

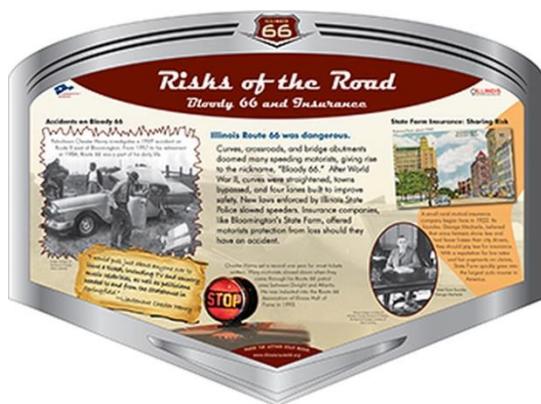


## Bloomington, Illinois Community Profile Overnight Itinerary



Thanks to a land donation of 60 acres by county proponent, James Allin, Bloomington, county seat for McLean County, was born. Bloomington's first plots sold at auction on July 4, 1831. North Bloomington, renamed Normal in 1865, was first laid out in 1854. Today the Twin Cities have over 130,000 residents in one of the most prosperous communities in Illinois. State Farm Insurance National Headquarters are located there as well as Beer Nuts Brand Snacks, a national snack company.

In 2015, the Cruisin' on Route 66 with Abraham Lincoln themed visitor center opened in the first floor of the McClean County Museum of History. Since opening, Bloomington Normal has seen a surge in tourism, sharing their Route 66 and Abraham Lincoln history with visitors from around the country and the world.



### The Risks of the Road

Illinois Route 66 was dangerous. Curves, crossroads, and bridge abutments doomed many speeding motorists, giving rise to the nickname, "Bloody 66." After World War II, curves were straightened, towns bypassed, and four lanes built to improve safety. New laws enforced by Illinois State Police slowed speeders. Insurance companies, like Bloomington's State Farm, offered motorists protection from loss should they have an accident.

### State Farm Insurance: Sharing Risk

A small rural mutual insurance company began here in 1922. Its founder, George Mecherle, believed that since farmers drove less and had fewer losses than city drivers, they should pay less for insurance. With a reputation for low rates and fair payments on claims, State Farm quickly grew into the largest auto insurer in America.

## ATTRACTIONS



### [McLean County Museum of History](#)

The museum is located on a public square in the heart of the historical Bloomington Central Business District in the Old McLean County Courthouse, an American Renaissance style structure built between 1901-1903. Both the district and the courthouse are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Award winning exhibits guide visitors through the county's history, including Making a Home, Farming in the Great Corn Belt, and Abraham Lincoln in McLean County. The Pioneer Discovery gallery is a hands on experience very popular with kids and adults. The museum also has one of the finest genealogical reference libraries in the country.

200 North Main Street, Bloomington  
(309) 827-0428

[McLean County Museum of History Official Website](#)



### ["Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66" Visitor Center](#)

The Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66 Visitors Center is located on the ground floor of the nationally accredited, McLean County Museum of History on Route 66 at Main and Washington Streets on the Museum Square in Downtown Bloomington. The Visitors Center serves as a gateway - the only one of its kind in the area. Discover the history of travel along the road through an interpretative exhibit and shop for unique gift items local to the area. A large kiosk allows visitors to explore the community and plan their next stop on Route 66. Visitors can also "Get Busted on 66", with a photo op in the county jail cell with paid admission to the Museum.

200 North Main Street, Bloomington

(309) 827-0428

["Cruisin' with Lincoln on 66" Visitor Center Official Website](#)



[Ryburn Place \(formerly Sprague's Super Service\)](#)

This Tudor-Revival building houses an information center and gift shop. It opened in 1931 to serve travelers on Route 66. It housed a café, gas station, and garage, with upstairs apartments for the owner and station attendant. Now owned by the Town of Normal, it is on the National Register of Historic Places, is a Town of Normal Local Landmark, and is in the Route 66 Association of Illinois Hall of Fame. 305 Pine Street, Normal

