

Fall Colors & Local Wines: a Perfect Pairing

Take a trip this month to enjoy the Chicago region's beautiful fall colors—and maybe a glass of organic wine, too

BY MAUREEN EWING

When the temperature stays below 60 during the day and blankets come out at night, fall is here. On the crisp fall days in October, the uniform green blanket turns russet and gold, and we remember that the trees are not uniform at all, but a vibrant mixture of oak, birch, maple and more.

This month, take yourself on a trip, whether in your neighborhood or further afield, and visit a forest preserve, arboretum, or state park. Walk, bike or canoe your way through the changing colors of the Midwest.

While you're out and about, stop and enjoy some local wine. An afternoon wine tasting teaches you a great deal about the local area—its history and its flavors—while you soak in the wonderful fall colors. Then, rest your tired feet at a cozy hotel or bed & breakfast, some of them green and sustainable. When you head back into the city, you'll feel like you've taken a break, done something good for yourself, carrying all that color with you into winter.

illinoiswine.org
vintageillinois.com
urbanext.illinois.edu/fallcolor



Lisle, Illinois

Distance: 25 miles from Chicago

Leaves: We've said it before, and we'll say it again. The Morton Arboretum offers a wonderful respite from the urban jungle. A short drive or Metra ride away, visit the Arboretum Oct. 3-Nov. 1 for its Fall Color Festival. Hike many of its trails (16 miles worth), sample some delicious food at the café afterwards, or bring your own picnic (no alcohol, glass containers or grills). There are many family friendly activities at the Arboretum all month, so check the website. In Lisle itself, events include Monster Madness (Oct. 16) and Haunted Dungeon (last two weekends of October).

Wine: At the Arboretum on weekends in October from 11am-4pm, there is a free wine tasting of Bonterra Vineyards wine, an organic vineyard in California whose wines are served at the Arboretum. If you're making a day or weekend of it, visit Lynfred Winery, only 16 miles away (see listing for Roselle). The Hilton Lisle will host a wine dinner on Oct. 14.

Stay Here: The hotels in Lisle provide nightly and weekend packages. With the refurbished downtown Lisle nearby, you'll have plenty to keep you busy. The Wyndham Lisle offers a \$99 nightly rate Fri/Sat/Sun through October which includes breakfast for two, transportation and two tickets to the Arboretum. The Hilton Lisle offers a Fall Colors Package at \$109 per night on Fri/Sat and \$149 Sun-Thurs, which includes breakfast for up to four with tickets to the Arboretum.

Transportation: Whether you drive or take the Metra, Lisle and the Arboretum are easily accessible. For the Metra, take the train to Lisle (Burlington Northern Santa Fe line from Union Station) and buy the \$5 weekend pass if you're traveling on Sat and Sun. If you stay at one of the above hotels, you'll be picked up from the Metra station (with notice).

mortonarb.org
refreshinglygreen.com
lisleparkdistrict.org
stayinlisle.com/social/hotels



Roselle, Illinois

Distance: 30 miles from Chicago

Wine: Just 16 miles north of the Arboretum is Lynfred Winery in Roselle, where you can sample the wines and say "I didn't know this was here." The winery is open from 10am-7pm every day for tastings (\$9 for seven tastings), and Lynfred Winery celebrates its 30th anniversary in October. Its tastings change every month, and over 5,000 people take advantage of the wine-of-the-month clubs. Some events at Lynfred include wine and cheese tastings, a Winemaker Dinner on Oct. 14, Open House Oct. 17-18, Think Pink Girls Night Out on Oct. 28, and a Christmas Holiday Preview on Nov. 4.

Stay Here: After you sample the wines at Lynfred, why not stay in the Bed & Breakfast? For \$350 per couple for one night, you receive a tasting, private tour, cheese and bread tray, and gourmet breakfast. Lynfred can cater to vegetarian and vegan guests, just let them know upon booking. Spa packages and massage treatments are also available. The B&B decorates each of the four beautiful suites for a specific region, and you may not want to leave.

Transportation: If you want to free yourself from your car, take the Metra. Lynfred Winery is less than a mile from the Roselle station (Milwaukee District West from Union Station), and the pretty walk will put you in the mood for wonderful wines. Again, the Metra \$5 weekend pass is the way to go if you're traveling on Saturday and/or Sunday.

lynfredwinery.com



Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Distance: 30 miles from Chicago

Leaves: Bike or hike some or all of the 61-mile Illinois Prairie Path from Maywood to Glen Ellyn, Geneva, Elgin and Aurora while enjoying nature's transformation. You pass through many historic downtown neighborhoods along the route to pick up snacks and beverages. The trail boasts many prairie restoration projects as well, so keep your eyes open.

Stay: The Crowne Plaza Hotel in Glen Ellyn and its Glen Prairie restaurant will offer you green accommodations and local, organic food when you're exhausted at the end of your day. If you would like to also make the Morton Arboretum a part of your trip, the hotel has a package that includes breakfast, four tickets, breakfast for up to four, and a shuttle service starting at \$109 per night.

