



PRESS RELEASE

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Illinois Tourism Plays Matchmaker with 390-Mile Blind Date Road Trip for New Digital Campaign

CHICAGO – Illinois Office of Tourism coordinated a blind date for two strangers, both first-time visitors to Illinois, to explore everything the state has to offer while on a road trip together. Nashville resident, Sam Butts – 27, and South Florida native, Brittany Carel – 23, were selected to go on a 390-mile adventure across Illinois and discover what makes Illinois amazing. The Blind Date Road Trip is the focus of Illinois Tourism’s new summer digital advertising campaign running through the end of June. [Watch the video here.](#)

During a weekend in May, Sam and Brittany experienced the best blind date spots across the state including scenic waterfalls and wineries in Starved Rock country, Abraham Lincoln history in Springfield and ziplining at Aerie’s Resort in Grafton along the Great River Road. “Never having been to Illinois before, all I really thought about when I heard ‘Illinois’ was Chicago,” said Sam Butts. “When we ventured outside the city to begin our journey, I never imagined everything Illinois has to offer.”

Both Sam and Brittany agree the locals they met throughout their blind date weekend made a lasting impression. “Everywhere we went people were so friendly and outgoing,” says Brittany. “How proud everyone was about what they had to offer – that energy is contagious, that’s what makes you want to go back!”

Here are the Top 10 Blind Date Spots in Illinois:

- **Chicago Riverwalk** located in the heart of downtown Chicago and known for scenic walking paths, waterfront restaurants, and architectural river tours.
- **The Gemini Giant** – found along the historic Route 66 in Wilmington is the perfect first date selfie spot at the entrance of Launching Pad Drive-In diner.
- **Polk-A-Dot Drive In** off Route 66 in Braidwood that offers a nostalgic 1950’s dinner date theme along with statues of stars Marilyn Monroe and Elvis for a fun photo opportunity.
- **Starved Rock State Park** along the Illinois River is an idyllic spot in Illinois to watch a sunset due to seasonal waterfalls, sandstone canyons, and tree-covered bluffs.

- **Illinois Sparkling Co. Tasting Room** in Utica is one of the most notable wine sampling locations in the state known for their Extra Brut that offers notes of pear and lavender.
- **Old State Capitol Building in Springfield** may not be what most would think of for a first-date spot, but with its expansive history and politics in action when legislature is in session it is sure to be the setting of an unforgettable day for a couple.
- **Obed & Isaacs Microbrewery** in Springfield is known for its locally crafted beer and outdoor patio filled with games and twinkling lights make it a memorable date spot.
- **Grafton Zipline** at Aerie’s Resort would make any date one to remember with its breathtaking views during a sky soaring adventure.
- **Pere Marquette State Park** is the largest state park in Illinois at 8,000 acres. With seemingly endless wooded trails, scenic bluffs, and the rustic stone-and-timber Pere Marquette Lodge, the park offers endless possibilities for adventure on a first date.
- **Grafton Harbor** where the Illinois River and Mississippi River meet is known as the “Key West of the Midwest” featuring a floating swimming pool and the Big Kahuna Bar and Grill –tons of options for a romantic day of fun.

So, what’s next for this young couple?

Visiting so many fun-filled attractions in Illinois in one weekend provided the pair with a lot of time to get to know each other while traveling. “It felt like I’ve known him for years,” says Brittany. “We had a lot in common between hobbies, family life, and lifestyle habits – he made an amazing road trip partner!”

Both Sam and Brittany are not only hoping to visit Illinois again soon, but also each other. “We talk every day,” says Brittany. “We’ve been wanting to see each other again ever since the trip ended!” The couple recently reunited in Nashville for the first time since their road trip.

To watch Sam and Brittany’s 390 Mile Blind Date Road Trip, visit EnjoyIllinois/Roadtrip-Adventure.com
 To download photos of Brittany and Sam during their Illinois Blind Date Road Trip [click here](#).

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.