

# Eagle Watching Adventures Await In Southwest Illinois

by Stephanie Tate

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ALTON - It won't be long before the iconic American Bald Eagles return to their winter homes in southwest Illinois so make plans now to take your winter eagle-watching adventure to the next level with a guided eagle-watching shuttle tour available in Alton and Grafton beginning Jan. 7, 2023.

All eyes are on the sky as the Great Rivers & Routes region prepares for the annual winter migration of the American Bald Eagles. Every January, experts anticipate as

many as 1,000 bald eagles will migrate to the area reclaiming their winter roosts along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway just outside St. Louis in Illinois.

To celebrate the return of this majestic bird, the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau has slated two months of guided shuttle tours to help eagle watchers discover the best places to view the wintering birds.

Starting Saturday, Jan. 7., tours will be available in Alton and Grafton. Tours will take place each Saturday through Feb. 25. Tickets for each tour should be purchased in advance here: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets/> or by visiting [www.RiversandRoutes.com](http://www.RiversandRoutes.com)

In Alton, the popular 90-minute guided eagle tours will showcase the best places to see wintering eagles. Tickets are \$15 per person. All Alton tours scheduled for Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28, and Feb. 4, 11, 12, and 25 will begin and end at the Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa St., Alton. Tours are available at 11 a.m., and 1 p.m.

Grafton will offer eagle-watching shuttle tours as well this eagle season. These guided two-and-one-half-hour tours will begin and end at the Grafton SkyTour, 3 W. Clinton St., Grafton. One tour per Saturday throughout January and February will be offered at 9 a.m. Tickets are \$30 per person and must be purchased in advance here: <https://www.riversandroutes.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets/> or by visiting [www.RiversandRoutes.com](http://www.RiversandRoutes.com)

“Eagle-watching guided tours are a great way to celebrate the winter tourism season,” Cory Jobe, President & CEO of the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau noted. “We want to encourage people to take an eagle-watching road trip to visit the region and guided tours are a large part of that adventure. Seeing eagles in the wild is a one-of-a-kind experience that really seems to light up outdoor activities in southwest Illinois.”

Please note, seating is limited for both the Alton and Grafton tours so it is recommended people purchase their tours early to ensure they get the tour dates they want.

The Tourism Bureau will also encourage self-guided eagle-watching with its eagle-watching mobile passport. The Eagle Watching Passport, which is free to download to mobile phones, encourages self-guided eagle-watching tours and provides users with an opportunity to enter to win a three-day, two-night stay in the region in 2023 after checking in to five different locations. The passport is available to download at: <https://explore.riversandroutes.com> beginning Jan. 1. A video accompanies each passport stop on the passport to provide more information about the locations.

The passport program is open to eagle watchers of all ages. The mobile platform replaces the traditional paper card passport that had been used in the past. Visitors who

go to five of the specified destinations (Pere Marquette State Park, Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge, Alton Visitor Center, Audubon Center at Riverlands, National Great Rivers Museum, TreeHouse Wildlife Center, Lewis & Clark State Historic Site, Elsie General Store, Willoughby Heritage Farm, or the Grafton Visitor Center) and log the PIN available at each site will receive a prompt to enter for the overnight getaway. An automatic registration form will appear on the mobile passport once the five destinations have been logged.

For more information on the passport and other eagle-watching activities, visit [www.riversandroutes.com](http://www.riversandroutes.com).