stay at GreatWolf.com/Illinois. Plan your getaway at VisitLakeCounty.org.
SKIING + SNOWBOARDING
Ensure you’re first in line when the ski lifts start running by booking a stay in one of the 100 rooms at Chestnut Mountain Resort in Galena. Thanks to 19 different runs (including meandering bunny hills and pulse-pounding black diamonds), skiers of all levels will find an area ideal for their skill set. Snowboarders head to the Farside, a terrain park packed with more than 25 trails (and its own chairlift). Off the mountain, discover miles and miles of winter hiking trails and an indoor pool.

G I A N T  C I T Y  S T A T E  P A R K,  M A K A N D A
Set out on a guided walk through Giant City and see giant icicles up close in the Shawnee National Forest. The rocky, castle-like walls of Giant City Lodge deliver a similar wow moment for hikers, who nestle in at their private cabin after ascending the 50-foot-tall observation deck (closed mid-December to February 2).

A L S O  C H E C K  O U T
X Games aficionados practice sliding over boxes and rails at Four Lakes Alpine Snowsports in Lisle, while beginner trails and novice-friendly tow ropes keep DuPage County’s ski area from getting too intimidating. Those ready to hop on a ski lift or take on the tubing hill can venture to Villa Olivia in Bartlett.
A memorable stop along historic Route 66, Uptown Normal combines world-class cultural attractions, vibrant events, eclectic restaurants, boutique retail shops, premier lodging and state-of-the-art transit with historic main street charm and warm midwestern hospitality.

Visit and discover how we’re changing the definition of Normal.

calendar, directory and more at uptownnormal.com
EAGLE WATCHING
Interpreters at the Alton and Grafton visitors centers periodically show off a living bald eagle, but if you miss the meet and greet, a hike to the top of Pere Marquette State Park’s lofty bluffs between December and March still presents an ideal vantage point for admiring the birds’ 7-foot-long wingspans as they glide above the Illinois River. The 50-foot-tall vaulted ceiling of the Pere Marquette Lodge’s Great Room does some soaring of its own, and offers the opportunity to thaw out by the quarter’s 700-ton stone fireplace. Then fill up on the Lodge’s famous, family-style fried chicken.

ALSO CHECK OUT
Tumultuous water flowing through locks and dams along the Mississippi River kick dazed fish up to the surface, well within striking distance of hungry eagles. Witness their hunting prowess at several spots in the Quad Cities region, including the clock tower at Rock Island’s Mississippi River Visitor Center.
ICE CLIMBING
Climbing the fragile sandstone walls at Starved Rock State Park is prohibited, but once the waterfalls pouring down the rock walls freeze over, those with a penchant for ascending ice can pack their crampons and ropes out to one of three areas—Wildcat, LaSalle and Ottawa canyons—to shimmy up 20- and 35-foot-tall sheets and columns looming higher than 90 feet in Oglesby. Refuel with beer-battered fried walleye at the Lodge Restaurant at Starved Rock Lodge, or soothe tired muscles in the hot tub in the pool room before settling down in a 1930s-era cabin built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

MORE IN GALENA
If you opt to spend the day shopping along Galena’s Main Street instead of playing in the snow, white cheddar cheese curds and hearty chicken, bacon and ranch pizza await when you meet up with the rest of your adrenaline-seeking crew at The Summit Food and Spirits at Chestnut Mountain Resort.

BE A WITNESS
DON’T FORGET ME
A gripping virtual reality experience takes you inside Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Ebensee during the Holocaust.
8 WEEKEND GETAWAYS

SOAK UP THE SUNNY DAYS AND CRISP NIGHTS OF AUTUMN WITH WEEKEND ESCAPES THAT INCLUDE LEAF-PEEPING, APPLE PICKING AND WINE TASTING.

WRITER JEN NILSSON
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Strike up the Marching Illini band’s fight song. If a homecoming weekend of nostalgic fun is on your agenda, then be sure to sneak in some of these experiences between the tailgates and parades.

Stay at the Champaign Garden Inn to explore downtown with ease, or camp at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve to see the stars at the state’s only International Dark Sky Park. View your old stomping grounds in a new light by following the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail or the public art walk that includes a sentimental stroll down Green Street where the Alma Mater statue welcomes you to Campustown. Drop by the Rose Bowl Tavern for live music. Gain firsthand knowledge of Champaign-Urbana’s explosion onto the culinary scene with a locally sourced steak at Hamilton Walker’s or a slab of double-smoked ribs at Wood N’ Hog BBQ. Find one of the food trucks making the area famous for cuisine on wheels or head for the fields and the farm-fresh goat cheese and gelato at Prairie Fruits Farm and Creamery.

Back to School

Starved Rock State Park sits between two nearby visit-worthy state parks: Matthiessen (with waterfalls and rock formations) and Buffalo Rock (with views of the Illinois River and three resident bison).

Everyone in the group deserves to be pampered, and that’s exactly what’s on the all-inclusive menu at Camp Aramoni in Tonica. Reserve a lavish, safari-style tent for yourself and five of your besties and relax into a weekend of leisure beneath the stars. Catch up over specialty cocktails and a seasonal (locally sourced) dinner served at The Barn before gathering around your personal bonfire to roast gourmet s’mores.

After your à la carte breakfast, plan for a group outing to nearby Starved Rock State Park, where 13 miles of trails meander through stunning canyons with waterfalls that sparkle in the autumn sunshine. For a guided adventure, book a Fall Colors Trolley Tour that includes lunch at Starved Rock Lodge followed by a scenic hike to Council Overhang and Ottawa Canyon.

