

ILLINOIS ATTRACTIONS GEAR UP FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

New Attractions Opening Throughout the Year for Group Tours

Chicago, IL (October 28, 1999) – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism is excited to announce several new attractions for the group tour market for the year 2000, some of which are already being launched and accommodating motorcoach groups. In Illinois, the new Millennium will offer many changes in destinations as well as new attractions and exhibits for group tours.

Illinois CVBs, tour operators and cities have created myriad new attractions and events, including:

Three motorcoach tours which have been designated by American Pathways 2000

Two events which were named the ABA's Top 100 Events in North America

New exhibits which are appearing throughout the state

New attractions which are opening around the state

Partnership programs that have brought together a variety of attractions within Illinois' cities

American Pathways 2000

Three Illinois motorcoach tours, "Secrets and Songs on the Road to Freedom," "Immigrants and Ingenuity in Illinois' Northwest Passage" and "Passport to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor" were recently picked with more than seventy other U.S. tours to be a part of the American Pathways 2000 program. The program is part of the White House Millennium Program, which was created to encourage the development of American cultural heritage tourism.

"Secrets and Songs on the Road to Freedom" traces the steps of more than eight million African Americans who were brought to this country as slaves. Their journey to freedom is chronicled through their music, their trips along the Underground Railroad

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and their fight to be free. The tour departs from St. Louis and in five

days and four nights travels to Memphis, Sikestown Mo., Cairo and Marion Ill., Alton, Ill., and ends in Springfield, Ill., home of Abraham Lincoln who emancipated slaves. For more information on this tour call 800/264-8884.

“Immigrants and Ingenuity in Illinois’ Northwest Passage” celebrates the rich immigrant heritage of northwest Illinois from the historic homes of Presidents Grant and Reagan to the rich Dutch culture. The tour begins at Apple River and travels throughout Illinois to Belvidere, Cedarville, Dixon, Freeport, Fulton, Galena, Grand Detour, Hanover, Lena, Oregon, Poplar Grove, Prophetstown, Rockford, Savanna, Sterling-Rock Falls, Tampico and Warren in four days and three nights. For more information on this tour call 815/489-1666.

“Passport to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor” introduces participants to the unique heritage of the Illinois and Michigan Canal and the impact the area had on the growth of America, from Native Americans to French fur traders. The tour begins in Chicago at Navy Pier, which marks the mouth of the Chicago River, the gateway to the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. The tour then follows the canal trail from Chicago through Joliet, Ill. and Lockport, Ill. For more information on this tour call 800/926-2262.

Award-Winning Events:

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism is thrilled that the American Bus Association has recently named the Morton Pumpkin Festival and the St. Charles Scarecrow Festival Top 100 Events in North America. The Top 100 program annually recognizes events in the U.S. and Canada which appeal to groups traveling by motorcoach as well as to the general public. The Morton Pumpkin Festival is scheduled for September 13-16, 2000 and celebrates the coming of fall. The St. Charles Scarecrow Festival is scheduled for October 13-15, 2000 and has an annual display of more than 100 hand-crafted scarecrows, a crafts fair and the famous “Autumn on the Fox Arts and Crafts Show.” For more information on Morton call 800/747-0302. For more information on St. Charles call 800/777-4373.

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New Exhibits:

Chicago’s museums have many things coming up for the remainder of 1999 and into 2000. The Chicago Historical Society invites groups to travel back in time through exhibits and live “Voices from History”

performances. There are a variety of upcoming exhibits including Go West!, which features an era when Chicago was a major railway hub; That's Good News!, which tells the story of gospel music through the father of the genre, Thomas A. Dorsey; and Norman Rockwell: Pictures for American People, the first major Norman Rockwell exhibit in 30 years.

Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry will celebrate an ethnic Christmas with an enchanted forest of trees decorated by the city's diverse ethnic groups. And new in 2000, the Field Museum is proud to present the Dead Sea Scrolls, on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority some for the first time outside of Israel. Also at the Field Museum in 2000 will be Sue, the most complete and best preserved T. rex ever discovered and Star Wars: The Magic of Myth, showcasing original effects from the famous movie trilogy.

Outside Chicago in the Quad Cities, the John Deere Pavilion has announced the opening of its new exhibit, The Future of Agriculture, which features interactive stations, which teach visitors about agriculture in the new Millennium. The exhibit features touch screen displays on "World Populations," "Sustainability," "Biotechnology" and "Precision Farming." For more information call 309/765-1000.

New Attractions:

In Illinois, one of the greatest attractions for the group tour market is the Gateway City of Chicago. Known for its rich culture, Chicago adds the new Shakespeare Theater to its already impressive list of performance venues. Located on Navy Pier and scheduled to open in October 1999, the theater is created in the Shakespearean style, where actors and audience are just feet apart, creating a vibrant theatrical performance. The inaugural year will include performances of Antony and Cleopatra, A Midsummer Night's Dream, All's Well That Ends Well and Romeo and Juliet. For groups who take in

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a performance at the theater, a behind-the-scenes tour of this one-of-a-kind design theater can be arranged. For more information call 312/595-5678.

There is no better way for groups to see the mighty Mississippi River than to travel alongside it on foot, or on the seat of a bicycle and Illinois' new Great River Trail is just the place to start. Scheduled for completion in Fall 2000, the trail will be a 62.5 mile stretch of hard surface bike path that will run from the Quad Cities, Ill., to Savanna, Ill.

taking visitors through three counties and 11 municipalities and both urban and rural settings. The Great River Trail provides a one-of-a-kind journey for bicyclists and walkers of every age, for families and individuals alike. For more information call

309/793-6300.

New Partnerships:

Two of Illinois CVBs have brought together the attractions in their communities and created two unique destination partnerships. In Rockford, motorcoach tours are invited to "See the World in Three Days." Rockford destinations representing France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the U.S.A are joined in this unique passport program. Visitors who "travel the Rockford world" can savor ethnic cuisine, tour an Italian village, experience Japanese gardens, explore Swiss cottages, enjoy an English tea or shop for the world's best gifts on their trip. For more information call 815/963-8111.

In Lake County motorcoach tours can embark on a day of site seeing when they take the "Country Roads of Lake County" tour. The tour features four popular area attractions: the Cuneo Museum and Gardens, historic Long Grove Village, the Lake County Museum and Quig's Orchard and Country Resort as well as lunch along the way. For more information call 847/662-2777. While in the area, families can make a stop at the all-new Rinkside Sports facility in Gurnee Mills. This ultimate family fun spot offers a national Hockey League size arena with public skating sessions, skating lessons, interactive games, Laser Tag, Soft Play, a variety of rides and a family restaurant. For more information on Rinkside Sports, call 847/856-1064. Also in Lake County, from July 17-23, 2000, one-hundred and fifty of the world's best women golfers will converge

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On the Merit Club in Libertyville, Ill. for the 55th Annual Women's Open. At the event, tours can watch the highest caliber of competition and remarkable play and enjoy this, the largest yearly celebration of women's golf, all in Illinois.

Team Illinois, the motorcoach tour marketing organization for the state of Illinois, is working to develop excellent partnerships and encourage group travel to the state. Illinois is gearing up for an excellent year 2000 and beyond, with a wide variety of new attractions and new twists on the old which promise to make it an exciting time for travel to

the Midwest.

For more information, or to plan an Illinois group tour or trip, call an Illinois travel counselor at 1-800-524-0790 or visit our group tour Web site at www.enjoyillinois.com

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), Bureau of Tourism works to enhance the economic development climate for the citizens of Illinois.

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