

FALL/WINTER 2022-23

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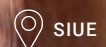
GREAT RIVERS & ROUTES OF
SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS

TOURS &
TRAILS

PICK OF
THE CROP

WINTER
ADVENTURES

GREAT
RIVERS
& ROUTES
OF SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS



enjoy
illinois

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SKYTUR • ZIPLINE • RESTAURANT • WINERY • LODGING



Aerie's is located on a bluff overlooking the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers above downtown Grafton, Illinois providing a stunning view that captivates any visitor. **BRING A FRIEND, OR YOUR FAMILY, WE HAVE A BUNCH IN STORE FOR YOU!**



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On the Scenic Byway in Grafton, IL

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ALT
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*Shine in the
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Spreading It Around
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She Loves Me (Musical)
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Violet Sharp
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Ding Dong
May 5-14

Tickets and more at the ALT Showplace • 2540 N. Henry Street | Alton, IL 62002
altonlittletheater.org | 618.462.3205

TOURS, TRAILS *and* DRIVES

EXPLOSIONS OF COLOR BLANKET THE HILLS AND VALLEYS, PRAIRIES AND BLUFFS ALONG THE RIVERS AND ROUTES OF SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS EACH FALL. IT IS ARGUABLY ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC TIMES OF THE YEAR IN THE GREAT RIVERS & ROUTES REGION. BUT DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT. SEE FOR YOURSELF!

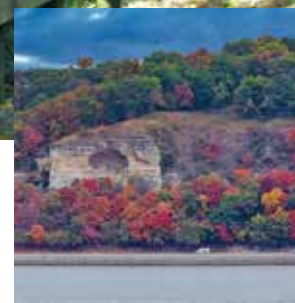


THE GREAT RIVER ROAD

If you're looking for a **TOUR**

Make plans now to see the Fall colors on a scenic guided tour. Enjoy a leisurely three hour tour along the Great River Road between the Mississippi River towns of Grafton and Elsah and see why this drive is one of the tops in the nation. Discover the historic Village of Elsah and shop at the Elsah General Store. Then take a drive through the acclaimed Principia College campus with a photo stop at the scenic campus chapel. This tour also includes a drive through scenic Pere Marquette State Park, the largest state park in Illinois. Tour dates: Oct. 20, 21, 27, 28 and Nov. 3 & 4. Tickets are \$27.50 per person and must be purchased in advance at: www.RiversandRoutes.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets

Please note: Tours are limited to 20 passengers and shuttle is not ADA accessible.



If you're looking for a **FALL COLOR DRIVE**

Set your GPS for one of the most striking Fall color drives in the country! A journey along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway between Alton and Pere Marquette State Park is one of the top 10 Fall color drives in the nation. With the mighty Mississippi River on one side of the road and soaring limestone bluffs drenched in magnificent colors on the opposite, there is no better drive. Make it a 60-mile round trip returning along the same road for an entirely different view of the ever-changing landscape.

TIP: Start on Illinois Route 100 in Alton and follow it to Pere Marquette State Park. Stop off at **Old Bakery Beer** in Alton for fuel for the road or **The Loading Dock** in Grafton on your return.

If you're looking for **NATURE**

Three state parks and dozens of smaller lakes and nature centers dot the six county landscape of Great Rivers & Routes. Hike through the vibrantly colored trees at **Pere Marquette State Park** along one of eight trails that weave through the landscape. Or travel north to **Beaver Dam State Park** outside of Carlinville and walk around the lake enjoying the Fall colors reflecting in the waters. **Horseshoe Lake State Park** in Collinsville, **Watershed Nature Center** in Edwardsville and **The Nature Institute** in Godfrey boast scenic natural vistas. **Lake Lou Yaeger** off Route 66 in Litchfield is filled with outdoor fall fun.



WATERSHED NATURE CENTER

If you're looking for **TRAILS**

Hop on your bicycle and explore the more than 200 miles of bike trails throughout the region. The **MCT Trails** are nationally recognized bikeways that wind through woodlands and forests, along river banks and over creeks and streams. The paved trails are ideal for nature enthusiasts who want to explore unincorporated areas along with urban jaunts. The trails are located on former railroad corridors and are considered Class 1 bikeways. The trails feature 48 bridges, 22 tunnels and a few at grade crossings. Ride the **Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail** from the outskirts of Alton all the way to Pere Marquette State Park and **Lake Lou Yaeger's Route 66 Trail** for new experiences.



MCT TRAILS



If you're looking for **ADVENTURE**

Be a-mazed this fall and get lost – and found – in a maze. The circus comes to town at the **Great Godfrey Maze** which is built in to a hemp field at Glazebrook Park. The circus-themed maze gets a little spooky after dark when it's just you and a flashlight. For good old-fashioned corn maze fun, head to St. Jacob and try to find your way out of the **DeMange Corn Maze**. This popular Fall attraction is one of the largest corn mazes in southwest Illinois. Be sure to pick up a pumpkin or two from their acres of pumpkin fields. Gas up the kart and go racing at **World Wide Technology Raceway**. Karts can reach speeds of up to 55 mph on the raceway's oval track.



PERE MARQUETTE STATE PARK

ARE YOU AN *Adventure Seeker?*

Adventure is calling your name and it's coming from Aerie's Resort in Grafton.

This historic riverfront community is getting ready to welcome an entirely new attraction which has no equal anywhere in the Midwest.

THE AERIE'S ALPINE COASTER

debut in September and brings a thrill ride to the region that soars down the face of the Aerie's bluff at max speeds of 28 miles per hour.

"What sets our Alpine Coaster™ apart is we have built it within the natural terrain which includes forest and rock formations," JD Lorton, Director of Operations for Aerie's Resort points out. "There is a 310-foot drop from the top of the bluff to the bottom. This is unique to the Aerie's property. There is nothing like it in the Midwest."

The Aerie's Alpine Coaster is the first of its kind in Illinois. It has seven hairpin turns, eight waves/jumps and twists and Lorton notes people will feel as if they are flying down the bluff because of the natural terrain.