Spend the late afternoon exploring the boutiques of downtown Utica, where a visit to the tasting room of August Hill Winery is a must. Choose your favorite wine and share a bottle on the patio—local musicians often jam on the weekends. Then catch the sunset back at camp. The surrounding forest comes to life, and the soothing sounds of the Vermilion River will lull you to sleep in the tent’s luxury linens.
FAMILY GETAWAY
Northeast Illinois

The kids will talk about this weekend for years. Start at the Richardson Adventure Farm in Spring Grove, where the family will get delightfully lost inside a corn maze. Take a private hayride around the farm and try Zorbing (rolling down a hill while running inside of a huge, 11-foot-diameter ball). Because you’ll likely need to unwind after that experience, fear not—there is a beer-and-wine tent next to the live pig races. Relax at a picnic table while the kids take on a 150-foot-long slide and a 750-foot-long zipline.

Then it’s on to the Great Wolf Lodge in Gurnee. Water-lovers will splash away the day in the indoor water park with four-story waterslides and a lazy river. Land-lovers will be entertained by the minigolf course, climbing wall and arcade. Dine at one of the on-site restaurants before hibernating in your wolf-themed suite. The fun doesn’t stop there. Just down the road, Six Flags Great America awaits. The theme park has 16 roller coasters to put the cherry on top of this weekend filled with thrills.

Splash, play and stay at Gurnee’s Great Wolf Lodge. The indoor water park includes tube rides and a lazy river, while Howlers Peak Ropes Course offers an aerial adventure as you climb through obstacles.

YOU PICK THE FUN
Grafton

The fresh, apple-scented orchard air is calling. Snag your field access pass to Eckert’s Grafton Farm and fill a pail with homegrown apples. Before you leave for a scenic drive along the Mississippi bluffs, grab a family-size bag of Eckert’s famous kettle corn.

On your way to downtown Grafton, you’ll pass the vineyards of Grafton Winery and Brewhaus. Stop for lunch on the outdoor patio with live music on weekends and river views.

Check in at Aerie’s Resort before sunset so you can hop on the SkyTour, an open-air chair or gondola that glides above the golden and yellow trees to your hilltop hotel. Take in the setting sun and views of the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers from Aerie’s Winery and Terrace before soaking in the jetted tub in your cozy suite.

The morning breeze brings the anticipation of airborne adventure. Hop on Aerie’s Alpine Coaster, Illinois’ first-ever, and ride its 4,000 feet of hairpin turns and twists. Then explore the treetop canopies high above the bluffs with the Grafton Zipline tour before riding the SkyTour back to the downtown streets.

Ride in style on the Grafton SkyTour. Both the enclosed gondolas and chairlifts take passengers from the confluence of two rivers to Aerie’s Resort.
FALL INTO HARVEST
Shawnee National Forest

The slopes of Shawnee National Forest are dotted with tasting rooms that offer generous pours and gorgeous views. Relax on the grass at Alto Vineyards in Alto Pass for an afternoon of live music, then dine at Peachbarn Winery and Cafe, where locally sourced food is paired with wine from the vines. Because no wine trail tour is complete without an overnight stay, see the stars from your deck at the Bed and Breakfast Cottages of the Von Jakob Winery and Brewery.

Wake up early for a “flight” through the treetops with Shawnee Bluffs Canopy Tour in Makanda. Enjoy fresh sandwiches in the Tuscan-inspired winery and tasting room at Blue Sky Vineyard or nosh on apps in the late afternoon while listening to local musicians. Try a flight of Vintner’s Reserve at Feather Hills Vineyard and Winery, then enjoy a vineyard picnic at Owl Creek Vineyard in Cobden.

Save time for a glass of rosé or a dessert wine at Hickory Ridge Vineyard in Pomona. The view of Shawnee Hills is magnificent.

WINE TRAIL PASSPORT
Collect stamps and receive deals and discounts as you taste your way through the harvest season with the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail Passport ($20).
ROAD TRIP!

Great River Road National Scenic Byway

Your journey begins along the Mississippi River with a stroll down Galena’s red-bricked Main Street before driving south to Fulton and the 100-foot-tall de Immigrant Windmill that celebrates the town’s Dutch heritage. At the John Deere Pavilion in Moline, many pieces of equipment are on display for visitors to sit in the driver’s seat. Quench your thirst at a Nauvoo tasting room: Baxter’s Vineyards is Illinois’ oldest winery. Then fuel up on pizza and cheese plates at the winery’s bar, the Wine Barrel, before settling in for the night at Ten Acre Treehouses.

After breakfast at family-owned Thyme Square Bakery and Cafe in Quincy, take a drive along towering bluffs. Photo ops include Alton’s Robert Wadlow Statue (the world’s tallest man), the World’s Largest Catsup Bottle in Collinsville, and the Popeye the Sailor Man statue in Chester. Relax for the night in Anna at the Davie School Inn with luxury amenities and complimentary breakfast in a converted schoolhouse located near Shawnee National Forest.

A trek through the corn maze at Jonamac Orchard takes 30 to 45 minutes. On Saturday nights in September, stay for drinks and music during Cider House After Hours. On Friday and Saturday nights in October, the maze is haunted!

SMALL TOWNS, BIG CHARM

Rock River Valley

Trade in city lights for night skies when you explore the eco-friendly farms and small-town delights of the Rock River Valley. In Malta, the tasting room of Jonamac Orchard Cider House lets you sample apple wines and hard ciders on a garden patio that overlooks the 105-acre farm.

