

2026



Expedition Guide

ADVENTURES
for the more
ADVENTUROUS

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BEN JOHNSON & MOLLY MCDONOUGH

enjoy
illinois

CARROLL • LEE • OGLE • WHITESIDE COUNTIES

ON THE NORTHWEST SIDE OF ILLINOIS IS A
PLACE WITH ITS OWN STATE OF MIND. A LAND
OF NATURAL BEAUTY, WIDE OPEN SPACES,
AND QUAIN TOWNS. A PLACE IN TUNE WITH
OUR NEED TO RECONNECT WITH NATURE,
WHILE REMINDING US OF THE IMPORTANCE
OF STAYING IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER.
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**JAM-PACKED
EVENT CALENDAR**

**TRENDY SHOPS &
AMAZING EATS**

**RONALD REAGAN
& LOCAL HISTORY**

**BEAUTIFUL PARKS
& MORE!**



📍 MIX PARK



📍 DIXON HYDROELECTRIC DAM



📍 ROCK RIVER



📍 DILLON HOME



📍 SINNISSIPPI STONE BRIDGE



Lose Yourself IN NORTHWEST ILLINOIS



Ever dreamed of getting gloriously lost? Welcome to Northwest Illinois, 2,700 square miles of “ooh, what’s that?” and “let’s go there!” From the Mississippi’s mighty swagger to I-39’s eastern embrace, we’re a treasure map disguised as a region.

Imagine bald eagles playing hide-and-seek over the Hennepin Canal, or your toes tapping to surprise melodies at a hidden music fest. Our quilt of quirky towns, secret trails, and mouthwatering local flavors begs to be unraveled one delightful thread at a time.

Fancy a chat with history in a centuries-old barn? Or perhaps you’d rather whisper to the wildflowers in an undiscovered meadow? Here, every detour is a doorway to adventure.

Snuggle into a storybook cabin, wake up to farm-fresh eggs in a chatty B&B, or dream big in our inviting hotels. However you recharge, we’ve got your cozy covered.

So, pack your curiosity (and maybe a compass — or don’t, where’s the fun in that?). In Northwest Illinois, the best memories are made when you’re just a little bit lost. Come find yourself in the wonderfully unexpected. After all, we’re the far-from-ordinary, near-enough getaway you never knew you needed.

MATTHEW LENOX
Executive Director

CONTACT

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visitnorthwestillinois.com
matthew@vnwil.com



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An Uncharted

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Welcome to a Midwest gem offering tranquil landscapes and adventurous activities. We're a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, featuring highlights that include the Great River Road, Mississippi Palisades State Park, Franklin Creek State Natural Area, Byron Forest Preserve, and Castle Rock State Park. Adrenaline seekers can enjoy water sports, rock climbing, and skydiving with those who've jumped with more first-timers than any other in the Midwest. In winter, we offer cross-country skiing, miles of snowmobile trails, and some of the best bald eagle watching in the state.



 NACHUSA GRASSLANDS

Discover

UNTAMED BEAUTY IN NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

Discover a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts with something for nature lovers, adventurers, and recreation seekers. Explore lush pathways, discover different species, and reconnect with nature in a wide variety of state parks, preserves, and forests. The Great River Road follows the mighty Mississippi along Illinois' western border and winds through Carroll and Whiteside counties. As a visitor, you'll be enchanted by its meandering path along the river, offering a perfect blend of nature's beauty and recreational adventure. Rent a canoe and spend an hour or two on the Mississippi River where Lewis and Clark began their famed expedition. Experience towering bluffs, rolling hills, river communities, farmlands, and sweeping views. Along the way, you might just discover there's more to the road than just the river.

Here, you'll find a remarkable resurgence of prairies with two excellent preserves. Nachusa Grasslands (2075 Lowden Road in Franklin Grove) holds immense importance and boasts a unique blend of prairie, wetlands, and savannas, teeming with diverse plants, birds, reptiles, insects, mammals, and fascinating geological wonders. It's even home to the largest population of American bison east of the Mississippi — a herd of approximately

100 bison roam these 4,000 acres, which also feature scenic viewing areas, hiking trails, and seasonal wildflowers.

Just northwest of Franklin Grove, explore the natural splendors of Franklin Creek State Natural Area and enjoy its meandering creek, several natural springs, hardwood forests, and captivating bedrock outcroppings that enhance this 882-acre park. The mill spring in this pristine ecosystem powers a historic 1847 grist mill — Lee County's largest — and is also home to the education center for the State Natural Area. Uncover a diversified haven of flora and fauna within the 198-acre nature preserve.

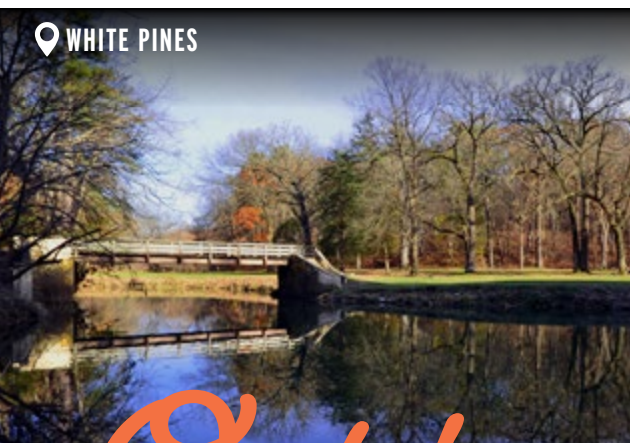
North of Savanna lies the beautiful Mississippi Palisades State Park, a secret gem for nature lovers and anyone who enjoys being outside. This haven has more than 2,500 acres of incredible scenery with rough cliffs, lush forests, and winding trails. Named for the towering limestone bluff along the edge of the Rock River, Castle Rock State Park — located about 3 miles south of Oregon — defies expectations of the Midwestern wilderness with rising rock formations and plunging ravines, in addition a thin layer of glacial till giving life to a wide variety of plant species.

North of Oregon, Lowden State Park is another natural space along the Rock River celebrated for its innate beauty. In fact, legend has it Chief Black Hawk spoke of the awe-inspiring majesty of the area as he departed, charging his captors to care for the land in his stead. Today, a 50-foot statue of The Eternal Indian casts a watchful eye over the park, a lasting tribute to all Native Americans who once called this land home.

At White Pines Forest State Park in Mt. Morris, discover a scenic refuge along the Spring and Pine creeks, a space where cliffs are covered with trees, vines, and moss. The park's unique concrete fords allow vehicles to traverse the babbling waters with ease — a truly unique experience during your Northwest Illinois expedition. Spend a day on the water at Morrison-Rockwood State Park. Home of the stream-fed reservoir Lake Carlton, guests can enjoy a variety of year-round activities ranging from fishing to birdwatching.



📍 HENNEPIN CANAL



📍 WHITE PINES



Outdoor Wellness

& REJUVENATION

Imagine a peaceful morning stroll, family picnic, or sporting activity within a tranquil landscape. Our parks are a haven for the mind, body, and soul.

ON THE TRAIL TO ADVENTURE

Lace up your hiking boots or tune up your bike — each trail around Northwest Illinois is a must-visit, offering a rugged, untamed look at our natural spaces. The 15-mile trail system at Mississippi Palisades State Park consists of 10 trails varying in length and difficulty. Ranging from the 1.7-mile Aspen in the North System to the 1-mile Sentinel in the South System, these trails offer a unique look at the 180-foot bluffs along the Mississippi River, as well as an up-close look at the park's plant and animal life.

Castle Rock State Park features 6 miles of trails winding through the park's vast

2,000 acres. Snap a photo of the park's rising sandstone bluffs or the many animals and birds that inhabit the area — in addition to 27 species of fern. Trails at Castle Rock are also open for cross-country skiing and tobogganing in winter.

Spanning from the Rock River to the Illinois River, the 155-mile Hennepin Canal towpath provides outstanding hiking and biking opportunities with a paved pathway following the canal. Cast a line in the canal and reel in your next trophy; some segments of the trail are even open to horseback riding and snowmobiling!

EMBRACE OUR COMMUNITY PARKS

Centennial Park in Rock Falls offers playgrounds, shelters, baseball diamonds, a lake, fishing, paddle boat rentals, and

access to the Hennepin Canal walking trail. This lovely park also hosts the annual Holiday Light Display drive every Christmas season from Thanksgiving to the end of December.

On the northern outskirts of Dixon lies one of the largest community parks in our region. Lowell Park sits on 200 acres along the Rock River and includes the Ruth Edwards Nature Center, handicap-accessible boat launches with river access, fishing, hiking, a nature preserve, a nine-hole disc golf course, and playgrounds. Lowell Forest is a designated Illinois Nature Preserve, and the park is on the National Register of Historic Places. Until you have taken a stroll through this natural wonderland, you won't fully appreciate this wonderful gift presented to the City of Dixon in 1907 by the daughter of fallen Civil War General

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

ROCK FALLS

STERLING'S TWIN WITH A SPIRIT ALL ITS OWN

The Nemesis sculpture catches the morning light — a towering abstract form rising from the riverbank, one of 13 large-scale artworks rotating through the RB&W; District each year. Behind it, the Rock River flows past, unhurried, as it has for millennia.

Rock Falls is Sterling's twin city, but it has carved out its own identity: a place where urban energy meets outdoor adventure. The beautifully developed RB&W; District park features a covered amphitheater, art installations you can touch, and trails that connect to something remarkable — the Historic Hennepin Feeder Canal. This historic waterway, listed on the National Register, was the first American canal built of concrete without stone-cut facings. Its engineering innovations influenced the Panama Canal. Today, nearly 100 miles of trails follow its path, perfect for fishing, kayaking, biking, walking, or simply wondering at human ingenuity.

Rock Falls packs 16 parks into its borders, spanning over 100 acres offering abundant space to play and unwind. Disc golfers take on two challenging 18-hole courses, while anglers cast their lines into the Rock River. Each fall, families make their way to Selmi's Greenhouse & Farm Market for apple picking and corn mazes — a tradition spanning four generations.

Throughout the summer, Rock Falls comes alive with events that bring concerts, food trucks, and sizzling aromas to the community. Each June, the Bellson Music Fest celebrates hometown jazz legend Louie Bellson, the inventor of the double bass drum kit.

Close enough for a day trip. Rich enough for a weekend.

visitrockfalls.com



 **LOWDEN PARK**

Charles Russell Lowell. It has endured the test of time as a spot where people may unwind and enjoy recreation to the fullest.

Located along the flowing waters of the Rock River in Oregon, the Byron Forest Preserve District offers plenty of space to explore with thousands of acres of woodland and prairie — including the best-known preserve, Jarrett Prairie Preserve, with more than 7 miles of trails and hundreds of native plant and animal species. Groups can also gather in the expansive Jarrett Prairie Center, an ideal venue for reunions and weddings.

In Lee County, Franklin Creek State Natural Area consists of 882 vast acres full of natural springs — including the mill spring that once provided power for the county's largest grist mill — hardwood forests, and bedrock outcroppings. Hikers, cross-country skiers, and horseback riders alike will enjoy miles of rugged trails year-round. A popular destination for all outdoor enthusiasts, Green River State Wildlife Area provides 2,565 acres of varying landscape, including swampy slough areas, prairie restorations, open fields, and timberlands.



The River

THAT CONNECTS US

Here, the draw of water adventures beckons. Picture yourself gliding over tranquil waterways while surrounded by the symphony of nature. It doesn't matter if you're paddling a canoe through our calm currents, floating downriver on a tube, or mastering the agility of a kayak; our waterways allow you to enjoy the peace of nature at your own pace.

Flowing through all four counties of Northwest Illinois, the 299-mile Rock River is a premier destination for aquatic recreation. Put in at Dixon, Oregon, Sterling-Rock Falls, or Morrison and enjoy a day spent paddling or casting a

line. The Mississippi River and Hennepin Canal both offer a fun getaway too, as do smaller streams like the Wakarusa River (or creek, as some call it), which will give any paddler a run for their money with the rapids created when the river is at an average or higher depth.

CANOE & KAYAK THROUGH WINDING WATERWAYS

For those with an adventurous spirit, canoeing and kayaking open a new world where the water is a highway to exploration. Here, paddlers enjoy the calming sound of rippling currents while

gliding through lush greenery and seeing wildlife darting along the banks. Every stroke tells a story of discovery, making it more than just a physical trip, but an immersive, sensory experience.

TUBING BRINGS LAZY RIVER BLISS

For those seeking a more leisurely aquatic escapade, tubing offers the perfect blend of relaxation and gentle adventure. Visitors recline on their inflatable tubes and let the river carry them along, soaking in the sun's warmth and the refreshing embrace of the water. It's a carefree



📍 SINNISSIPPI PARK



📍 MISSISSIPPI RIVER IN SAVANNA



📍 ROCK RIVER IN OREGON



📍 ROCK RIVER

journey where time slows down and laughter floats amidst the gentle currents.

