

THE IOWAN

**3 EPIC FALL
ADVENTURES**

**GERMAN PRISONERS
IN IOWA DURING
WORLD WAR II**

**THE MONARCHS
HAVE ARRIVED**

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EPIC FALL ADVENTURES

These scenic routes through some of the state's rural gems yield the best of fall — stunning views of hills and valleys, active outdoor pursuits, fresh produce, and sips at local wineries and breweries.

Written and Produced by Beth Eslinger



Full color above historic downtown McGregor. Photo by Brian Abeling

EAST BLUFFS FOR NATURE BUFFS

Steeped in Native American culture and surrounded by limestone bluffs, some reaching 500 high, the rivers and maple-studded woods of Northeast Iowa strike a stunning note in fall. Along the Mississippi River and surrounding area, hikers, boaters, birders, and paddlers find plenty to explore. Foodies, too, will discover delights, thanks to the dairy-rich lands and rich locavore culture.

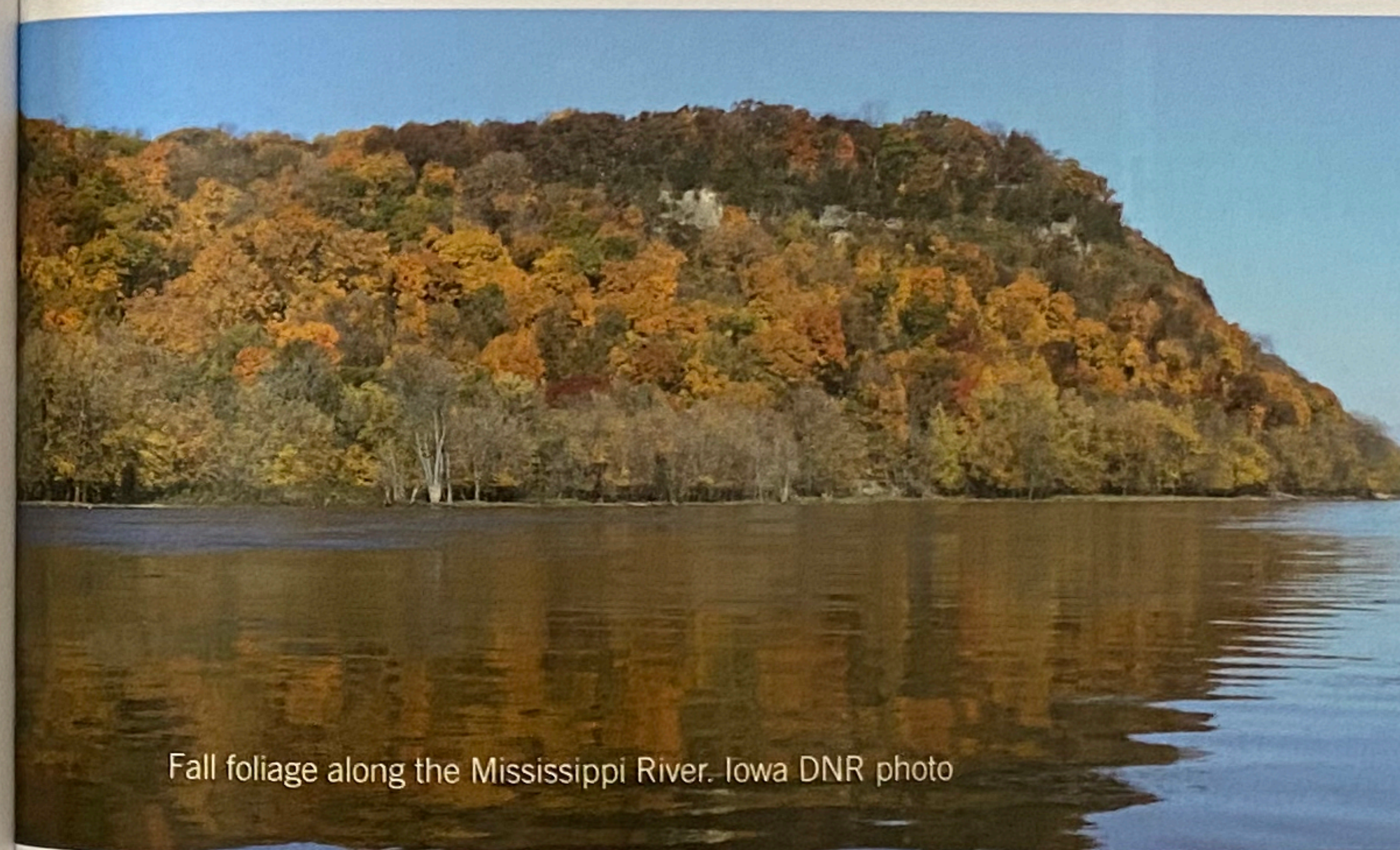
Effigy Mounds National Monument, just north of historic downtown McGregor, is a must-visit for any fall traveler. Sited on the Mississippi, hikers can explore the leaf-covered native burial mounds in animal shapes such as bears and swallows. Constructed by the prehistoric Mound Builders, the 200 structures are sited throughout the park's 14 miles of trails; the visitor center, operated by the National Park Service, provides insights into the culture, flora, and fauna.