Check in to the Lincoln Way in Franklin Grove, where a crackling fire awaits. The inn offers a dinner kit filled with locally sourced meat and produce, and you can grill your meal in the garden pagoda. Schedule a morning tour of the inn’s orchard and apiary and stock up on jars of prairie-wildflower honey made from the hives of the bees you will visit. Continue your outdoor exploration with a visit to Nachusa Grasslands. A half-mile trail from the visitors center offers views of the prairie, woodlands and wetlands beyond. If you’re lucky, you’ll even spy a herd of bison.

Stop at the Franklin Creek Grist Mill to see how cornmeal and flour were produced in the 1800s, then hop on the historic Lincoln Highway. Visit the Lincoln Monument in Dixon before fueling up at The Rusty Fox Wine and Alehouse in Sterling.

A road trip along the southern portion of the 550-mile-long Great River Road takes leaf-peeking to the next level.
After saying hello to (and capturing a selfie with) Máximo, the world’s largest titanosaur, at the Field Museum, wander through ancient Egypt and a replica earth lodge.

SPORTS-LOVERS’ GETAWAY

Chicago

Home base for this weekend of sports and sightseeing is the Chicago Athletic Association. Its Venetian Gothic halls pay homage to the hotel’s history as an exclusive club. Today, the space is open to all and, it’s a good thing, too, because it’s across from Chicago’s Millennium Park.

Check in and head to the second floor for a lunch of double smashburgers at the Game Room. You and your crew can rekindle the competition over shuffleboard and bocce ball. Cross the street to see The Bean and the spitting faces of Crown Fountain before heading south past the iconic lions of the Art Institute of Chicago and through Grant Park.

Work up an appetite with an afternoon exploring any of the museums at Museum Campus along the banks of Lake Michigan before going out for steaks and chops at Harry Caray’s Italian Steakhouse.

Football Sunday means it’s time to “Bear Down.” Find your way to Soldier Field to partake in the pregame tailgate or book a behind-the-scenes stadium tour.

Millennium Park’s most notable features include Cloud Gate, aka The Bean; the Jay Pritzker Pavilion; Crown Fountain; and Lurie Garden.

IT’S ALL HERE

Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium, the Field Museum and more great sites call the Lake Michigan campus home.
GET YOUR HAUNT ON THIS HALLOWEEN WITH EERIE HOTELS, GHOST TOURS AND MORE OTHERWORLDLY DESTINATIONS ACROSS THE PRAIRIE STATE.

WRITER SHAYLA MARTIN
If you’re unafraid of things that go bump in the night, check into these hotels known for notorious guests and paranormal happenings.

**CONGRESS PLAZA HOTEL**
Chicago
You’ll be in infamous company when you overnight here, where notable villains like Al Capone and America’s first serial killer, Dr. H.H. Holmes, were guests. Capone’s ghost is rumored to roam the halls, along with Peg Leg Johnny, a hobo ghost with a penchant for causing electrical disruptions.

**THE DRAKE HOTEL**
Chicago
Take your chances on the 10th floor, where the “Lady in Red,” a woman who leapt from a window in 1920, has been said to wander the floor. In celebration of Halloween, the hotel offers a Palm Court Spooky Afternoon Tea with devilish delights (October 5–31).

**THE DE SOTO HOUSE**
Galena
You may see a “Lady in Black” disappear into the wall. And don’t be surprised if items unexpectedly move.

**HOTEL BAKER**
St. Charles
Moaning noises have been heard from the top floor of this boutique hotel. Other notable past guests include John F. Kennedy and Gerald Ford.

**HOTEL KASKASKIA**
La Salle
Phantom footsteps and an elevator door that randomly opens are a couple of the reported mysterious happenings.

**THE ROSE HOTEL**
Elizabethtown
The reflection of a former servant named Tote has been spotted in mirrors.

**RUEBEL HOTEL**
Grafton
A young girl from the 1800s named Abigail has been heard walking in the hallways.

Chicago has hotels like Congress Plaza that are likely to thrill ghost hunters.

**FEAR FACTOR**
Use these icons as an age-appropriate guide.

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The 6th floor penthouse at Hotel Baker is rumored to be haunted.

EnjoyIllinois.com
IF YOU DARE...
You can give yourself a fright by visiting one of the most haunted small towns in America.

ALTON
Alton’s sordid past of war, murder, disease and destruction makes the presence of ghosts nearly inescapable. Learn more at the Old Alton Prison, where more than 1,400 Confederate soldiers died from smallpox. Numerous area hauntings involve basements, including the First Unitarian Church, where the preacher died mysteriously in 1934. People have heard voices in the basement ever since. The Jacoby Arts Center basement once housed a morgue, and the Piasa Masonic’s is said to be haunted by the spirit of a Confederate soldier. Get all the details with a guided tour by Alton Odyssey Tours. The three-hour trolley tour includes the famous McPike Mansion, the Stratford Hotel and Milton School.

GRACELAND CEMETERY AND ARBORETUM Chicago
This cemetery features some especially creepy grave sites, like the Dexter Graves monument, which is rumored to give you visions of your own death if you look the statue, Eternal Silence, in its eyes.
After dark, ghosts may join you on the Six Flags Carousel.

GHOST STORY TRAIN
South Elgin
Hop a creepy trolley down to the haunted forest preserve for an evening of family-friendly ghost stories (October 7, 14, and 21).

SIX FLAGS KIDS BOO FEST
Gurnee
During the day, it’s slightly spooky fun! Families can take a spin on roller coasters, enjoy a hay maze and get treats on a trail (select days, September 16–October 29).

THE OLD JOLIET HAUNTED PRISON
Joliet
The former women’s prison annex transforms into a truly terrifying house of horrors at night (select nights, September 29–November 5).

SIX FLAGS FRIGHT FEST
Gurnee
As the sun sets and the moon rises, be ready to shriek: haunted houses, heart-pounding roller coasters and spine-chilling shows (select nights, September 16–October 29).

