

CELEBRATE THE HARVEST throughout the Midwest

By Mira Temkin

Now's a great time to enjoy the glorious bounty of fall. Apple cider, sweet cranberries, and pumpkin EVERYTHING are all in season. So breathe in the crisp, fall air and wander out to a few festivals within a short drive of Chicago. Or, head to Wisconsin, Michigan or Iowa for a weekend getaway and really feel like you've had a fall break. Make your plans now and get set for a great autumn adventure!

Serving Up Fall Fun in Spoon River Country

October 2-3, October 9-10

Start with a colorful drive of spectacular fall colors at the 43rd annual Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive Fall Festival. Located just southwest of Peoria, there are 15 towns participating in the two festival weekends, which cover some 100 miles. Hit the flea markets, discover arts and crafts, antiques, and get a taste of fall favorites from apple dumplings to homemade caramel corn. The Spoon River became nationally known from the work of Edgar Lee Masters, author



Photo courtesy of Bayfield Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce

of the noted Spoon River Anthology. 309-647-8980, www.fultoncountytourism.org, www.spoonriverdrive.org

Siegel's Cottonwood Farm Now through Halloween Crest Hill, IL

With over 20 acres and more than five miles of winding paths, your family is sure to find the perfect pumpkin here. Hop off the leisurely hayride and search through thousands of pumpkins. Climb around Fort Cottonwood and Veggeland, pet the animals or stroll through their Haunted Barn. Admission charge. (800) 304-FARM, www.ourpumpkin-farm.com

St. Charles 25th Annual Scarecrow Festival

October 8 - 10

Each year, more than 100+ hand-crafted scarecrows line the streets of historic St. Charles and you can vote for your favorites! Enjoy live entertainment, great food, children's

carnival, arts and crafts, all along the beautiful Fox River. Make a romantic weekend out of it and stay at historic Hotel Baker or the Pheasant Run Resort. Last year, this annual event was recognized by MSN as one of the country's "Top Spots for Autumn." www.scarecrowfest.com, www.visitstcharles.com

Chicago Country Music Festival

October 8 - 9

If you're not in the mood for a long Sunday drive, then head to the last of the big free festivals in the city, held in Millennium Park this year. Hear some of the best country music north of Nashville on three stages, let the young ones play in the kids' corral and kick up your heels with a little country line dancing in the dance tent. www.explorechicago.org

Long Grove's OktoberFest

October 16 - 17

Come celebrate Long Grove's German heritage at OktoberFest with plenty of delicious ethnic cuisine, dancing, live entertainment and shopping. Experience the old-fashioned fun of a family carriage ride, join in some lively German dancing, let the youngsters decorate their own pumpkins and participate in a variety of children's activities. Stay for beer, brats and lots of OOM-PAH-PAH, traditional German entertainment. www.longgroveonline.com/Oktoberfest

Autumn Harvest Fest in the Wisconsin Dells

October 16 - October 17

If you think the Dells is only for summer fun, you're in for a special treat. This celebration of the harvest season features a crafts fair, farmers market, straw dig, scarecrow stuffing, pumpkin decorating, kid's cookie corner, petting zoo, pony rides and face painting. Enjoy live entertainment and microbrew beer tasting. Free spectator admission and parking. Select activities require fee. www.wisdells.com/attractions/autumn-harvest-fest.cfm

Pumpkin Festival

October 27 - 31

Celebrate Halloween at the Pumpkin Festival in Sycamore, IL, which brings together more than 30 DeKalb County non-profit groups. This year's theme is "Pumpkins Across America," where you can see the Courthouse lawn decorat-



ed with thousands of colorful pumpkins. Stroll through the art and craft shows, a house walk, pie eating contest, carnival, fun fair, race and other events. See the giant parade on Sunday afternoon. www.sycamorepumpkinfestival.com/schedule.htm

For more information about fall fun in Illinois, visit www.enjoyillinois.com or call 800-2CONNECT and make the most out of this colorful season!

A Little Further Down the Road

wAmana Colonies Amana, Iowa

The Amana Colonies have been a landmark on the Iowa prairie for over 150 years - reminding us of a kinder, slower and gentler America. Located 25 miles west of Iowa City, this National Historic Landmark features historic buildings dating to the mid-1850s. Shop for hand-made treasures and antiques, go for wine tasting and visit Millstream, Iowa's oldest micro-brewery. Stop in the museums and show your kids what a general store was like back in the day. Don't miss Oktoberfest, October 1 - 3. www.amanacolonies.com

49th Annual Bayfield Apple Festival October 1 - 3

Discover a spectacle of fall color and quaint harvest decor throughout the small historic fishing village of Bayfield, Wisconsin, located on the shores of Lake Superior. Celebrate the bounty of the season with apple picking, apple cider and wine sampling, ghost walking tours, the lighted Venetian boat parade and the grand parade. While you're there, hop on one of their Apostle Islands cruises. The Bayfield Apple Festival is listed among "Top Ten Autumn Festivals in North America"

and one of Discover Wisconsin's Top Ten Favorite Small Town Festivals. 800 447-4094 or www.bayfield.org

15th Annual Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival October 7 - 10

Enjoy the largest and best lighthouse festival in the country in Alpena, Michigan. Tour the five area lighthouses along Lake Huron via boat and even climb to the top. There's also live nautical entertainment, arts and crafts, food court, family activities and more. www.lighthousefestival.org

Madison County Covered Bridge Festival October 9 - 10

You remember the popular book and the tear-jerker of a movie, "The Bridges of Madison County." Here's your chance to see where it all took place. Located southwest of Des Moines, Winterset, Iowa is the birthplace of John Wayne and George Washington Carver also called it home. This year's festival theme is "Fall in Love with the Bridges" and the festival features guided bus tours to the bridges, free horse-drawn wagon rides to Wayne's house and appearances by Carver as well as other historical figures. See an old-fashioned spelling bee, a belt-buckle auction, live music and an antique vehicles parade. www.madisoncounty.com

65th Anniversary Fall Fest October 15 - 17

This is the "granddaddy" of all Door County festivals, held in Sister Bay, Wisconsin. Enjoy one of the largest weekend celebrations on the peninsula with a parade, arts and crafts fair, food booths, live entertainment, and children's activities. But the real fun is one of the Fest's oldest traditions - the famous Ping-Pong Ball Drop. An astonishing 10,000 Ping-

Pong balls are dropped from the sky on Sunday afternoon, with a one in ten chance of winning a prize from a participating Sister Bay business! www.sisterbaytourism.com

Whatever you do this fall, make the most of the season. Share it with your family and be sure to take lots of pictures to create warm and wonderful memories. ■



Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Dells



Photo courtesy of Bayfield, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce



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