

Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Route

Here, the Missouri, Mississippi and Illinois Rivers meet to form a 35,000-acre floodplain. The Mississippi, a working river, is also an environmental treasure. Historic 18th Century river towns, islands, bars, points and bends create beautiful scenery beneath limestone bluffs that are covered by forests extending over nearly 20,000 acres.



Local Information

Alton Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau

618-465-6676

800-258-6645

Length: 33 miles / 52.8 km

Time to Two days to enjoy the

Allow: entire byway

Visitor Services

Fees



There are no fees along the byway proper and ferries on the byway are free.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities



Touted as the longest and perhaps the most scenic bicycle path in the region, the 25-mile Vandalabene (Great River Road) Bicycle Trail runs parallel to the Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Route from Alton to the north of Pere Marquette State Park. The trail provides walking and bicycling opportunities, and it is the non-motorized, interconnecting link to 80 percent of the attractions along the byway. The trail hugs the scenic limestone cliffs bordering the Mississippi River and passes through the historic towns of Alton, Elsah, Chautauqua, and Grafton, ending at Pere Marquette State Park. There are plans to extend the Vandalabene Bike Trail to connect with the West Alton Bike Trail into Missouri via the Clark Bridge. Once in Missouri, the biker can take county roads to St. Charles and connect with the Katy Trail there. The West Alton Trail, coming off the Clark Bridge, will connect with the new Confluence Trail that serves the Melvin Price Lock and Dam and Visitor Center (northern terminus). This trail continues south, and then it splits and either crosses the Mississippi at the Eads Bridge into St. Louis or turns east to Belleville, IL. There are also pedestrian trails within Pere Marquette State Park.



Camping

Camping is available at the Pere Marquette State Park.



Food

Alton, St. Louis, Grafton, Elsah, and Wood River have several places to eat.



Gasoline

There are multiple gas stations along the byway in Alton, Hartford, and Godfrey.



Information

The byway passes by the Melvin Price Visitors Center, a state-of-the-art interpretive center. This visitor's center tells the story of the Mississippi River and draws more than 500,000 visitors from an eight-state region.



Lodging

Travelers can find lodging along the byway in towns like Alton, St. Louis, Grafton, and Wood River. If you are interested in a great bed and breakfast experience, stay at one in the town of Elsah.



Phone

Phones can be found at any of the gas stations in Alton, Hartford, or Godfrey.



Restrooms

Public restrooms are available along the route in Alton, Hartford, and Godfrey.



Retail

There are many different types of places to shop along the Byway. Some great shopping areas are in Wood River, Alton, St. Louis, Grafton, and Elsah.

Special Considerations

There are several special considerations when driving this byway:

- There are multiple gas stations along the byway in Alton, Hartford, and Godfrey.
- Over half of the 50-mile route is a paved, four-lane facility, and the remaining half is a paved, two-lane road. The five state routes are in excellent condition, have no high-accident locations, and have been designed to serve higher levels of traffic than presently exist on the route.
- However, the area is hampered by periodic flooding during the spring, particularly in the northern parts of the byway from Grafton north. During periods of road closure due to flooding, alternate routes are posted for the convenience of motorists.
- There may be times during the coldest winter months that the river ferries cannot operate due to either the river freezing or ice jams coming down the river from the north. During these times, motorists can use the Joe Paige Bridge at Hardin to

connect with Kampsville in Calhoun County. The route has recently been reconstructed and resurfaced. The Clark Bridge, which was opened in 1994, serves as the major river crossing from Missouri. The route can accommodate all types of vehicles, including commercial, agricultural, and recreational vehicles. In most cases, surrounding local roads provide access to businesses and other activities off of the byway.

- The best time to come for fall colors is mid-week. Saturday and Sunday traffic is extremely heavy during the fall, so extra time must be added to the trip. The normal 30-minute drive from Alton to Grafton can take two to three hours on beautiful fall weekends.

Restrictions

Roads can be closed during the spring due to flooding and during the winter due to freezing and ice. When this happens, alternate routes are provided for motorists. Also, ferries cannot operate when the river freezes.

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

The byway is beautiful in both the spring and the fall.

Fall

In the fall, people come from miles around to see the colors of the leaves and to enjoy harvest in the orchards and vineyards. In mid-October, people are out picking apples or participating in the wine tour in Grafton.

High Season

Each season on the byway has a different virtue and each season sees its share of travelers.

Spring

During the spring, the Dogwoods and Redwoods are in bloom.

Summer

In the summer, recreational activities are abundant on the byway.

Winter

In the winter, people come to see the eagles swooping near the bluffs.