GHOST TOURS
Experience supernatural adventure with a dash of history.

FREE TOURS BY FOOT
Chicago
Popular stops on this name-your-own-price tour include the Congress Hotel and “Death Alley” near the former Iroquois Theatre (weekends through October).

MATTHEW’S HAUNTED PUB CRAWL
Galena
Sip spirits among the spirits (March to October, every day; Fridays and Saturdays the rest of the year).

MINERAL SPRINGS HOTEL
Alton
Managers Dave and Donna Nunnally give guided tours of the defunct hotel (now revitalized as a shopping venue with their store, It’s Raining Zen, and the Soul Asylum Museum) with known spirits Lou Harwood and Pearl Sans.

AMELIA’S GALENA GHOST TOURS
Galena
Both shuttle and walking tours take patrons to the most haunted places (year-round).

LINCOLN’S GHOST WALK: LEGENDS AND LORE
Springfield
Go on a 10-block walking tour with bizarre stories at various Lincoln-related locations, discussing his life and death (through September, weekends only in October).

OLD JOLIET PRISON TOUR
Joliet
Take a self-guided walking tour during the day (through mid-November).

GET together with other fans of spine-tingling specters throughout the haunting season at these attractions.
JUST YOUR STYLE

Whether your look is midcentury modern, rustic or a little bit of everything, you’ll find the perfect piece for your home with these design-savvy shopping experiences.

WRITERS SHAYLA MARTIN AND BRIAN KRAMER

BE NICE
Sounds simple, but nothing ruins a potential deal faster than a buyer with attitude. Smile, ask questions—and listen.

BARGAIN A BIT
Many sellers will discount 5 to 10 percent if you ask. Rather than name a specific price, ask “Can you do better?”

SIZE IT UP
Will it fit? Carry a mini measuring tape in your pocket and a list of room dimensions in your phone to know for sure.

TAKE A BREATHER
Quality antique furniture sells slowly. If you’re on the fence, snap a pic and take the dealer’s card so you can follow up later.

ANTIQUES AND VINTAGE
Illinois antiques shops, malls and markets are home to classic and quirky finds, all ready to embark on their second (or third) lives in your home. At Galena Antique Mall, more than 55 dealers offer furniture, collectibles and jewelry under one roof, while Tin-Pan Alley spans the centuries with 1800s Victorian and French furniture, Art Deco fixtures, and chic garden accents. In a former school building, Elizabeth’s Grand Antique Company hosts up to 200 vendors in classrooms spread over three floors in Elizabeth. Chicago is home to an abundance of history-rich home furnishings. Standout establishments like Brownstone Antiques and Salvage One feature sprawling retail spaces.

WRITERS SHAYLA MARTIN AND BRIAN KRAMER

HOME DESIGN

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WRITERS SHAYLA MARTIN AND BRIAN KRAMER
MIDCENTURY MODERN

If clean lines, sophisticated scale and curved statement pieces are your vibe, chances are you’re a midcentury modern design fan. At Modern Vibe in Evanston, you’ll find stunning American- and Scandinavian-designed furniture, including teak tables, shapely recliners and sleek credenzas. Circa Modern in Chicago specializes in elegant modular sofas, whimsical chairs, showstopping lighting and original art. Husband and wife Erick and Kayla Pausz own and operate Spaced Out Studio in Chicago’s North Park neighborhood. Discover vintage midcentury modern Scandinavian gems imported from Denmark and modern handmade pieces.

UNDERSTAND THE MARKET

Don’t expect big discounts. Given its popularity and limited inventory, prices for midcentury furniture are often higher and less flexible than comparable items from other eras.

MAKE IT A HABIT

Visit shops or their websites regularly (we’re talking weekly or even daily) to learn what’s new and what’s in demand.

DO THE RESEARCH

Learn the details and brand markers of genuine midcentury manufacturers by reading blogs, online discussion groups, and books on designs and designers you admire.

QUESTION THAT BARGAIN

Lower-priced midcentury pieces are often restorations or reproductions. (Some reproductions are as old as the originals.) If you love a well-made reproduction piece, go ahead and add it to your home. Just be sure you’re paying an appropriate price.
RUSTIC AND RECLAIMED

If farmhouse style gives you all the feels, create your own look with furniture crafted from reclaimed lumber and other elements. (Bonus: Reusing and repurposing wood and other materials keeps them out of landfills.) Check out Sangamon Reclaimed in Springfield for dining tables and cutting boards from walnut and pine. Square Nail (a custom furniture and woodworking company in Chicago) specializes in solid lumber and reclaimed materials. Born Again Barns and Lumber Company dismantles barns, salvages wood and builds custom pieces in Antioch. They specialize in live-edge slabs and craft mantels, desks, tables and bookshelves. Woman-owned Urban Wood Goods in Gurnee makes custom tables from sustainably reclaimed wood.

Handcrafted

Amish-made furniture is known for its custom construction and attention to detail. You’ll find traditional- and contemporary-style bedroom, dining and living room sets, all with lifetime guarantees, at Kauffman Amish Furniture Outlet in Arcola. For more than 25 years, David Stine has grown, harvested and milled wood on his family’s fourth-generation farm in Dow for his line of custom creations at David Stine Furniture (showroom by appointment).

Hefty and Strong

Reclaimed wood and furniture made from it can be surprisingly heavy.

Seek Design Help

Transforming vintage materials into furniture takes knowledge and vision. Ask shop owners to guide you through their inventory and furniture-building processes. Learn up-front what aspects you can customize to suit your style and space.

