

# Top Weekend Getaways in ILLINOISouth

The 23 counties that make up ILLINOISouth and stretch from the Mississippi River to the Wabash River are packed with both urban and rural areas worth exploring on a quick getaway. The best part about the landscape is the variety of outdoor opportunities of which you can take advantage, depending on your interests. Whether you're a road-trip junkie, thrill-seeking nature enthusiast or history buff, you'll find a weekend itinerary to suit your travel style here. Check out our three perfect weekend getaways to ILLINOISouth.

## Family Road Trip

For a classic family weekend road trip, [Casey, Illinois](#)—put on the map by resident and businessman Jim Bolin's "Big Things in a Small Town" project—is a place where everyone gets to live a little larger. Easily accessible from I-70, Casey is home to many quirky, massive items, which you can learn more about below. Seven of Bolin's creations are listed in the



*World's Largest Wind Chime*

Guinness Book of World Records, making them perfect props for a photo op. Spend a day hopping from one big thing to the next on a scavenger hunt that can be continued to the neighboring town of Marshall searching for [murals](#).

### SATURDAY

Start with lunch at family-owned [The Greathouse of Pizza](#), known for its gourmet pizzas with the best homemade dough. Try the thick-crust Chi-Town Combo, with double Italian sausage, double Italian beef, onions and pepperoncinis. It's served with au jus for dipping.

After you've filled up on pizza, hop back in the car and take a three-minute drive south to look for the [world's largest knitting needles and crochet hook](#), [wind chime](#) and [rocking chair](#), all within walking distance of each other. Your kids will love climbing the stairs inside the post of the nearby [world's largest mailbox](#) to look down and strike a pose from the platform. And just a block south of the mailbox, they'll get a kick out of climbing inside the world's largest [wooden shoes](#) located in [Casey's Candy Depot](#), a converted train depot on the Doty Railroad. Grab treats like fudge or a bag of bulk candy while you're there.

From the candy depot, drive northeast for a mile to the [world's largest golf tee](#), situated at the Casey Country Club. Stop to snap a picture before you settle in for dinner at [Richard's Farm Restaurant](#), where you can choose from delicious steaks, sandwiches and a weekly buffet. The restaurant is a converted 1930s gothic-style barn, and it's home to the last scavenger hunt stop, the [world's largest pitchfork](#). Stay at the Eighteen-Ninety Sleepover for a unique experience at a locally owned boutique hotel, or at the pet-friendly Days Inn & Suites Casey – both of which offer breakfast.

### SUNDAY

Before heading to Marshall for the day, take a 20-minute southbound detour to Martinsville for a famous Moonburger from the no-frills, cash-only [Moonshine Store](#), a converted 1910 general store. The burgers are giant and juicy and perfect road-trip chow, but be sure to get there early: The grill shuts down at 12:30 p.m. sharp. Eat at a picnic table or take your burger to go on a 40-minute drive northeast to Marshall to hunt for 16 colorful murals highlighting the town's culture and history. The [murals](#) are painted by the Walldogs, a pack of talented artists who bring small cities to life through historically significant street art. Enjoy dinner at [Main Street Supper Club](#) where they have weekly chef specials or try the Main Street burger— locals rave about it. Get a good night's rest at [Super 8 Marshall](#), which will take you right back to I-70 in the morning.



*Martinsville Moonshine Store*

## Outdoor Adventure

The wide-open spaces of ILLINOISouth are perfect for travelers who love to be one with nature. The centerpiece is [Carlyle Lake](#), a 26,000-acre reservoir where you might want to stay the whole weekend. Check out cozy lakeside lodging at [Mariner's Village Resort](#) at Carlyle Lake. Book one of the resort's rustic cabins and kick back on its private porch, complete with a fire pit facing the lake. The cabins also have their own kitchens, good for cooking up your own breakfast feasts; but if you're feeling lazy, simply head to the on-site [Wheelhouse Grille](#). Another choice is to stay in a suite at Mariner's Village Hotel, which has an outdoor pool and complimentary breakfast. Further north on the lake in Keyesport, [Stones Throw Cottages](#) is opening "100 Steps," a cute cottage for two that's exactly 100 steps from the lake, this summer. It's a perfect lodging choice if you like the idea of sipping your coffee on a charming patio.



*American Obstacle adventure park*

### FRIDAY

Plan a trip to the [American Obstacle](#) adventure park in Kinmundy. It's a 45-minute drive east from Carlyle Lake that has zip-lining tracks where you can fly through tree canopies, and an outdoor laser tag area where you can battle it out in the woods. When you've gotten your thrills for the day, have dinner in nearby [Salem](#) on your way back to the lake. Consider [Five Brothers Cafe](#) for comfort food like fried chicken, sandwiches or all-day breakfast. Another option is [Village Garden](#), which serves a variety of cuisine from tacos to lasagna to hamburgers. If a cold beer, perfect steak and overflowing order of fries is more your speed, head to [Quandt's ABC Liquors Inc.](#) Then, rest up at your accommodations on the lake before a full day of water adventures when you wake.