OUR OUTFITTERS ARE HERE TO HELP YOU GET ON THE WATER

Visitors are welcome to bring their own equipment, but if that's not possible, we have several outfitters who can provide you with almost anything you need. The White Pelican, located in Oregon, is an outfitter that caters to all paddlers. Reservations are needed at least one to two hours in advance and can be done online. The White Pelican offers self-guided trips down the scenic Rock River — an easy-to-navigate, gentle river for people of all ages — with your choice of

watercraft. Day and overnight trips are available. Rentals include individual or two-person tubes, single and two-person kayaks, 17-foot canoes, and stand-up paddleboards.

Rock Falls Kayak Rentals opened in 2023 and is located at the Hennepin Canal Route 40 boat launch. This outfitter has partnered with Rent Fun for self-service kayak rentals. Paddles and life jackets are included. Once you are all set, it's a short walk to the Hennepin Canal for a day of smooth paddling. The water is calm and it's easy to turn around and travel back.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHTS

BYRON FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT

WHERE ILLINOIS REMEMBERS WHAT IT USED TO BE

The tallgrass sways in waves, golden and endless, stretching toward a horizon unmarked by buildings or roads. A hawk circles overhead. Somewhere nearby, something wild moves through the brush.

This is how Illinois looked before the plows came. At Byron Forest Preserve, you can still see it.

What began in 1980 as an effort to protect 120 acres of rare dolomite prairie has grown into something extraordinary — nearly 2,600 acres across eight preserves, all dedicated to showing visitors the landscape their great-great-grandparents would have known.

Hike the trails through Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve, where tallgrass and oak savannas have been protected since 1992. Visit Bald Hill Prairie to stand beneath the State Champion Eastern Cottonwood, the

tallest tree in Illinois. At the Jarrett Prairie Center Museum, an Ice Age diorama brings woolly mammoths to life, while live exhibits offer more immediate wonders.

On Saturday nights, the J. Weiskopf Observatory opens its dome, inviting visitors to peer through an 11-inch Celestron telescope at galaxies impossibly far away. It's free, like nearly everything here. A gift from a community that understood some things are too precious to charge for.

Bring your hiking boots. Bring your curiosity. Leave your expectations of what "preserved" means. This isn't a museum. It's a living, breathing reminder of who we were.

7993 N. River Road, Byron, IL
byronforestpreserve.com
Free Admission



PRAIRIEFIRE GOLF & GRILL

WHERE EVERY SWING TELLS A STORY

The ball launches into the night sky, its arc traced in glowing lines across the screen. Behind you, flames dance in the fire pit. Friends lean forward on the sectional, craft beers in hand, watching the digital readout calculate trajectory, speed, and distance. Someone groans. Someone cheers. The next player steps up to the bay.

This is golf reimagined, and it's happening year-round in Byron.

PrairieFire Golf & Grill brought something entirely new to the region when it opened inside the award-winning PrairieView Golf Club. Eight temperature-controlled hitting bays face a real outdoor range, but Toptracer technology transforms every shot into data, competition, and pure entertainment. Challenge friends to closest-to-the-pin contests. Play virtual rounds at Pebble Beach. Track your

improvement over time through the app. Or simply enjoy the satisfying thwack of a well-struck drive without keeping score at all.

What sets PrairieFire apart isn't just the technology. It's the atmosphere. The interior blends industrial chic with rustic warmth. The bar tops are crafted from live-edge wood harvested right from the surrounding nature preserve. Each bay features lounge seating, fire pits, and personal TV monitors. You could spend an afternoon here without touching a club. But you won't want to.

When hunger strikes, the menu delivers: loaded PrairieFire Fries piled with seasoned bison and beer cheese, sliders that disappear too quickly, craft cocktails designed to celebrate victory or soften defeat.

Golf has never been this social, this comfortable, or this fun.

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NEIGHBOR Notes

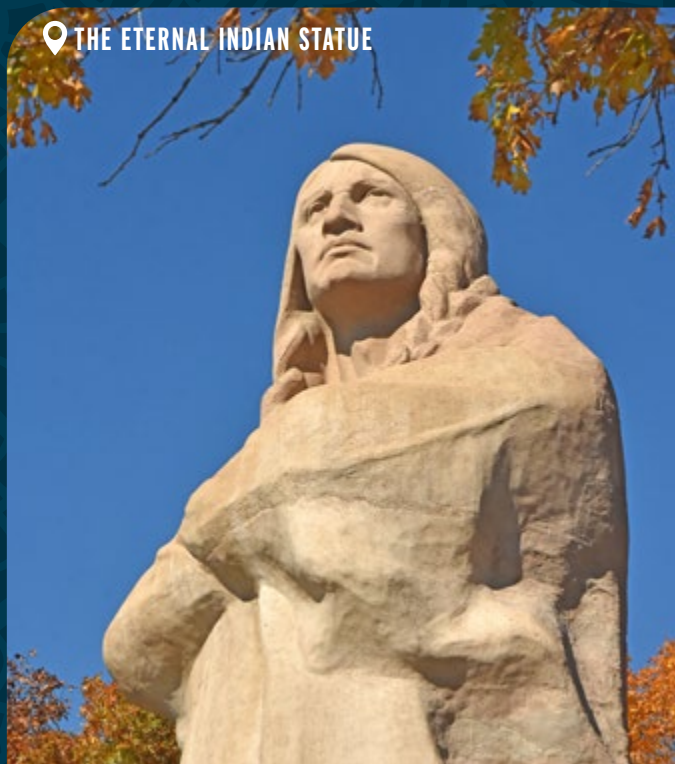


TERRY SCHUSTER

In the mid '90s, Terry Schuster built a home in the city of Oregon and has lived here ever since. As the Commissioner of Finance for Oregon, Terry has a unique insider's perspective on the city, its businesses, and its people. He and his wife enjoy visiting Oregon's many "third spaces" — community gathering spots where you can drop in anytime and find others to spend a few hours with. "You never know who you might meet for the first time who will regale you with stories and laughter," mentions Terry. "But the warmth of our people is just one reason to visit. When folks say there's nothing to do in a smaller town, I say they aren't following social media. Pick a topic you might be interested in... Hiking, biking, boating, and kayaking. We got it. Exploring nature, geology, prairie history — we got that too. Seeing nationally renowned art history and public art — it's here." In addition, Terry also described Oregon as the "trailhead" for short excursions to the Nachusa Grasslands, Byron Forest Preserve, Chicagoland Skydiving Center in Rochelle, John Deere's homestead, Reagan's Boyhood Home in Dixon, and trout fishing at White Pines State Park.

Picks & Tips

"A person can't just drive through town to see the river and poke into a few shops before moving on," Terry said. "To really experience Oregon, explore. We've got a castle, a paddlewheel river boat, a monolithic statue overlooking the town, the largest bison herd east of the Mississippi, the Sculpture Trail, the Eagle's Nest Art Gallery, three state parks, a state forest, and a state natural area. Plus, see the state's largest tree just a few miles from town."





MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Adventures

FOR THE MORE ADVENTUROUS

Embark on a journey where adrenaline dances with excitement and heart-pounding adventures offer an electrifying cocktail of thrill, courage, and unforgettable experiences.

LET'S JUMP OUT OF A PERFECTLY GOOD AIRPLANE

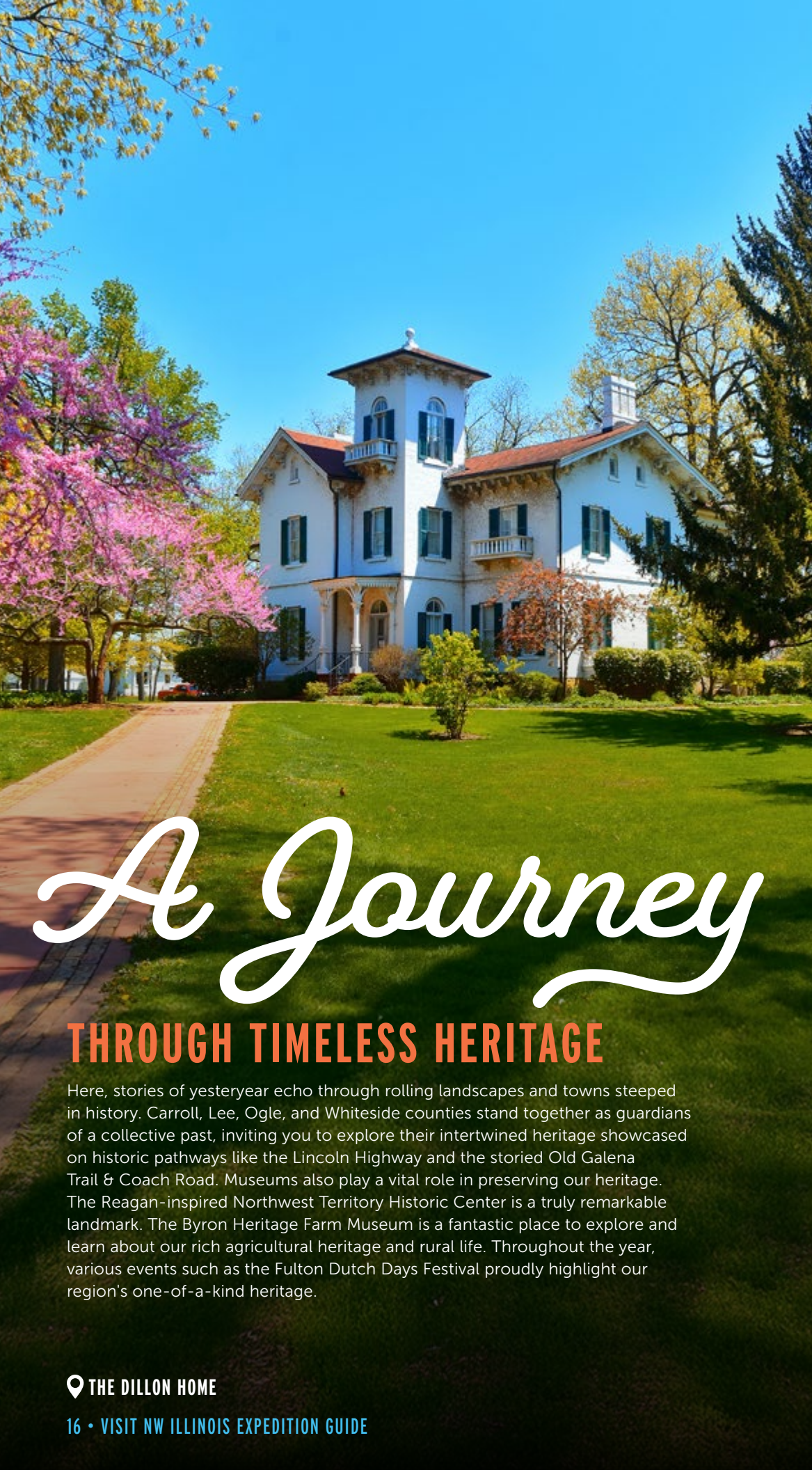
Experiencing the thrill of skydiving is on many a bucket list. If you're ready to add it to yours, there's no better place to do it than at Chicagoland Skydiving Center in Rochelle. Not only are their instructors among the finest in Illinois, but they've also helped more first-timers than any other center in the Midwest. The purpose-built 20,000-square-foot facility includes a hangar with a padded packing floor, team/bunk rooms, classrooms, the

Rock Sky Market gear store, a rigging loft, laundry facilities, and private shower rooms. This venue also provides an RV park, a camping area, three landing areas, a sand volleyball court, a bonfire pit, and a full-service on-site restaurant and bar.

REACH NEW HEIGHTS – ROCK CLIMB THE MISSISSIPPI PALISADES

Rock climbing is a mix of strategy, strength, and courage. Mississippi Palisades State Park in Savanna boasts 2,500 acres of dramatic cliffs and rock faces — some reaching as high as 180 feet — that beckon adventurers to test their limits. Here, climbers feel the rush as each new grip and foothold leads

to stunning peak vistas, both physically and spiritually rewarding. Climbing opportunities are offered at more than 60 routes in the Sentinel Area, Twin Sisters, and Indian Head. Climbers must bring their own equipment and go directly to the bluff. No check-ins are necessary but permanent anchors are not allowed. Please note the Illinois Department of Natural Resources does not maintain the park's rocks, cliffs, or other natural features and is not responsible for climber safety and climbing protection on cliffs. The park is also home to 15 miles of trails ranging from beginner to advanced as well as 241 camping sites, making it an ideal spot to view birds and native wildlife.



A Journey

THROUGH TIMELESS HERITAGE

Here, stories of yesteryear echo through rolling landscapes and towns steeped in history. Carroll, Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside counties stand together as guardians of a collective past, inviting you to explore their intertwined heritage showcased on historic pathways like the Lincoln Highway and the storied Old Galena Trail & Coach Road. Museums also play a vital role in preserving our heritage. The Reagan-inspired Northwest Territory Historic Center is a truly remarkable landmark. The Byron Heritage Farm Museum is a fantastic place to explore and learn about our rich agricultural heritage and rural life. Throughout the year, various events such as the Fulton Dutch Days Festival proudly highlight our region's one-of-a-kind heritage.

📍 THE DILLON HOME

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📍 WIERENGA'S HERITAGE CANYON



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lovelandcommunityhouse.org

 Loveland Community House



Events

THAT DEFINE OUR PAST & CULTURE

History whispers through our communities' streets and echoes in the vibrant events celebrating our rich heritage. From captivating reenactments to festivals steeped in tradition, every cultural event becomes a living chapter in the captivating narrative of our history.