Map and Directions



Legend:

Point of Interest	Campground	Featured Byway	Water	State Border
Park	Picnic/Rest Area	America's Byways	Wildlife Refuge	Urban Area
Mountain	Interstate	Other Byway	Wilderness Area	Tribal Nation
City	U.S. Highway	Other Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

Driving Directions

- The byway begins at the intersection of IL 3 and New Poag Road south of Alton, Illinois.
- Follow IL 3 north for 5 miles until you reach the junction of IL 143.
- Turn Left on IL 143 and continue for 2 miles towards Lock & Dam at the Melvin Price Visitors Center in Alton.
- Take IL 143 north out of town to the junction with IL 100.
- Follow IL 100 north past Rosedale, Pere Marquette State Park, and Nutwood.

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- Continue on IL 100 as it merges with IL 16.
- Turn right onto Eldred Road and follow it north to Eldred and the intersection with IL 108.
- Take IL 108 west to the bank of the Illinois River and take the free ferry to Kampsville, where the byway ends.

Getting to the Byway



Nearby cities

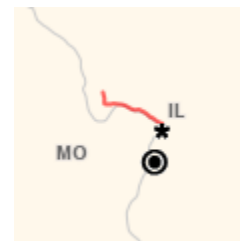
St. Louis, MO (20 miles / 32.19 km, 23 minutes)

Start: ⊙ I-70 northbound, St. Louis, MO
 N 38.629° W 90.159° [?]

Directions:

- Take I-70 to I-255 north.
- Follow I-255 north to I-270 east.
- Continue on to Route 3 north to Hartford where the byway begins.

Junction with byway: * Intersection of IL-3 and IL-203, IL
 N 38.804° W 90.100° [?]



Road Trip: Meeting of the Great Rivers Must See Tour

Departure: Pere Marquette State Park, Illinois

Destination: Bluffs, Illinois

Time to allow: 1 day

This "Must-See" Tour on the Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Byway, follows a 33-mile strip of river where the Mississippi and Missouri meet. This scenic and entertaining ride takes you through an area known locally as "Piasa Country." Enjoy the natural wonders of the area and learn a little history at the museums and visitor's centers along the way.

Day 1

- **Start: Pere Marquette State Park**

The park over looks the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. The lodge is considered by many to be the finest state lodge in Illinois; it was built by the WPA during the Great Depression. The lodge and cabins are available for overnight visitors. The area has several nature trails and prehistoric sites available. Try your hand at horseback riding, camping, fishing, boating and hiking. Don't miss the visitor's center where you can learn firsthand about the natural treasures in and around the park. Campgrounds are available, and there is also a boat launch.



- **Stop 1: Brussels Free Ferry**

From previous stop: 7 minutes / 6 mi (9.6 km)

Directions: Go west on IL 100 for 5 miles, until you pass through Grafton. After Grafton go 1 more mile until you see the free ferry on your right.

Suggested time at this stop: 15 minutes

A few miles beyond Grafton is the Brussels Ferry. The ferry will take your car across the Illinois River into Calhoun County, which is a green and hilly land full of natural beauty.

- **Stop 2: Clark Bridge**



From previous stop: 17 minutes / 11.55 mi (18.5 km)

Directions: Starting in Grafton go southeast on IL 100 for 10.9 miles. The road will turn into W. Broadway St. Continue on this road until you cross the Clark Bridge into Alton.

Suggested time at this stop: 5 minutes

Constructed in 1993, the Clark Bridge has become a landmark in this part of Illinois. Take a drive across this award winning bridge.

- **Stop 3: National Great Rivers Museum at Melvin Price Lock and Dam**

From previous stop: 13 minutes / 4.9 mi (7.8 km)

Directions: In Alton, continue go east on Broadway St. This road will become W. St. Louis Ave. Follow this road until you reach Haller Ave. and turn left. Turn right to go onto 1st St. and follow it until you reach the museum.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

Located at Melvin Price Lock and Dam, this state-of-the-art interpretive center tells the story of the Mississippi River. The museum interactive displays and exhibits that help visitors understand the many aspects of the Mississippi River and how it affects our lives.

- **Stop 4: The Piasa Bird**



From previous stop: 5 minutes / 3 mi (4.8 km)

Directions: Go west on 1st St. and turn left onto Haller Ave. Turn right onto W. Edwardsville Rd., which will become E. St. Louis Ave. Turn left onto IL 3 going south and follow it for 3.6 miles, until you see the Piasa Bird on the bluffs overhead.

Suggested time at this stop: 5 minutes

This ancient Native American pictograph has recently been restored on the cliff face above the river. Take a look at the mysterious bird that has baffled people for hundreds of years.

- **End: Bluffs**



From previous stop: 10 minutes / 5.18 mi (8.3 km)

Directions: Continue going south on IL 3 and you will see the Bluffs on both sides of the road.

The bluffs tower above the river with the byway road surface immediately between the peaks and the riverbank. Anytime is good viewing but late afternoon and sunset are very rewarding. As the river flows by, the sun illuminates the bluffs, creating a vista unlike anywhere else on the Mississippi.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 30.63 miles / 49.0 km

Total Travel Time: 52 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 1 hour 25 minutes