(309) 452-5325

[Ryburn Place Official Website](#)



[David Davis Museum State Historic Site](#)

Also called Clover Lawn, this Victorian home was built in 1872 for U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Davis. In his early days, Davis rode the circuit with Abraham Lincoln. As president, Lincoln appointed Davis to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Davis Mansion served as a focal point for the social, cultural, and political life of Bloomington. Today, it is operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

1000 Monroe Drive, Bloomington

(309) 828-1084

[David Davis Mansion State Historic Site Official Website](#)



### [Grady's Pizza](#)

In 1959, James and Mary Grady created a recipe for a pizza with a sweet sauce that we are now famous for today. In 1982, the business was passed onto Jack & Bev Grady. They started a Family Fun Park with the same recipe for success; "If you keep the quality, you will keep the customers." – James Grady.

Today these same family values and recipes go into each and every "World Famous Grady's Pizza"

1501 Morrissey Drive, Bloomington

(309) 662-3333

[Grady's Pizza Official Website](#)



### [Grady's Family Fun Park](#)

Bloomington-Normal's premier Entertainment Center is nestled behind Grady's Pizza, where it all started in 1959 serving their "World Famous Pizza". The Fun Park has developed into a 5.5-acre entertainment center offering a wide range of attractions for all age groups. Race around in one of the race car themed go-karts, cool off in the bumper boats with water blasters, and bump around in bumper cars equipped with laser tag.

1501 Morrissey Drive, Bloomington

(309) 662-3332

[Grady's Family Fun Park Official Website](#)



### [Children's Discovery Museum](#)

Explore, imagine, create and play with three floors of unique, hands-on, larger than life exhibits; climb into the two-story lucky climber; join in the fun of new exciting educational programs and shop at the "Discover More!" store.

101 East Beaufort Street, Normal

(309) 433-3444

[Children's Discovery Museum Official Website](#)



### [Miller Park and Zoo](#)

The park features a restored 1906 pavilion, lake, war memorials, and a preserved steam locomotive, coal car, and caboose from the Nickel Plate Railroad. The zoo has an indoor tropical rain forest that houses exotic birds and an outdoor exhibit with a tiger, red wolves, snow leopards and more.

1020 South Morris Avenue, Bloomington

(309) 434-2250

[Miller Park and Zoo Official Website](#)



### [Beer Nuts Factory and Company Store](#)

In 1937, Edward Shirk took over Caramel Crisp confectionery store in downtown Bloomington. One of their products was called “Redskins,” glazed peanuts with their red skins intact. The name changed to “Beer Nuts” in 1953 when the Shirks began packaging the nuts for the National Liquor Stores in Bloomington. The company moved into their current processing plant in 1973. The plant includes a public company store with nuts and souvenirs. A video tour of the plant is also available.

103 North Robinson Street, Bloomington

(309) 827-8580

[Beer Nuts Factory and Company Store Official Website](#)



### [Historical Normal Theater](#)

The theater has been completely restored to its original condition when it opened in 1937. The first theater designed for sound films; today it shows classic films and hosts live theater and music.

209 North Street, Normal

(309) 454-9722

[Historic Normal Theater Official Website](#)



### [Bloomington Center For The Performing Arts](#)

Home of the American Passion Play and stage to a wide variety of many dance, music, and theatre performances. The unique structure houses the best entertainment.

Take the insightful Behind the Curtain Tour and learn the history of the unique foundation. Visit their website for details.

600 North East Street, Bloomington

(309) 434-2777

[Bloomington Center For The Performing Arts Official Website](#)



### [Grossinger Motors Arena](#)

Grossinger Motors Arena is a premier venue for entertainment and recreation. The arena hosts a variety of sporting events, concerts, ice shows, conferences and more.

101 South Madison Street, Bloomington

(309) 434-2843

[Grossinger Motors Arena Official Website](#)



### [First Steak 'n Shake](#)

In the 1920's Gus and Edith Belt owned a Shell Gas Station in town. They attached a dining room and began selling "Shell Chicken". Gus quickly realized that area had enough chicken restaurants; and changed his line to steak burgers and the first Steak 'n Shake was born in 1934. Now the location is a Monical's Pizza.