Every September, Sterling and Rock Falls come alive with the beating rhythm of Fiesta Days. Prepare for a lively fusion of traditions and entertainment embodying these sister cities' hearts and souls. From the moment Fiesta Days kicks off, the streets burst with colors, echoing the region's vibrant spirit. This jubilant celebration, spanning both towns, unites communities in a whirlwind of music, culture, and a colorful parade.

Experience a slice of the Netherlands in downtown Fulton. Every May, the Dutch Days Festival paints this charming town with every aspect of its heritage. Immerse in Dutch culture from the moment you arrive. Discover the town adorned with wooden shoes and tulips and the iconic Dutch windmill standing tall as its beacon of heritage. The annual scrubbing of the streets during the parade alone makes it a perfect day.

Celebrate one of the nation's first transcontinental highways during the Lincoln Highway Heritage Festival in Rochelle! Each August, this three-day celebration pays tribute to the legacy of the highway, filling the streets of Rochelle with family-friendly activities like a carnival, live music, car shows, and an arts-and-crafts show.

In Oregon, the annual Autumn on Parade Festival blends the community's rich history and culture with family-friendly events — and plenty of delicious food! Discover handmade gifts from local artisans, sample one-of-a-kind dishes from local eateries, admire classic cars and farm equipment, or beat your best time with a 1-mile run and 5K race.

Fill your spirit with holiday cheer during Oregon's annual Candlelight Walk. Dubbed one of the most magical Christmas communities in Illinois, Oregon celebrates the Most Wonderful Time of the Year with a variety of festive activities, including horse-drawn carriage rides, a tree-lighting ceremony, caroling, and holiday shopping — plus visits from Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus!





📍 WIERENGA'S HERITAGE CANYON

Welcome

TO A TIME TRAVELER'S HAVEN

Museums are like time machines, letting us explore our rich history. Enter these hallowed halls and journey through time, where every object tells a story and represents our legacy. Living history museums transport visitors to the past and allow us to touch, taste, and feel history through dedicated reenactors. A day spent exploring these information vaults provides a glimpse into history and a chance to untangle the links that bind us all, deepening our respect for our roots and the rich tapestry of human experiences.

Immerse yourself in diverse exhibits at the Northwest Territory Historic Center in Dixon and examine topics such as Native American history, early American farming, bison, and more. Discover the past in unique rooms dedicated to

Presidents Lincoln and Reagan, a restored school gym, and an auditorium. Don't miss the toothpick exhibits, Veterans History Project, and the museum theater.

Step back to 1843 at Byron Heritage Farm Museum in Byron. Here, the whole family gets to experience farm life as the original owner Charlie Wilbur did. Take self-guided tours, delve into maple syrup and honey production, and churn your own butter. A journey into the heart of early country living awaits.

All aboard at Rochelle Railroad Park in Rochelle, located at the junction of two major railroads. This unique, covered, open-deck platform is open 24/7. Witness the spectacle of up to 80 trains daily at this prime spot. Explore the gift shop, relish a picnic in scenic areas, and explore railroad

history. The park is an unforgettable experience for train enthusiasts.

Step into a living history book at Wierenga's Heritage Canyon. Located in Fulton, this 12-acre site offers a mesmerizing journey through time. Wander along paths adorned with 1800s-style homes, businesses, and a beautiful, white-steepled church. Seasonally, the essence of pioneer life is witnessed with reenactments demonstrating the craftsmanship of the past. Explore the Canyon — where the past whispers through the wind.

Also in Fulton is the iconic Windmill Cultural Center and the majestic De Immigrant Windmill. Picture perfect and steeped in history, these landmarks embody the heart of this charming town. The Windmill Cultural Center

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

JOHN DEERE
HISTORIC SITEWHERE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE
WAS MODERNIZED

The blacksmith raises his hammer as sparks shoot from the forge. Steel strikes steel, echoing through the shop — the same sound heard in 1837 when Vermont blacksmith John Deere worked at his anvil and made history.

He didn't set out to change farming forever. He saw hardworking Midwestern farmers facing a tough challenge: The thick, sticky prairie soil would cling to their cast-iron plows, forcing them to stop constantly to scrape them clean. Applying his blacksmith's ingenuity, Deere used a broken sawmill blade to craft a self-scouring steel plow that cut through prairie soil with ease, transforming the way farmers worked.

That breakthrough didn't just solve a local problem — it helped open the American West to agriculture. And it all started in Grand Detour, IL.

Today, the John Deere Historic Site welcomes visitors to the very spot where Deere's original blacksmith shop was discovered in 1962. You can explore his carefully restored 1836 home, where he and his wife raised eight children, and step into a working replica forge to watch blacksmiths demonstrate the craft firsthand, just as Deere did nearly two centuries ago.

Admission is free, and the experience is inspiring. After you leave, you may never look at farmland quite the same way again, knowing that it all started with John Deere — his skilled hands, his hammer, and his steadfast dedication to helping others create a brighter future.

8334 S. Clinton Street, Grand Detour, IL
visitjohndeere.com | Free Admission



DE IMMIGRANT WINDMILL

is a testament to the area's rich Dutch heritage, offering a delightful journey into the past. Directly across the street and standing proudly on the Mississippi River is the De Immigrant Windmill, a towering, 100-foot structure that proudly watches over the landscape, whispering tales of the pioneering spirit that built this community. Climb its steps, feel the breeze, and witness the inner workings of this engineering marvel. From its lofty heights, soak in panoramic views that stretch far and wide, inviting you to embrace the beauty and history of Fulton.

Unlock the elegance of the past at the Dillon Home in Sterling. This 1858 Italianate-style home is filled with original treasures virtually untouched by time. It's a treasure trove of history and architectural splendor. Delve into the opulence of a bygone era as you stroll through its ornate rooms adorned with period furnishings and timeless charm. Experience the grandeur of Sterling's history by stepping back in time and immersing yourself in the refined allure of Victorian living.

Opened in 2011 by a group of volunteers, the Savanna Museum & Cultural Center honors the fascinating history of Savanna as well as the people who helped shape the community over the years. Hear the harrowing tales of one of America's darkest chapters in the Gallery of Civil War Soldiers. Gain a unique perspective on how the rail industry shaped old Savanna with the museum's model railroad. And marvel in the life and times of Savanna natives like jazz musician Wayne "The Waltz" King and Red Cross nurse Helen Scott Hay.

THE PLACE WHERE *AGRICULTURAL HISTORY WAS MADE:*

IS *HERE:*

Stand in the spot where John Deere created the first commercially successful steel plow and relive the experience of his original blacksmith shop. Discover where John Deere history began – and changed the world of agriculture forever.

**OPEN
SEASONALLY:
APRIL –
OCTOBER**

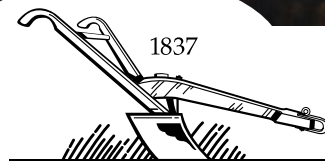
ADMISSION IS ALWAYS FREE!

Sunday: 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Wednesday – Saturday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.



**JOHN DEERE
HISTORIC SITE**

Grand Detour, Illinois

Visit JohnDeere.com | (815) 652-4551
8334 S. Clinton St. | Grand Detour (Dixon), IL 61021



📍 LINCOLN HIGHWAY

Where History

MEETS THE ROADS

Journey through time along two iconic roadways: the Lincoln Highway and the Old Galena Trail & Coach Road. These historic routes aren't as much a means to get from Point A to Point B as they are gateways to the past, inviting you to traverse the landscapes and stories that have shaped our rich heritage. The Lincoln Highway, America's first paved transcontinental highway, beckons with whispers of pioneering spirit and progress. At the same time, the Old Galena Trail & Coach Road, which once echoed footsteps of miners and traders, reveals tales of early exploration and commerce.

THE HISTORIC MARVELS OF THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

The Lincoln Highway, a renowned road that embodies more than a hundred years of American history and exploration, is situated amid our scenic landscapes. Established in 1913, this historic road marks the first transcontinental thoroughfare for automobiles, stretching an impressive 179 miles across Northern Illinois. Set out on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure along this historic route in our region, dotted with cultural treasures and natural marvels.

At the western edge of our section of the Lincoln Highway lies the town of Fulton. Discover the towering Dutch windmill, a 100-foot testament to the road's history, housing invaluable tales of the pioneering era. Immerse yourself in the rich Dutch

heritage that infuses this quaint town, inviting you to delve deeper into its cultural essence.

In the middle of the route, experience a slice of American history at Ronald Reagan's Boyhood Home and Visitors Center in Dixon. See the loose brick in the fireplace's hearth where the future president used to hide tiny treasures. Just a few blocks away is the Northwest Territory Historic Center. This former school now contains a museum store, art gallery, and historical exhibits.

Just east of Dixon in Franklin Grove, visit the official headquarters of the Lincoln Highway Association and uncover the fascinating inception, rich narrative, and evolution of this historic route.

Lowden State Park sits on the eastern side of our stretch of the Lincoln Highway and is home to the awe-inspiring "Eternal Indian" Black Hawk statue. Marvel at this colossal 48-foot sculpture set against panoramic views, a breathtaking fusion of artistry and natural splendor.

IMAGINE THE LIVES OF ALL WHO TRAVELED THE OLD GALENA TRAIL & COACH ROAD

The Galena Trail & Coach Road is a scenic motor trail extending from Peoria to Galena following state, county, and unpaved township roads. The Trail features cultural, scenic, historical, and conservation points of interest over a course that winds through Carroll, Lee,

and Ogle counties. Embark on a journey that unravels the very fabric of history and bears witness to the resolute journeys of thousands between 1825-1855. Once a conduit for aspirations of agricultural and mineral wealth in Illinois, it now stands as a testament to a bygone era, welcoming modern adventurers seeking a glimpse into the past.

In the 19th century, this trail was more than just a passage. It bore the weight of dreams carried by immigrants from around the country. Each twist and turn along this historic route whispers tales of hardships and determination. Marked with directional signs, travelers may trace the historic alignments of the 1825 Galena Trail and its successor, the 1833 Peoria-Galena Coach Road, the first state road in Northern Illinois. Both alignments followed ancient Native American trails and were used by miners to link the Lead Mine Region of Illinois and Wisconsin with Peoria and Southern Illinois.

The Old Galena Trail & Coach Road witnessed the convergence of diverse cultures, shaping the landscape of early settlements from Dixon to Lanark and many points in between. Yet, with the promise of opportunity came the realities of danger. Life along the trail was fraught with peril. Accidents and occasional confrontations punctuated the journey, casting shadows on the dreams of many. Disease claimed lives in heartbreaking numbers, a stark reminder of the fragility of life in that era.

NEIGHBOR Notes

NEAL RODGERS

Ever sink your teeth into a ripe, delicious pawpaw? Lifelong resident Neal Rogers describes it as having a vaguely tropical taste somewhat reminiscent of both banana and mango. This delicacy is endemic to Illinois and lends its name to the small village of Paw Paw, which was named for a grove of fruit-bearing trees on the edge of a nearby forest. So, in Neal's words, "Where better to hold a pawpaw festival than Paw Paw, IL?" As president of the local Lions Club — a driving force

for many community events — Neal partnered with two enthusiasts of the tasty fruit, Shawn Beck and Austin Cliffe, to organize the first Pawpaw Festival in 2023. Though Neal described the first event as "small but successful," it has since grown into an annual extravaganza. "It grew to about 4,000-5,000 people who came to visit our small town, to learn about pawpaws, to buy trees and fruit, and to taste the fruit," Neal said. "We offer tram tours around town where we show off local trees growing in the area and also some of the other neat things about Paw Paw. People really enjoy getting a chance to try some of those things that include the fruit and to experience that unique flavor and appeal of the pawpaw."



Picks & Tips

"I love taking scenic drives, taking a fall trip, driving up through Northwestern Illinois," Neal said. "This is one of our favorite places to slow

down, relax, and enjoy nature. There are tons of little places along the way to stop and enjoy both food and the communities in general. I also like to play a little more golf than I actually do. There's a nice little golf course I play occasionally over here between Amboy and Sublette — Shady Oaks Country Club, a beautiful little 18-hole course. That's a very cool place set in some of the rolling hills over there in the Amboy area."





Fabulous Food

FROM FANTASTIC FAMILIES

Northwest Illinois is home to an incredible variety of restaurants, many of which are family owned. Here, discover a variety of entertaining, culinary experiences, including farm-to-table flavors, riverside dining, and small-town gems, each boasting delicious and unique menus. These amazing establishments have won the hearts — and taste buds — of locals and visitors alike, providing one-of-a-kind memories that highlight the region's one-of-a-kind flavors and welcoming atmosphere.



LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

SELMI'S GREENHOUSE & FAMILY FARM

SEASONS WORTH SHARING

Some places stay with you. For families in the Sauk Valley, Selmi's Greenhouse & Family Farm is one of them. Maybe you remember strawberry picking, photos by the hand-painted signs, climbing onto a hayride toward the haunted woods, or tasting sweet corn so good it became your summer tradition. Now you're loading up your kids and watching them discover it.

