



FALL INTO ADVENTURE

LOOKING FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF FALL GETAWAY?

There's a slower side of autumn waiting in Southern Illinois. Follow winding roads through the Shawnee National Forest, linger over a warm cup of coffee, explore trails dressed in fall color, and settle into a cozy place to stay. This season, skip the crowds and make room for the kind of fall getaway where the journey is just as memorable as the destination.

In this newsletter:

PLAN YOUR GETAWAY

BOOK YOUR STAY

HARVEST MEMORIES

2026 COFFEE TRAIL

RED CEDAR CHALLENGE

GIANT CITY TURNS 100

THE SHAWNEE CHALLENGE IS GOING SEASONAL!

The current Shawnee Challenge digital pass will be phased out and replaced with new seasonal itineraries designed to give you fresh reasons to explore the Shawnee Forest Country. This September, take on the Red Cedar Trail Challenge at Giant City State Park! Find more information about the challenge in this newsletter.

FALL FUN WITH YOUR FAVORITE PEOPLE



Fall is made for gathering with your favorite people, sharing a meal and a bottle of wine, and taking the scenic route. The **Shawnee Hills Wine Trail** winds through some of Shawnee National Forest's most beautiful autumn landscapes, making it a picture-perfect backdrop for a weekend with your favorite people.

Spend the day exploring wineries, enjoying local food, browsing small-town shops, and watching the leaves change along the way. The Wine Trail website hosts a wealth of information about local restaurants, shops, attractions, and more! Perfect for planning a girls getaway, couples retreat, or family holiday gathering.

PLAN YOUR FALL GETAWAY 

EXPLORE WINERIES 

BOOK YOUR STAY FOR A FALL GETAWAY

Whether you're visiting our charming towns, exploring the forest, lakes and rivers, or spending time along the wine trail, a fall getaway is best when you have a comfortable place to unwind at the end of the day. There is no shortage of quaint B&Bs, inns, cabins and vacation rentals in Southernmost Illinois!

Booking directly with a property or through a local property management site like **Southern Illinois Vacation Rentals** is the smartest way to go! You may find savings, personalized local recommendations, and a selection of rentals that put you close to the experiences you came to enjoy.

EXPLORE SIVR RENTALS 

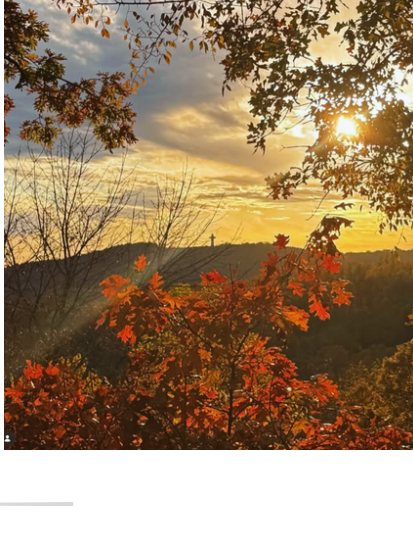
PERKS OF BOOKING DIRECT 

EXPLORE FORESTS, PADDLE LAKES, HARVEST MEMORIES.

Fall invites you to experience Southernmost Illinois at a different pace. Wander beneath a canopy of changing leaves at Giant City and Ferne Clyffe State Parks, cast a line at Lake of Egypt or Kinkaid Lake, or head to the Cache River to explore unique landscapes and spot wildlife.

From quiet forest trails to peaceful lakes and wetlands, there are plenty of ways to spend a fall day outdoors in Shawnee Forest Country. Bring your camera, leave some room in your schedule, and let the landscape set the pace this season.

START AT GIANT CITY 



FIND YOUR NEW FAVORITE COFFEE SHOP

Fall is a great time to explore Shawnee Forest Country with a cozy coffee in hand. The **2026 Southern Illinois Coffee Trail** brings together 64 stops across more than 400 miles, giving you plenty of reasons to take a scenic drive and try somewhere new. 18 of those stops are right here in Southernmost Illinois!

Visit eight participating shops between August 1 and December 31 to earn a prize, using either the Discover Downstate Illinois app or the traditional passport. Grab your passport, hit the road, and find your new favorite coffee shop.

GET YOUR COFFEE TRAIL PASSPORT 



TAKE THE RED CEDAR 12-MILE CHALLENGE

Put some miles on your shoes this fall! The Red Cedar Trail at Giant City State Park offers a 12-mile hiking challenge through rugged forest terrain. Along the way, find all 10 password signs and take a selfie at each one. Bring your photos to the Visitor Center to receive an official Red Cedar patch!

The full trail takes a minimum of seven hours and can be completed all at once or in sections over a few days. Come prepared with plenty of water, snacks, insect spray, and sturdy footwear. For more information, visit the Giant City Visitor Center or call 618-457-4836.

BOOK A CABIN 

HELP TELL THE STORY OF GIANT CITY



Giant City State Park will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2027, and the park wants to hear from the people who have made a difference there over the years. Whether the park remember a funny moment, a special milestone, a family tradition, or simply a day at the park that stayed with you, your story could become part of the centennial celebration. Selected stories and original photos will be featured in a year-long display at the Giant City Visitor Center.

Stories should be 100 words or less and include a photo. They can be submitted through November 2026. Share your memory by emailing DNR.GiantCity100@illinois.gov

SUBMIT YOUR STORY 

UPCOMING EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

- 9/9 MURPHYSBORO APPLE FESTIVAL
- 9/19 ALPACA FARM DAYS
- 9/24 PRAISE THE LARD BBQ COOK-OFF
- 9/26 SOUTHERN IL HUNTING + FISHING DAYS
- 10/3 BIG MUDDY MONSTER BREW FEST
- 10/9 LITTLE GRASSY GET DOWN MUSIC FEST
- 10/17 MAKANDA VULTURE FEST
- 10/23 CARBONDALE PUMPKIN GLOW
- 11/7 HARRISBURG HERITAGE FESTIVAL
- 11/12 CHRISTMAS BARN SALE TRAIL
- 11/20 GOLCONDA DEER FESTIVAL

EXPLORE MORE LOCAL EVENTS 



#YESSITB

Tag us on your posts and use #yesSITB to be featured on our social pages and future newsletters!

WERE YOU FORWARDED THIS EMAIL?

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE YOUR OWN!

LET'S GO 

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK OF THE FALL NEWSLETTER

[Take the survey >](#)