1219 South Main Street, Normal

(800) 433-8226



### [Avanti's Italian Restaurant](#)

Established in 1971 and known for their home-style pasta, pizza, salads, sandwiches and their famous trademark is fresh Italian bread. Located right on Historic Route 66.

407 South Main Street, Normal

(309) 452-4436

[Avanti's Italian Restaurant Official Website](#)



### [Evergreen Memorial Cemetery](#)

Founded in the early 1820's, this historic cemetery is nestled in the heart of Bloomington. The 87-acre cemetery begins with a simple entrance, winding avenues, towering trees and an elaborate mausoleum. The cemetery is a wonderful example of preservation, culture and tradition in Central Illinois. It is the resting place of famous figures and ordinary people. People like former Vice President Adlai Stevenson, Revolutionary War soldier David Haggard and niece of L. Frank Baum, Dorothy Louise Gage, basis for the character Dorothy from his book The Wizard of Oz. There are two sections dedicated to children, three areas dedicated to veterans. Today, Evergreen Memorial Cemetery captures the imagination of the visitor and may be swept away by the quality which one might call the essential spirit of the place.

302 East Miller Street, Bloomington

(309) 827-6950

[Evergreen Memorial Cemetery Official Website](#)



### [Prairie Aviation Museum](#)

Features a collection of preserved aircraft, revolving aviation exhibits and memorabilia, and a mini-theatre. Exhibits include a Bell Sea Cobra, Huey Helicopter, and F-14 Tomcat. The museum's DC-3 Flagship is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

2929 East Empire Street, Bloomington

(309) 633-7632

[Prairie Aviation Museum Official Website](#)



### **[Gene's Dairy Delight](#)**

Gene's is known for their amazing soft serve cones and the Avalanche. This has always been a favorite family stop on Route 66!

1019 South Main Street, Bloomington

(309) 829-6022

[Gene's Ice Cream Official Website](#)



### **State Farm Downtown Building**

State Farm was founded by G. J. Mecherle to provide automobile insurance to farmers. State Farm was inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame on June 10, 1995. This original Art Deco building is still in operation. Photo opportunity only; not open for public tours.

112 East Washington Street, Bloomington



### **[Tobin's Pizza](#)**

Established in 1963, Tobin's is known for its not-too-thick, not-too-thin crust pizza. The red-ripe tomato sauce and buttery cheese create an unforgettable dining experience.

1513 North Main Street, Bloomington

(309) 828-0410

[Tobin's Pizza Official Website](#)



### [Casey's Garden Shop](#)

Originally a market that helped feed locals and Route 66 travelers, this family business is now a full-service florist and garden center that has served the surrounding area since 1949. Casey's was inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame on June 12, 1999.

1505 North Main Street, Bloomington

(309) 828-1424

[Casey's Garden Shop Official Website](#)



### [Lucca Grill](#)

Lucca Grill was established in 1936. Customers can enjoy delicious thin-crust pizza as they appreciate the ornate tin ceiling and antique mahogany bar.

116 East Market Street, Bloomington

(309) 828-7521

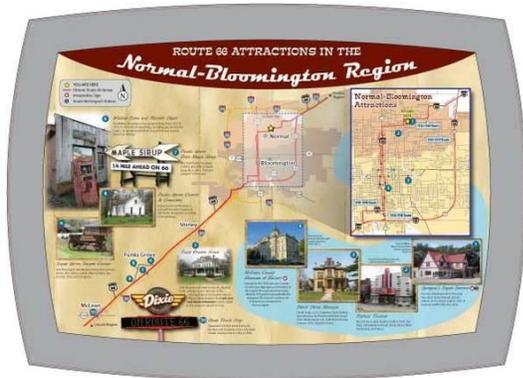
[Lucca Grill Official Website](#)

### [Quinn's Shell Station](#)

The Quinn family owned and operated this full-service gas station for more than 70 years. The station was inducted into the Illinois Route 66 Hall of Fame just a few years before the Quinns retired. While it is closed today, it remains a drive-by attraction with original memorabilia displayed in the windows.

