



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Great River Road in Illinois...The Drive of a Lifetime

(Macomb, Ill – May 18, 2011) Experience Illinois...on the road! Selected as one of National Geographic's "500 Drives of a Lifetime," the Great River Road in Illinois is a stunning scenic drive that winds 550 miles along the western border of Illinois' most beautiful landscape. From the rolling hills and bluffs in the north to the soul-stirring river views along the way, the Great River Road in Illinois offers visitors an unforgettable journey filled with history, nature and endless attractions.

Traveling the Great River Road – North to South

As a National Scenic Byway, the Great River Road in Illinois is recognized by the United States Department of Transportation for its archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities.

- The Illinois portion of the Great River Road starts just outside of **Galena** on US Route 20
- The route continues through **Fulton** on Illinois Route 84 and winds through **Moline** and **Rock Island**
- The road continues south through **Nauvoo** and down through **Quincy**
- Near **Alton**, experience 33 miles of the **Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Byway**
- The route picks up at **Thebes** and continues south to the **Horseshoe Lake Exploration Route**, through **Cairo** where the Great River Road in Illinois meets the Ohio River National Scenic Byway at **Fort Defiance State Park**

Attractions and Sightseeing

Nature enthusiasts, outdoor adventurers, history buffs, recreation travelers...the Great River Road in Illinois is calling your name. There is something for all visitors to enjoy along this beautiful route.

North

Galena: Wine and nature lovers can experience the best of both worlds at **Galena Cellars Winery** and enjoy wine tastings and a tour of the beautiful vineyard (www.galenacellars.com). Visitors can start their journey by stocking up on gifts and treasures along Galena's quaint Main Street.

Savanna: Approximately 40 percent of America's duck, goose, swan and eagle population use the Mississippi River as a flyaway. Hikers can get that "birds-eye" view when they hike up the steep cliffs to take in the gorgeous River vistas at the **Mississippi Palisades State Park**. The 2,500-acre facility also offers picnicking, camping and limited hunting.

The Great River Trail: Take a two-wheel adventure along 60 beautiful miles of bike routes along the Mississippi River. Starting in Savanna, the trails range from paved rail-trails, gravel trails and sidewalks that will take visitors through charming small towns, quiet streets and scenic river banks.

Moline: Civilization and commerce began with agriculture and it is quickly becoming one of the top tourism attractions along the Great River Road in Illinois. **The John Deere Complex** features the largest agricultural exhibit in the world as well as vintage equipment, interactive kiosks and the John Deere Store. (www.deere.com/en_US/attractions/pavilion/index.html)

Keithsburg – Big River State Park: This gorgeous forest is home to the area's oldest pine plantation and is an ideal site for camping, hiking, scenic drives and horseback riding. A nature lover's paradise, this scenic spot along the Great River Road is a prime habitat for white-tailed deer, rabbits, small game and numerous waterfowl.

Rock Island: One of the "Seven Wonders of Illinois," the **Black Hawk State Historic Site** was first occupied by Indians as long as 12,000 years ago. Sauk and Meskwaki Indians made their home here as well. Visitors learn about the history of the site and its inhabitants in the **Hauberg Indian Museum**. The site also features hiking trails throughout the beautiful bluffs and forests of the Rock River Valley (www.blackhawpark.org).

CENTRAL

Nauvoo: Visitors can bike, hike and drive to this "utopia on the prairie" and experience one of the most accurately restored and intact historic

towns in the entire country. Located right on the banks of the Mississippi River, Nauvoo's quaint bakery, old post office, vineyards and B&Bs make this a fun and fascinating stop along this route. And just across the street from the **Nauvoo Grand Bed & Breakfast** is **Baxter's Vineyards** – a family owned winery that offers fun themed wine tasting events (www.nauvoowinery.com).

Quincy: The historic districts in Quincy boasts some of the most magnificent late 19th and 20th century mansions along the Mississippi River. Visitors can also enjoy the scenic views of the Mississippi and acres of green grass, flowers and fountains in the **Clat Adams Bicentennial Park** (www.seequincy.com).

SOUTH

Grafton: The beauty and the numerous activities available at **Pere Marquette State Park**, often overwhelm the visitors who come to the one of the most picturesque locations on the Illinois River. From biking, hiking and horseback riding to camping and eagle watching – there is something for everyone at this gorgeous state park.

Alton: A rare geographical wonder, the confluence of three American rivers – Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri – begins in Alton. Travel the 33 scenic miles of **Great Rivers Byway** and see majestic bluffs, expansive countryside, and charming historic sites. Experience Illinois exploration and see how famed explorers, Lewis & Clark lived and worked at the **Lewis & Clark State Historic Site**. (www.visitalton.com).

Collinsville: **Cahokia Mounds** is the only prehistoric Native American city north of Mexico and is a World Heritage Site. The area contains the remains of an ancient city founded by a culture that flourished from 700 to 1400 A.D. Visitors can climb the 100 foot Monks mound, experience interactive displays and see a historical film screening (cahokiamounds.org).

Prairie du Rocher: History buffs will want to stop at **Fort de Chartres State Historic Site** to see the majestic stone fort. Built in 1753, Fort de Chartres was formerly one of the strongest forts in North America and offers a glimpse into 18th century combat (www.ftdechartres.com).

Thebes: This southern Illinois city used to be a bustling steamboat port – however, it's more than just a port in the storm! The scenic beauty of Thebes makes the entire trip down the Great River Road in Illinois a worthy feat.

Accommodations

Whether you're hiking, biking or driving, the accommodations along the Great River Road in Illinois suit every traveler. From charming bed & breakfasts and boutique hotels to family-friendly motels, resorts and campgrounds – there is always a place to stay with a gorgeous view of the Mississippi River.

“The nature, the history, the charm and the beauty of one of the most scenic drives in the country is what keeps visitors coming back to the Great River Road in Illinois time and time again,” said Great River Road in Illinois National Scenic Byway Executive Director, Roger Carmack. The towns and communities along the way have been shaped by this geographic wonder and everything this region in Illinois has to offer its visitors and residents. A trip down the Great River Road in Illinois is truly a travel experience of a lifetime.

For more information on attractions, accommodations, maps and driving directions to places along the Great River Road in Illinois visit www.greatriverroad-illinois.org or contact John Haas at (877) 477-7007.

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