In spring, our greenhouse becomes a blooming oasis filled with color and fresh growth. We grow and nurture flowers and veggie plants ready to thrive in your garden. As a certified Proven Winners grower, we offer trusted favorites, new varieties, and other brands chosen to perform well in our growing zone.

Summer brings the moment everyone waits for: our famous bi-color sweet corn, grown here for more than 45 years. Around here, it's the official sweet treat of summer. When our mobile farm stands roll out, locals stock up, travelers detour, and fresh-picked sweet corn and vegetables make their way to tables across the region.

Then, fall turns the farm into the place to gather. Enjoy more than 15 family-friendly activities, a U-pick apple orchard, a pumpkin yard, and weekend events. Top it off with hot, fresh cider donuts from our trailer, an apple cider slushie, and a quick stop in the retail farm store for canned Amish goods, Selmi's apples, and cider.

Plan your visit this year and let Selmi's be part of the seasons of your life.

1206 Dixon Avenue, Rock Falls, IL | selmi.com



POOPY'S PUB & GRUB

POOPY'S PUB & GRUB

Located in Savanna, Poopy's isn't just a tavern and restaurant — it's an experience. Although it's known as a hangout for bikers, everyone is welcome for the food, friendship, and fun. From live music and events to merch and an on-site tattoo and piercing shop, an afternoon or evening at Poopy's will surely be worth the trip whether you show up on two wheels or four.

BLACKHAWK STEAK PIT

Blackhawk Steak Pit in Oregon has been satisfying guests with incredible meals since 1978. Near the Rock River and the famed statue of Black Hawk on the hillside, an evening here is an experience for all the senses. Blackhawk Steak Pit specializes in high-quality steaks that are hand cut daily and grilled to order on their open charcoal grill. They also have amazing seafood, a wide selection of wine and beer, and a generously stocked salad bar.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

THE RUSTY FOX ALEHOUSE & WINE BAR

WHERE EVERYONE BECOMES A REGULAR

The bartender remembers your name. More impressively, he remembers what you ordered last time: that small-batch bourbon from the whiskey wall, the one you'd never heard of before but can't stop thinking about since.

The Rusty Fox has earned its reputation as one of Northern Illinois' top destinations through its passion for craft drinks, including more than 100 craft beers, more than 450 wines, and 600 whiskeys, plus Chicago-style pizza and appetizers locals argue about in the best way and a warmth that transforms first-time visitors into regulars before they've finished their first drink.

Founded in 2014 in downtown Sterling, the Rusty Fox anchors the corner of Third Street like it's always belonged there. Tuesday through Thursday, the after-work crowd fills the space. Fridays and Saturdays bring live music — folk singers, rock bands, and acoustic acts that have discovered intimate venues produce the best performances.

The first Wednesday of the month means trivia night, where teams with increasingly ridiculous names compete for bragging rights and bar tabs. The staff recommends pairings, guides novices through the whiskey menu without judgment, and treats every palate as worthy of excellent things.

You came for a drink. You'll leave with a story, a recommendation, and plans to return.

1 E. Third Street, Downtown Sterling | rustyfoxalehouse.com



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BLACKHAWK STEAK PIT



LUXX THE RESTAURANT

LUXX THE RESTAURANT

Savor an exquisite taste of authentic Italian flavors at LUXX The Restaurant in Sterling, where handcrafted, made-from-scratch dishes — along with an exquisite atmosphere — create an elevated dining experience. Culinary works of art like steak, pasta, and seafood burst with authentic, Old World flavors and pair wonderfully with a magnificent selection of wines and craft cocktails. During the warmer months, enjoy patio seating at LUXX, By the Garden for an unforgettable al fresco experience.



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Selmi's

Visit Us 1206 Dixon Ave., Rock Falls, IL • Explore All Our Seasonal Offerings at selmi.com

Alehouse • Whiskey Bar • Wine Bar • Martini Bar



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THE RUSTY FOX

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- ✓ 125 CRAFT BEERS
- ✓ 450 WINES
- ✓ 600 WHISKIES
- ✓ FULL FOOD MENU
- ✓ CARRY OUT STORE
- ✓ LIVE MUSIC & COMEDY
- ✓ BEST OLD FASHIONEDS



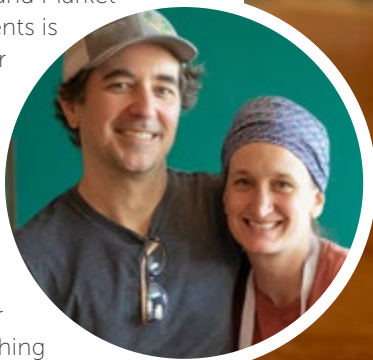
VOTED TOP 10
PUBS IN ILLINOIS!

Whiskey Store • Craft Beer Store • Wine Shoppe

NEIGHBOR Notes

BEN JOHNSON & MOLLY MCDONOUGH

As Northwest Illinois natives, husband and wife Ben Johnson and Molly McDonough are passionate about providing something wholly unique to their community — something wholesome and nourishing. For the owners of Molly's Kitchen & Bar and Market Street Pizza in Mt. Carroll, using high-quality ingredients is no joke, but creating one delicious dish after another certainly is fun. "What makes our restaurants stand out is we take making food for people seriously," Molly explained. "I don't mean we don't have fun doing it; rather, we're invested in the quality of food that we fuel our bodies with. We know what goes into each dish. We're aware of all the allergens and preparations for each item. We want you to have the best experience you can have at our establishments, so we take time to make sure everything is properly prepared with technique, flavor, and care." And having lived in the sprawling metropolis of Los Angeles, Molly and Ben agree there's no better place than their home to make this dream a reality. "Northwest Illinois is an area where you can really build something and contribute to a growing community. It's an amazing place to grow your own food or pick up a hobby you've been interested in but never felt you had the time or space," Molly said. "It's a really beautiful spread of eclectic, creative, and progressive minds."



📍 MOLLY'S KITCHEN & BAR



Picks & Tips

For a sweet treat, Molly, Ben, and their kids frequent Tina's Ice Cream Shoppe in Mt. Carroll, offering a tasty menu of scoops in cones and cups. The Novel Bloom in Savanna provides a peaceful, women-owned space to unwind and relax with a steaming-hot cup of coffee — or a glass of wine or a handcrafted cocktail, if the mood strikes. For dinner, Molly and Ben enjoy the scenic views accompanying savory flavors at Candlelight Inn and Lanark. Both the Timber Lake Playhouse in Mt. Carroll and Trailside Mini Golf in Lake Carroll provide a fun-filled evening with the entire family, while Mississippi Palisades State Park offers the unique opportunity to commune with the Northwest Illinois outdoors.



📍 MOLLY'S KITCHEN & BAR



40 Acre Retreat

- A very secluded lodge & campground offering private stays, parties & amazing venues perfect for a multi day event
- The 10,000 sq. ft. luxury western lodge that can accommodate 80+ guests in 19 separate bedrooms
- Lost Nation Golf Club bar & grill is next door
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- Our Crystal Lodge is available for corporate events, weddings, & parties

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Authentic log cabins with fireplaces. The restaurant is open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Wedding receptions and banquets are available. A charming gift shop. The Playhouse Theater features live stage shows.

WWW.VISITWHITEPINES.COM

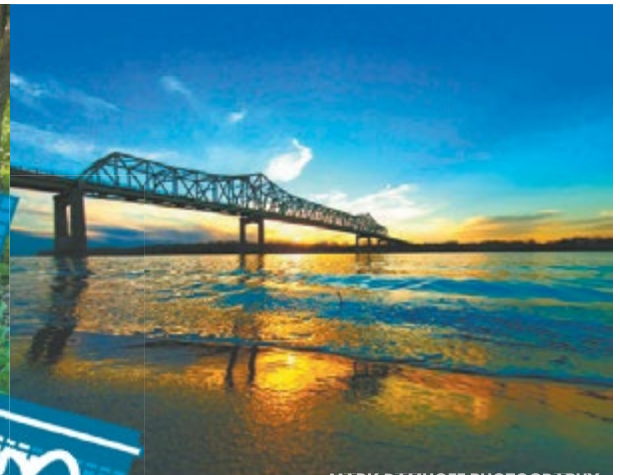
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FRIENDSHIP PARK



HERITAGE CANYON



MARK DAMHOFF PHOTOGRAPHY
SARAH LONG PHOTOGRAPHY



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ROOTED BOUTIQUE





EXPEDITION Map



CARROLL COUNTY

- 1 Mississippi Palisades State Park
- 2 Savanna Museum & Cultural Center
- 3 Havencrest Castle
- 4 Timber Lake Playhouse
- 5 Trailside Mini Golf
- 6 Lake Carroll Golf Course

WHITESIDE COUNTY

- 7 De Immigrant Windmill
- 8 Morrison-Rockwood State Park
- 9 Dillon Home Museum
- 10 Rock Falls Sculpture Walk
- 11 Midway Drive-In Theater



OGLE COUNTY

- 12** White Pines Forest State Park
- 13** The Rink at Pine Creek
- 14** John Deere Historic Site
- 15** Castle Rock State Park
- 16** Lowden State Park
- 17** Byron Forest Preserve & Jarrett Prairie Center
- 18** PrairieFire Golf & Grill
- 19** Chicagoland Skydiving Center

LEE COUNTY

- 20** Dixon Arch
- 21** Lowell Park
- 22** Northwest Territory Historic Center
- 23** Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home
- 24** Franklin Creek Grist Mill
- 25** Franklin Creek State Natural Area
- 26** Nachusa Grasslands
- 27** Amboy Depot Museum

Boutiques to Antiques

LET THE HUNT BEGIN

We offer diverse shopping experiences where you can discover handcrafted treasures from local artisans, explore art galleries highlighting our region's talent, and unearth historical gems in a wide variety of antique stores. Our shopkeepers embody genuine hospitality, ensuring a personal and memorable experience. We invite you to explore our rich tapestry of art, history, and culture through a shopping experience that embodies our soulful essence.



📍 THE LOFT ON MAIN

Galleries

MAKE QUITE THE ART SCENE

A vibrant art scene unfolds like a colorful tapestry at The Next Picture Show, a nonprofit located in an historic, 1854 building in downtown Dixon. Completely restored in 2004, the space still retains its beautiful wood floors, tin ceilings, and distinct architectural details. In the main gallery, artists from distant corners showcase their masterpieces, while the space also doubles as a hub for cultural gatherings, intimate concerts, and spirited art receptions on opening nights. The lower level provides more exhibition space for special showings, art classes, and workshops.

Visit The Loft on Main in Morrison. This cozy gallery — complete with original store shelving, fixtures, and a charming loft — is a regional arts destination providing a venue for local artists to create, promote, and sell original art and to foster art education through

lessons and programs. Special events fill the year including Third Thursday Coffee and Treats, drop-in craft sessions for children and families, fundraisers, studio visits, and social events.

The Coliseum Museum of Art, Antiques & Americana (CMAAA) in charming Oregon is housed within the captivating walls of a 1923 Art Deco building. After 18 months of careful restoration, the CMAAA re-emerged in 2023, reclaiming its role as the epicenter of artistic and communal vitality with classes, long-term and short-term art shows, sales for artists working in all kinds of media, recitals, and receptions. Beyond mere displays, the CMAAA pulsates with life, weaving together the threads of history, art, and community, ensuring every visit celebrates creativity and a journey through the soulful narrative of Oregon's cultural heritage.

Discover a vibrant community of innovators and craftspeople at Woodlawn Arts Academy in Sterling. This cultural hub offers art classes and workshops and hosts performances. From preschoolers to seasoned artists, Woodlawn has tailored programs for all and strives to live by its motto, "Where the Arts are for everyone!" Year-round daytime and evening instruction is offered in visual arts, music, dance, theater, woodworking, and culinary arts, plus education programs encompassing its preschool program, STEM, and literary arts programming. As a nonprofit, Woodlawn ensures the beauty of the arts thrives, enriching the cultural tapestry of our region.

We Specialize

IN SPECIALTY SHOPPING

Forget bland malls and indulge in the allure of our many one-of-a-kind shops and hidden gems. Here, you'll find a treasure trove of unique stores that beckon with their distinct offerings. Boutiques showcase racks adorned with carefully selected garments, from chic dresses and versatile tops to jewelry with handcrafted pieces. Discover bookstores that are sanctuaries of literary exploration, from beloved classics to rare finds and contemporary bestsellers. For home enthusiasts, find handcrafted wood furniture, handmade signs, and captivating home décor.

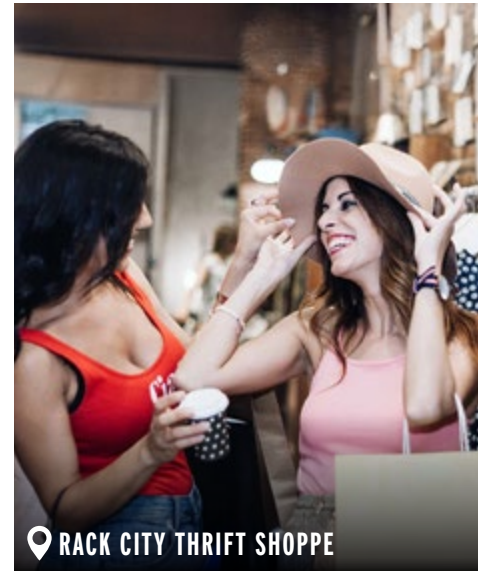
Fall in love with Mud & Moo Boutique finds. This delightful boutique in Rock Falls offers modern and stylish women's clothing, stunning purses,

exquisite jewelry, the trendiest shoes, premium bath and body essentials, seductive scents, captivating candles, and darling baby things. Step inside this refuge of one-of-a-kind finds, including anything "moo-related," that promise to enrich your shopping experience.

