Celebrate Irish Heritage

Full-day itinerary – From Lemont to LaSalle

Soak up the charming small-town atmosphere of three distinctive communities along the I&M Canal while discovering the history of the Irish immigrants who built the vital passageway.

Start your tour in Lemont

WHERE TO PARK

Park near St. James at Sag Bridge, 10600 S. Archer Ave., Lemont, IL 60439. There is free parking available at the church. Learn more about this historic church and environs when you visit the website.

St. James at Sag Bridge – 630/257-7000

Begin your visit to Lemont at St. James at Sag Bridge Church and Cemetery. Here you will see a beautiful limestone Roman Catholic Church constructed in the 1850s on a hill above Archer Avenue. The parish was founded in 1833 by Irish canal workers, many of whom are buried in its adjoining cemetery. A rough log cabin served as the first church building and was located directly on the original Indian trail, which later became Archer Avenue.

Consecrated in 1837, the St. James at Sag Bridge Cemetery contains the graves of numerous Civil War veterans. The limestone Stations of the Cross lining the church and cemetery walkway were constructed in the 1920s and donated by parishioners in memory of deceased family members. The land on which both the church and cemetery are situated was purchased and later donated by two early Irish settlers, John Sullivan and James Murphy. Their direct descendants are still active parishioners today.

Continue on to downtown Lemont

WHERE TO PARK

Park downtown on the street or adjacent to the I&M Canal. There is parking available in several village lots such as the Waterworks Parking Lot, located immediately east of Stephen Street and north of the I&M Canal; and the Lemont Street Lot, located at the north terminus of Lemont Street at the canal. Four-hour on-street parking is offered from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday at numerous locations, including Lemont Street, from Illinois Street to the I&M Canal; Front Street; and Main Street, from Stephen Street to Fremont Street.

Lemont’s impressive church spires and cozy neighborhoods rise on the bluffs above its downtown and three waterways – the narrow I&M Canal, the wide and bustling Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, and the marshy Des Plaines River.

Shop, dine, and enjoy Lemont’s 19th century architecture or walk its 5-mile canal trail segment. Observe the native yellow limestone in Lemont’s canal walls, its scenic hills, and vibrant downtown businesses. Chicago’s famed Water Tower owes its construction to the tons of yellow stone shipped to Chicago by canal from Lemont.

The many public art displays found downtown tell compelling stories from the community’s history. Be sure to see the large mural at Budnik Plaza on Stephen Street and mosaics throughout the downtown depicting Lemont’s quarrying past. You’ll also see the life story of local aviator Rudy Kling depicted in the “Pride of Lemont” mural on Front Street.
Lemont's compact and walkable village center is a charming oasis offering numerous boutiques, unique shops, excellent dining, and a new wine store and event venue – Bottles, located at 439 Talcott Ave. Lemont also boasts a popular new brewpub, Pollyanna Brewing Co., 431 Talcott Ave., offering trivia nights, live music, tours, and other events, in addition to their fine lineup of four flagship beers and seasonal brews.

Check out the exhibits, library, and gift shop of the Lemont Area Historical Society and Museum, located at 418 Main St. Situated on the south side of downtown in Lemont’s historic Old Stone Church, a building which once served as a recruiting station during the Civil War, the Museum is open five days a week. The Historical Society offers walking tours of downtown Lemont.

**Lemont Area Historical Society and Museum** – 630/257-2972

**WHERE TO EAT**

- The Vault Café & Bar, 308 Canal St., 630/312-8380
- Sweetwater Deli, 316 Canal St., 630/243-7210
- StoneHouse Pub, 103 Stephen St., 630/257-1300
- Old Town Restaurant, 113 Stephen St., 630/257-7570
- Front Street Cantina Lemont, 319 Front St., 630/312-8636

**Drive on to Utica**

**WHERE TO PARK**

Park in one of the lots at Starved Rock State Park, Ill. Rte. 178, Utica, IL 61373. Check the Park website for hours and other visitor information.

**Starved Rock State Park** – 815/667-4726

Enter the park from Ill. Rte. 178 across the Illinois River, about a mile south of Utica. There is free parking available in numerous lots inside the park.

Start your Starved Rock adventure with a stop at the Visitor’s Center, located along the Illinois River area in the main park. Take advantage of the interactive displays and exhibits conveying the story of the park's cultural and natural history. Watch free videos on the park, obtain hiking maps, browse the Le Rocher Bookstore, and much more.

Also located here is Trailheads Snacks & Souvenirs, a great place to purchase everything from gifts and souvenirs to sandwiches, ice cream and snacks. They offer a wide selection of Starved Rock hoodies, ball caps and tee shirts for outdoor lovers of all ages. In addition, Trailheads carries walking sticks, rain gear, water bottles, and coffee mugs.