The track runs a total of 3,010 feet downhill. It is then pulled back up to the top of the bluff on 875 feet of track. There will be a total of 38 sleds at the attraction but only 18 in use at any time. Lorton says 300 people an hour can ride this new attraction. The sleds slide down the track through a gravity feed.

"People who want a thrill will get their fix on the coaster," Lorton says. "It's not a roller coaster like you find at an amusement park. It's better."

Each sled holds one adult and one small child. The cost to ride the Aerie's Alpine Coaster is \$15 for one ride and \$28 for three rides. For each additional tandem passenger (children) add \$10 to the single ride ticket as well as the three ride ticket.

"This is an exhilarating one-of-a-kind experience," Lorton says.



> GRAFTON SKYTOUR

Take a leisurely ride to the top of the Aerie's Resort bluff on the Grafton SkyTour. This open air chair and enclosed gondola ride ferries passengers from the base of the bluff over 300 feet high to the top of the bluff. It takes about 15 minutes to travel to the top. Tickets for the SkyTour are \$10 for an entire day of rides.



^ GRAFTON ZIPLINE ADVENTURES

Soar through the tree canopy along the river bluffs in Grafton on the Grafton Zipline. This seven line ride includes jaw dropping views of the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and offers thrill seekers speeds of up to 45 miles per hour along with two suspension bridges. Riders are treated to a surprise at the end! Grafton Zipline was the first to be built in Illinois and it is also one of the longest in the state. Thrill seekers get ready! The cost to zip on weekends is \$90 per person and through the week it is \$70. Reservations are encouraged.

▼ **sip & dine** There's nothing like the views from the top of Aerie's Resort. Often considered one of the most scenic overlooks in the Midwest, views include the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and on clear days the downtown St. Louis Arch. Enjoy a sip of private label Aerie's wines at The Winery at Aerie's Resort while enjoying the views. Order lunch or dinner from the diverse menu which includes charcuterie boards, salads, flatbreads, sandwiches, steaks, salmon and a signature bourbon pork steak.



TRAVEL TIP:

Make plans to spend the night at Aerie's Resort and enjoy the views throughout your stay. There are more than 55 rooms available at the resort. It's the perfect place to unwind and unplug.

GHOSTS AROUND EVERY CORNER

"ALTON IS A CREEPY, GROOVY KIND OF TOWN." – DAVE NUNNALLY
OWNER OF THE SOUL ASYLUM LOCATED IN
THE MINERAL SPRINGS HOTEL



THE SOUL ASYLUM

The couple also purchased the Curiosity Museum, housed in the former ballroom of the hotel. It is now called **The Soul Asylum** and combines both history and the paranormal into an intriguing museum full of arcane and curious artifacts. Inside the museum, old movies featuring vampires, mummies and ghosts play adding to the ambiance.

"The museum is dedicated to hauntings, oddities and curiosities. It has Alton history and ties in to the city's haunted history," Dave says.

Open Friday - Sunday.
Admission: \$5 per person

MYSTERIOUS MINERAL SPRINGS TOURS

Donna and Dave have co-branded their Mysterious Mineral Springs Tours with haunted expert Troy Taylor of Haunted Alton fame. They conduct tours once a month until Alton's 'haunted season' kicks off. Then they offer tours two to three times a month.

To book a tour, call
618-717-0546 or
618-468-1051.



Scan Me
FOR MORE
HAUNTED ALTON
FUN



the 'largest dining table in Alton' – it seated 26 people. The hotel was originally meant to be an ice storage plant when brothers August and Herman Luer began construction on it. Those plans changed when they hit a natural mineral spring during construction.

WHO HAUNTS MINERAL SPRINGS

The hotel was a thriving business for decades and also the scene of at least one suicide, an accidental drowning and several suspicious deaths. The Nunnallys

believe the spirits of Pearl Sons, who died from a suspected sleeping pill overdose; Clarence Blair who died after diving in to the shallow end of the pool and breaking his neck; as well as Louis Harwood who committed suicide at the hotel remain on site. It is also home to spirits of children and even the famous, if folkloric, 'Jasmine Lady'.

"History matters and facts matter," Dave says. "The spirits here appreciate having their stories told with accuracy and compassion."



EXPERIENCE THE (EXTREMELY) HAUNTED MINERAL SPRINGS HOTEL

When Dave and Donna Nunnally arrived in Alton and first set eyes on the historic **Mineral Springs Hotel** in downtown Alton they knew one thing for certain: it was their destiny.

"I was always drawn to it. There was something about the building I couldn't stop thinking about," Donna muses with a smile.

Donna, a psychic medium since she was 11, has always had a strong sense about people and places, her husband Dave points out. "She knew what had happened at Mineral Springs. She knew about the hauntings."



MINERAL SPRINGS HISTORY

The Mineral Springs Hotel, a massive limestone structure anchoring a block of downtown Alton, was built in 1914 and at the time was the most opulent hotel in Alton and along the Mississippi River in Illinois. It boasted a mineral springs fed swimming pool and had what was considered

EXPERIENCE HAUNTED ALTON

ALTON HAUNTINGS TOURS

Find out why things go 'bump in the night' in Alton, considered one of the 'Most Haunted Small Towns in America' during author Troy Taylor's walking and dinner tours. Reservations are required for these tours which run year round but ramp up in September and October.

ALTON ODYSSEY TOURS

Walking tours, trolley tours and the only Haunted Craft Beer Walking Tour available in the region. Tours begin in September.

MCPIKE MANSION

Visit the famous and extraordinarily haunted McPike Mansion every weekend in October for a 'frightfully' great ghost adventure. The historic home is considered one of the most haunted mansions in the U.S. with at least a dozen spirits reported. Monthly tours are also available starting in April.