Rack City Thrift Shoppe in Dixon is the perfect place to find lived and loved clothing and accessories. With an ever-changing array of merchandise, no two visits are the same. Discover something special for yourself or a unique gift for a special someone.

In Mt. Carroll, The Fika Boutique offers visitors a wide variety of clothing, accessories, and specialty gift items that can't be found anywhere else. You never know what you

might find, which is exactly why you should find your way here.



📍 RACK CITY THRIFT SHOPPE

Downtown Sterling will "Steel" your



Forged by makers, fueled by entrepreneurs and alive with fresh flavors, friendly faces and events that bring people together.

STERLING
MAIN STREET
Inspired. Involved.

*Car Show + Cruise Nights • Live Music + Family Friendly Events
Craft Beer Festival • Year-Round Farmers Market • Holiday Fun*

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LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

STERLING MAIN STREET

STEEL YOUR HEART

The morning sun catches the weathered brick of a century-old storefront, illuminating a hand-painted mural that stretches 130 feet across an entire block. This is "Adelante," restored in 2022 by original muralist Robert Valadez, its vibrant five panels celebrating the Latino heritage woven into Sterling's story. Each September, the Fiesta Parade passes beneath it, filling these streets with music, dancing, and the aromas of authentic cuisine.

This is Sterling Main Street, where 20 murals transform an ordinary walk into a journey through time. Around the next corner, the Masonic Temple rises in rare Châteauesque splendor, its turrets and dormers earning it a place on the National Register of Historic Places. Designed by architect George W. Ashby in 1899, it remains one of the finest examples of the style in the Midwest.

But Sterling isn't frozen in amber. Step inside 3 Twelve for handcrafted cocktails and creative cuisine that rivals any city restaurant. Browse four floors of treasures at Showplace Antiques. Catch a Wednesday night concert at the Art Deco bandshell in Central Memorial Park, where families have gathered for generations.

The Twin City Farmers Market brings the surrounding farmland to the town square every Saturday morning with tables laden with produce that traveled mere miles to get here.

What strikes visitors most is the sense that Sterling is very much alive — not preserved, but evolving. Since 2009, more than \$350,000 in facade grants have helped business owners restore their historic buildings while adding contemporary touches. The riverfront is being reimagined. New restaurants open beside establishments that have served the community for decades.

Come summer, Hops on the Rock fills the streets with craft beer enthusiasts. Hot Dog Day, a peculiarly beloved tradition since 1976, draws crowds who understand that some things don't need to make sense to matter. Rally on the Rock cruise nights bring classic cars and their proud owners downtown, engines rumbling past those painted murals like a conversation between eras.

The Andrew Carnegie-funded library still stands where it opened in 1905, its shelves now holding books Carnegie never could have imagined. The iconic Sterling

Theater tower still anchors the skyline, a beacon that's guided residents home for generations.

Perhaps that's what makes Sterling Main Street more than a destination. It's a reminder that small towns aren't relics waiting to be discovered. They're living, breathing communities where history and progress co-exist on every block. Where a mural tells a story, but the coffee shop below it writes new ones every day.

Walk these streets slowly. Let the murals guide you. Stop when something catches your eye, a vintage sign, an unexpected gallery, the smell of fresh bread from a bakery that's been here longer than anyone can remember. Talk to the shopkeepers. They'll tell you their stories, and somehow, their stories will start to feel like yours.

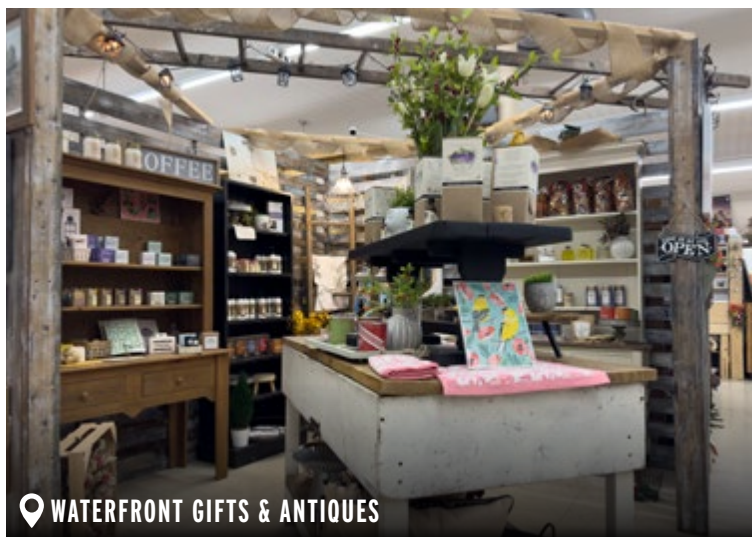
Sterling asks only one thing of its visitors: take your time. Some places reveal themselves in an afternoon. This one unfolds like a good book, one chapter at a time.

Downtown Sterling, IL
sterlingmainstreet.org





📍 SHOWPLACE ANTIQUES & TREASURES



📍 WATERFRONT GIFTS & ANTIQUES



📍 SWEET RIVAL

Uncover

HISTORICAL TREASURES THROUGH ANTIQUING ADVENTURES

Northwest Illinois offers a fascinating journey through time for antique and history fans. Explore, collect, and discover timeless stories in picturesque cities and landscapes. Welcome to an antique paradise where every find has a story.

Set in a beautifully preserved Civil War-era church, Sweet Revival Antiques & Coffee Shop in Kings provides an incredible array of antiques, collectibles, vintage finds, and gifts. But Sweet Revival isn't just about the past. Here, you can also enjoy some of the finest coffee drinks and chocolates in the area.

Nestled in Dixon, Waterfront Gifts & Antiques awaits with a treasure trove of home décor, primitives, and reimagined relics. Delight in the allure of retro and shabby chic finds alongside an impressive array of vinyl records. With fresh additions each week and an offer to hunt down your sought-after items, this spot promises to elevate your collection.

Enjoy the vintage charm of Sterling at Showplace Antiques & Treasures. Located in the heart of downtown, this building boasts four floors brimming with an eclectic array of antiques. From rustic

primitives to nostalgic kitchenware, captivating beer signs, and Christmas delights, every space has a different story to tell. Immerse yourself in the allure of handmade crafts from skilled vendors, making every visit a journey through time and creativity. Explore the past and find your next cherished piece in this titan of an antique store.

NEIGHBOR Notes

MELINDA JONES

Even if Melinda Jones wasn't the Director of Tourism for Rock Falls, she would still have plenty of wonderful things to say about the area. Born and raised here, she's had the unique opportunity to see the city and region evolve over the years. Although the natural beauty and warmth of the people have remained constant, the variety of attractions and activities has grown. Rock Falls and its sister city, Sterling, are home to an increasing number of festivals and events both annual and year-round. "You'll never be at a loss for something interesting to see or do around here," Melinda said. "From eagle watching events like Flock to the Rock to our Lumberjack Show to our Spooktacular Halloween Lighted Golf Cart & UTV Parade, if we can dream it, we'll do it. We're also fantastic for foodies. In addition to our Rock Falls farmers market, there's the Twin Cities Farmers Market in Sterling that's open all year. We even just started the Taco Throwdown Festival, which is not only a competition amongst chefs, but a great way for visitors to sample a ton of great tacos. That way, everyone wins."



📍 ROCK FALLS SCULPTURE WALK



📍 BELLSON MUSIC FEST



Picks & Tips

World-famous big-band drummer Louie Bellson was born in 1924 in Rock Falls. He performed with such greats as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan, and Ella Fitzgerald. He was a six-time Grammy nominee and received the prestigious American Jazz Masters Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. To celebrate this jazz legend, Rock Falls hosts the annual Bellson Music Fest every June. "This is a great weekend filled with not only incredible music and food, but also drum clinics for aspiring musicians," Melinda noted. "People come from all over come to experience this unique event, but it's just one of many. Check our events calendar, pick what's interesting to you, and stop by. Happy visitors are always music to my ears."

Carroll County

**MT. CARROLL • SHANNON • THOMSON • LANARK
SAVANNA • MILLEDGEVILLE • CHADWICK**

Steep cliffs, dense woodlands, free-roaming wildlife, nesting eagles, wild turkeys, and numerous species of shorebirds and waterfowl combine to create a paradise for nature lovers and those who just wish to get away from it all.





MT. CARROLL

A distinct feature of Carroll County is the Great River Trail, which provides miles of scenic biking and hiking opportunities. At the same time, just to its west, the Mississippi River and its backwaters offer incredible places to boat or fish. The county is rich in native wildlife and plants, with nearly 3,000 types of plants and 600 species of vertebrates. In addition, dozens of species of birds pass through the area during spring and fall migrations.

The wildlife you'll find here depends on the season and where you visit, but here is a short list of what you might encounter: waterfowl and shorebirds, pileated woodpeckers, wild turkey, eagles, hawks, buzzards/turkey vultures, deer, coyotes, gray and red foxes, weasels, woodchucks, badgers, beavers, muskrats, lizards, snakes, salamanders, frogs, toads, turtles, and many species of fish. Also, this county's western edge is the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. This historic treasure winds 557 miles through six states, but some of its most incredible beauty exists right here, where it meanders 35 miles along the Mississippi. Stop off at Mississippi Palisades State Park and enjoy a commanding view of the river, valley, and forests below.

The Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center, just south of Savanna, is ideal for observing waterfowl, migratory birds, and other wetland wildlife. The Center also offers educational opportunities and great wildlife displays.

Excellent dining, shopping, and a professional summer stock theater — the Timber Lake Playhouse — are just some of the things you'll find along the brick-lined streets of Mt. Carroll. Other local villages, including historic Savanna, boast unique shops offering antiques and collectibles and, in season, farmers markets featuring homegrown produce and vine-fresh melons. Visitors can also revel in a slate of Carroll County's many special events throughout the year, ranging from Mt. Carroll's Mayfest to Lanark's Old Settler's Days.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT YOUR BASECAMP FOR ADVENTURE

The stars here are different. Away from city glow, they crowd the sky in numbers you forgot were possible. From your cabin porch at Hickory Hideaway or the deck at Seven Eagles Resort, the Milky Way isn't a photograph. It's Tuesday night.

Carroll County offers lodging as varied as the adventures that await. The Trailside Inn near Lake Carroll provides modern comfort with panoramic country views and miniature golf on-site. Sandburr Run pairs comfortable rooms with a nine-hole golf course and the welcoming SandTrap Bar & Grill. Executive Inn in Thomson puts you minutes from Mississippi Palisades State Park and the Great River Trail.

For those seeking something more secluded, the county's cabins deliver. Hickory Hideaway offers a true woodland retreat on 10 wooded acres. Seven Eagles Resort combines motel rooms and cabins with a stocked fishing pond, in-ground pool, and direct access to the Great River Bike Trail. Timber Lake cabins let theatergoers extend a show night into a full getaway.

Prefer farm country charm? The Blue Farmhouse welcomes guests to experience rural Illinois the way it was meant to be. And at Spring Lake Campground, families have pitched tents and parked RVs beneath the trees for generations.

Whether you've come for Timberlake Playhouse, the eagles at Lock and Dam 13, or simply to trade noise for birdsong, Carroll County has a pillow waiting. Book early for theater weekends.

visitcarrollcountyil.com



MISSISSIPPI PALISADES



Lee County



DIXON • AMBOY • ASHTON • FRANKLIN GROVE • PAW PAW

Lee County offers friendly communities, historic sites, and wide-open spaces. In the small towns of this unique region, visitors will discover annual festivals such as Amboy Depot Days and the Dixon Petunia Festival. Dixon is also the boyhood home of President Ronald Reagan, the original National Headquarters of the Lincoln Highway Association, art galleries, and railroading history.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT DISCOVER DIXON

THE PETUNIA CAPITAL WITH PRESIDENTIAL ROOTS

Thirty thousand pink petunias bloom along Dixon's streets each summer, a tradition that earned this Rock River city its official designation as Illinois' Petunia Capital. But flowers aren't why most visitors come. They come for the boy who grew up here and became the 40th president of the United States.

Ronald Reagan lived in Dixon from age 9 through high school, and the town shaped him profoundly. His restored 1891 Queen Anne boyhood home welcomes visitors for guided tours, the rooms arranged as his family kept them in the 1920s. At Lowell Park, the beach where teenage Reagan worked seven summers as a lifeguard — famously saving 77 lives — still welcomes swimmers to the Rock River.

But Dixon offers more than Reagan history. The Lincoln Monument depicts Abraham Lincoln in military attire, commemorating his 1832 march through town during the Blackhawk War. Three remarkable railroad bridges, built 1852-1855 from locally quarried yellow limestone without mortar, demonstrate engineering that still inspires wonder.

