



Eagle Season is Almost Here

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ALTON - Eagles are returning to their winter homes in southwest Illinois and the region is preparing for the upcoming Eagle Season with a full schedule of events including a kick off festival on Saturday, Jan. 8.

To celebrate the return of this majestic bird, the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau along with the Audubon Center at Riverlands and National Great Rivers Museum will host the annual Eagle Ice Festival, Saturday, Jan. 8 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. This year's event has been expanded to include additional activities in downtown Alton during the afternoon. For the first time, the National Great Rivers Museum in Alton will also hold concurrent eagle activities during the festival.

“This year’s Eagle Fest will be bigger and better than ever,” said Cory Jobe, President /CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau. “We are expanding the festival to include expanded afternoon activities and we are pleased to welcome the National Great Rivers Museum as a festival co-sponsor.”

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., a free Eagle Meet & Greet event will be held at the Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa St. Liberty, the American Bald Eagle from World Bird Sanctuary, will be on hand with his handler to welcome visitors. Learn more about bald eagles and take photos during this event.

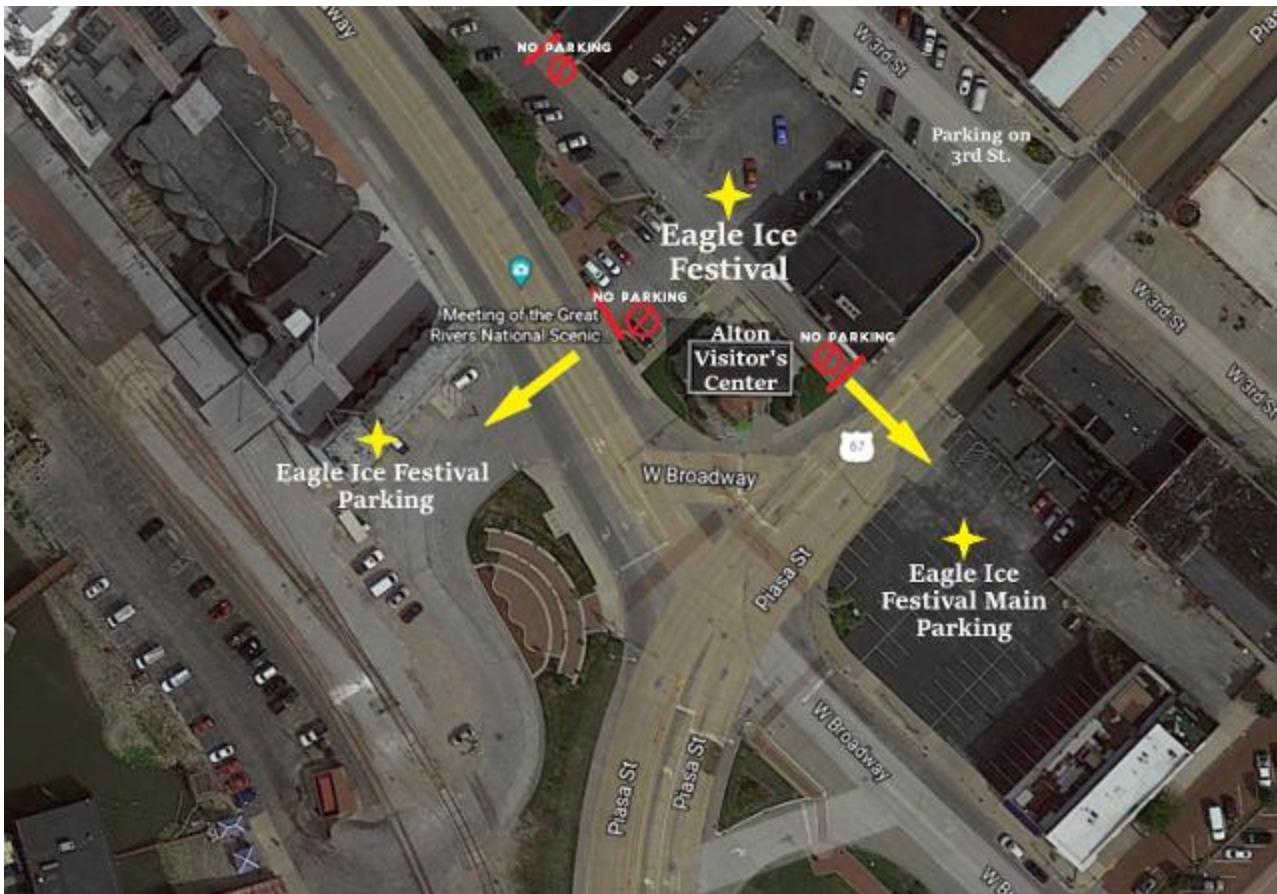
Also from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., there will be family-friendly activities at the Audubon Center at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, and National Great Rivers Museum, #2 Locks & Dam Way, Alton.

The Audubon Center will have outdoor learning activities about eagles and nature along the birding sanctuary's trails. There will also be Eagle Meet & Greet sessions at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., Noon, and 1 p.m. Advance registration is required. Also register for guided bird hikes and explore the trails at Riverlands.

The National Great Rivers Museum will celebrate Eagle Fest with a mascot appearance by Eric the Eagle, children's crafts, open tours of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam, a 'Nest Watch Station' with spotting scopes to view a resident eagles' nest, talks by eagle experts, an eagle video shown in the museum theater and free eagle passport goodie bags (while supplies last).

The fun continues at 2 p.m. in downtown Alton with free adult-focused activities. From the release of an exclusive Eagle Fest beer, to fire pits, live music, ice carving, and more, spend the remainder of the day celebrating the return of bald eagles.

The parking lots behind and adjacent to the Alton Visitor Center will be closed to the public and will be home to toasty warm fire pits. Add to the experience by purchasing s'mores kits available at the firepits.



Sample Old Bakery Beer's new 'Snowbird' beer, brewed exclusively for Eagle Fest. The beer is a dark ale with a dash of maple flavor. Representatives of Old Bakery Beer will be on hand to provide beer samples. Or purchase a six-pack to take home and try.

The fun doesn't end there. Live ice carving from Ice Visions in St. Louis will also take place from 2 to 6 p.m. in the parking lots. Or try your hand at axe throwing with Riverbend Axe Throwing, a free activity, also located in the parking lot. (Please note, the parking lots behind the Alton Visitor Center and beside Frontier Home Furnishings will be closed off for the festival activities.)

Check out the Eagle Fest specials available at businesses located on Third Street and State Street during the afternoon Eagle Fest.

Every day visitors can travel along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway to visit the "Eagle Watching Hot Spots" featured on the Great Rivers & Routes Eagle Watching Mobile Passport. Again this year, the Passport will guide visitors during their eagle-watching adventure. The free passport is available for iPhone and Android, will lead visitors to the eagle-watching hot spots. Anyone who checks in to five of the 10 eagle hotspots can register to win a two-night stay in southwest Illinois during the summer.

Annually, the opportunities for eagle watching continue to grow in the Alton region. Visitors can head out to view the eagles on their own, or they can take part in some of the traditional eagle watching events in the region, including eagle meet & greets, eagle watching tours, and live bird demonstrations. Events take place nearly every weekend and throughout the week in January. A full list of events can be found online at: www.riverandroutes.com

For visitors who would like to make eagle watching a winter getaway, there are numerous eagle packages and specials available at hotels and bed & breakfast inns in Alton, Grafton, and Elsau.

The Eagle Fest is sponsored by Phillips 66 Wood River Refinery, Colman's Country Campers, Liberty Bank, and Old Bakery Beer Company.