Embrace Irregularity

The grain and details of reclaimed wood can vary widely, even when two boards are the same species. Think of this as character you fall in love with, not a flaw you need to hide or fix.

Enjoy the Wait

Custom furniture takes time. Ask for a finish date but stay flexible.
THE MART
Visited by nearly 30,000 people a day, THE MART is the world’s largest commercial building and design destination with more than 250 premier design showrooms. Connect with a designer to craft a custom piece or check out one of many design events open to the public. One of a Kind (early December) is a popular four-day show that features more than 500 outstanding artists, makers and designers of handmade ceramics, clothing, jewelry, paper goods and home decor. It’s the perfect destination for exceptional holiday gifts! Every spring, the show returns for a three-day iteration of the classic event.

ECLECTIC AND FLEA
Illinois has multiple spots where you can snag truly one-of-a-kind home decor. Woolly Mammoth Chicago brims with unusual finds like antique taxidermy, skeletons and science lab equipment. Score quality knickknacks and fuel your hunt with homemade fudge, burgers and ice cream at Pink Elephant Antique Mall in Livingston. At Kane County Flea Market in St. Charles, peruse vinyl records and sports collectibles on the first Sunday of each month and the preceding Saturday (March through December). And on Sundays, don’t miss Wolff’s Flea Market in Rosemont, where hundreds of vendors fill the parking lot of Allstate Arena with antiques, books, art, video games, tools and more (from late April through October 29).

Art on THE MART is the largest permanent digital art projection in the world and showcases contemporary artwork nightly on the building’s facade (through December).

TAKE TWO PASSES
Avoid overwhelm by walking the entire shop, market or event space quickly—then going back and spending quality time with the booths that caught your attention.

PREPARE TO DIG
Many markets are dusty affairs. Wear clothes and shoes that can get dirty.

CASH OUT
You’ll get the best deals if you pay in cash. And have smaller bills on hand if you’ll be buying bits and baubles from multiple vendors.

GROUP TO SAVE
This strategy almost always works: Offer to purchase two or more items but pay a lower price than the total on the price tags.

COME AGAIN
Returning to a booth, shop or market builds rapport with sellers, clues them into your interests—and often leads to lower prices.
Memories are waiting to be made in the Chicagoland area beneath the glittering lights that illuminate window displays, theater marquees, skating rinks and outdoor gardens. Create your new favorite holiday traditions here.

**WRITER ANGELA UFHEIL**

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**LIGHTSCAPE AT CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN, GLENCOE**
Salute the season with a resplendent outdoor experience. Walk through an enchanting, after-dark, illuminated all-new path that winds by favorite artistic installations along with inventive new works 🌃November 10–January 08

**HOOLIGHTS AT LINCOLN PARK 🌃**
What could be better than an engaging light show and an ice-carving spectacle? Seeing it all from the top of a Ferris wheel that soars above the event. Afterward, wander the grounds, say hello to the animals and meet Santa 🌃November 10–January 08

**THE WINTRIST MAGNIFICENT MILE LIGHTS FESTIVAL**
Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse from Walt Disney Resort lead a music-filled parade that passes by 200 illuminated trees on an iconic American street. Kick off the holiday season with festive performances and awe-inspiring fireworks 🌃November 18

**LIGHTSCAPE AT CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN, GLENCOE**
Roast s'mores while surrounded by a symphony of wooded lights. A mile-long pathway leads you through a captivating forest and past two outdoor sculptures and a festival of lanterns 🌃November 17–January 07

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**.sparkle & shine**

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**THE WINTRIST MAGNIFICENT MILE LIGHTS FESTIVAL**
Salute the season with a resplendent outdoor experience. Walk through an enchanting, after-dark, illuminated all-new path that winds by favorite artistic installations along with inventive new works 🌃November 10–January 08
ice-skate around

SKATING RIBBON AT MAGGIE DALEY PARK
When you glide along this curvy quarter-mile track, you feel like you’re skating on the surface of a frozen river as the ice slopes slightly up and down and winds around the climbing wall at one of Chicago’s most beloved parks.

McCORMICK TRIBUNE ICE RINK AT MILLENNIUM PARK
There’s nothing like skating beneath the holiday lights of the Chicago skyline while you catch your reflection in the famous Cloud Gate sculpture known as The Bean. The best part? Admission is free; reservations required.
holiday express train

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY
HOLIDAY TRAIN
Unable to hitch a ride on Santa’s sleigh this year? Your next best option might be catching the festively decorated holiday train (and bus) that crisscrosses Chicago, bringing joy to the neighborhoods. Track Santa’s transit schedule on the CTA website.

weekend getaways

GALENA
Welcoming inns and wineries dot the hills, while whimsical boutiques and candy shops line Main Street. Holiday Fire in the Sky is one of Galena’s seasonal festivities with fireworks (December 2). Night of the Luminaria and Living Windows sets the town aglow with more than 5,000 lights flickering alongside festive window displays (December 9).

ROCKFORD
The great outdoors beckons. Go tubing at Alpine Hills Adventure Park or wander through the twinkling trees and pagodas during the Illuminated experience at Anderson Japanese Gardens. The holiday season kicks off here with the annual Stroll on State Street (November 25), complete with a parade, fireworks and tree-lighting ceremony.

merry & bright shopping

MACY’S HOLIDAY WINDOWS AND TREE
It’s a Chicago holiday tradition. Every year, the windows of Macy’s State Street tell a new story through interconnected and intricately decorated displays. Don’t miss the 45-foot-tall tree that hangs from the 7th-floor Walnut Room ceiling.