The Petunia Festival transforms downtown each July with 16 live bands, riverfront concerts, and the annual Reagan Run. Christmas brings the traditional walk with horse-drawn carriages and Santa. Summer Fridays feature Music at the Square.

Here, enjoy more parks per capita than any Midwestern city and a historic theater showing films and hosting concerts, plus restaurants, antique shops, and a genuine sense of place.

Some towns have history. Dixon lives it.

discoverdixon.com



📍 RONALD REAGAN BOYHOOD HOME

The Rock River makes Lee County an outdoor lover's paradise, as do five campgrounds, the Amboy Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, Green River State Wildlife Area, Franklin Creek State Natural Area, and Nachusa Grasslands, which features Illinois' first conservation bison herd roaming more than 4,000 acres of restored prairie.

But Lee County is also rich in history. A young Abraham Lincoln served at Fort Dixon during the Black Hawk War of 1832. Dixon is also the hometown of President Ronald Reagan. There are several sites on a self-guided walking tour where you can trace the roots of our 40th president, such as the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home at 816 S. Hennepin Ave., which features original furnishings and tells the story of Reagan's experiences and remarkable accomplishments during his time in Dixon from 1920-1923. Out in the yard, a life-sized bronze statue pays tribute to Dixon's most celebrated resident.

The Northwest Territory Historic Center at 205 W. Fifth St., where Reagan attended grade school, is home to more Reagan memorabilia, a small theater, and a library and research center. At Dixon Heritage Crossing, a pedestrian-friendly outdoor plaza in downtown Dixon, you'll find "Begins the Trial," a life-sized, bronze sculpture of a young Reagan. Heritage Crossing also has a pavilion, performance spaces, places to sit, places to walk, and places to enjoy the view of the Rock River. From there, a short walk up Hennepin Avenue will lead you to many of the buildings and institutions that shaped his life in Dixon. Other historical sites around Dixon include the Lincoln Monument — a bronze statue of a 23-year-old Abraham Lincoln on the site of the former Fort Dixon — and the Illinois Central Stone Arch Railroad Bridges, a series of three limestone bridges built between 1852-1855 that were in use until 1985.





📍 STRONGHOLD CASTLE

Ogle County

OREGON • ROCHELLE • MT. MORRIS • BYRON • POLO

Sandstone bluffs, old-growth forests, serene state parks, rippling waters, railroad history, and the iconic Black Hawk Statue define Ogle County, where the wonders of the natural world blend beautifully with magnificent man-made attractions and special events.

Ogle County is home to the region's most recognizable landmark — sculptor Lorado Taft's famous 50-foot tribute to Native Americans, commonly called the Black Hawk Statue, and Lowden State Park. This 536,770-pound work of art, originating from an 8-inch sketch, gazes across the Rock River from its eastern bank, perched 125 feet above the waterway. At its dedication in 1911, Taft noted the statue, which he called "The Eternal Indian," had grown from the ground. And what a ground it is.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

ROCHELLE
RAILROAD PARK

THE CROSSROADS OF AMERICA

The ground trembles first. Then comes the whistle, low and mournful, growing louder. Suddenly, 200 tons of locomotive thunder past, close enough to feel the wind, smell the diesel, and understand why humans have always been drawn to trains.

At Rochelle Railroad Park, this happens all day, every day. Directly beneath the park's observation platform lies one of America's busiest rail crossings, a double diamond where Union Pacific and BNSF main lines intersect, carrying freight from coast to coast. This is America's first park built specifically for train watching. Visitors come from around the world to witness the spectacle. Families spread picnic blankets. Photographers capture the perfect shot. Children press their faces to the fence, counting cars as they rumble past. Tune your radio to 106.9 FM and you'll hear the dispatcher coordinating the ballet of steel and momentum.

In September 2024, more than 60,000 people descended on Rochelle when Union Pacific's legendary Big Boy 4014 — the world's largest operating steam locomotive at 1.2 million pounds — rolled through on its Heartland of America Tour. For one magical weekend, the park became a pilgrimage site.

But you don't need a special event to feel the magic. Just show up, find a seat, and wait. The next train is never more than minutes away.

Gift Shop Hours:

Wednesday – Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (summer)
11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (winter)

124 N. Ninth Street, Rochelle, IL | Open daily 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.
rochellerrailroadpark.org | Free Admission



 A.M. FLORAL

Ogle County is home to many of the region's quintessential attractions, including the Byron Forest Preserve, a scenic stop for nature lovers offering miles of trails and prairie landscapes, and the Jarrett Prairie Center for engaging exhibits on local ecology. The 2,000-acre Castle Rock State Park features dramatic, breathtaking sandstone bluffs along with 6 miles of hiking trails and 27 species of fern that are unique to the region. Visitors can enjoy recreational activities from hiking and birdwatching to stargazing at the Weiskopf Observatory. White Pines Forest State Park is where virgin stands of pine, log cabins, lodge dining, live theater, and natural beauty abound. Here, the scent of towering pines permeates, where guests find solace on moss-covered hiking trails, in cozy one-room cabins, and around crackling campfires at night. Visitors discover nature preserves, parks, go-cart rides, golf and mini-golf, canoeing and kayaking, specialty shops, and historic sites just minutes from White Pines. One of the most popular is the John Deere Historic Site in nearby Grand Detour, where the famous inventor built his family home in 1836 and revolutionized farming. Other historical sites include the Rochelle Railroad Park — the first park in the country built specifically for trainspotting with more than 80 trains crossing daily — and the Byron Heritage Farm Museum, where guests can explore five preserved farm buildings to learn about the history of agriculture in Northwest Illinois.

Throughout our small towns and villages, Ogle County celebrates its heritage with frequent family-friendly events ranging from Rochelle's Railroad Days and Lincoln Highway Heritage Festival to Oregon's Autumn on Parade and Candlelight Christmas Walk. While in Rochelle, visit the Flagg Township Historical Society and Museum, which holds an extensive collection of antiques and genealogical information. One of the more important artifacts is the 1915 Partin-Palmer automobile built in Rochelle, the only one known in existence.

Whiteside County

**MORRISON • STERLING • ROCK FALLS
FULTON • TAMPICO • PROPHETSTOWN**

Whether you're getting lost in a corn maze, visiting a restored village from yesteryear, or marveling at a massive barge maneuvering its way through a Mississippi River lock, you'll never be at a loss for things to do and see in Whiteside County.





LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

FULTON, IL

COME FOR A VISIT,
STAY FOR A LIFETIME

Take a day trip to Fulton, IL. Make it a whole weekend. We like to say, "Come for a visit, stay for a lifetime." We've got that small-town charm with a sprinkle of big-city vibes, including great shopping from boutiques to antiques, stellar coffee joints on all ends of town, and amazing restaurants throughout. Most importantly, the people are kind and the views are great.

Located along the banks of the Mississippi River, Fulton is home to De Immigrant, a nearly 100-foot authentic Dutch windmill with sails turning slowly against the morning sky. Inside the adjacent cultural center, 22 European windmill models from 10 countries tell the story of wind power across centuries.

Heritage Canyon recreates an 1800s pioneer village in a reclaimed 12-acre quarry, complete with a schoolhouse, church, and blacksmith shop. Lock and Dam 13 provides prime eagle watching from December through February, and the Great River Trail winds 62 miles through some of Illinois' most spectacular scenery.

The first weekend of May brings Dutch Days, when traditional dancing, wooden shoes, and street scrubbing transform downtown into a celebration of heritage. The Fulton Fun Crew hosts family events year-round, including the iconic Fall Fest and Totally Tuesdays throughout summer. A brand-new ADA-accessible Friendship Park provides a safe and fun place for everyone to explore and play.

Small towns often claim to be unique. Fulton proves it.

visitfulton.com



MISSISSIPPI RIVER

In Tampico, visitors can tour where President Ronald Reagan was born in 1911 above the town bakery. In Fulton, experience the early-American village of Heritage Canyon, where special events and historical reenactors harken back to life in the 1800s. Also in Fulton is the De Immigrant Windmill, the only working Dutch windmill in the state. Manufactured in the Netherlands and delivered to Fulton, this massive, 100-foot, fully functional windmill showcases the craftsmanship and ingenuity of the Dutch millwrights and masons who constructed it. At Albany Indian Mounds State Historic Site in Albany, you'll be fascinated by one of the state's largest prehistoric Hopewell Mound groupings, where interpretive exhibits explore a Native American culture that existed more than 2,000 years ago. The site is free and offers hiking, biking, cross-country ski trails, and picnicking areas. In Sterling, the Dillon Home Museum — an 1858 manor built for Civil War Brigadier General Edward Needles Kirk and later home to steel magnate P.W. Dillon — hosts a collection of historical artifacts along with original furnishings.

Throughout the year, Whiteside County hosts an endless array of entertaining special events, including Dutch Days, the Prophetstown Pow Wow, Rock Falls Summer Splash, Fulton Fall Festival, and Dillon Home Museum Victorian Christmas Walk. The county is also home to Lake Carlton, which is pegged as the state's premier spot for muskie fishing. Numerous parks in Sterling and Rock Falls offer beautiful views of the flowing waters, including Sinnissippi Park, which features trail access and more Hopewellian Mounds.

The Hennepin Canal, which stretches through the county, is one of Northwest Illinois' most historic waterways. Originally known as the Illinois and Mississippi Canal, it was conceived in 1834 as a project that would reduce the distance between Chicago and Rock Island by 41 miles. The peak of the canal's success was in 1927, when 30,000 tons of freight moved down its waters. After that, it saw a steady decline in use as railroads and trucks took over the freight industry. Today, the canal is home to 78 miles of canoeing and kayaking opportunities and is snaked by parks and a beautiful walking path. The waterway is perfect for beginners as it is very calm, there are no obstructions, and wildlife is abundant. A boat landing south of Rock Falls off Route 40 provides access to a kayak rental provider and many take-out places along the way.

A vintage upright piano is the central focus, with sheet music open on its stand. The piano is dark wood with a light-colored keyboard. In the background, there are large windows with heavy, patterned curtains. To the right, a portion of an ornate, upholstered chair is visible. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a cozy atmosphere.

Rest Your

WANDERLUST

In Northwest Illinois, you'll find the accommodations are just as unique as the things you'll see and do here. Our bed-and-breakfasts are rich in character, offering a quaint ambiance and personalized experiences with your hosts, while our vacation rentals blend coziness and privacy, letting you savor the essence of our region at your own pace. For a more casual stay where nature's embrace awaits, picture yourself nestled amidst serene woodlands in one of our many campgrounds or rustic cabins. If luxury and convenience are more your style, our acclaimed hotels provide top-notch amenities and exceptional service, elevating your getaway to an extraordinary experience.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

EAST OF
YELLOWSTONE LODGE

THE WEST WITHOUT THE DRIVE

The great room stretches before you, 10,000 square feet of hand-hewn Montana logs, a massive stone fireplace crackling with warmth, and antiques collected from around the world adorning every corner. Through floor-to-ceiling windows, 43 wooded acres spread beneath a sky unmarked by light pollution.

You're not in Wyoming. You're in the Illinois prairie. And that's exactly the point.

East of Yellowstone Lodge was born from a dream: Recreate the majesty of a Western mountain retreat in Illinois. Keith and Lisa, a retired military family whose travels took them across continents, spent 18 months assembling this masterpiece from numbered Montana logs shipped halfway across the country. The result defies expectation. Five luxury bedrooms sleep 16 guests surrounded by three game rooms, five lounges, a theater with a 100-inch 4K screen, and the World Saloon where the whiskey flows and the billiard balls crack like they did in another era. The gourmet kitchen invites gathering. The deck invites wonder.

For larger groups, the EoY Outpost Campground offers rustic cabins, bunkhouses, and newly expanded glamping options, including an ADA-accessible cabin. The adjacent Scout Campground preserves a historic Girl Scout camp dating to 1937, its bunks still bearing signatures of campers through the decades.

Enjoy 4 miles of private trails, year-round creek access, and next door, Lost Nation Golf Club, offering "Stay N Play" packages. The name reflects its geography — east of Yellowstone. The experience rivals the original.

6685 S. Lost Nation Road, Dixon, IL
eastofyellowstonelodge.com



THE INN AT MOLLY'S

OUR BED & BREAKFASTS WILL
TAKE YOU BACK IN TIME

In Mt. Carroll, The Inn at Molly's combines rural charm with contemporary amenities and style in a beautifully restored 1865 historic building. Spend the day exploring the historic buildings and architecture of Mt. Carroll, antiques, and the beautiful pastoral landscape of the driftless area. Then, come home to cocktails and a delicious meal downstairs at Molly's.

VACATION & RESORT RENTALS
HAVE ROOM FOR A CROWD

Our region has a wealth of vacation rentals ranging from casual to luxury accommodations. Mill Spring Cottage in Franklin Grove is situated within the 900-acre Franklin Creek State Natural Area and offers two bedrooms, a loft, two baths, and a fully equipped kitchen, making it the perfect place for a family or friend's escape. Enjoy easy access to hiking, fishing, and birdwatching in this scenic setting. Nearby, the 4,000-acre Nachusa Grasslands is home to roaming wild bison, adding to the natural charm. Your stay also includes access to an acre of surrounding land within the State Natural Area.