Transportation: Take the Metra (Union Pacific West from Ogilvie Station) out to Maywood, Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, or Geneva and bike the trail. Stay the night or hop on at another station to head back home. The Metra \$5 weekend pass offers the best deal around. If you take the Metra and stay at the Crowne Plaza, let them know in advance, and the complimentary shuttle will pick you up.

ipp.org
visitglenellyn.org
cpglenellyn.com



Kankakee/ Kempton, Illinois

Distance: 90 miles from Chicago

Leaves: An easy drive away, Kankakee River State Park offers hiking and biking trails for your leaf excursions. Even better, hop in a canoe and enjoy the fall colors along the Kankakee River with Reed's Canoe Trips; tours run through Oc. 15.

Wine: Bring some organic wine from your local store and enjoy it at the Greenhouse Bed & Breakfast after a day of hiking and/or canoeing.

Stay Here: Spend a relaxing evening (or two!) at Greenhouse Bed & Breakfast in Kempton, Ill, a green, sustainable Bed & Breakfast affiliated with the Center for Sustainable Community. Since there are no restaurants nearby, the B&B can make an evening meal for an extra charge with advanced notice, and can cater to vegetarians and vegans too. Sit outside with the organic wine you've brought along and enjoy the stars. A large breakfast awaits you in the morning, much of it picked from the local garden and from local farms. Greenhouse can set up local farm tours for you as well. Rooms range from \$55-\$135 per night.

dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks
reedscanotrips.com
greenhousebed.com

Maureen Ewing is a recent graduate of Columbia College Chicago's MFA-Creative Writing Poetry program. She also teaches First-Year Writing at Columbia and works as a freelance writer.



Southwest Michigan

Distance: 90 miles from Chicago

Leaves: An easy drive away, Southwest Michigan offers many places to see the leaves in their glory. All along your drive up the eastern coast of Lake Michigan, you can stop for wonderful wooded views. Just inside Michigan, stop at the Warren Woods State Park at the Warren Dunes. Head further up the coast and visit Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Reserve or go inland to the Fred Russ Forest for its beautiful virgin white oak and black walnut.

Wine: Just like the trees, you'll be spoiled for choice when it comes to wine. There are many vineyards and tasting rooms in this corner of Michigan. Some favorites include Hickory Creek Winery, Fenn Valley, and Tabor Hill, all open everyday for tastings. Fenn Valley offers short and extended tours with tastings. Tabor Hill offers an excellent restaurant overlooking its vineyards, perfect for lunch or dinner.

Stay Here: Riverbend Retreat Bed & Breakfast outside St. Joseph has a back porch view right onto the St. Joseph River. The leaf viewing doesn't get much better than this when you're drinking your morning cup of tea or coffee. The B&B just qualified for Green Lodging Michigan status in part due to the wonderful local and organic breakfasts served. From the natural meats, organic eggs and dairy, homemade bread, and many organic fruits and veggies, the breakfasts cater to both the omnivore and the vegetarian/vegan. Rooms range from \$130-225 per night (two night minimum stay on weekends in October).

Transportation: Fruitful Vine offers guided four-hour tours of vineyards in the area, starting at \$39 plus gratuity. You will visit up to four local vineyards, learn about the region, and not need to worry about driving.

swmichigan.org
miwinetrail.com
riverbendretreatbb.com
fruitfulvinetours.com



Utica, Illinois

Distance: 95 miles from Chicago

Leaves: An Illinois favorite, Starved Rock State Park is a perfect day trip or overnight stay. Enjoy the beautiful hikes (15 miles worth), explore the 18 canyons and waterfalls, and take in the views over the Illinois River. Bring along plenty of water and snacks, treating yourself to lunch or dinner in the historic Starved Rock Lodge. Nearby Matthiesen State Park also offers great trails with fewer visitors.

Wine: On your way back to Chicago, stop in Utica at the August Hill Winery tasting room and sample the wines made on their nearby vineyard. On select weekends in October, there's live music on a Friday night. August Hill's wines can be found in many Chicago area stores and restaurants. The Illinois River Winery down the road also offers tastings and tours.

Stay Here: Staying in a private cottage or in the historic 70-year-old Starved Rock Lodge is always a good idea, but sold out for October. These leaves are quite the show! Nearby Utica offers many options like The Willows Hotel and Landers House. The Willows rooms start at \$109 per night and Landers House at \$149. The Landers House suites and cottages also have outdoor fire pits for your cool fall night campfire. Walk down the street to Foothills Organics, a local store that carries many local products.

starvedrockstatepark.org
dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgmt/parks
augusthillwinery.com
illinoisriverwinery.com
starvedrocklodge.com
thewillowshotel.net
landershouse.com



South Wisconsin

Distance: 145 miles from Chicago

Leaves: Bring your bikes and head up to Monroe, Wis. and meander down the 47-mile-long Cheese County Trail (bikes, horses, and some vehicles) or the Badger State Trail (bikes only). Two state parks, Cadiz Springs and Yellowstone Lake, offer miles of hiking trails as well. Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin is an easy side trip and a wonderful leaf viewing option. The highly recommended Fall Art Tour takes place from Oct. 16-18 throughout the area.