If great fall trekking is on your bucket list, nearby Yellow River State Forest serves up 45 miles of trails through the hilly Driftless area terrain. In the Paint Creek unit, you can hike, mountain-bike, or horseback ride to a fire tower and bluff lookout points. The Yellow River coursing through the park serves up recreation as well, including paddling and fly-fishing for trout. And if your idea of a fall float is a bit more relaxed, rent a pontoon or houseboat to cruise the Mississippi through S&S Rentals in Lansing (they rent fishing boats, too). Boaters can cruise the entirety of Pool 9, soaking in the views of the blazing bluffs, and stopping at sandbars for one of the most relaxed days ever. After the tour, stop by downtown Waukon's Steel Cow gallery for farm-theme art by Valerie Miller, graphic Iowa T-shirts at Epic Wear, and fresh curds or ice cream at WW Homestead Dairy.

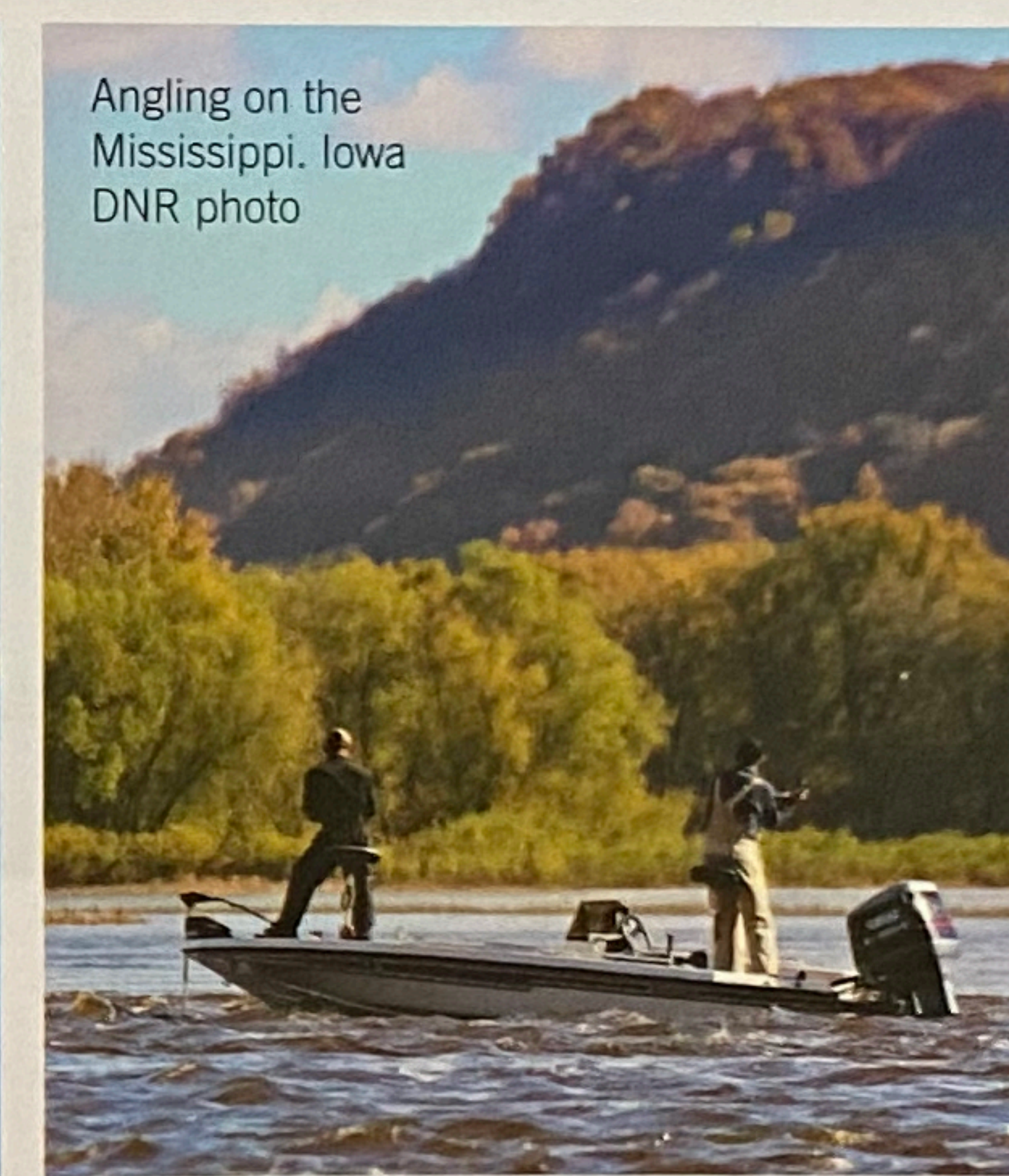
Sited on a farm between Waukon and Decorah on Highway 9, Empty Nest