East of Yellowstone Lodge & Retreat near rural Dixon is a secluded lodge and campground offering a private stay for family and friends. The 10,000-square-foot Luxury Western Lodge has two game rooms, four lounges, a well-appointed gourmet kitchen, and a formal dining room, and can sleep up to 80 between the main lodge and on-site cabins. The additional rustic cabins dot the property and guests can enjoy their own private nature area with over 4 miles of trails on 43 acres, complete with a year-round creek and abundant wildlife.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

WOODHAVEN LAKES ASSOCIATION

WHERE FAMILIES RETURN FOR GENERATIONS

The fishing line arcs across the morning mist, landing with a soft plop in the still water. Three generations share the dock — grandfather, father, and son — the same dock where Grandfather learned to cast 50 summers ago.

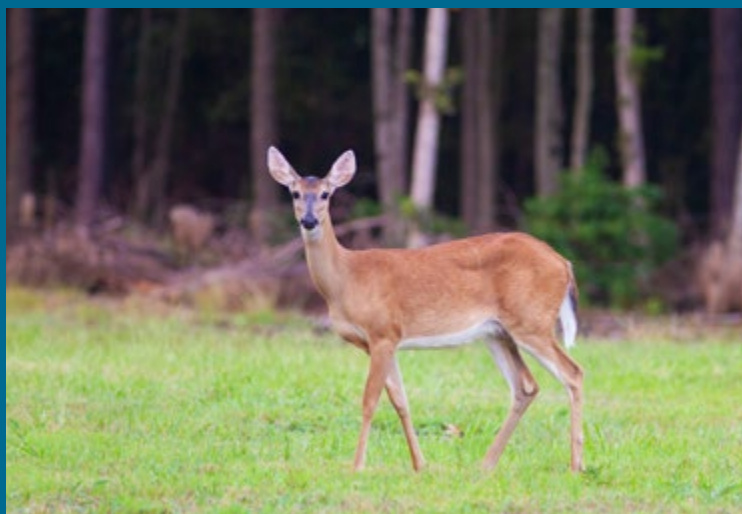
This is Woodhaven Lakes. Not a resort you visit, but a community you join. Spanning 1,756 acres with seven stocked fishing lakes, this private recreational property has welcomed families since 1971. Members don't rent sites. They own them, passing down lots like heirlooms and creating traditions that outlast any vacation.

The amenities read like a summer camp wish list: two swimming pools, a swimming beach, more than 15 miles of natural trails, mini golf, and a nature center where kids discover creatures they've only seen in books. But what keeps families returning isn't the amenities. It's the neighbors who become friends, the children who grow up together, and the sense of belonging to something larger than a two-week getaway.

Each season brings themed events. The Cabin Fever Festival in January draws families out of hibernation. Year-round recreation programs keep every age entertained. Twenty-four-hour gated security ensures peace of mind while on-site grocery and hardware stores mean you never need to leave.

Some families have been coming for 50 years. They'll tell you: Once Woodhaven gets in your blood, it never leaves.

509 La Moille Road, Sublette, IL
woodhavenassociation.com



WHITE PINES LODGE

WHEN AMENITIES KNOW NO BOUNDS

Hotels and motels provide comfort, convenience, security, and other services tailored to your needs. The Comfort Inn & Suites in Rochelle welcomes you to peace and quiet with 95 rooms, including suites with full kitchens and private hot tubs. Guests can enjoy a complimentary hot breakfast, WiFi, and use of the business center. The hotel also includes a restaurant and bar on-site, as well as an event facility for weddings, meetings, and conferences. It also has a full-service fitness facility and indoor pool.

Located on the Rock River in Oregon, The Paddle Wheel Inn offers balcony suites with panoramic views of the river and the iconic Eternal Indian. Cruise aboard an authentic paddlewheel boat while enjoying a relaxing lunch or moonlit dinner. This venue boasts a continental breakfast, spa, sauna, meeting and banquet facilities, and is home to Maxson Restaurant. Looking for a tasty steak? The Paddlewheel Inn sits next to the Blackhawk Steak Pit, a dining tradition in Ogle County.

In Rock Falls just off the I-88 exit, there are several hotels to choose from. The Holiday Inn Express & Suites sits on the banks of the Rock River with guest rooms that offer a blend of style and space, complete with all the essentials like WiFi, a 42-inch flat-screen TV, microwave, refrigerator, and an enhanced bath setup. Plus, many rooms feature a private balcony with a stunning river view. For business travelers, rooms offer spacious work areas with an ergonomic chair.

In Dixon, the newly opened Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites is located conveniently off I-88 and includes free WiFi and a complimentary breakfast. The new Tru by Hilton Dixon is also located just off I-88 and offers pet-friendly rooms, making it a perfect option for those bringing their four-legged friends along.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

PINECREEK ESCAPE

UNPLUG & RECONNECT

The fire crackles in the gas fireplace. Through the cabin window, pine trees stand sentinel in the gathering dusk. Your phone, deliberately left in the car, can't reach you here. And for the first time in months, you don't mind.

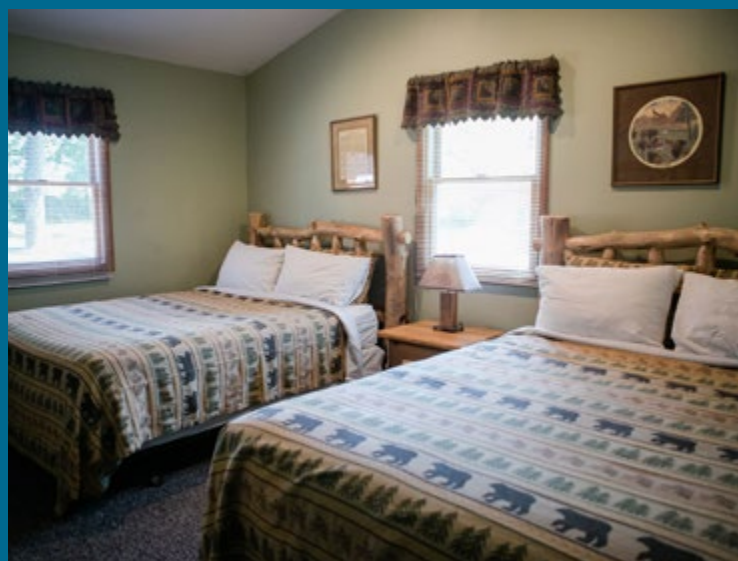
Pine Creek Escape sits directly across from White Pines Forest State Park, close enough to hear Pine Creek murmuring through the ravine but private enough to feel utterly secluded. For more than 18 years, couples have come here to reconnect with nature, each other, and the quiet parts of themselves city life drowns out. The cabins range from the cozy Whispering Pine (a 1940s original overlooking the creek bluff) to the spacious Knotty Pine (sleeping 12, perfect for family reunions). The newest addition, Cobblestone Cabin, opened in June 2024 with two bedrooms, two baths, and a location steps from the state park entrance.

Each cabin features a full kitchen, comfortable beds, and something priceless: silence. No highway noise. No notifications. Just birdsong, wind through the pines, and the person you came here to be with.

And when you're ready to step out of the cabin, adventure awaits. Hike the trails at White Pines or Lowden State Park. Kayak the Rock River. Visit the free-roaming bison at Nachusa Grasslands. Bring the family next door to The Rink at Pine Creek — an 11,000-square-foot roller rink with an original terrazzo floor dating to 1948, a full arcade, and a live DJ spinning hits every weekend. Explore the galleries and shops of downtown Oregon. Then return to your cabin, where the fireplace is waiting.

Two hours from Chicago. A world away from everything else.

6797 W. Pines Road, Oregon, IL | [pinecreekescape.com](https://www.pinecreekescape.com)



Kick Back

IN ONE OF OUR COZY CABINS

Located in White Pines State Park near Mt. Morris, White Pines Lodge resembles a pioneer village with authentic log cabins and gas fireplaces. The 13 one-room cabins, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s, have open-beamed ceilings, while six additional quad cabins are built in groups of four under one roof, each offering a private entrance and bath with interconnecting doors, making them ideal for large families. Finally, they offer two romantic suite cabins with king-size canopy beds and soaking tubs. During the lodging season (March through late December), guests can access the Lodge's beautiful restaurant and gift shop.

Relax in the rustic setting of cabins located on 10 wooded acres just minutes from Lake Carroll. Hickory Hideaway in Shannon lets visitors enjoy cabins with private baths and some with gas fireplaces and hot tubs. There are optional extras like a full-body massage, unique chocolate treats from nearby chocolatiers, or even breakfast in bed from their caterers. Its cabins and grounds are immaculate, even in the winter months. The owners are experienced and gracious hosts who guide visitors to places to see, dine, and drink in Carroll County.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT WHITE PINES LODGE

HISTORY YOU CAN SLEEP IN

The logs are hand-hewn, each placed by Civilian Conservation Corps workers during the darkest years of the Depression. The fireplace is stone, gathered from these very hills. And the breakfast — biscuits and gravy, chicken pot pie, and peach cobbler — follows recipes perfected over generations.

White Pines Lodge isn't merely historic; it's living history, the only privately operated lodge within an Illinois state park, surrounded by the southernmost native white pine forest remaining in the state. Twenty-five log cabins dot the property, built between 1933-1939 by young CCC workers who poured their hope into every joint and beam. Today, those cabins feature gas fireplaces and modern comforts while retaining their rustic soul. Some offer hot tubs for two. Others connect for family gatherings. All offer something no chain hotel can match: the weight of time made comfortable.

The Pines Dinner Theater has presented live entertainment since 1989, providing over 37 years of laughter and song in an intimate, 144-seat playhouse. Their holiday production of Scrooge The Comedy has run for three decades, becoming a regional tradition.

Beyond the lodge, seven hiking trails wind through 385 acres of forest. Concrete fords allow you to drive through flowing streams. In winter, cross-country skiing trails transform the landscape into a quiet wonderland.

The Lodge anticipates reopening March 2026 for its next chapter of creating memories.

6712 W. Pines Road, Mt. Morris, IL | visitwhitepines.com



GETTING BACK TO NATURE IS THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE

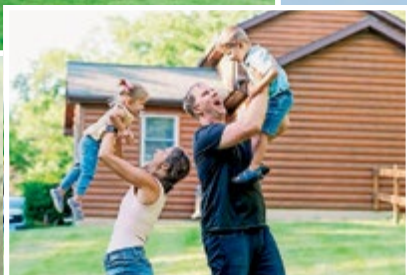
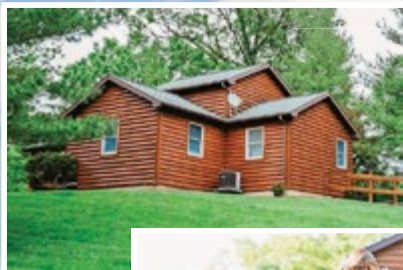
Camping brings unparalleled joy, whether in a tent or a cozy camper. The serenity of waking up to birdsong, the crackle of a campfire, or the star-studded night sky fosters a deep connection with nature in our region. Savanna's Mississippi Palisades State Park offers a glimpse into the tales of the ancient Mississippi River. It has 241 Class A and B sites in shaded and open areas and 110 sites with electrical setup from May through October. Visitors here enjoy fishing, hiking, boating, and rock climbing.

Lowden State Park Campground, located in Oregon, guarantees a restful getaway surrounded by natural beauty. Here, the Black Hawk Statue stands sentinel as you sleep under the stars. There are 80 Class A campsites, including electricity, a shower building, and a sanitary dumping station for trailers. Another option is the campground cabin with two bunk beds, a full-sized bed, and electricity from May through October. For the authentic wilderness experience, there are eight Class D primitive hike-in-only campsites. All visitors are welcome to enjoy 4 miles of good foot trails.

Camping in Morrison-Rockwood State Park Campground near Morrison will surely delight all who love the great outdoors. Ninety-two sites are available in heavily wooded areas of the park and within its boundaries is Lake Carlton, which provides boating and one of the best fishing spots in Illinois. A 3.5-mile nature trail is marked for hikers and offers many scenic views of the lake as it winds through the park. This trail is particularly beautiful in spring when the wildflowers are in bloom. Equestrians may use a 14-mile trail through the park that has a watering well and an overnight campsite with shelter.

Time To Escape!

THE CABINS PINE CREEK



A hidden gem nestled in the rolling hills of northern Illinois surrounded by white pines, waterfalls and natural stone. Plan your escape today.

- Open year-round
- Located outside White Pines State Park
- Multiple bedrooms/bathrooms
- Full kitchens • Private fire rings/grills

6559 W Pines Rd, Oregon, IL 61061
Ph: 815-881-1180 • www.pinecreekescape.com

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815-946-9988 • www.skatingfun.com

Go Northwest

FOR GREAT EVENTS

Northwest Illinois is a region brimming with a vibrant array of events throughout the year, each providing an opportunity to immerse yourself in local culture, traditions, and communal spirit. Enjoy birdwatching in February, fun ways to beat the heat in the summer, scarecrow festivities in October, and holiday happenings in November and December. Every month offers unique experiences that unite locals and visitors alike.

For more events and the most up-to-date information available, go to visitnorthwestillinois.com.



