



Aurora Area

37 miles west of Chicago
2 days / 1 night itinerary

All Aboard: Train Enthusiasts' Tour

Day 1

Calling all conductor, brakemen, and engineer enthusiasts to discover the historic roots of trains in the Aurora Area. Your tour begins with a stop in Batavia at the Depot Museum that was the 1854 Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (CB & Q) Depot originally at Webster and Van Buren streets. The interior of the Depot is preserved much as it looked when passengers stopped at the window to seek information or to buy a ticket for a ride to a nearby town.

Batavia railroad history comes alive in a permanent exhibit about the CB&Q (est. 1850), the Chicago & North Western Railroad (est. 1872) and the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin Electric Line (est. 1902). Three railroad lines served Batavia freight and passenger service until the mid-1900's when the automobile ran the rails out of town. View authentic railroad artifacts, photos and real ticket agent office. Try your hand at sending messages via Morse Code. The Depot Museum was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Shop at the Museum store before boarding for the Roundhouse.



Next Stop: the Aurora Roundhouse

The Aurora Roundhouse, built in 1856 after Aurora was chosen as the site for a major car building and repair shop by the CB&Q. The CB&Q became the largest railroad operating in Illinois with over 9,300 miles of track. In 1974, the Aurora shops closed and within a few years were demolished, with

Michelle R. Glosser, Group Sales Director | AURORA AREA CVB | 630-897-5581 | michelle@enjoyaurora.com

the exception of the original roundhouse structure. The roundhouse lay empty until 1995 when Walter Payton, NFL Hall of Famer, and current owners Scott and Pam Ascher redeveloped the facility into its current ultimate dining and entertainment complex. The Aurora Roundhouse is the oldest existing limestone roundhouse in the nation and also listed on the National Historic Registry. After visiting the transportation center where commuters jump on the Chicago-bound Metra, enjoy dinner and freshly made award-winning microbrews at America's Historic Roundhouse, visit the Museum, or enjoy the music in the outside courtyard with a roaring fire in one of many outside fireplaces.

Depart: For the hotel

Day 2

The following morning, enjoy a hot, hearty breakfast in the Comfort Suites antique-train themed breakfast room. Catch a piece of history from the rails of the CB&Q.

Next Stop: Lyon Farm

Lyon Farm in Yorkville where you will see the original CB&Q caboose built in the Aurora shops in 1918. The caboose was used on the Fox Line for 56 years and moved to its current home in 1974. While visiting Lyon Farm, you'll also see the Plano Depot built in Chicago and hauled to Plano on flatcars in the 1850s. It, too, was built by the CB&Q in the gothic style architecture. The depot was used until 1914 when the new depot was built. It was moved to Lyon farm in 1978.

Enjoy lunch inside "Isabella" Number 4438, A Pullman Palace Car who made her debut at the Chicago's World Fair in 1893. With her wicker, mahogany, velvet and crystal, a Pullman Palace car very well could have seated visiting royalty from anywhere in the world. When the fair ended, the car was employed by Burlington to serve as one of only four cars on the line's Cracker Flyer "The Pride of the Burlington." Now home in Sandwich, Illinois as part of the Kelly's Pub and American Grill, patrons may enjoy this bit of history in the comforts of the historic dining car.

End your journey here or continue with additional options such as:

*Union Depot Railroad Museum Mendota, Illinois. Mendota is an Indian name meaning crossing of the trails. In 1853 the Illinois Central Railroad and Chicago & Aurora Railroad crossed at this junction called Mendota. (Chicago & Aurora became the C,B & Q in 1858.)

*Illinois Railway Museum Union, Illinois. IRM is America's largest railway museum and is probably the ultimate railroad historian special interest group. Originally formed to preserve one important piece of rolling stock, it has evolved into an educational and historic preservation organization recreating possibly the largest operating demonstration railroad showcase on the North American continent.

*Rochelle Railroad Park Rochelle, Illinois. Come watch where the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the Union Pacific historically crossover. Today these two railroads daily haul millions of tons of merchandise on at least 80 to 90 trains a day through Rochelle in a 24-hour period. This has made Rochelle a "hot spot" for train watching, drawing visitors from every state in the nation and world wide. Also on display at the Train Park is the Whitcomb Locomotive. Whitcomb locomotives were produced for over 40 years in Rochelle at what is today a pre-stressed concrete plant on east 5th Ave. Over 5,312 locomotives were built and shipped all over the world. In 1906 Whitcomb produced the first successful gasoline locomotive in the world and they were shipped to southern Illinois coal mines where they operated for two years before switching to electric engines. The firm later produced 2,054 diesel locomotives ending production in Rochelle in 1946. The firm also manufactured the Partin-Palmer automobile from 1915 to 1919 in Rochelle. The City has acquired a 1915 model that is on display in the City and Town Hall museum.

Add on a second night in Aurora before running the rails of the Metra Burlington Commuter train into Chicago!

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