

springfield il travel guide

Springfield, IL travel guide: The capital city of Illinois, Springfield is a treasure trove of history, culture, and natural beauty. Known primarily as the home of Abraham Lincoln, this vibrant city offers a variety of attractions, activities, and delicious dining options. Whether you're a history buff, an art lover, or simply looking to explore a new city, Springfield has something for everyone. This travel guide will help you navigate the must-see sights, culinary delights, and unique experiences that await you in Springfield, Illinois.

Getting to Springfield

Springfield is conveniently located at the crossroads of major highways, making it accessible by car from various locations. The city is approximately 200 miles from Chicago, 100 miles from St. Louis, and 250 miles from Indianapolis. For those preferring public transportation, Amtrak offers train services to Springfield, while several bus companies operate routes to the city.

If you're flying in, the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport (SPI) is located just a few miles from downtown Springfield, providing easy access to the city's attractions.

Where to Stay

When it comes to accommodations, Springfield offers a range of options to fit various budgets and preferences:

- **Luxury Hotels:** For a high-end experience, consider staying at the Crowne Plaza Springfield or the Wyndham Springfield City Centre.
- **Mid-Range Hotels:** The Hilton Garden Inn and the Holiday Inn Express are great options for comfortable stays without breaking the bank.
- **Budget-Friendly Options:** If you're traveling on a budget, consider motels or budget hotels like Super 8 or Days Inn.
- **Unique Stays:** For a unique experience, check out local bed-and-breakfasts or vacation rentals through platforms like Airbnb.

Must-See Attractions

Springfield is steeped in history, particularly associated with Abraham Lincoln, but it also offers a variety of other attractions that cater to different interests.

1. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

The crown jewel of Springfield's attractions, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, provides an in-depth look at the life and legacy of one of America's greatest presidents. The museum features interactive exhibits, artifacts, and immersive displays that tell the story of Lincoln's life, from his humble beginnings to his time in the White House.

2. Lincoln Home National Historic Site

Step back in time with a visit to Lincoln's former residence, which has been preserved as a historic site. Guided tours offer insights into Lincoln's life and the era he lived in. The surrounding neighborhood is also worth exploring, with its beautifully restored homes.

3. Old State Capitol

The Old State Capitol building served as Illinois' government seat from 1839 to 1876. Visitors can tour the historic building, which showcases stunning architecture and offers insights into the political history of the state. It was here that Lincoln gave his famous "House Divided" speech.

4. Illinois State Museum

This museum is dedicated to the natural and cultural history of Illinois. With exhibits ranging from prehistoric fossils to contemporary art, it's a great place for families and anyone interested in the state's rich heritage.

5. Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site

Located in Oak Ridge Cemetery, the Lincoln Tomb is the final resting place of Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary, and three of their sons. The site features beautiful architecture and memorials, making it a poignant place for reflection.

6. Route 66 Drive-In Theater

For a nostalgic experience, catch a movie at the Route 66 Drive-In Theater. This classic venue features double features during the summer months and is a fun way to spend an evening under the stars.

Cultural Experiences

Springfield is not just about history; the city also boasts a vibrant arts and culture scene.

1. Springfield Art Association

For art enthusiasts, the Springfield Art Association offers rotating exhibits, art classes, and community events. It's a great place to appreciate local artists and participate in workshops.

2. Illinois State Fair

If you're visiting in August, don't miss the Illinois State Fair, which features rides, games, food, and concerts. This annual event showcases the best of Illinois agriculture and local culture.

Dining in Springfield

No travel guide would be complete without mentioning the local dining options. Springfield is renowned for its culinary scene, particularly its unique take on traditional Midwestern fare.

1. Chicago-style Deep Dish Pizza

While Chicago is famous for its deep-dish pizza, Springfield has its own local twist. Be sure to visit places like Rocco's or Louie's for a hearty slice.

2. Horseshoe Sandwich

A must-try local specialty, the Horseshoe sandwich consists of an open-faced

sandwich with a choice of meat, topped with fries and a cheese sauce. Local favorites include D'Arcy's Pint and The Deli.

3. Local Breweries

Springfield has a growing craft beer scene. Check out local breweries such as the Buzz Bomb Brewing Company and the Engrained Brewing Company for a taste of Illinois brews.

4. Farm-to-Table Dining

For a more upscale dining experience, consider places like The Inn at 835 or Maldaner's, which focus on fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Outdoor Activities

For those who enjoy the great outdoors, Springfield offers various parks and outdoor spaces to explore.

1. Washington Park

A beautiful green space in the heart of the city, Washington Park features walking trails, gardens, and a playground. It's perfect for picnics, leisurely strolls, or simply enjoying nature.

2. Dana-Thomas House

Designed by the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the Dana-Thomas House is not only an architectural marvel but also surrounded by beautiful gardens. Tours are available, providing insights into Wright's design philosophy.

3. Lake Springfield

For water enthusiasts, Lake Springfield offers opportunities for fishing, boating, and picnicking. The lake is surrounded by scenic trails, making it perfect for hiking or cycling.

Tips for Visiting Springfield

To make the most of your visit to Springfield, keep the following tips in mind:

1. **Plan Ahead:** Some attractions may require advance tickets or have limited hours, especially during holidays or special events.
2. **Check Local Events:** Springfield hosts numerous events throughout the year, so check the local calendar for festivals, concerts, and other happenings during your visit.
3. **Wear Comfortable Shoes:** Many attractions require walking, so wear comfortable footwear to explore the city fully.
4. **Engage with Locals:** Don't hesitate to ask locals for recommendations on dining and attractions; they can offer insider tips.

Conclusion

Springfield, IL, is a city rich in history and culture, offering a diverse range of attractions and experiences for visitors. From the legacy of Abraham Lincoln to vibrant arts and dining scenes, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Whether you're spending a weekend or a week in Springfield, this travel guide will help you make the most of your trip and discover the unique charm that this city has to offer.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the must-see attractions in Springfield, IL?

Must-see attractions in Springfield include the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, the Illinois State Capitol, and Lincoln's Home National Historic Site.

What is the best time of year to visit Springfield, IL?

The best time to visit Springfield is during the spring (April to June) or fall (September to November) when the weather is mild and the natural scenery is beautiful.

Are there any outdoor activities to enjoy in Springfield, IL?

Yes, visitors can enjoy outdoor activities such as walking or biking along the trails at Washington Park, exploring the gardens at the Springfield Botanical Gardens, and visiting the beautiful Lake Springfield.

What are some local dining options in Springfield, IL?

Local dining options include Cozy Dog Drive In, known for its corn dogs, and the iconic Maldaner's Restaurant, which offers farm-to-table dishes and a historic atmosphere.

Is there public transportation available in Springfield, IL?

Yes, Springfield offers public transportation through the Sangamon Mass Transit District, which provides bus services throughout the city.

What events or festivals take place in Springfield, IL throughout the year?

Springfield hosts several events and festivals, including the Illinois State Fair in August, the Route 66 Motor Tour, and various cultural events at the Springfield Art Association.

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