

ITINERARY · NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

NW ILLINOIS: MINI GOLF, MAIN STREET, AND MOONLIT CABINS

There’s something special about Mount Carroll, a feeling that wraps around you like a familiar story. We spent our afternoon uncovering the town’s rich history through its charming downtown, with a self-guided walking tour that brought old buildings and quiet corners to life. A quick round of quirky mini golf and a shared pizza later, we made our way back to Hickory Hideaway. That evening, tucked into our cozy cabin beneath a sky full of stars, we felt it: the kind of contentment that only comes from slowing down and being present together. Enjoy this perfect half day adventure in NW Illinois.



Half Day HOW LONG	4 STOPS
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DAY 1

THE TRIP

Created by Sara Nordman from the SHRPA creator visit “Wanderlust in Carroll County: The Drive That Delivers”. Location: Mt Carroll · Distance: > 10 Miles What to bring: Comfortable Shoes; Camera; Bug Spray. SHRPA creator visit: “Wanderlust in Carroll County: The Drive That Delivers”. Photo: Sara Nordman.

DRIVING ROUTE

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4 PLANNED STOPS

1

SCENIC STOP

Mount Carroll

Mt Carroll

WHY IT BELONGS

We spent an afternoon exploring historic downtown Mount Carroll, IL. Fun Fact: Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the downtown district boasts over 30 architecturally significant sites, including the 1858 Carroll County Courthouse and the stately Nathaniel Halderman House . We enjoyed a self-guided walking tour (available at local businesses) and explored these landmarks at our own pace, reading up on their history along the way. My favorite- the cobblestone streets! Exploring what the town offers is a peaceful way to connect with each other, nature, and history - making it a great family-friendly activity.

Address: Mt Carroll, IL

[VIEW SOURCE](#) [OPEN IN MAPS](#)

2

SCENIC STOP

Tina's Ice Cream And Antiques

Mt Carroll

WHY IT BELONGS

After soaking in the charm and history of downtown Mount Carroll, it was time to shift gears and let the kids run wild (in the best way). Just a short walk away, Tina's Antiques & Ice Cream has the coolest surprise: an outdoor dinosaur-themed mini golf course that we absolutely couldn't pass up! Though the shop and ice cream weren't open yet (next time!), the kids had a blast testing their skills among the 9-hole dino putt-putt. Bright colors, quirky prehistoric creatures, and just enough challenge to keep everyone laughing made it the perfect family-friendly stop.

Pro tip: Swing by when the shop is open so you can browse antiques and grab a scoop of ice cream after your game, the perfect reward for a hole-in-one!

Address: 409 N Main St, Mt Carroll, IL

[OPEN IN MAPS](#)

3

SCENIC STOP

Market Street Pizza

Mt Carroll

WHY IT BELONGS

Last stop in Mount Carroll was dinner, and Market Street Pizza was calling our name! With a menu full of tempting appetizers and pizzas, everything sounded delicious... but we kept it classic with a pepperoni pizza, and it did not disappoint. Crispy crust, gooey cheese, just the right kick of spice. Every bite disappeared before we knew it. The best part? The kids declared it the best pizza they've ever had... and honestly, I couldn't argue. Watching everyone dig in, laugh, and battle over the last slice turned dinner into one of those unexpectedly perfect little moments. You can order online for takeout or stay to soak in the charm of the cozy setting. Either way, you're in for a win.

Pro tip: Leave room for dessert!

Address: 108 W Market St, Mt Carroll, IL

[VIEW SOURCE](#) [OPEN IN MAPS](#)

4



LODGING

Hickory Hideaway

Shannon

WHY IT BELONGS

After a day of exploring, we settled into our weekend stay at Hickory Hideaway, and instantly exhaled. Our cabin was tucked beneath the trees, quiet and peaceful, with a wide-open sky overhead. Just what we needed. Inside, we had everything for a cozy family night: bedding/towels, a small kitchenette, a fireplace, a deck to relax on, and plenty of space to spread out and unwind. Some cabins are even pet-friendly, so your furry friends can join the adventure too! The best part? You're right in the middle of it all, just minutes from the trails at Mississippi Palisades, the charm of Mount Carroll, and everything Northwest Illinois has to offer. Whether you're out hiking or just curled up with a book on the deck, the pace here is exactly what you make it. Our family of course brought our cards for family game night! Fun fact: On select evenings, there's a community campfire where guests gather under the stars, and yes, s'mores are a must.

Pro tip: Don't forget to look up. Out here, far from city lights, the stars put on a show. Bring a blanket, lay back, and soak it in. It's one of the best parts of the whole stay.

Address: 24366 Payne Rd, Shannon, IL

[VIEW THIS PLACE](#) [OPEN IN MAPS](#)

Shannon