MAGNIFICENT MILE
Find a gift for every person on your list along this stretch of Michigan Avenue, known globally for its shopping, hotels and attractions—plus restaurants and cafes like Starbucks Reserve Roastery, one of only six and the largest Starbucks in the world. Warm up with a dark chocolate mocha or a classic hot chocolate.
’tis the season onstage

THE NUTCRACKER BY THE JOFFREY BALLET
Mix holiday tradition and cutting-edge choreography with the city’s premiere ballet company. The Joffrey’s mesmerizing take on a Christmas classic finds the Nutcracker Prince and a young Marie dancing through Chicago’s 1893 World’s Fair (December 2–27).

BROADWAY IN CHICAGO
With five world-class theaters dotting the downtown district, Broadway in Chicago brings the spirit of the holidays to center stage. Festive productions light up historic marquees from the Magnificent Mile to State Street and beyond.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL, GOODMAN THEATRE
You know the holidays are here when Chicago’s oldest not-for-profit theater rolls out the red carpet for Ebenezer Scrooge and the Christmas spirit(s). For admirers young and old, the season is incomplete without the Goodman’s annual performance of this classic (November 18–December 31).

up on the rooftop

WINTER WONDERLAND AT IO GODFREY
Thanks to the year-round portico with retractable roof, outdoor firepits and heated igloos, guests can sip on cocktails while taking in city views.

CURLING AND COCKTAILS, UPSTAIRS AT THE GWEN
Test your talent for the sport of curling on the luxury rooftop terrace. Take the competition up a level with winter cocktails.

ICE-SKATING AT THE PENINSULA CHICAGO
Glide beneath the stars on the Sky Rink, four floors above the Magnificent Mile.

jolly good times

FROSTY’S CHRISTMAS BAR
This just might be where Santa comes to write his naughty list! Eggnog cocktails are served next to life-size toy soldiers in a three-level, seasonal pop-up experience that keeps the festivities flowing until 4 a.m.

BUTCH McGUIRE’S
This family-owned pub is the cornerstone of the legendary nightlife surrounding Rush and Division streets. That scene heats up for the holidays when nearly every inch of the ceiling is strung in garlands of light, and two double-decker trains run throughout the bar.

WRIGLEYVILLE WONDERLAND
Known as a shrine to baseball during the summer, this North Side neighborhood turns into the North Pole in winter. It’s a pop-up extravaganza with holiday-themed rides, a Christkindlmarket and dozens of pubs.
TRIP IDEAS AROUND THE STATE

CEDARHURST CENTER FOR THE ARTS, MT. VERNON

JAMES MILLIKIN HOMESTEAD, DECATUR

FOX RIVER, GENEVA

NAUVOO ILLINOIS TEMPLE, NAUVOO
Chicago & Beyond

Geneva keeps a low profile in the western suburbs, but it's a real gem awaiting discovery, especially for shoppers and fans of river-based rec.

About an hour west of downtown Chicago, IL-31 follows the curve of the Fox River as it flows through Geneva, a suburb of about 20,000 that flies a bit under the radar. Point your GPS in the city's direction and you'll pick up strong signals from its many attractions, especially the shopping areas. The historic downtown district offers 100-plus specialty shops, many set in charming Victorian-style homes. (Check out Third Street.) The cornerstone is The Little Traveler, a Italianate Victorian mansion (now more than a century old) that has expanded to include 36 rooms of gifts for your home, friends and family. Its contemporary counterpart is Geneva Commons, an open-air mall featuring more than 60 national brand and specialty shops, plus restaurants and a central parklike space for gatherings and events. More green space beckons in places like Island Park and Fabyan Forest Preserve, home to a five-story Dutch windmill. Both connect to the Fox River Trail, which lets hikers and bikers follow the water for 40 miles. Paddlers can take to the Fabulous Fox Water Trail, while bird-watchers may spot eagles, great blue herons and cormorants that fish the river. Or keep your eye on the ball at Northwestern Medicine Field, home of the Kane County Cougars, an independent professional baseball team.

DO

GENEVA HISTORY MUSEUM
An exhibit displays the restored dragon head and tail of a replica Viking ship from the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. The ship has resided at Good Templar Park for almost 30 years.

EAT

PENROSE BREWING COMPANY
Hop on over to the taproom for a taste of small-batch beers, including hazy IPAs, American lagers, fruited sours and imperial stouts. Take a tour and purchase a growler to go.

ATWATER’S RESTAURANT
Seasonal farm-to-table cuisine comes with views of the Fox River on the patio or inside with white tablecloths and high-backed chairs. For a private meal, rent the riverfront gazebo.

STAY

THE HERRINGTON INN AND SPA
Milk and cookies at bedtime is an apt amenity at the inn, a former creamery. Also soothing are the Fox River vistas, whirlpool tubs and spa massages.

THE OSCAR SWAN
Built in 1902, the country mansion has become a bed-and-breakfast. The four rooms and three suites have a cozy, vintage vibe and decor that pays homage to the estate’s original owning family.
The Nauvoo Illinois Temple
Walk around the limestone temple, which glows on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. What stands is a replica of the 1840s original, which was destroyed by arson. The temple is open only to Latter-day Saints.

The Red Front
Stop by the restaurant for breakfast sandwiches with even more offerings (pancakes and French toast) on weekends, and come back later for burgers and hot dogs.

Baxter’s Vineyards
Get a free tour and tasting at Illinois’ oldest winery—established in 1857 and run by the same family for five generations. The Wine Barrel, an on-site bar, serves apps and local wines by the glass.

The Nauvoo Grand
Built in 1904 on the site of an old Mormon homestead, the bed-and-breakfast provides Victorian-style elegance amid lush orchards and grape groves—Baxter’s Vineyards is across the street.

