

Take A Fall Road Trip To Southwest Illinois

September 16 2021 11:00 AM



ALTON - Hop in the car and take a road trip to southwest Illinois this fall and discover stunning fall color drives, scenic river cruises, adventures in u-pick orchards, and spectacularly spooky haunted tours.

When it comes to Fall, the Great Rivers & Routes region has more than its share of fun, adventure, and relaxing getaways on tap.

“Fall is really a great time to visit southwest Illinois and the Great Rivers & Routes region,” says Cory Jobe, President/CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau. “We are the perfect week-day escape and weekend getaway destination. There are so many things to do here – from outdoor adventures to haunted tours, U Pick Orchards, and historic re-enactments. We are focusing on encouraging folks to visit us mid-week and enjoy the same weekend experiences.”

Enjoy a scenic cruise along the Mississippi River onboard the classic **Spirit of Peoria**, an authentic paddlewheel riverboat. Morning and afternoon sightseeing and lunch cruises are available on Wednesday, Sept. 22, and Wednesday, Oct. 6.

Sightseeing cruises last approximately 90 minutes while lunch cruises are two hours and include a full lunch served aboard the boat. For tickets, please visit: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets/>

The **Hakuna Matata** excursion boat, sailing out of Grafton Harbor in downtown Grafton, also offers weekly fall color cruises and themed specialty cruises. Boat rentals are also available at Grafton Harbor.

There’s nothing like heading to local farms and orchards and taking your pick of crisp, juicy apples or the perfect pumpkin. From Carlinville to Edwardsville, Hardin to St. Jacob, dozens of orchards, farms, and roadside stands are open and full of amazing fall fruits, award-winning apple cider, autumn plants, and flowers and vegetables. A full list of orchards and farms open for the Fall U Pick season is available here: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/things-to-do/outdoors-and-recreation/orchards-and-gardens/>

Get lost in St. Jacob at the area’s largest corn maze. **DeMange Farms** in St. Jacob is home to a 15-acre maze full of wild turns and dead ends. Don’t worry – there are special hints inside to help everyone reach the end. DeMange Farms also has a one-acre mini-maze for the kids. In addition to the corn maze, be sure to visit the pick-your-own pumpkin patch, the Corn Pit, and the hay fort for even more fun.

Fall is the season when downtown Alton comes alive with tales of spirits and ghosts, fantastic hauntings, and histories. The historic riverfront city is considered “The Most Haunted Small Town in America” after all.

Join the guides at **Alton Hauntings** for walking tours of downtown Alton. The walks are based on the book Haunted Alton by Troy Taylor and offer entertaining and spine-tingling trips into the unknown. Or hop on board a trolley and enjoy a dinner haunted tour – Eating with the Entities, a Bare Bones Tour, or a late-night Witching Hour Tour, all offered by **Alton Haunted Odyssey Tours**.

Also on tap are **Haunted Craft Beer Walks**. Sip a five-ounce glass of beer at five different haunted downtown Alton stops on Saturdays in October. Each stop includes a different flavor of beer from a local craft brewery, Old Bakery Beer.

A visit to the historically haunted **McPike Mansion** is a must for any haunted aficionado. With reports of more than 11 spirits living within the imposing, and vacant, home, be sure to see for yourself during the weekend events which include a darkroom session to talk to the on-site spirits. For more information about haunted activities go to: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/events/>

Take another look at the history of the region with the Great Rivers & Routes **Underground Railroad Tours**. These monthly shuttle tours feature Underground Railroad Historian and guide Eric Robinson who provides a compelling look at the role Alton and the local region played in helping slaves escape to freedom.

There are still seats available on **Underground Railroad Tours** on Sept. 25, Oct. 9, and Nov. 6. Tickets are \$27.50 per person and last about two hours. All tours begin and end at the Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa St., Alton. Tickets are available here: https://www.riversandroutes.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets/?fbclid=IwAR3i8S9dX-7d5WrQb30YcQ3my6dJVB4Vkh_GqyU9Npifl0KMIMnH5V9iBGs

Fall color drives along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway between Alton and Grafton are the pinnacle of any road trip to southwest Illinois.

With the sparkling waters of the mighty Mississippi on one side of the road and soaring limestone bluffs covered with trees exploding with color -- fierce reds, bright oranges, rustic browns, and electric yellows – on the other, these drives are considered a top fall color destination and among the best in the United States.

The newly released **Fall/Winter GO Guide**, produced by the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, highlights three different fall color drives. The drives include river views, country loops, and a ferry ride across the Illinois River to Calhoun County for epic scenic views. The new Fall/Winter GO Guide can be downloaded here: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/plan/visitor-guide/>

While colors generally peak in late October, updates on the changing colors are available at [RiversandRoutes.com](https://www.riversandroutes.com).

For more Fall road trip ideas, please visit: [RiversandRoutes.com](https://www.riversandroutes.com)

(The Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau is a certified Destination Marketing Organization serving Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Macoupin, Montgomery, and Greene

counties. The bureau is dedicated to educating visitors about the region by providing information regarding the area's history, unique landmarks, recreational opportunities, leisure attractions, special events, and scenic marvels.)