FEBRUARY



FLOCK TO THE ROCK

This free, family-friendly event is a must for nature enthusiasts and bird lovers. Start the day at the Lower Dam in Rock Falls, where you'll have the chance to witness the majestic bald eagles soaring above the Rock River. Bring your binoculars and cameras to capture these stunning birds in their winter habitat. The festivities continue at the Rock Falls American Legion, featuring engaging presentations. Explore nature-related vendors and enjoy a bite to eat. Winter in Rock Falls is the perfect time to see migrating bald eagles gathered along the open waters near the dams — don't miss this unique celebration of wildlife and culture.

MAY



DUTCH DAYS FESTIVAL

Come enjoy the classic Dutch dinner as well as mouthwatering pastries and other various regional delights. Explore the arts and crafts show featuring more than 100 talented artisans. Need a wooden shoe fix? Make sure to check out the Klompen dancers in their traditional wooden shoes. And if you're looking to get a pair for yourself, custom-made shoes are also available. The excitement begins when the Burgomaster and Town Crier inspect the streets for cleanliness and the street sweepers come through with water and brooms to prepare the street for the parade. Enjoy the authentic Dutch costumes, bands, floats, and other entertainment during the parade. Tradition and love are everywhere at Fulton's Dutch Days Festival.

JUNE



DUPAGE PLOUGHBOYS VS. OREGON GANYMEDES

The Oregon Ganymedes is a vintage baseball team based in Oregon. In June, the Ganymedes will take on the DuPage Ploughboys on the grounds of the John Deere Historic Site in Grand Detour. This league plays by 1858 rules, wears wool uniforms, has no mitts, and is consistently polite during this free, family-friendly event. Bring your lawn chairs or blankets and enjoy a hot dog and lemonade.

JULY



PETUNIA FESTIVAL

For over 50 years, Dixon's Petunia Festival has been the highlight of summer and will take place this year from July 2-6. Enjoy five days of fun, featuring a carnival on Lincoln Statue Drive, live music on two stages along the Dixon Riverfront, and the annual Nuts About Art outdoor festival at John Dixon Park. Watch the grand parade Sunday afternoon as it winds through town, starting at St. Mary's Catholic School and ending at Dixon High School. Conclude the weekend with a spectacular fireworks show at over the Rock River on Sunday. Don't miss this vibrant celebration filled with entertainment and community spirit.

AUGUST



AMBOY DEPOT DAYS

Amboy Depot Days celebrates the city's rich railroad history over four days with live music, art shows, local cuisine, and vintage train displays. Visit the Depot Museum and one-room schoolhouse to learn what makes Amboy tick. The car, truck, and motorcycle show fills the streets of Amboy on Sunday. One of the most popular draws is the festival's famous 50/50 raffle. The drawing is also held on Sunday during the Depot Days Weekend. Since 2014, winnings have topped \$100,000 almost every year. Will you be the one to take home the big cash prize? Don't miss this nostalgic summer celebration.

SEPTEMBER



TASTE OF FIESTA

Enjoy the delicious flavors and lively rhythms of the 14th annual Taste of Fiesta. Be part of the largest Hispanic festival in our region at RB&W District Park in Rock Falls. Enjoy delicious food from various vendors, discover local businesses and nonprofits, and experience a vibrant display of artists capturing live moments. With a wide range of entertainment options, this event guarantees a memorable experience for all attendees. From lively folkloric dancers to engaging kids' crafts, a petting zoo, bucket rides, face painting, and live bands, there's something for everyone to enjoy.



ART IN THE PARK

Immerse yourself in the Art in the Park extravaganza. At the Rock Falls RB&W Sculpture Walk and Outdoor Art Gallery, nature and art blend seamlessly. It's a canvas for artists nationwide to display their work. This festival grows every year, celebrating the community's artistic spirit. Since its inception in 2018, the event has become an annual celebration of art, culture, and vibrant hues along the riverfront park. Imagine encountering 13 stunning sculptures that breathe life into the surroundings. Witness the unveiling of nine new sculptures each year, carefully curated through jury selection, adorning the park just a day before the event. You can also engage with the visionary artists behind these magnificent works, gaining insight into their inspiration and creative process.

OCTOBER



AUTUMN ON PARADE FESTIVAL

Bring the entire family on an Oregon adventure, combining local culture, natural beauty, and culinary delights. The annual Autumn on Parade festival, a cherished tradition, offers local, handcrafted, and homemade treasures from more than 80 vendors circling the historic courthouse square. Kids can explore the Fun Zone with Miller's Petting Zoo. Tasty snacks and dishes from nonprofits and local businesses are sure to satisfy any craving. Enjoy the Auto Classic and Antique Tractor Show at Oregon Park East with food vendors Saturday or delve into history at the Chana School. In the evening, the Entertainment HotSpot features a beer garden. Sunday starts with a one-mile "Fun Run" and a 5K race, followed by the grand Harvest Time Parade, making it a family-friendly event with something for everyone.



STRONGHOLD OLDE ENGLISH FAIRE

The Stronghold Olde English Faire is a fascinating event that honors medieval culture and fun. It occurs at Stronghold Castle in Oregon, which is a camp and retreat venue for the rest of the year. It is a captivating event with jousting tournaments, live music, theater shows, handcrafted goods, and delicious food. Visitors can immerse themselves in the ambiance of the Renaissance period while exploring various themed activities and interactive displays. It's a spectacular event transporting attendees to a bygone era, creating memorable experiences for all who visit.



MT. CARROLL PUMPKIN FEST

Downtown Mt. Carroll comes alive with autumn charm during its annual Mt. Carroll Pumpkin Fest. Start your day at the farmers market, bustling with local vendors, food trucks, and live music. Bring the whole family for free activities, including the Kids & Critters Costume Parade in the morning, pumpkin painting, mini-gourd racing, and even a pumpkin catapult. Other highlights include face painting, a barrel train ride, touch-a-truck experiences, and the crowd-favorite Ping Pong Ball Drop. Celebrate fall at this community favorite and enjoy a festive day full of fun, laughter, and pumpkin-inspired creativity.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER



SCARECROW FESTIVAL

Crisp air, vibrant leaves, and the enchanting Scarecrow Festival await in Dixon. Make it a family fun day celebrating creativity and community. Six city blocks come alive with whimsical scarecrow displays, live music echoing through the autumn breeze, and local artisans showcasing their crafts. This festive celebration has something for everyone, from scarecrow competitions to a pumpkin derby, and vendor booths brimming with fall delights.



Northwest Illinois transforms into a holiday wonderland from late November through December, offering festive events that capture the season's magic. Highlights include dazzling holiday light displays like those at Centennial Park in Rock Falls and charming Christmas walks in communities like Dixon, Oregon, and Mt. Carroll. Visitors can enjoy horse-drawn carriage rides, tree lightings, local shopping experiences, and live entertainment during the Hometown Holidays and the Savanna Festival of Trees. With activities ranging from s'mores by the fire to encounters with Santa, the region promises a memorable holiday experience for families and friends alike.



📍 GRANDON CIVIC CENTER



📍 DIXON PETUNIA FEST: CARNIVAL



📍 DIXON PETUNIA FESTIVAL: MAIN STAGE

Year Round

ENTERTAINMENT EVENT VENUES

Northwest Illinois is home to a diverse collection of entertainment scenes. Our region offers various events, from lively concerts to captivating theater performances. The Dixon is a historic theater in Dixon steeped in history and culture. This venue showcases remarkable architecture that preserves the charm of its era. Hosting performances from live music and theater productions to film screenings, The Dixon captivates visitors with its diverse cultural offerings. Timber Lake Playhouse in Mt. Carroll is a hidden gem. This professional summer theater boasts top-notch productions, from Broadway hits to original works. Nestled in scenic surroundings, it's a go-to for theater enthusiasts.

Discover outstanding performances, workshops, and an enchanting ambiance that captivates every visitor. Enjoy the rhythm of live music echoing through our many outdoor venues, where nature becomes a part of the performance — especially at the Rhythm Section Amphitheater in Mt. Carroll. The amphitheater stage offers optimal sound with the best secluded outdoor scenery. Its silo bar and viewing decks are specially designed for enhanced listening experiences.

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

DIXON HISTORIC THEATER

SILVER-SCREEN NOSTALGIA

The lights dim. A hush falls over the crowd. For a moment, you could be anywhere in time: a teenager on a first date in 1928, sneaking glances in the darkness; a child in the 1950s, clutching popcorn as cowboys galloped across the screen; a young actor in the wings, heart pounding before stepping onto that 80-foot stage.

The Dixon: Historic Theatre has held all these moments and millions more since its doors first opened on March 15, 1922. Built on the ashes of the old Dixon Opera House, which fire claimed two years earlier, this wasn't just a replacement — it was a statement. Three hundred local stockholders pooled their resources, investing \$235,000 (nearly \$4 million today) to create something extraordinary: a fireproof palace of brick, terra cotta, and steel where the community could gather for generations.

They built it to last. And it has.

Walk through those doors today and the original 1922 balcony seats still cradle you, each embossed with "DIXON" on its

iron frame. The Art Deco details remain crisp. The stage still stretches 25 feet deep, intimate enough that the back row sits just 75 feet from the performers, close enough to see the sweat on a drummer's brow or the tears in a singer's eyes.

The acoustics, touring musicians say, are among the finest they've encountered. "The best we've sounded in months," more than one artist has remarked after a show. There's magic in these walls, something the architects understood in 1922 and renovators have carefully preserved through a recent \$1.2 million restoration completed in March 2025.

That restoration — new roof, restored masonry, refreshed interiors — wasn't about changing the Dixon. It was about ensuring another century of standing ovations. And the programming has expanded to match: Nearly 70 shows per year now fill the calendar. Broadway touring productions. Tribute bands channeling Taylor Swift and Billy Joel. Legacy artists like Sister Hazel. Community theater where local kids

discover they have voices that deserve to be heard.

Young Ronald Reagan brought dates here in the late 1920s, watching "talkies" flicker across the screen, perhaps dreaming of a future he couldn't yet imagine. Today, visitors sit in those same seats, surrounded by neighbors and strangers who become neighbors, sharing the collective experience that only live performance can provide.

In an age of streaming and isolation, The Dixon offers something radical: a reason to leave home, to sit beside someone you don't know and laugh at the same joke, gasp at the same plot twist, and rise together for the same standing ovation.

The lights dim. The curtain rises. And for the next two hours, the outside world falls away. This is why they built it. This is why it endures.

114 S. Galena Avenue, Dixon, IL
dixontheatre.com
Box Office: (815) 508-6324



SPONSORED

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

TIMBER LAKE PLAYHOUSE

A WOODLAND ENCORE

The stage lights dim. The audience holds its breath. Somewhere in the wings, a young actor prepares to step into the spotlight for the first time, following in footsteps that have led to Broadway, Hollywood, and beyond.

Timber Lake Playhouse has launched careers for 65 years. Jennifer Garner performed here, as did Michael Gross, Kate Baldwin, and Tony Award winner Jayne Houdyshell. The roster of alumni reads like a who's who of American theater, featuring artists who discovered their voices in this 371-seat venue tucked among the trees of Carroll County.

Founded in 1961, Timber Lake has produced nearly 400 plays and musicals across more than 4,500 performances, making it Illinois' oldest continuously

operating professional summer stock theatre company. The current building rose from the ashes of a 1974 fire, its 45-foot semi-thrust revolving stage hosting productions that rival regional theaters 10 times its size.

The 2026 season — the company's 65th — promises six productions ranging from the joyful *Godspell* to the sweeping *Les Misérables* to the family-friendly *Shrek: The Musical*. Each show features a company of aspiring professionals alongside experienced artists, fulfilling the Timber Lake mission to bridge the gap between training and career.

A pre-show dinner at nearby Molly's Kitchen has become tradition. The drive through rolling countryside sets the mood. And the performance? That's why

people return summer after summer to this unassuming theater where dreams take flight.

8215 Black Oak Road, Mt. Carroll, IL
timberlakeplayhouse.org



- 2026 -
Our 65th
Anniversary
Season!



May 29th-June 7th



June 12th-June 28th



July 3rd-July 12th



July 17th-August 2nd



August 7th-August 16th



August 21st-August 30th

EDUCATION PROGRAMMING | CONCERTS | COMMUNITY EVENTS | FAMILY FUN

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The DIXON

HISTORIC THEATRE

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MARCH 26

6TH CIRCUS OF BUBBLES
7TH REVOLUCIÓN DE AMOR
13TH SANCTUS REAL
14TH REILLY
20TH GIT COMEDY
21ST NIKKI D & THE SISTERS

APRIL 26

4TH PENNY LANE
10TH MEGAN WOODS
11TH ALBORN
18TH MOVIE ORCHESTRA
25TH TONY DANZA

MAY 26

2ND COSTA COLLECTIVOS
8-9 FINDING NEMO JR
15-16 LITTLE MERMAID
22ND CLICK CLACK MOO LIVE
29TH BAD MOMS COMEDY
30TH WHATSERNAME-
GREEN DAY

JUNE 26

6TH BOOM TOWN SAINTS
12TH EASTMAN DANCE
27TH COUNTRY LEGENDS

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