ESCAPE TO Elsau

VOTED #1 SCENIC SPOT IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS*

SHOP | STAY | EXPLORE

Elsah General Store
Life in the Postcard Gallery
Peace Works
A Market with a Mission
Systir Studio
The Look Factory

Green Tree Inn Bed & Breakfast
Maple Leaf Cottages Bed & Breakfast
Inspiring Wooded Cottage Airbnb
Suite Jane Airbnb

*Statewide vote by the Illinois Bicentennial Commission and the State Journal Register

escapetoelsah.com

Pick of the Crop

AT A QUIET INTERSECTION AMID QUEEN ANNE'S LACE IN CALHOUN COUNTY STANDS A PLYWOOD SIGN THAT READS, "IF YOU ATE TODAY, THANK A FARMER."

Story and Photos by CARMEN TROESSER

In the area around the great rivers, you can easily do both simultaneously. Smaller hand-painted signs with arrows direct you to farm stands in the region that overflow with fresh produce, flowers, and homemade baked goods. The landscape, the weather and the kaleidoscope of produce change with the seasons, but the names and heritage behind them at many farms have remained constant for years, even generations.

At Odelehr's Roadside Market in Brussels, Sandi Odelehr places peaches on a scale and glances out at her family's farmstead across the road. "Our house was built in 1842," she says. "My husbands family were some of the original settlers in the area." Kenny Odelehr makes an appearance as if summoned by the mention of his name. He holds a container of cookies on his hip while his free hand guides one into his mouth, his overalls attached on one shoulder while the other side dangles. About 15 family members still help out on the farm, where they are known for churning out about 1000 baked goods a week. Fruit pies, cookies, breads and an endless assortment of pie fillings are year-round staples. Fields and orchards roll out in every direction, where you can see your next meal of corn, squash and peaches growing.

» If you ate today, thank a farmer.

Down the road at Hagen Family Orchards, Shannon Kamp slowly makes her way down the rows of blackberry bushes behind the produce shed, selecting only the blackest and ripest fruit from the prolific canes. "My great grandparents started the stand in the 1930's," she says. "My friends from the city like to say my life here is like a Hallmark movie, and I guess it sort of is." Shannon worked at the market every summer growing up, helping customers with their assortments of fresh apples, peaches, berries, and corn. "I grew up getting off the bus here in the fall and riding my bike around the shed. She places her freshly-picked pints on the bench near the counter and recalls, "One of my favorite days of the year was when I'd get off the bus the first day the pumpkins were out."

Further north at Blueridge Farms Market in Hardin, Katie Matthews arranges pecks of peaches into rows. A cousin stops by and whisks up two boxes and asks about her family as he hops back into his pickup. Her parents, Brian and Cathy Matthews, bought their land in 2001 and planted their first peach trees in 2009. "Peaches are our livelihood. We're a pretty small community but we have a lot of out of town traffic for the peaches every summer," says Brian, who left a 22-year career in the city to farm. "I have the greatest job in the world. I get to spend every summer working outside with my kids."

Theodora Farms, a relatively new 10 acre farm in Godfrey, fulfills a need for local fresh organic and nutrient rich produce. Kayla Brown of Alton inspects tiny eggplants before putting them in her basket. "Everything changes here. There's always something different," she says as she adds okra and yellow cherry tomatoes. "I love to cook.

Everything's always so fresh and I get to experiment with a lot of new produce that I've never tried before. I'm very glad they're here."

Back up in Fieldon, 87-year-old Joe Ringhausen hoes weeds under apple and peach trees as his family has for six generations. He seems unconcerned to see strangers wandering his orchards and leads them on a tour through the grass between the trees, pointing out varieties of peaches, apples and plums. He stops only to pick and share the fruit, until sun-warmed plum juice drips down every chin into the grass. Joe's tour ends in the barn where his award-winning cider is made and sold with apples and pumpkins in the fall. Standing alongside the cider press he divulges one of the secrets to his process, then directs a squinted gaze into the rafters. "Yep, here I am," he says, "and this is what I've done."



» "Everything changes here, there's always something different."



A Walk Through History

A COMMUNITY IS MORE THAN A ZIP CODE ...

By Danette Watt

... A COMMUNITY IS MADE UP OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE, WORK AND POUR THEIR HEART AND SOULS IN TO THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TOWN.

THAT'S WHAT MAKES THE HISTORIC RIVERFRONT CITY OF ALTON SO UNIQUE. THE CITY'S SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY EVOLVED EARLY ON AND HAS BEEN EVIDENT THROUGHOUT HISTORY.



Scan Me
FOR MORE
THINGS TO DO
IN ALTON

CONSIDER THIS:

- Alton was one of four cities in Illinois in the 1840s that also included a free black community.
- The city's residents and those in surrounding areas also played a major role in the famed Underground Railroad of the 1800's

Celebrating Alton's commitment to diversity throughout the centuries, Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau partnered with Eric Robinson,

of J.E. Robinson Tours, to develop two-hour shuttle tours highlighting locations along the **Underground Railroad**, the organized network of sites created to help fleeing slaves.

Tour sites are residences, churches, and other private locations, so availability varies.

Robinson likes to tell the stories of the people, rather than the places, within a community.

"Places aren't important. What's important are the people and community," he said. "People

want to hear the stories of 'who was this escaped slave? Who was this person who helped them? Why did they help them?'"

He said his tours are not "ghost tours" done for shock value.

"These were not shaken, pitiful people. I want everyone to see how these communities thrived and survived," he said.

Famous, infamous, and ordinary people also make up a community. The actors of Alton's Vintage Voices bring to life the stories of residents of a different kind of community. They tell the tales of those buried in Alton Cemetery at 5th and Vine Streets.

Every October, **Vintage Voices** actors spend weekends in the Alton Cemetery bringing those characters to life during walking cemetery tours.

Characters are chosen based on interesting facts discovered by researchers during sessions at Hayner Public Library's genealogy department. Or the characters are tied to a specific anniversary in the city.

This year's stories include that of a night watchman who was murdered Halloween night and the Rev. Austin Otey, who was a minister at Union Baptist Church on 7th Street, now celebrating its 185th anniversary.

"Col. John Kuhn of the Alton Jaeger Guards will be portrayed by Jack Hardin, a Civil War reenactor. There will be a fife and drum presence, too," said Jody Basola, a member of Vintage Voices. "It has a cool story."