Winery pours up to 6 free samples at their rustic-chic space. Buy a bottle of rich French Silk red or a flight of Iowa brews to enjoy outside at their rural retreat. Kids love playing games such as Connect Four and snacking on free popcorn. Nearby in Decorah, esteemed Toppling Goliath draws Midwesterners and beyond with its award-winning IPAs, stouts, and limited editions. Take a tour, enjoy a pint, and try loaded chips or pizza and their new casual taproom just outside of town. Pulpit Rock Brewing Company also crafts ciders, IPAs, and sours from their intimate space near the Luther College campus.

Downtown Decorah charms with independent bistros, casual restaurants, and local shops (cooking, bookstores, boutique clothing, yoga studios). Start your day touring the Heritage Park at the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum. Stop by the gift shop for classic Norwegian sweaters, kitchenware, and



Fall foliage along the Mississippi River. Iowa DNR photo



Angling on the Mississippi. Iowa DNR photo

other Scandinavia specialties. Stroll downtown to find tasty eats: healthy, fresh options at Oneota Community Food Co-op; tasty pizza at Mabe's or High, Wide & Handsome Pizza; light salads and sandwiches at La Rana. Rent a bike (find several options in town) to cruise the Trout Run Trail along the Upper Iowa River, or book a canoe or kayak rental to meander through the clear green-blue waters and limestone cliffs of the Upper Iowa.

On the way into the Northeast corner, take time to make a few stops for more unique experiences. Located on the eastern edge of Fayette County, the picturesque town of Clermont lives large with architecture and natural beauty. Stop for photo ops of the town's limestone churches, the rippling Turkey River, and Montauk State Preserve, the Larrabee family home from 1874 to 1965 (Larrabee was the 12th governor of Iowa).

Perched within an hour of the Driftless region, Fredericksburg makes a perfect stopping point for wine and a farm tour. At Hawkeye Buffalo Ranch, you can take a tractor-driven wagon to feed the friendly bison. Pick up jerky or summer sausage for your tour. Also in town, Engelbrecht Family Winery and Vineyards grows its own grapes and offers dry reds and whites as well as sweeter varietals, plus overnight stays in their bed and breakfast.

JUST STOPPING BY

Lucky for us, Iowa is a stopping point on the monarchs' big fall migration to Mexico

Photography and Text by Brian Abeling



The annual migration of the monarch butterfly is one of the largest of its kind. Their ultimate destination is Michoacan, Mexico.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service named Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City one of five super stops in the country. This means that huge numbers of these monarch butterflies spend time here and the surrounding areas.

Each fall since 2006, the refuge has held a Monarch Madness day, where volunteers help catch and tag hundreds of monarchs. This year, the event is scheduled for Saturday, Sep. 14.

So, why are the monarchs attracted to the Neal Smith refuge? It's because of their prairie restoration project, where thousands of acres now have native plants that attract monarchs. They particularly like the sawtooth sunflowers (the yellow flowers in the photos). These can grow from 4 to 7 feet tall and provide the monarchs with nectar and lodging for the evening.

Although monarchs can be seen from May through October, their numbers peak from mid- to late-September.

Learn more about the refuge at fws.gov/refuge/Neal_Smith or at [@nealsmithnwr](https://twitter.com/nealsmithnwr)