Hotel Nauvoo Historic Inn
Climb a winding walnut staircase to rooms at the inn, an 1841 building restored to period elegance and grace. Dinner is a famously sumptuous buffet.

Great Rivers Country
A church with more than 16 million members worldwide retains roots in Nauvoo, a Mississippi River town with rich history and abundant natural beauty.

In 1839, religious leader Joseph Smith brought his Latter-day Saints out of persecution in Missouri and into western Illinois. They bought a town and renamed it Nauvoo—Hebrew for “beautiful place.” Eventually, more than 10,000 Mormons called Nauvoo home, briefly making it the largest city in Illinois. However, trouble followed the Mormons, and in 1846 they migrated again, this time to Utah.

Today, though Nauvoo’s population is less than 1,000, the town fulfills the long-ago vision of a beautiful place—and historic sites resound with echoes of the Mormon era. You’ll find monuments honoring Smith and other figures among downtown’s restored shops, homes and buildings from the 1840s. Get the lay of the land at the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center, where you can browse artifacts and displays, including a large relief map of 1846 Nauvoo. Take a horse-drawn wagon ride past more than 30 historic sites downtown, or do a walking tour of trade buildings such as a bakery, tin shop and gunsmith.

At the Joseph Smith Historic Site, tour several original structures. The reconstructed Red Brick Store re-creates an 1840s general store. The Nauvoo Family Living Center offers a look at 1840s domestic life. Gain hands-on rope- and candle-making skills, watch guides weave rugs, and taste wheat bread from a brick oven.
Land of Lincoln
The air in Decatur is so thick with history—especially Lincoln’s—that you can taste it. Other local sights and flavors stimulate your senses too.

If you aim to find Lincoln lore, you’ll hit the bull’s-eye in Decatur—it’s in the middle of the state and a target-rich environment for Abe aficionados. Start with 15 wayside exhibits that highlight the 16th president’s ties to the area. Each contains a medallion you can rub off onto paper as a souvenir. Lincoln Trail Homestead State Park and Memorial features a bronze plaque near the site of the Lincoln family’s first Illinois home; in 1830, they settled about 10 miles west of town on the Sangamon River. The river’s importance was the subject of Lincoln’s first political speech, which he delivered in Decatur (age 21 and barefoot). A statue downtown commemorates the milestone. And Decatur also hosted the 1860 Illinois Republican Convention, where Abe received his first endorsement as a candidate for president.

It’s not all about Abe here, though. Visit the downtown Madden Arts Center to see exhibits of local and regional works or attend programs and classes from the Decatur Area Arts Council. Sites on the National Register of Historic Places include the Governor Richard J. Oglesby Mansion, a beautifully restored Victorian home; the 1896 Transfer House, once a hub for electric streetcars and interurban trains; and James Millikin Homestead, a stately brick mansion built in 1876 by a prominent banker who founded local Millikin University. A downtown trolley will take you by significant sites for free.

TRIP IDEAS

WAYNE FITZGERRELL
STATE RECREATION AREA

On Rend Lake, this rec area makes an ideal gateway to the great outdoors. Fishing, boating, camping, horseback riding, hiking and other adventures abound.

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL VILLAGE

Step back in time as you walk through the pioneer-era structures: log homes, a church, jail, one-room school, working blacksmith and print shops, and a general store.

EAT

THE WAFFLE COMPANY

Start your day with a fluffy, country omelet or a s’mores waffle. This small place is a hot spot for breakfast and lunch.

THE FROSTY MUG BAR AND GRILL

The smoked beef brisket and house-made pub chips get high marks from diners.

RARE CHOP HOUSE

Experience dining well done. The Cajun Shrimp comes with a chipotle aioli. Or try to slay the Beast Burger—it’s bulked up with boar, elk, bison and Wagyu beef.

STAY

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

Lodge close to all the popular attractions. The hotel has an on-site restaurant and lounge, and the spacious lobby features a 30-foot-tall water fountain.

Trails to Adventure

Mt. Vernon’s history is linked to two men of Mount Rushmore, but the town also has strong ties to the arts and the outdoors.

History and creativity abound in Mt. Vernon, which sits on high ground—a once swampy, thickly forested area—between Casey Fork and the Big Muddy River. Named for George Washington’s Virginia estate, Mt. Vernon boasts a link to another legendary POTUS: In 1839, Abraham Lincoln argued a famous tax case at the town’s Greek Revival-Italianate Appellate Courthouse. But there’s more history to the building. In 1888, American Red Cross founder Clara Barton used it as a makeshift hospital after a tornado hit the town. You can tour the courthouse (it’s still in use), but call in advance. There’s no need for an appointment at the annual Mt. Vernon Fall Festival (September 29–30). Come early to get a spot for the parade and enjoy the live entertainment, food and classic cars.

Relax and reflect at Veterans Park, where a memorial honors those who’ve served in all U.S. conflicts. There’s an island gazebo, plus courts for games and paths for walking. Allow plenty of time to explore Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, an 80-plus-acre estate with four galleries, a museum, an interactive family learning center, a performance hall, two historic homes and the Goldman-Kuenz Sculpture Park with more than 60 pieces. See a show at The Granada Theatre, an Art Deco venue built in 1937 and long known as the Crown Jewel of Southern Illinois. Now restored to its former glamour, the theater hosts concerts and special events.
travel resources

