

ITINERARY · NORTHWEST ILLINOIS

PRAIRIES, PALISADES & SMALL-TOWN BITES

Cross the region from restored tallgrass prairie to Mississippi River bluffs, using Dixon, Savanna, and Fulton’s independent kitchens as the thread between two very different landscapes.



Bison grazing the tallgrass prairie at Nachusa Grasslands on the Lee–Ogle county line

2 Days HOW LONG	7 STOPS	3 COUNTIES Lee County, Carroll County, Whiteside County	3 BEST FOR Outdoors, Food Lovers, Friends
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OPEN ONLINE

Open the live itinerary
visitnwillinois.com/itineraries/prairies-palisades-and-small-to...

DAY 1

DAY 1: PRAIRIE TO THE SAUK VALLEY

Northwest Illinois changes character from east to west. This route starts where bison move through restored prairie and ends above Mississippi backwaters, with small-town meals carrying the miles between them.

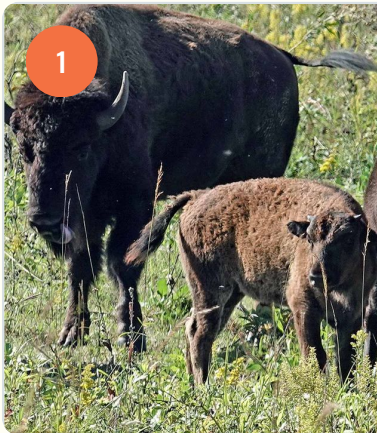
Give the morning to prairie and the afternoon to the Rock River towns.

DRIVING ROUTE

Open this day in Google Maps
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3 PLANNED STOPS



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Nachusa Grasslands

2–3 hrs - Franklin Grove

WHY IT BELONGS

Walk visitor-access trails through prairie, wetlands, and oak savanna. Bison sightings are never guaranteed; the restored landscape is the main event.

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Franklin Grove



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Franklin Creek State Natural Area

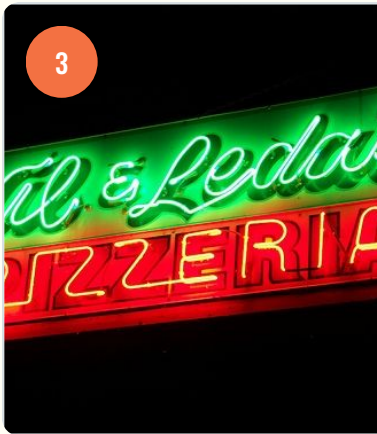
1–2 hrs - Franklin Grove

WHY IT BELONGS

Add a shaded creek walk and historic mill stop when trail conditions and daylight allow.

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Franklin Grove



FOOD & DRINK

Al & Leda Pizzeria

Dinner - Dixon

WHY IT BELONGS

Finish in Dixon with a long-running family pizza tradition, then stay in the Sauk Valley for an early start west.

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Dixon

DAY 2

DAY 2: MISSISSIPPI BLUFFS AND RIVER TOWNS

Follow Illinois Route 84 north with room for overlooks, backwaters, and whatever is fresh at the bakery.

DRIVING ROUTE

Open this day in Google Maps
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4 PLANNED STOPS



ATTRACTION

De Immigrant Dutch Windmill

1 hr - Fulton

WHY IT BELONGS

Begin on Fulton's levee with the working Dutch windmill and Mississippi views. Check seasonal tour hours.

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Fulton



FOOD & DRINK

Krumpets Restaurant & Bakery

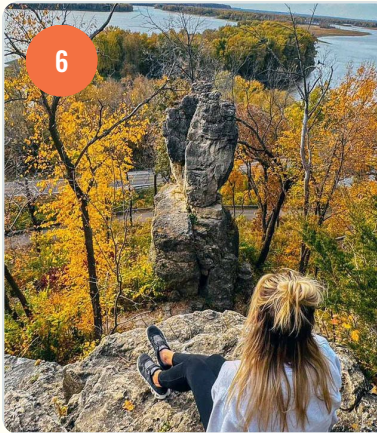
Breakfast or coffee - Fulton

WHY IT BELONGS

Pick up coffee and something from the bakery before taking the Great River Road north.

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Fulton



OUTDOOR RECREATION

Mississippi Palisades State Park

2-3 hrs - Savanna

WHY IT BELONGS

Choose a bluff trail or link several overlooks above the Mississippi. Allow more time than the mileage suggests.

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Savanna



FOOD & DRINK

Muddy Water's Cafe/Marina

Late lunch - Savanna

WHY IT BELONGS

Close the route with a casual riverfront meal in Savanna and enough time to watch the river before heading home.

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Savanna