Vintage Voices began in 2001 as a fundraiser for the YWCA. Basola has been part of the all-volunteer acting ensemble since 2006. Profits are donated to local agencies and organizations, including the cemetery for its upkeep. The group usually collects around \$3,000.

"It's a fun fundraiser," said Basola. "There's so much history in Alton, so much to say. We'll never run out of stories to tell."



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TOURS

\$27.50; advance tickets must be purchased online at www.riversandroutes.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets/. Begins at the Alton Visitors Center, 200 Piasa St. Two-hour tours, Saturdays, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Seating is limited to 20 passengers. The shuttle is not ADA accessible.

- September 17, 2022
- October 22, 2022
- November 5, 2022

VINTAGE VOICES

Walking tours: \$15 for adults; \$10 ages 6-18. Purchase online vintagevoices.eventbrite.com or cash at main gate, 5th and Vine Street. Noon-2:30 p.m.

- October 1 & 2, 2022
- October 8 & 9, 2022

Non-walking performance: \$15, Sunday, October 9, 5 p.m., Jacoby Arts Center, 627 East Broadway, Alton. Purchase tickets at Jacoby Arts Center and online at link above.

>> WINE DOWN ROADTRIP

By: Carmen Troesser



GRAFTON WINERY
THE VINEYARDS

AS TEMPERATURES DROP AND THE FALL COLORS RAMP UP, IT'S THE PERFECT TIME TO DIG OUT YOUR FAVORITE SWEATER AND HEAD OUT TO ONE OF THE MANY LOCAL WINERIES THAT DOT THE BACKROADS OF OUR REGION. THEY ARE NESTLED IN WOODS AND PERCHED ON LAKES, SETTLED INTO HORSES' QUARTERS AND CRADLED INSIDE SMALL TOWN SIDEWALKS. THEY ARE AS UNIQUE AS THE PEOPLE WHO CREATE THEM AND HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER EVERYONE.



HALF WITT
WINERY

>> **Half Witt Winery**, located in Witt, of course, is a bit off the beaten track, but its award-winning wines make it well worth the drive. An expansive lawn on the edge of a Mayberry-esque neighborhood feels like your favorite uncle's back yard, only here, you're serenaded by live local bands and catered to by food trucks and sometimes even the local volunteer fire department. You might be served wine by the actual "Half-Witt" himself, David Bradshaw, who was lovingly given the title by his wife, Gail Bradshaw. "He's from Indiana, so he's only a "half- Witt," she says as she simultaneously elbows him in the ribs and pours two glasses of semi- sweet red table wine. I'm the "whole Witt." Half witts or whole witts aside, the two have racked up over 30 medals for their wines in Illinois and Indiana since their opening in 2019.

Further south and to the west, a gravel road outside Staunton winds past vineyards to a barn- turned-winery and event space. The building once boarded 27 horses, but in 2020, Susan and David Weso began the process of converting the property into a destination – **The Winery at Shale Lake** – complete with a heated wine garden, a 14 acre vineyard, miles of hiking trails, picnic areas, and 10 fully- furnished cabins overlooking a 24 acre lake. The area that used to be the outside horse stalls is now a covered patio, where twinkle lights hang from the ceiling and a clover-carpeted meadow

stretches out and begs to be traipsed. A huge cottonwood tree is centered there, with a 120- foot plank walkway to its base. In the kitchen, Susan churns out her "heavy appetizers," including pizzas, bruschettas, and her wildly popular Bloom'n Bread, a savory cheese pull-apart loaf. After dinner, guests Jessica and Mark Jones of Peoria head back to the boat house cabin, which is lovingly decorated with a nautical theme and floats on the lake itself. Here, they sip wine on the sunset-soaked porch and proclaim that they can also fish without getting up or spilling a drop of wine.

Closer to the river, the **Grafton Winery** has added a sibling winery adjacent to Eckert's Orchard – **Grafton Winery The Vineyards**. While nothing can beat the view at the bustling downtown location, the new site is definitely the more placid and expansive of the two. It can accommodate even the biggest events with a 5,000 square foot covered pavilion and it produces 13,000 cases of wine a year. Vignoles, Vidal and Chardonel grapes grow on slopes across the lake from the terraced patio, where Deb Monroe of Grafton shares lunch with Debbie Zimmerman. "It's beautiful out here. The food is delicious and the wine is always great, she says. "It's a perfect setting, especially for a girls' day out. I highly recommend."



GRAFTON
WINERY

The expansive menu at **Bella Vista Winery** in Maryville makes it a destination for foodies and wine enthusiasts alike. The lake serves as an ever-changing backdrop, sparkling at midday for Sunday Brunch and glowing orange at sunset by the fire pit. Chef Thomas Casey's expansive menu includes smash burgers, flatbreads, Sunday brunch and all-day breakfast. Seasonal pairing dinners showcase wines made on site with locally-grown grapes, such as their bestselling Sugar Creek White, a sweet white wine, and Black Vino, a semi sweet red.



WILD
PICKIN'S
WINERY

Between Medora and Chesterfield, the mostly straight Illinois Route 111 kinks into a few curves and hills that flank Macoupin Creek. On one of the ridges here, **Wild Pickin's Winery** is tucked just inside the canopy of oaks on the edge of the sloping vineyard. Picnic tables and umbrellas surround a wooden stage, where a band belts out country tunes. Hand-tossed wood fired pizzas are shared on crowded tables, where children check in for a bite and head back into the woods to sword-fight with sticks. Ice buckets rest on the forest floor, chilling bottles of Bewitched Blush and owner Todd McGill's blackberry wine. "It's dedicated to my winery moms, he says, pointing to a bench where Carol Opel and Patty Page are sharing a bottle. "He's a sweetheart," says Opel, "And this place...it's out here in the middle of the trees and the breeze. It's the only place to be on a Sunday afternoon. It's a down-home place...a wonderful place."

MUST-SEE!

HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE

By Danette Watt

IF ART IS A CRITICAL WAY WE COMMUNICATE, AS MELISSA MCDONOUGH-BORDEN BELIEVES, THEN LOVERS OF THE ARTS IN EDWARDSVILLE ARE SURE TO FIND SOMETHING THAT SPEAKS TO THEIR SOUL. WITH A WELL-ESTABLISHED ARTS CENTER AND A VIBRANT OPERA HOUSE, EDWARDSVILLE IS FAST BECOMING A CULTURAL HOT SPOT IN SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS.

“PEOPLE FIND MEANING IN ART, EITHER IN PERFORMING IT OR VIEWING IT. ART IS AT THE CENTER OF A COMMUNITY AND THIS COMMUNITY HAS A RICH ARTS SCENE.”

McDonough-Borden is director of the Edwardsville Arts Center, a community visual arts experience now in its 21st year.

“If we want to have artists in our future, we need to support those interested in improving their skills,” she said.

EAC is dedicated to offering Metro-East communities cultural experiences through the three Es – education, events, and exhibits. The arts center is situated in Edwardsville High School. With donated space from District 7, the center has freedom to focus on fostering art in young people.

Nine years ago, EAC began offering three free art classes on Saturdays for kids ages 2-14. Covering a variety of media such as ceramics, painting and drawing, children learn art fundamentals and can put their skills and creativity into practice.

Children also are encouraged to begin collecting art. Each year, at EAC’s annual art fair, kids can buy donated artworks from exhibiting artists and visit them in their booths. Artists from Belgium, New York and Oregon, as well as local and emerging artists, will display their work the last weekend of September.

The final “E” is the rotating exhibits in Edwardsville High School by professional and student artists.



“The main exhibit is held the week before Thanksgiving. Artists are invited to create and show items that would make great gifts,” said McDonough-Borden. Media range from ceramics and textiles to photographs and paintings.



WHEN IT COMES TO THE ARTS, EDWARDSVILLE IS FAST BECOMING A HUB FOR MUSICAL PERFORMANCES AS WELL AS FINE ARTS.

Providing musical excellence and educational outreach are two goals of Opera Edwardsville which is celebrating its fifth operatic season in the city. One way the burgeoning opera company does that is through its Opera for Kids performances which just celebrated its fourth year of shows. More than 5,000 children have seen these performances which are children’s fairy tales re-created to the music of Mozart and other classical composers.

“It’s a staple of our arts outreach and education,” said Chase Hopkins.

Hopkins is general director of OE and a classical tenor. He returned after living and performing in Europe for years, and through a series of events, decided to start the non-profit.

Hopkins said half of their audience frequent the symphony and opera in St. Louis, but many attend OE performances for a first-time experience. The free community concert is a perfect way to introduce people to opera. Rather than one opera, the artists perform excerpts.

“We make it about the event and beauty of the music,” he said. He weaves general history of opera and background on the stories around the performances. He also releases the music beforehand so the

audience is familiar with it. “We don’t dumb down but invite people to spend the evening with us.” Hopkins said Edwardsville may be a surprising location for opera, but world-class artists make appearances at Opera Edwardsville, alongside local talent.



Scan Me
FOR MORE
REGIONAL
EVENTS

- **Opera for Kids** – children’s story set to a famous opera, in English.
- **Sept. 30:** Free community concert – soloists from around the country perform opera excerpts in Edwardsville’s City Park

www.operaedwardsville.org for performance details

- **Holiday Concert:** Signature ticketed concert – part of the Southern Illinois University Arts & Issues series. Dec. 3

BEFORE THE SHOW, DINE OUT AT NEARBY RESTAURANTS IN DOWNTOWN EDWARDSVILLE. HERE ARE SOME OPTIONS:

- **1818 OFFSHORE** – known for its fresh seafood, adult slushies and cocktails
- **CLEVELAND-HEATH** – Gourmet comfort food fusing Midwestern and California-flavors
- **CHAVA’S MEXICAN RESTAURANT** – Large portions of delicious Mexican cuisine featuring authentic family recipes from Guadalajara.
- **TAQUERIA Z** – Simple Mexican street tacos, chacos and quesadillas paired with craft beer, margaritas and more
- **FOUNDRY PUBLIC HOUSE** – Seasonal food menus with great local craft beers, martinis and cocktails
- **WASABI SUSHI BAR** – Take your pick from a nearly infinite selection of sushi rolls and an assortment of Japanese cuisine
- **DEWEY’S PIZZA** – Upscale gourmet pizza with creative pizza/salad combinations

- **The 12 Days of Opera Edwardsville** – free online series, presenting one a day starting Dec. 12.



EDWARDSVILLE
ARTS CENTER
ART FAIR
SEPT. 23 - 25

- **100 artists** from around the world, local favorites and new artists;
- **8 food and drink vendors**

www.edwardsvilleartscenter.com for general EAC info.

- **6 local bars and restaurants** compete in “Artini” to create a cocktail designed around an artist. People’s Choice Award with ticket votes.



COZY UP FOR WINTER COMFORT FOOD

COZY UP AT LOCAL EATERIES AND WARM YOUR SOUL WITH DELICIOUS WINTER COMFORT FOODS. THERE'S A SMORGASBORD OF DELIGHTFUL WINTER DINING EXPERIENCES JUST WAITING TO BE ENJOYED.

BLUFF CITY GRILL, ALTON: Nothing screams comfort food like a helping of Grandma's Meatloaf loaded with cheese, bell peppers and onions served with a side of garlic red skinned mashed potatoes and green beans. Bluff City Grill, in downtown Alton, is famous for this Sunday dining special.



► BLUFF CITY GRILL



Farm-to-table is all the rage, and **MOUSALLI'S PRIME** on the outskirts of Edwardsville brings quality comfort food to the forefront. From certified prime steaks served up alongside vegan and vegetarian dishes and daily fresh fish specials, Mousalli's adds locally grown produce to each dish.



A staple in the Collinsville restaurant scene, **RAVANELLI'S ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE AND WINE BAR** is a local favorite serving up family recipe entrees including fried and baked chicken, Sicilian pizza and toasted ravioli appetizers.



