ITINERARY · NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

FALL COLOR FULL-DAY DRIVE

One long October day from the Mississippi bluffs to the Rock River, taking in four state parks, an orchard and a dinner table facing the Black Hawk statue. Roughly 120 miles west to east, timed so the last overlook lands at golden hour.



The Mississippi River bending below the wooded limestone bluffs of Mississippi Palisades State Park, with the Savanna–Sabula bridge downriver

Full Day	7	2	2
HOW LONG	STOPS	COUNTIES	BEST FOR
		Carroll County, Ogle County	Outdoors, Couples

OPEN ONLINE

Open the live itinerary
visitnwillinois.com/itineraries/fall-color-full-day-drive

DAY 1

THE DRIVE

Northwest Illinois turns about a week later than the driftless country north of it and holds colour into the last days of October. This drive links the two best canopies in the region, the Mississippi bluffs above Savanna and the hardwood-and-pine along the Rock River, with an orchard in between and dinner at the far end. Leave at eight; you will need all of it.

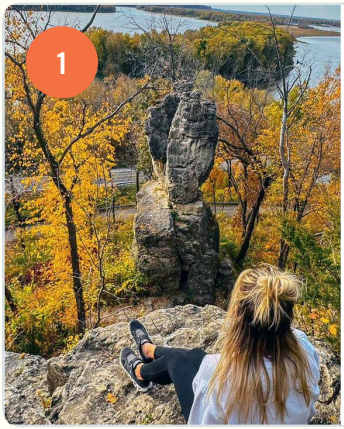
West to east, roughly following Route 64 and then Route 2. Peak colour is usually mid to late October, and the overlooks are best in the first and last two hours of light.

DRIVING ROUTE

Open this day in Google Maps

www.google.com/maps/dir/?api=1&origin=42.15...

7 PLANNED STOPS



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Mississippi Palisades State Park

2 hrs - Savanna

WHY IT BELONGS

Start at the top of the bluffs while the river valley still has mist in it. Lookout Point and Ozzie's Point face the Mississippi a cross miles of hardwood; the accessible overlooks give you most of the view without the climb.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Savanna



ATTRACTION

Center Hill Orchard & Apiary

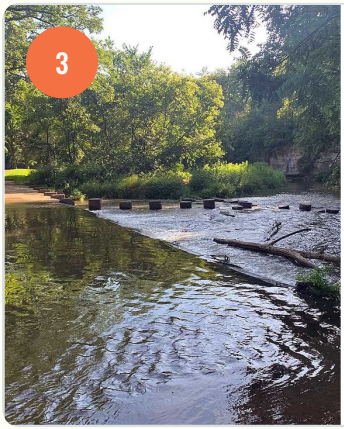
45 min - Mount Carroll

WHY IT BELONGS

Fifteen miles inland in the Carroll County hills for apples, pears and honey picked to order. Availability shifts week to week through the autumn. A call ahead is the difference between a bag of fruit and a locked gate.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Mount Carroll



OUTDOOR RECREATION

White Pines Forest State Park

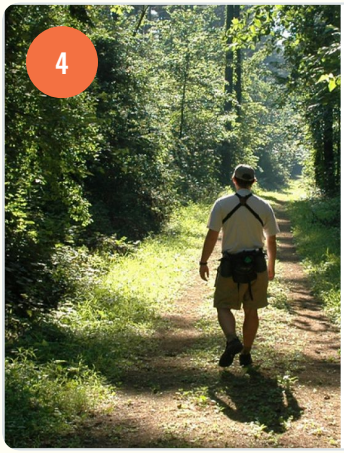
1–2 hrs - Mt Morris

WHY IT BELONGS

The state's northernmost natural white pine stand, which means dark evergreen against every colour the hardwoods a re doing. Walk one of the creek trails, and drive at least one of the low fords for the sake of it.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Mt Morris



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Lowden-Miller State Forest

1 hr - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Two thousand two hundred and ninety-one acres of hardwood and pine along three and a half miles of the Rock River, with 22 miles of trail and six parking areas to choose a length from. The 1.5-mile self-guided nature trail is the efficient option. Check Illinois DNR notices. Trails close briefly during firearm deer season.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Oregon



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Castle Rock State Park

1–2 hrs - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Climb the staircase up the sandstone bluff for the widest view of the Rock River valley in autumn. Six miles of trail below it run through ravines that hold colour after the ridgetops have gone.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Oregon



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Lowden State Park

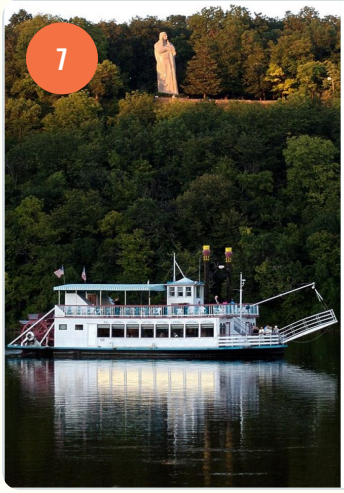
1 hr - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Time this one for golden hour. The bluff-top picnic ground and the Black Hawk statue look west over the river, which is the direction the light is coming from: the single best half hour of the day.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Oregon



FOOD & DRINK

Maxson's Riverside Restaurant & Pride of Oregon River-boat

Dinner - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Dinner in a glass-enclosed dining room looking back across the river at the statue you were standing under an hour ago. Ask for the homemade orange rolls. The Pride of Oregon paddlewheeler runs seasonal lunch and dinner cruises from the same dock if you would rather eat moving.

VIEW THIS PLACE OPEN IN MAPS

Oregon