Wine: Stop in and visit the New Glarus Primrose Winery, which makes its wines mostly of Wisconsin fruits. If you've got time to meander, there are a few wineries within an easy afternoon drive.

Stay Here: When you're done with your leaves, biking, and hiking, stay at Inn Serendipity and relax your tired muscles. This Bed & Breakfast is run on 100 percent renewable energy and has won multiple awards and designations as a green, sustainable business. Wake up to a hearty vegetarian breakfast with items from their organic garden (vegans welcome, just give advance notice) and get back on the trail. Inn Serendipity has two rooms at rates of \$105 or \$120 per night.

dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks
fallarttour.com
wiswine.org
newglarusprimrosewinery.com
innserendipity.com





Galena, Illinois

Distance: 165 miles from Chicago

Leaves: Head towards the gallant Mississippi River for some stunning leaves. This little corner of northwest Illinois packs quite a punch, and Galena offers just the place to begin. From the Apple River Canyon State Park to Hanover Bluff Nature Preserve to the Mississippi Palisades (30 miles south), there are many hiking and biking trips to get you out into all that gold and russet.

Wine: As you make your way west on Route 20, you'll find four vineyards waiting for you: Famous Fossil, Massbach Ridge, Rocky Waters and Galena Cellars.

Stay Here: If you want to wake up to a view of the vineyards and countryside, Galena Cellars Vineyard offers a suite and guest house, both starting at \$150 a night. Galena itself offers many options, but why not stay off the beaten path but close enough to enjoy all it has to offer. The Pine Hollow Inn is only a mile away and set in a peaceful area with beautiful views from its wrap around porch. With rates starting at \$110 a night, you'll feel relaxed and right at home.

Transportation: When you arrive in Galena, why not let somebody else do the driving? Iowa Wine Tours offer wonderful day trips (four to five hours) to local vineyards for \$60. You can sit back and enjoy the beautiful fall scenery and be picked up and dropped off at your accommodation.

galena.org
northernillinoiswinetrail.com
iowawinetoursinc.com
galenacellars.com
pinehollowinn.com



Devil's Lake, Wisconsin

Distance: 190 miles from Chicago

Leaves: With over 29 miles of hiking and biking trails and a small lake surrounded by forest, Devil's Lake State Park makes a perfect place to take in the changing leaves of fall. The trails take you through gorges and waterfalls, forest and grasslands, scenic views and bluffs. These trails can keep you busy all day and all weekend. If you have some extra time, visit the Aldo Leopold Center in Baraboo and learn about the famous environmentalist and the Center's green buildings.

Wine: Wollersheim Winery is the local vineyard where you can sample wines and take a tour of its vineyards and winery. The tasting room is open every day from 10am-5pm, and the tours run once an hour for \$3.50. On Oct. 14, Wollersheim celebrates the release of its ice wine with extended hours.

Stay Here: If you've got the gear and temperament for camping, why not stay right in the state park and wake up to the crisp fall in this large and beautiful campground. If that sounds a bit too rugged, head down the road to the Inn at Wawanissee Point in Baraboo where you'll be spoiled with wine and cheese in the evenings and a gourmet breakfast. Rates begin at \$199 per night. Stop by the Cheese Factory Restaurant in Wisconsin Dells for vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free fare.

devilslakewisconsin.com
aldoleopold.org
wollersheim.com
innatwawanisseept.com

Buying Organic Wine in Chicagoland

These local wine shops know what's behind the labels, & they'll help you find interesting organic & biodynamic wines. With their wide selections & friendly staff, you won't be disappointed.



Fine Wine Brokers

4621 N. Lincoln, Chicago
773.989.8166, fwbchicago.com

Green Grocer

1402 W. Grand, Chicago
312.624.9508, greengrocerchicago.com

In Fine Spirits

5418 N. Clark, Chicago
773.506.9463, infinespirits.com

Just Grapes

560 W. Washington, Chicago
312.627.WINE, justgrapes.net

Provenance Food & Wine

2528 N. California, Chicago
773.384.0699
2312 W. Leland, Chicago
773.784.2314
provenancefoodandwine.com

Red & White

1861 N. Milwaukee, Chicago
773.486.4769, redandwhitechicago.com

The Noble Grape

802 N. Bishop, Chicago
312.846.1204, noblegrape.net

Wild Blossom Wines

10033 S. Western, Chicago
773.233.7579, wildblossomwines.com

House Red

7403 W. Madison, Forest Park, Ill.
708.771.7RED, house-red.com