If fried chicken is your go-to comfort food, then head to **CASTELLI'S AT 255** in Alton. This family-owned restaurant opened in 1937 and has been serving up its trademarked and secret recipe "Talk-N-Chic" since then. Be sure to enjoy other homemade specialties including the "Roman" house salad dressing and toasted ravioli.

Hidden away on North State Street in Alton is **SAMMI'S SANDWICHES** – a local favorite. Pick up your choice of sandwich, soup, or salad which are made fresh daily. Be sure to check out the daily sandwich specials posted on Sammi's Sandwiches Facebook page. Generous portions are the secret ingredient!



► SAMMI'S SANDWICHES



Don't forget dessert! It's the ultimate winter comfort food, after all. Be sure to browse Alton's **BROWN BAG BISTRO'S** dessert case. Homemade desserts are created daily with an emphasis on cheesecakes!

BACKROADS bars

GREAT BARS ARE REALLY ALL ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE. DISCOVER HISTORIC AND AUTHENTIC BACKROADS BARS OFF THE BEATEN PATH IN SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS!

Belly up to the bar and order a drink in this Grafton riverfront saloon – named after a once infamous bar which attracted blood thirsty murders, bushwackers, horse thieves and other corrupt outlaws in post-Civil War Grafton. Even Jesse James and his gang were known to frequent the bar in its day. Welcome to the new **BLOODY BUCKET**.

201 E. Main St. Grafton.

BARS TO EXPLORE



Scan Me
TO FIND LOCAL
BREWRIES &
DISTILLERIES

FAST EDDIE'S BON AIR: One of the most famous bars in southwest Illinois, Fast Eddie's is known for its dynamic daily live music, cheap food and cold drinks.
1530 E. 4TH ST.
ALTON

Located along historic Route 66 in Edwardsville, the **STAGGER INN AGAIN** is one of the city's oldest continuously operating drinking establishments. Food, spirits, beer and live music are on tap.
104 E. VANDALIA ST.
EDWARDSVILLE

DECAMP STATION, an original Route 66 roadhouse bar is still in operation serving up top-notch food, fun and history.
8767 STATE RT. 4
STAUNTON

WEEZY'S ROUTE 66 BAR & GRILL has been part of the Mother Road since 1938 although its name has changed over the years. This local hotspot has covered its walls with Route 66 photos and memorabilia.
108 OLD US
ROUTE 66
HAMEL

Off the beaten path, **THE TOPP HAT** in Girard boasts a swanky, industrial atmosphere and serves up cocktails, ice cream martinis, frozen drinks and more.
30549 HENRY RD.
GIRARD



LITCHFIELD PICKERS MARKET

FALL FUN

KICKS ON 66 ULTRA CAR SHOW

Get your kicks on Route 66 in Edwardsville and enjoy this annual car show and cruise. Browse through the hundreds of vintage and modern classic cars on display and then see them in action during the cruise. Takes place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 10 at the American Legion Post #199, 58 S. State Route 157.

▲ LITCHFIELD PICKERS MARKET

The streets of downtown Litchfield turn in to a treasure chest of vintage finds during the annual Pickers Market held the second Sunday of September and October from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

MISSISSIPPI EARTHTONES

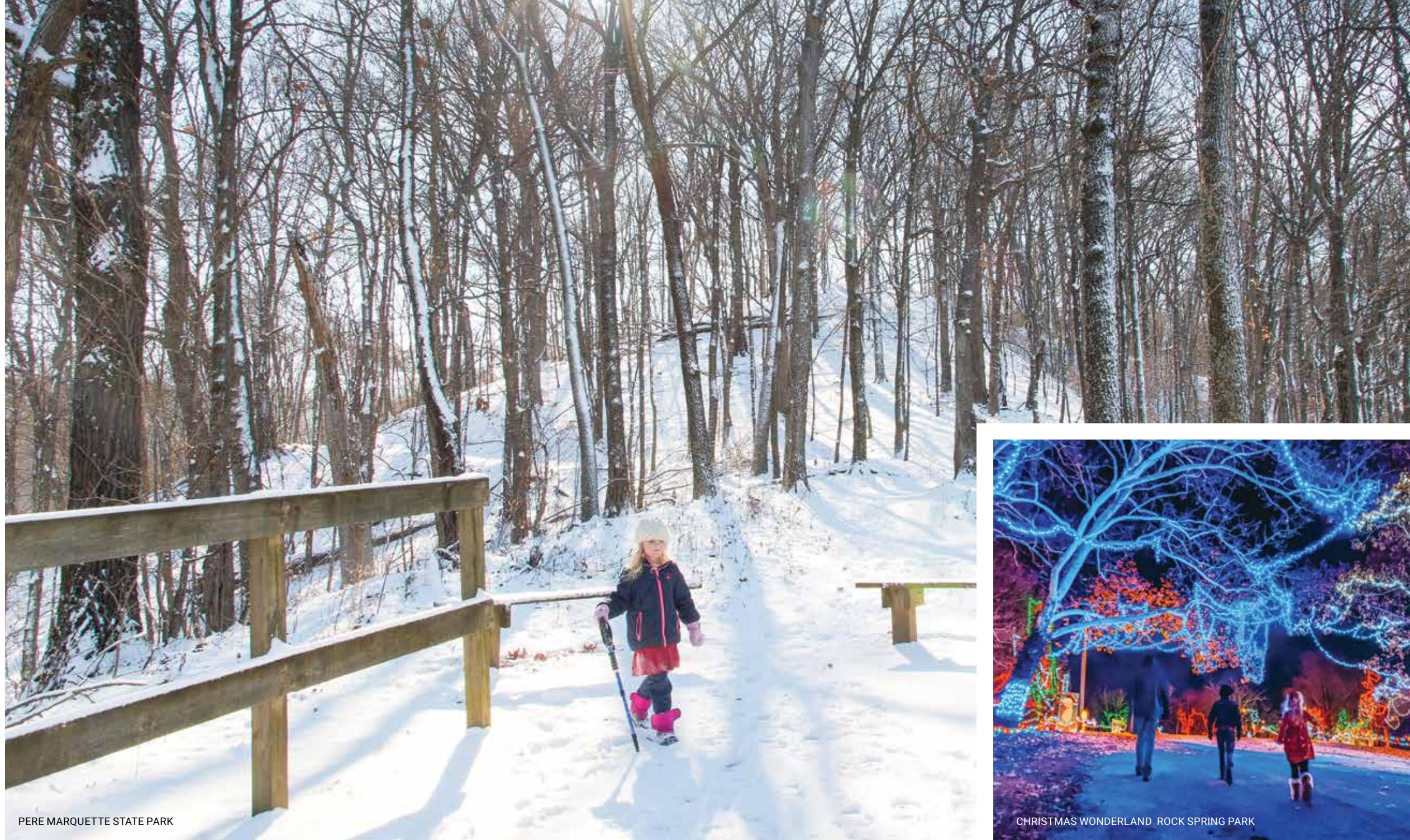
Celebrate the Mighty Mississippi River at this downtown Alton festival focused on art, music and conservation. Live music, eco-friendly vendors, food and drinks are on hand during this free, family-friendly event. Saturday, Sept. 17 from Noon to 10 p.m.

