

ITINERARY · NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

A FAMILY WEEKEND OUTDOORS IN OGLE COUNTY

Two days of white pine forest, Rock River bluffs and open prairie, with a roller rink from 1948, a fifty-foot statue on a clifftop and a free natural history museum. Almost everything on this weekend is free, and the paid parts are cheap.



Eternal Indian Statue Overlooking Rock River at Lowden State Park

Weekend HOW LONG	9 STOPS	Ogle County COUNTY	3 BEST FOR Families, Outdoors, Budget-Friendly
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Open the live itinerary
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DAY 1

DAY 1: INTO THE PINES

Ogle County packs four state parks, a 440-acre prairie preserve and the Rock River into about twenty miles, which is why it works so well with children in the car. Nothing is more than half an hour from anything else. Book a cabin at White Pines if you can; if not, the whole weekend runs comfortably from any base in Oregon or Byron.

The northernmost natural stand of white pine in Illinois, and a lodge built by the CCC in the 1930s that has been feeding people ever since.

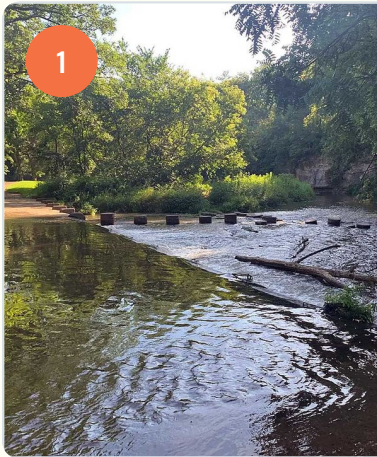
DRIVING ROUTE

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4 PLANNED STOPS



OUTDOOR RECREATION

White Pines Forest State Park

2-3 hrs - Mt Morris

WHY IT BELONGS

Three hundred and eighty-five acres of pine, limestone bluff and creek, with trails that cross the water on footbridges, and low concrete fords you drive straight through, which children remember longer than the scenery. Easy routes and steep ones both.

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Mt Morris



FOOD & DRINK

White Pines Lodge Restaurant

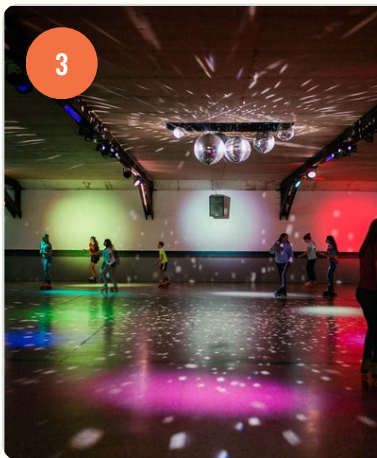
Lunch - Mount Morris

WHY IT BELONGS

The historic limestone-and-log lodge inside the park: home-style cooking, chicken pot pie, peach cobbler and a Sunday buffet with a following. Open March to just before Christmas. Call to confirm December hours.

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Mount Morris



ATTRACTION

The Rink at Pine Creek

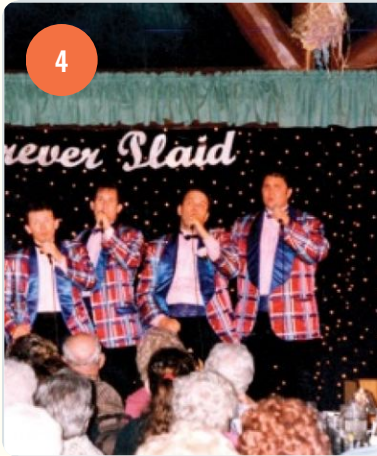
2 hrs - Mount Morris

WHY IT BELONGS

A roller rink that has been running since 1948, with one of the largest skate floors in Illinois, a live DJ every session and a twenty-game arcade. The wet-weather plan that everyone ends up wanting anyway.

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Mount Morris



Attraction

White Pines Lodge & Dinner Theatre

Evening - Mount Morris

Why it belongs

Back at the lodge for dinner and a show: plays, tribute acts and the long-running “Scrooge the Comedy,” with a home-cooked meal served during the performance. Running since 1989; reserve by phone.

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Mount Morris

DAY 2

DAY 2: BLUFFS, RIVER AND PRAIRIE

Three parks and a prairie preserve strung along the Rock River, north to south then east. Pack lunch: the good picnic tables here are the ones with the view.

DRIVING ROUTE

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5 PLANNED STOPS



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Lowden State Park

1 hr - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

On the bluffs just north of Oregon, with hiking trails, overlooks and picnic ground above the river, plus the remains of the Eagle's Nest art colony that drew Chicago sculptors and writers here a century ago.

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Oregon



ATTRACTION

Black Hawk Statue

20 min - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Lorado Taft's "The Eternal Indian," 48 feet of concrete poured in place in 1911 and weighing 536,770 pounds, standing on the bluff edge above the Rock River. Restored in 2020 and back open to walk up to. The photograph of the trip.

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Oregon



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Castle Rock State Park

1-2 hrs - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Two thousand acres three miles south on Route 2, named for the sandstone bluff you climb by staircase for the best river view in the county. Six miles of marked trail, deep ravines, and a fern-covered slope carrying 27 different species.

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Oregon



OUTDOOR RECREATION

White Pelican Outfitters

2–3 hrs - Oregon

WHY IT BELONGS

Canoe, kayak, paddleboard and tube rental in downtown Oregon, launching from behind Conover Square. Self-guided trips of every length, gear and safety briefing included, and they are used to first-timers and mixed-age groups.

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Oregon



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Jarrett Prairie Nature Preserve

1–2 hrs - Byron

WHY IT BELONGS

Four hundred and forty acres of dolomite tallgrass prairie and oak savanna with 9.5 miles of mowed trail, a free natural history museum in the Jarrett Prairie Center, a playground and picnic shelters, and free public sky-viewing nights at the Weiskopf Observatory. Dogs are not allowed inside the preserve itself.

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