

Gateway GTO Cruises to Crown Ridge Tiger Sanctuary

By Dan Jackson



On Saturday, October 27th, Gateway members met in Columbia, Illinois, to begin our cruise to Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. We departed from Columbia at 8 a.m. and the weather was very cool and foggy. Luckily the rain held off all weekend. We followed Bluff Road which is a very scenic route despite the hazy conditions.

Our first stop was at Fort De Chartres in Prairie Du Rocher. Fort de Chartres was a French fortification first built in 1720 on the east bank of the Mississippi River in present-day Illinois. It was used as an administrative center for the province. The posted opening time was 9 a.m. However, we arrived to a locked front gate. A few cruise participants explored the perimeter and scaled exterior walls to gain entry. They soon found a park employee who unlocked the front gate. We toured the fort and on-site museum.

After departing the Fort, the haze lifted and the sun was out the remainder of the day. Our original plan was to cruise to the Modoc Ferry and cross the Mississippi River on the ferry. Unfortunately, it was shut down due to high river levels. Our detour took us across the Mississippi on the Chester Bridge in Chester, Illinois. From there we cruised north to Ste. Genevieve and stopped for lunch in downtown Ste. Genevieve at the Audubon Bar & Grill.

After lunch we headed for the Crown Ridge Tiger Sanctuary.





The sanctuary is an awesome facility with overnight accommodations that have beautiful bluff views. We all partook in a tiger tour to hear more about the sanctuary and the tigers. We learned where the tigers were rescued from, how they are trained and cared for at the facility.

Then we were off to the Crown Valley Winery to relax with a glass of wine. We all sat on the back patio and conversed until it was dinner time. We cruised on to 12 West Bar & Grill in Farmington, Missouri. After a great dinner we all cruised back to our hotels where some called it a night and others decided to stay up a bit longer.

On Sunday morning we awoke to sunny weather and met at the Huddle House in Ste. Genevieve for breakfast before we all departed for our trips back home.