ITALIAN FEST

Everyone's Italian during Italian Fest held on the streets of Uptown Collinsville Sept. 16-17. Play Bocce Ball, sample Italian food and wine, and enjoy live music. Included in the fun is a grape stomping competition, parade, kids activities and pageant. Free family-friendly event featuring over 30 food and drink vendors. Get your Italian on!

SAVOR RESTAURANT WEEK

Dine out in style in Edwardsville and Glen Carbon during SAVOR Restaurant Week Oct. 1 – 10. Participating restaurants offer a lunch and dinner special so take your pick of delicious dining options and experience culinary excellence. Visit www.edglenchamber.com for participating restaurants.



PERE MARQUETTE STATE PARK

CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND ROCK SPRING PARK

WINTER WONDERLAND



Scan Me
FOR
MORE
EVENTS

NEW YEAR'S EVE FIREWORKS, GRAFTON

Ring in the New Year in Grafton a bit early. Fireworks light up the night sky in this historic riverfront community at 10 p.m., Dec. 31. Make plans to shop, dine and stay in Grafton and welcome the New Year.

LIGHT UP PARADE, COLLINSVILLE

Welcome the holidays with the annual Collinsville Light Up Parade on Main Street in Uptown. Marching bands, decorated floats and even Mr. and Mrs. Claus make an appearance. Saturday, Dec. 3. The parade steps off at 5:30 p.m.

DOWNTOWN COUNTRY CHRISTMAS/ BRIGHT NIGHTS, JERSEYVILLE

Holiday nights are bright in Jerseyville. The annual Downtown Country Christmas festival will take place in the city's new City Center Park Saturday Nov. 26 from 1 to 5 p.m. The rest of the holiday season is dedicated to Bright Nights. Take a stroll through downtown Jerseyville at night and enjoy the vividly decorated store windows.

BETHALTO CHRISTMAS VILLAGE, CENTRAL PARK, BETHALTO

The Christmas season comes to life in Bethalto's Central Park every weekend starting at Thanksgiving and running until the weekend before Christmas. Open weekends beginning Nov. 25 and ending Dec. 18.

▲ CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND, ROCK SPRING PARK, ALTON

Every night from Nov. 25 through Dec. 27, holiday lights sparkle throughout Rock Spring Park in Alton to the delight of young and old alike. This traditional holiday light drive creates a sense of wonder as lights bring holiday displays to life throughout the park. Monday – Friday 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.



Eagle SEASON

SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS IS HOME TO HUNDREDS OF WINTERING AMERICAN BALD EAGLES. Flying along the avian super highway called the Mississippi Flyway, the eagles travel from the frigid northern states to the relatively warmer weather around the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers. Eagles begin arriving in early January and stay through February before making the return journey north.

Where can you see EAGLES?

LOOKING FOR A SPOT TO VIEW BALD EAGLES? The Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau offers guided shuttle tours every Saturday in January and February. The tours in the riverfront communities of Alton and Grafton showcases the best places to view eagles along the Mississippi River. The tours include tips and highlights on bald eagle viewing. Pere Marquette State Park also offers Eagle Watching tours. A park interpreter presents information about eagle viewing and then leads an observational drive to view wintering bald eagles.



Alton Eagle ICE FESTIVAL

Celebrate the return of American Bald Eagles to southwest Illinois during the **Alton Eagle Ice Festival**. Held on Jan. 7 in **downtown Alton**, at the **Audubon Center at Riverlands** and the **National Great Rivers Museum/Melvin Price Locks & Dam**, the festival includes family friendly activities including an American Bald Eagle Meet & Greet, ice carvers, roasting s'mores at firepits, and enjoying a signature Eagle Fest craft beer. Eagle Fest is free and begins at 10 a.m. and runs to 2 p.m.



meet LIBERTY!

Get up close and personal with Liberty, an American Bald Eagle, during Saturday meet and greets in Alton and Grafton. Liberty will be part of the **Alton Eagle Ice Festival** on Saturday, Jan. 7 at the **Flock Food Truck Park**. She will be at the **Alton Visitor Center** on Saturday, Jan. 21 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Liberty will appear at the **Grafton Visitor Center** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 14 and Saturday, Jan. 28. All eagle meet and greet events are free.

trumpeter swans & MORE

Thousands of Trumpeter Swans make southwest Illinois their home from November through February. They gather at the **Audubon Center at Riverlands** and can be seen floating across the inlets of the Mississippi River.

The Audubon Center offers meet and greet events with live birds of winter on Saturdays and Sundays in January and the first two weeks of February. Also in February, the National Great Rivers Museum hosts **Ice Jam at the Dam**. This winter-themed outdoor festival promotes winter recreation and celebrates all things icy along the river.