802 North Main Street, Bloomington

(800) 433-8226



## [Normal- Bloomington, Illinois Route 66 Wayside Exhibits and Experience Hub](#)

### **Route 66 in Normal - Bloomington**

#### **Serving the Route 66 Traveler**

When Route 66 was born, businesses sprang up to serve the needs of new motorists. Early filling stations were simply gas pumps outside a store. Later canopy roofs were added over the pumps. Eye-catching architecture in the 1930s attracted growing numbers of cross-country travelers with gas, mechanical service, maps, and home-cooked food.

#### Service Station Architecture

You are standing near Sprague's Super Service. Built in 1931 in the Tudor Revival style, this gas station, diner, and home was designed to blend in with the surrounding neighborhood.

In the mid - 1930s, oil corporations hired famous architects to create modern-style gas stations. Walter Dorwin Teague crafted a streamlined box design used for more the 10,000 Texaco stations, including Quinn's Texaco on Main Street in Bloomington built in 1941.

Fill 'er up! How's the Food? Got a Room?

Streid's gas station, restaurant, and motel (now demolished) offered "one stop" services in the early 1950s when Route 66 followed the Beltline. Its "Streamlined Spanish" architectural style was typical of exuberant Mom and Pop businesses in the 1950s.

#### First Steak 'n Shake

In 1934, Gus Belt turned his Shell gas station on Main Street in Normal into a restaurant featuring his signature "Steakburger." Today there are over 500 Steak 'n Shake locations. The original building on Route 66 is now a pizza restaurant.

[Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Interpretive Exhibits Official Website](#)

## **MAJOR EVENTS**



### **3<sup>RD</sup> Sunday Market**

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday May through October

From May to October, thousands of Midwestern collectors clear their calendars to shop the 3rd Sunday Market, an event devoted exclusively to the finest in antiques, collectibles, crafts, and garden.

Interstate Center 2301 W Market St, Bloomington

(217) 202-2847

[3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Market Official Website](#)



### [Historical Normal Theater Events](#)

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[Historic Normal Theater Official Event Calendar](#)



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101 South Madison Street, Bloomington

(309) 434-2843

[Grossinger Motors Arena Official Events Calendar](#)

[Bloomington-Normal Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Events Calendar](#)

## AMENITIES



### **Bloomington-Normal Area Convention & Visitors Bureau**

Bloomington-Normal Area CVB

3201 CIRA Drive, Suite 201

(309) 665-0033

[Bloomington-Normal Convention and Visitors Bureau Official Website](#)



[City of Bloomington Official Website](#)



[Town of Normal Official Website](#)

## [Bloomington Normal Accommodations](#)



### [The Chateau Bloomington Hotel & Conference Center](#)

Stay at the most unique hotel in the area. They are close to where you need to be— Route 66! Enjoy the charming character of The Chateau, where unique architectural details create a distinctive ambiance. The warmth and elegance of The Bloomington Chateau makes this the preferred address for visitors to the area.

1601 Jumer Drive, Bloomington

(309) 662-2020

[The Chateau Bloomington Hotel and Conference Center Official Website](#)



### [Holiday Inn Express](#)

1031 Wylie Drive, Bloomington

(309) 820-9990

Come stay at our Bloomington West hotel and enjoy premium amenities that include a heated indoor pool and whirlpool spa and a complimentary hot breakfast. Start planning your next Illinois vacation or business trip now at our Bloomington West hotel which offers great hotel room deals.

[Holiday Inn Express Official Website](#)

## [Bloomington Normal Dining](#)

## [Bloomington Normal Shopping](#)

[CLICK HERE Bloomington Normal Google Map](#)



**Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway**

700 East Adams

Springfield, IL 62701

(217) 525-9308

[info@illinoisroute66.org](mailto:info@illinoisroute66.org)

[www.illinoisroute66.org](http://www.illinoisroute66.org)