



DAY TRIP TO KASKASKIA

From Chester · Randolph County, Illinois



Photo: Charles Houchin, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0

VILLAGE OF 21

A village of 21 people at the 2020 census. The bell memorial is open daily, per the Illinois DNR page read October 2026, and the DNR announced its 55th July 4 ceremony there for 2025.

Kaskaskia is a short, odd trip: cross into Missouri to reach a piece of Illinois. See the Liberty Bell of the West in its memorial, walk around the outside of the church, and look at the old river channel at the St. Mary bridge on the way in. Nothing on the island sells food or fuel that we know of, so plan meals in Chester or St. Mary.

A SAMPLE DAY

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Morning | Leave Chester over the Mississippi bridge into Missouri and drive up Route H to St. Mary. |
| ☐ Morning | Cross the old river channel on Old Channel Road and stop to look at the creek that was the Mississippi until 1881. |
| ☐ Late morning | The Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial and the church beside it. |
| ☐ Midday | Drive the island roads, then back to Chester for lunch. |

The memorial is open from sunrise to sunset, so any time of day works.

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- **The church and the memorial.** The red brick spire against a big sky over flat fields.
- **The old channel.** From the bridge, the narrow creek that was once the Mississippi.



USGS topographic map, 1915 (public domain). The ring and pin mark the town.

DAY TRIP ESSENTIALS

DRIVE	18 mi, about 40 min each way from downtown Chester. From St. Louis: 78 mi, about 1 h 42 min.
HOURS	Kaskaskia Bell State Memorial: sunrise to sunset daily, self-guided tours only (Illinois DNR, read October 2026).
ADMISSION	The DNR page lists no fee.
CONTACT	DNR office, (618) 859-3741.
JULY 4	The state holds an Independence Day ceremony at the memorial. The DNR's notice for 2025 set it for 1 p.m., with a food stand from 11 a.m., and asked visitors to bring chairs.
FOOD AND WATER	None listed on the island. Bring water.
THE CHURCH	The Church of the Immaculate Conception is a parish church; we found no posted visiting hours. See it from outside.
WATCH FOR	High water. The island is in the Mississippi floodplain.
WEBSITE	dnrhistoric.illinois.gov/experience/sites/site.kaskaskia-bell-memorial.html

BEFORE YOU GO

- Check the status with the land manager before you go; conditions change.
- Keep out of unstable buildings and off fenced ruins.
- Leave artifacts where they lie. Removing them can be a crime.
- Carry water, a paper map and a charged phone; signal is often poor.

Coordinates 37.92139, -89.91639 · 37°55'17"N
89°54'59"W

Full guide abandonedtowns.com/illinois/kaskaskia/

Directions [Google Maps](#)

Details checked October 2026. Hours, prices and access change: confirm before you go.