

Walk or toll in Lincoln's foot



Hist

**Abraham Lincoln's tomb
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield (r)**

Photos by Charles Pannell

otsteps in



Historic Springfield

by Candy B. Harrington

Located just a short drive from St. Louis, Springfield, IL is a great destination for history buffs, as it was once home to Abraham Lincoln. Although access can sometimes be a bit tricky at historic venues, gladly that's not the case in Springfield. In fact, thanks to a very progressive attitude among local business people, most of

Old Illinois state capitol



the Lincoln sites in this Illinois capital city are accessible.

A stroll through history
Located in the heart of downtown Springfield, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum is the best place to start your Springfield tour. This cornerstone attraction features 40,000 square-feet of gallery space devoted to the history, life and politics of our sixteenth presi-

dent. Through the use of interactive displays and special theatrical effects, visitors actually become part of Lincoln's life; as they follow him from his boyhood Kentucky home to Ford's Theater in Washington D.C.

Access is excellent throughout the museum, with a level entrance, barrier-free access to all of the galleries and accessible restrooms. Accessible park-

ing is located in a nearby garage, with an accessible pathway to the museum.

Set aside several hours for your visit, as there's lots to see in this excellent museum.

Besides the state-of-the-art video presentations, don't miss the Treasures Gallery which includes Lincoln's stovepipe hat, his glasses and shaving mirror and a handwritten copy of the Gettysburg Address.

After you leave the museum, stroll through the downtown

area, with a stop at the Old Capitol. The historic building is located just a few blocks from the museum, and the downtown area is fairly level with good sidewalks and curb-cuts.

Although the front entrance of the Old Capitol is graced with steps, alternative access arrangements have been made. A sign advising disabled visitors to ring the bell for assistance is located near the entrance. After the bell is pressed a docent emerges to



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www.alplm.org/home.html

Old Capitol
(217) 785-7960
www.illinoishistory.gov/hs/old_capitol.htm

The Lincoln Home
(217) 492-4241
www.nps.gov/liho

Lincoln's Tomb
(217) 782-2717
www.illinoishistory.gov/hs/lincoln_tomb.htm

SMTD Historic Sites Bus
(217) 522-5531
www.smtd.org

Springfield Convention &
Visitors Bureau
(217) 789-2361
www.visit-springfieldillinois.com



escort wheelers to a lift in back. Once inside, there is elevator access to both floors, as well as the lower parking garage.

The Old Capitol, which served as the seat of Illinois government from 1839 to 1876, was frequented by Mr. Lincoln, both as a lawyer and a politician. Most notably, it was where he delivered his famous



“house divided” speech. Today the rooms are furnished as they were in Lincoln’s time; and visitors can take a peek at the Supreme Court, the Law Library, the Treasurer’s Office and Representative Hall. Best of all, there’s no admission charge to this stately building.

For a fun walking tour, stop by the Union Station Visitors

Center and pick up the *Here I Have Lived* map. This self-guided tour highlights 30 interpretive sites throughout town, that illustrate how Lincoln was affected by local places and events. You can pace yourself and do as little or as much of it as you want.

Lincoln slept here

Operated by the National Park Service, The Lincoln Home is a must-do on any Springfield visit. Not only is the home restored, but so is the surrounding neighborhood. There's no charge to tour the home, but you must pick up a ticket in the Visitors Center.

Although there are steps at the front entrance of the home, a lift is located in back.

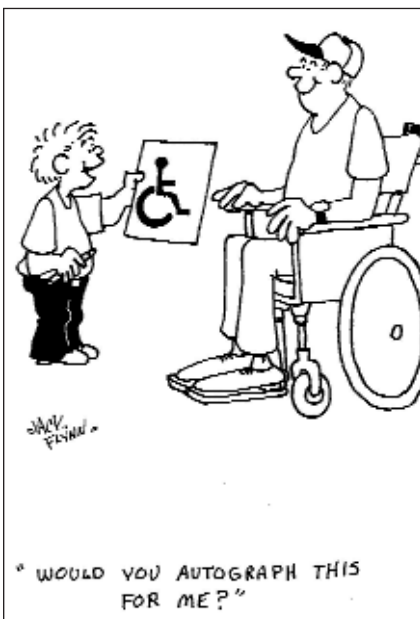
Wheelchair-users can tour the first floor, which includes the

two parlors, dining room, sitting room and kitchen. Access to the second floor is by stairway only, but a photo album is available for those who cannot make the climb.

Outside, there are boardwalk sidewalks throughout the neighborhood; with the Arnold House and the Dean House open for self-guided tours. Both homes have displays, models, interpretive exhibits and photographs inside. The Dean House features lift access up to the porch, while the Arnold House has ramp access through the side gate.

The Great Emancipator's tomb

Of course, you can't visit Springfield without the obligatory stop at Lincoln's Tomb. Located outside of the downtown area in Oak Ridge Cemetery, the tomb serves as a monument to the Great Emancipator, as well as the focal point of more than a few ghost stories.



There is level access to the tomb, with accessible parking just a short walk away. And if you don't have your own car, you can ride the Springfield Historic Sites Bus, which stops near the entrance. This wheelchair-accessible bus runs every 30 minutes and stops at most of the major Springfield attractions. Plus with day passes priced at just \$3, it's a very affordable way to get around. Before you go visit

www.EasyAccessSpringfield.org. A project of Open Doors Organization, the website is slated to go live this spring, and will contain detailed access information on hotels, restaurants and attractions in the city. A print access guide will also be published later in the year.

*Candy Harrington is the author of Barrier Free Travel: A Nuts and Bolts Guide For Wheelers and Slow Walkers, available from Specialiving.**



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