### SATURDAY

Spend your day sailing and fishing on [Carlyle Lake](#). The largest man-made lake in Illinois, it's full of channel catfish, flatheads, largemouth bass, white bass, crappie and bluegill. The area is known for its prevailing winds, so [rent a sailboat](#) (Carlyle Sailing Association will provide a skipper, if you need one), or [rent a pontoon boat](#) for a day of relaxation on the water. Take a lunch break in the neighboring town of [Breese](#), where you can get a killer burger at [Wally's Drive-In](#). That evening, have dinner in nearby St. Rose at [Popeye's Chop House](#) for a juicy steak or daily special like pork chop cordon bleu, or try [Bretz Wildlife Lodge and Winery](#), located just a couple of miles from the lake that features live music on Saturdays from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., plus karaoke nights, a summer concert series and festivals throughout the year. Share a bottle of Kalahari Sunset, the winery's semi-dry blush, with your friends as you savor a surf 'n' turf dinner.



*Carlyle Sailing Association*

### SUNDAY

After breakfast at your cabin or suite (or Sunday brunch at Bretz Winery), make your way north to [Greenville](#) to end your getaway with a dose of adrenaline. [Gateway Skydiving Center](#) is located at the Greenville Airport, where you'll leap from a plane and fall for 45 seconds before you open your parachute, catch your breath and take a bird's-eye view of Carlyle Lake. Whether you're a first-time or experienced jumper, it'll be a dive for the books

## History Explorer

If you're a history lover, the [Kaskaskia-Cahokia Trail](#) is a perfect escape located just outside St. Louis. The trail gets its name from the Illini natives who lived there before the area was settled by Europeans in the 1600s, and the path was the first road used for walking and stagecoach in Illinois by the settlers. Amazing historical stops throughout the county along this route trace the scenic Mississippi River Valley. Our getaway itinerary includes stops in St. Clair, Monroe and Randolph Counties and goes from north to south



History Museum of Monroe County

## SATURDAY

Head south on the Kaskaskia-Cahokia trail to spend your day exploring the historic district of Waterloo. You'll find fascinating stops like [Peterstown House](#)—the only intact inn and stagecoach stop along the Kaskaskia Cahokia Trail—and the [Bellevue House](#), the site of the town's original settlement. At the [History Museum of Monroe County](#), browse the Kueker Collection, which anchors the museum and holds artifacts that represent settlement of the west, agriculture, local commerce and transportation, several wars and more.

Head to [Maeystown](#) for lunch, where you'll be transported to a 19th century German village surrounded by hills. The area was founded by Jacob Maey in 1852, and 60 original structures are still tucked into its landscape, including a stone bridge entry into the village, the church, Maey's log house and Zeitinger's Mill. Adorning the streets are quaint shops and eateries where you can grab a bite to eat in between exploring. Maeystown hosts a variety of seasonal festivals and other events, so consider planning your visit around one like Oktoberfest.

Call it a day back in Waterloo and stay at [Timberwolf Cabin and Chalet](#). A fireplace makes the chalet feel homey and rustic

## SUNDAY

From Waterloo, head south for a stop at [Fort de Chartres](#). It's a partially restored 1700s French fort made of stone, and it houses a powder magazine believed to be the oldest building in Illinois. The fort hosts several large re-enactments each summer.

From Fort de Chartres, drive south to [Chester](#), the home of Popeye the Sailor. The cartoon's creator, E.C. Segar, was born and raised in Chester, and it's presumed he based Popeye on a local bachelor named Frank "Rocky" Fiegel, who was skillful with his fists. Check out the [Spinach Can Collectibles Museum](#) to see Popeye memorabilia dating back to the early 20th century, then grab lunch at nearby [Reid's Harvest House](#) for home-style American food like fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, homemade rolls and roast beef.



Fort De Chartres

Finally, make your way to Kaskaskia Island, located on the west side of the Mississippi River. It's home to the [Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial](#), a 1948 brick building that houses the Liberty Bell of the West, which was rung by villagers to celebrate their liberation from the British in 1778. It's even older than Philadelphia's Liberty Bell and was cast in 1741 by King Louis XV of France as a gift to the Mission of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church at Kaskaskia.

The historic brick Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, originally built in 1843, was rebuilt there in 1894 after a series of floods wiped out the village of Kaskaskia, and it houses many artifacts from the early days of the mission. One such item is a stone altar, built around 1736 and believed to have been brought to Kaskaskia from France by Father Marquette himself, the French explorer and Jesuit missionary priest who founded the mission. The sites on the island can only be reached by a bridge in St. Mary, Missouri, so map your route accordingly.

Share with us stories and photos of your getaway adventures, and explore our [Annual Visitors Guide](#) to discover more family-friendly attractions, historic sites, outdoor recreational opportunities, lodging options and local cuisine in ILLINOISouth.



For more information and things to do, visit [ILLINOISouth](#) and be sure to share your adventure on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) using #ILSouth