VISITORS BUREAUS

Chicago & Beyond
Aurora Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 630/256-3190, enjoyaurora.com
Blackhawk Waterways Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/678-2108, 815/946-2108, visitnorthwestillinois.com
Chicago Southland Convention and Visitors Bureau 888/895-8233, 708/895-8200, visitchicagosouthland.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
DuPage Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/232-0502, 630/575-8070, discoverdupage.com
Elgin Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/217-5362, 847/695-7540, exploreelginarea.com
Heritage Corridor Destinations 844/944-2282, 800/926-2262, heritagecorridorcvb.com
Kankakee County Convention and Visitors Bureau 815/935-7390, visitkankakeecounty.com
Meet Chicago Northwest 800/847-4849, 847/490-1010, chicagonorthwest.com
Naturally McHenry County 815/893-6280, naturallymchenrycounty.com
Rock Island Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/521-0849, 815/963-8111, gorockford.com
Rosemont Convention and Tourism Bureau 847/823-2100, rosemont.com
Visit Lake County 847/662-2700, visitlakecounty.org
Visit Oak Park 708/524-7800, visitoakpark.com
Tourism Center Turtle Creek I-90, rest area southbound, South Beloit

Great Rivers Country
Blackhawk Waterways Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/678-2108, 815/946-2108, visitnorthwestillinois.com
Galena Country Tourism 815/776-9200, visitgalena.org
Galesburg Tourism and Visitors Bureau 309/343-2485, experiencegalesburg.com
Great Rivers and Routes of Southwest Illinois 800/258-6645, 618/665-6676, riversandroutes.com
ILLINOISouth Tourism 618/257-1488, illinoisouth.org
Macomb Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 309/833-1515, visitfortgottonia.com
Bourbonnais Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/747-0302, 309/676-0303, peoria.org
P&amp;V Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/978-4748, 217/214-3700, seequincy.com
SOUTHERNMOST ILLINOIS Tourism Bureau 800/248-4373, 618/833-9928, southernmostillinois.com
Visit Quad Cities 800/747-7800, visitquadcities.com

Land of Lincoln
Bloomington Normal Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/433-8226, 309/665-0033, visitbn.org
Danville Area Visitors Bureau 800/383-3438, 217/442-2096, visitdanvillearea.com
Decatur Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/331-4479, 217/423-7000, decaturcvb.com
DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/772-0750, 217/342-5310, visitdekalb.com
ILLINOISouth Tourism 618/257-1488, illinoisouth.org
Jacksonville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 800/593-5678, 217/243-5678, jacksonvilleil.org
Lake Shelbyville Area CVB/Shelby County Tourism 800/874-3529, 217-774-2244, lakeshelbyville.com
Logansport Convention Bureau 217/732-8687, destinationlogancountyil.com
Visit Champaign County 800/369-6151, 217/351-4133, visitchampaigncounty.org
Visit Springfield 800/545-7300, 217/789-2360, visitspringfieldillinois.com
Tourism Centers
Cumberland Road I-70, rest area westbound, Marshall
Salt Saddle I-74, rest area westbound, Oakwood

Trails to Adventure
Will County South Tourism 618/257-1488, illinoisouth.org
Mt. Vernon Convention and Visitors Bureau 618/242-3151, enjoymtvernon.com
Shawnee Forest Country Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau 800/248-4373, 618/833-9928, southernmostillinois.com
Visit SI 800/433-7399, 618/997-3690, visit3i.com
Tourism Centers
Fort Massac 5402 Hwy. 65 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 45 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; not all toll plazas have attendants. Electronic toll collection is available through I-PASS or any transponder that’s part of the E-Pass system.

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

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

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

For locations, visit idot.illinois.gov

Arriving by Plane
Domestic travelers can fly direct to destinations including Belleville, Bloomington-Normal, Champaign-Urbana, 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 metrarail.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. Visit rtachicago.org

Amtrak runs trains to 29 cities in Illinois, and Greyhound Lines serves most major Illinois cities. Go to amtrak.com or greyhound.com

If you drink, don’t drive. Instead, hail a cab or use a rideshare app. The state’s legal limit for blood alcohol is .08.

Twelve 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 in most public places, including theaters, museums, casinos, restaurants and bars.

For more Illinois government information, visit illinois.gov
CHICAGO'S FIRST CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY, COMPLETED IN 1897, IS NOW THE CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER. THIS GLORIOUSLY RESTORED BEAUX ARTS GEM IS OPEN DAILY AND FREE TO THE PUBLIC. JOIN A DOCENT-LED TOUR EVERY THURSDAY AND FRIDAY (1:15 P.M.) OR ATTEND A FREE PERFORMANCE OR EXHIBITION.

Commanding an entire block across from Millennium Park, the Chicago Cultural Center features dozens of windows set in 3-foot-thick exterior walls.

When the library opened, this is where patrons picked up requested books.

The restored Tiffany glass dome atop Preston Bradley Hall is the world's largest and contains more than 30,000 pieces of glass.

ART, MUSIC, DANCE AND MORE!
The Chicago Cultural Center hosts more than 1,000 programs, events and exhibits every year, including some especially for children.
YOUR DESTINATION FOR WINTER ADVENTURE

Get ready for winter fun in Heritage Corridor Destinations! Hike to spectacular icefalls and watch bald eagles soar in Starved Rock Country. Explore the historic and charming I&M Canal Towns. Find adventure at every turn along The First Hundred Miles of the famed Route 66.

Find your adventure at HCDestinations.com

Pictured: Top - Starved Rock State Park (Oglesby), Bottom Left to Right - Lincoln Landing (Lockport), Heritage Quarries Recreation Area (Lemont), Final Cut Steakhouse at Hollywood Casino (Joliet)
Chicago Northwest has a great story to tell and it’s all about an entertainment-rich place to stay, eat, and play especially during theater season!

Hop in the car and get on your way to build lasting memories in Chicago Northwest. Share them with #ChicagoNW.

Looking for inspiration? Head to ChicagoNorthwest.com.