

I Love Rockford

I love Rockford. And not because I work at the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, and it's my job to say that. I really do love the Rockford Region.

This past summer I traveled throughout the Midwest promoting our community. I was in big cities, smaller cities, rural communities and out of the way locations. Nowhere else could I find a community with as many great amenities as we have here in the Rockford region. From restaurants, museums, golf courses, gardens, cultural events, beautiful parks, bike paths, walking paths, a state park and even a river – not one community had it all EXCEPT Rockford, Illinois.

Enjoy Downtown and the Arts

I love that we have a city market every Friday from summer until mid-fall where I can listen to music, meet friends, buy fresh produce, eat dinner and sample delicious pastries and desserts. I can come downtown to Davis Park and watch movies with my family for free! Winter brings the BMO Harris Winter Wonderland, the only ice rink of its kind in the world. Yes...right here in Rockford.

Rockford Art Deli opened recently on First and State, with a new art gallery, Collect, on the second floor of the same building. Mendelssohn purchased the First Presbyterian Church, expanding our Cultural Arts Corridor. Community and professional theater thrives in our community with plenty of venues to showcase our local talent from Starlight Theatre, Pec Playhouse, Coronado Performing Arts Center and Maddox Theatre.

I love that we have creative entrepreneurs shaping our downtown scene and that The Rockford Area Arts Council is committed to making arts accessible to everyone, including school children. I love that Fatally Unique is from Rockford.

Visit our Museums and Monuments

I love the Historic Auto Attraction Museum where "history meets entertainment." This museum is home to the Mayberry RFD police car, the station wagon from the movie Vacation, a piece of cake from John F. Kennedy's 45th birthday and wax figurines of world leaders – and so much more.

At the Burpee Museum of Natural History I can see Jane, a fully restored 21-foot dinosaur skeleton; the only juvenile T-rex dinosaur in the country. I can also experience one of the COOLEST exhibits ever – Rick's Picks: A Lifelong Affair With Guitars & Music. It's all here in Rockford.

Did you know Forbes Magazine ranked Discovery Center as one of the top children's museums in the country? I love it! Or that Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum is haunted and "Ghost Hunters" from the Syfy network popped in to investigate?

Midway Village tells a story of our early settlers with over 100,000 artifacts dating back to the 1830s. The Ethnic Heritage Museum is committed to keeping our immigrant story alive with rooms devoted to our Polish, Italian, Lithuanian, African American, Irish and Hispanic immigrants.

From Music to Food

I love that we have a symphony – the third largest in the state – and a dance company. In fact there is live music almost every night of the week at places all over the region including Charlotte's Web, Kryptonite and Franchesco's. Plus, the Coronado Performing Arts Center and BMO Harris Bank Center bring top-notch, nationally recognized performances to our region.

I can meet friends for coffee at Restoration Café, Katie's Cup, Mary's Market or any of the other nearly 200 original, locally owned restaurants in this region. I love that great chefs live and work in our community, and that it is hard to decide where to eat on an evening out.

Head Outdoors

I can golf at some of the finest golf courses in the United States; kayak or canoe on the river; bowl at one of the many exceptional bowling centers; take out some aggression at a batting cage at Volcano Falls; or stroll one of our seven Great Gardens. I can snowshoe or cross country ski, run through trails at Rock Cut State Park and ride my bike on the Perryville or Sinnissippi paths.

Our parks are well maintained and a showcase for our region. When I travel people tell me that they have been to Rockford for a soccer/baseball/softball tournament and our parks and people are so nice. I love that kids have a free, safe place to stay during the day in the summer thanks to our park district.

The Speedway, known as “Mid-America’s finest racetrack,” is celebrating its 65th year of operation. I love their trailer races, bus races, monster trucks and more. Some of the events have even been shown on Speed Channel’s “On the Edge” series. Want to take an adventure? Rent a motorcycle at Kegels Harley Davidson – the oldest Harley-Davidson dealership still in the same family.

Culturally Diversified

I also love that Rockford is a culturally diverse community. Did you know that there are more than 35+ languages spoken in the Rockford Area schools? I love that our community has a monument to peace, the Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza, and monuments to remember and commemorate those who have served our country.

Ethnic festivals and fairs abound from early summer to late fall. From Festa Italia, Polish Fest, Black Family Reunion to Greek Fest, Oktoberfest, Cinco de Mayo to Irish Fest, Midsommer, Hispanic Heritage Festival the music, dancing and food celebrate cultural diversity.

So Much More

But most of all, I love that this list did not even put a dent in all the things there are to do. Don’t believe me? Check out the calendar at www.gorockford.com. Find what you love most about our region and share it with us on our Facebook page, take a picture on Instagram or even send a tweet with #gorockford.