Continue your visit to Starved Rock State Park at the Lodge, which offers family educational programs, “Tribute to the Stars” shows, year-round trolley tours and guided hikes to see beautiful canyons and seasonal waterfalls. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the welcoming Lodge boasts the largest two-sided stone fireplace in the state.

A must-see on your trip to Starved Rock, the Lodge features relaxing rooms and cabins, an amazing in-house restaurant known for its Sunday Brunch, and an outdoor Veranda with a stunning view. Enjoy live entertainment and a refreshing drink at the full-service Back Door Lounge.
Starved Rock State Park attracts more than 2 million visitors annual to its breathtaking collection of rivers, streams and valley trails winding through dramatic sandstone canyons. Starved Rock features 13 miles of hiking trails, campgrounds, numerous waterfalls, and Illinois River access. A hike to the top of a sandstone butte or a peaceful stroll to explore any of the park’s 18 incredible canyons will leave you with a memorable experience.

Drive north on Ill. Rte. 178 into downtown Utica.

**WHERE TO PARK**

Park near the LaSalle County Historical Society Museum, 101 E. Canal St., North Utica, IL 61373. Visit the Museum website for hours, admission fees, and other visitor information.

LaSalle County Historical Society Museum – 815/667-4861

Headquartered in an old stone warehouse used during the canal era, the Museum features exhibits primarily centered on LaSalle County history. Explore the Museum’s extensive campus, which includes a Canal Warehouse, Heritage Center, Blacksmith Shop, and One-Room School House.

Shop for quality antiques, collectibles, vintage and handmade items, as well as artisan and homegrown products at the seasonal Canal Market. This weekly, open-air market is sponsored by the Historical Society and held at the corner of Mill and Clark streets on the Museum grounds. Check online for dates.

**WHERE TO EAT**

Duffy’s Tavern, 101 Mill St., 815/667-4324
Canal Port, 148 Mill St., 815/667-3010
Skoog’s Pub & Grill, 155 Mill St., 815/667-5800
The Bistro at The Willows Hotel, 325 Clark St., 815/667-3400
Nonie’s Bakery & Cafe’, 522 Clark St., 815/691-5002
Cajun Connection, 897 E. U.S. Hwy. 6, 815/667-9855
(Located about 1 mile east of the intersection of Ill. Rte. 178 and U.S. 6)

End your tour in LaSalle

**WHERE TO PARK**

Free parking is available at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, 725 4th St., LaSalle, IL 61301.
St. Patrick’s Catholic Church – 815/223-0641

Step inside the first church established in the Illinois Valley and the oldest living parish church in Illinois. St. Patrick’s Church was first conceived in 1838 to minister to Irish-Catholic immigrants working on the I&M Canal. The parish outgrew its original log church and construction of the current limestone building began in May 1846. Completed in 1848, the same year that the I&M Canal opened, the church was designed and built by Patrick Joseph Mullaney. The magnificent building was consecrated on April 11, 1853.
WHERE TO PARK
Park in the lot at St. Vincent Cemetery, 2990 St. Vincent Ave., LaSalle, IL 61301.
St. Vincent Cemetery – 815/223-0494  Alternate address: 371 N. 2979th Rd., LaSalle

The first person buried in what local residents refer to as “the Irish cemetery” was Sister Vincentia on July 21, 1857. The cemetery was named after her. Also buried in St. Vincent’s is the first priest to die in LaSalle, Rev. M.L. O’Reilly, who was buried on May 3, 1867.

WHERE TO PARK
Park in the lot for the LaSalle Canal Boat, two blocks south of downtown LaSalle, where Ill. Rte. 351/Joliet Street crosses over the I&M Canal. Purchase tickets online or at Lock 16 for the boat ride. Tours run May through October. Visit the online calendar to see available dates.
LaSalle Canal Boat – 815/220-1848

Free parking is available in the lot immediately south of the I&M Canal. Turn west off of Ill. Rte. 351/Joliet Street into the parking lot.

Step aboard the LaSalle Canal Boat and enjoy the scenery and relaxation of a mule-pulled ride on the historic Illinois & Michigan Canal. “The Volunteer” is a 76-foot-long, 70-passenger boat docked in downtown LaSalle, only 5 miles from Starved Rock State Park. Have fun learning a little history as lively period-dressed guides tell the stories of the I&M Canal Passageway.

Every boat trip begins with “Mule Tending 101” as the guides introduce passengers to their intrepid canal mules, Joe and Moe. The Captain regales everyone with tales of life on the canal while his deckhands guide the vessel a mile up the canal to the Little Vermillion aqueduct and back. Mary Todd Lincoln has been known to ride the boat, knitting in the corner and sharing fantastic stories of her time in the nation’s capital with President Lincoln.