ENJOY GRAFTON ILLINOIS

GREAT PLACES TO DINE • STAY • PLAY

FALL COLORS ALONG THE RIVERROAD

MISSISSIPPI MASTERS GOLF TOURNAMENT
Oct. 7

SANTA'S CHOCOLATE EXPRESS
Dec. 3

SANTA CON
Dec. 10

2ND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARADE
Dec. 17

FIREWORKS ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
Dec. 31
Celebrate New Year's Eve in Grafton

EAGLE WATCHING
Jan. - Feb.

RIDE THE GRAFTON FERRY!
(April - November)

www.GraftonILChamber.com • www.EnjoyGrafton.com



Winter ADVENTURE

IT'S COLD OUTSIDE AND YOU'VE ALREADY DUG INTO YOUR HOT COCOA SUPPLY. THE TV IS PLAYING PROGRAMS ON REPEAT AND YOU HAVEN'T LEFT THE HOUSE IN DAYS. EVERYONE IS GETTING CABIN FEVER- BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU CAN SEE YOUR BREATH OUTSIDE? SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS HAS JUST THE THING TO KICK YOUR WINTER BLUES AND GET YOU OUT THE DOOR!

BY KAYLA HOWLAND



THE START OF WINTER DOESN'T MEAN THE
END OF FUN IN SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS!

Beat the Chill

WHAT BETTER WAY TO BEAT THE CHILL THAN TO GET YOUR HEART PUMPING?

>> Fly through crisp wooded hollows on the **Grafton Zipline**- seven lines help you soar through the canopy at 45 mph with spectacular views of the Mississippi!

Fight cabin fever with a round of **Mission Ready Laser Tag**! Enjoy a battle in the snow and see who has the better aim.



Kayaking on the Mississippi River isn't just a warm weather adventure. Dip a paddle in the frosty waters for an entirely new experience. Yes – winter kayaking is for real!

Turn Up the Heat

WANT A MORE PHYSICAL CHALLENGE?

>> Go rock climbing or hiking at **Pere Marquette State Park**. Over 60 climbing routes and five trailheads are perfect to explore local wildlife like white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and even American bald eagles which frequent the park in the colder months.

Enjoy birdwatching and love to bike? Hit the **Madison County Transit Trails** for a chance to see native and migratory songbirds like cardinals, woodpeckers, and nuthatch. Ten paved trails provide access to miles of scenic countryside and many of the region's charming communities.



Learn Something Fun

WANTING TO LEARN SOMETHING FUN?

>> Take the family to **Lewis & Clark State Historic Site** and celebrate **Arrival Days** in mid-December with frontier reenactments, period goods, and historic speakers or see the inner workings of river transport on a tour of **Melvin Price Locks and Dam**.

AND IF IT SNOWS? Break out the sleds and have a snow day at **Rock Spring Park** or sled at **Pere Marquette Lodge** and get toasty by the stone fireplace!



Warm Your Soul

NEED TO UNWIND AFTER A BUSY WINTER DAY?

>> Have a hearty meal and a warming drink with friends or family-heated patios in the region are easy to find at places like **Great Rivers Tap & Grill**, Alton; **Martin's Tunes and Eats**, Wood River; **State Street Market**, Alton; **Bakers & Hale**, Godfrey; **Old Herald Brewery & Distillery**, Collinsville, or even spend an afternoon in an igloo at the **Grafton Winery**! Go shopping at **Edwardsville's Land of Goshen Winter Market** for cold-weather produce and local crafts or prep for the holidays during the **Winter Market at Gateway Convention Center**, Collinsville.



MAKE THE LEAP WITH THE FAMILY AT GLEN CARBON'S ALTITUDE TRAMPOLINE PARK with a climbing wall, foam pits, and dodgeball courts.



TRY TO GET THE HIGHEST SCORE at Edwardsville's **EDISON'S ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX** with a full arcade, bowling, and indoor laser tag! Adults can catch a drink and retro favorites like Ms. Pac-Man at **THE LOADING BAR**, Edwardsville.

NEED TO MAKE AN ACTUAL GETAWAY FROM THE MIDWINTER BLUES? All ages can test their spy skills at **BAILOUT ESCAPE ROOMS**, Highland, **ALTON ROOM ESCAPE**, or explore a new world through the **OMNIDOME VIRTUAL REALITY**, Maryville experience!



TAKE AIM with East Alton's **RIVERBEND AXE THROWING** OR **THE AXE COMPANY**, Jerseyville.



BRING THE SMALLEST OF YOUR CREW to the **EDWARDSVILLE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM** for some hands on fun or go on a winter field trip to the **NATIONAL GREAT RIVERS MUSEUM** in Alton to learn about the region's powerful waterways and the animals that call them home.



FOR BOTH ADULT AND YOUNGER AUDIENCES, an afternoon of live theater might be just what's needed to warm your bones- **ALTON LITTLE THEATRE**, **ALFRESCO PRODUCTIONS** in Granite City, or **HARD ROAD THEATRE PRODUCTIONS**, Highland, offer an assortment of entertaining shows throughout the year.



NIGHT OWLS CAN SWIG A DRINK in **THE SPEAKEASY** in Granite City- whisper your password at the meat locker door and follow a secret passage to cocktails and a roaring 20's lounge! Also in Granite City, adults can visit one of **TINSELTOWN'S** themed pop-up bars or unique parties celebrating everything from the holidays, Oktoberfest, New Year's Eve, and more!

INDOOR WINTER ADVENTURES

Break free from winter's chill with indoor adventures. Fortunately, southwest Illinois is full of indoor entertainment options to zest up the winter season!

By Kayla Howland

Stop. Play. Stay.

PLAN YOUR COLLINSVILLE FUN NOW!





TAKE THE GOLDEN EAGLE FERRY

CROSSING THE MIGHTY
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
BETWEEN HISTORIC
ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI
& BEAUTIFUL CALHOUN
COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Visit Calhoun County year-round for a fascinating journey through the historic and quaint communities, hiking trails, restaurants, roadside stands and orchards that make up the countryside. And it all starts with a ferry ride!



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