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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES New "Make it Illinois" Program

Special travel packages and hotel, theater and other discounts
are available to encourage fall travel in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD -- Governor George H. Ryan today announced a new marketing program designed to stimulate tourism statewide. "Make it Illinois" allows consumers to choose from a variety of travel packages--from as low as \$49.00--and receive great discounts on hotels, restaurants, theater tickets, and more.

"In the recent weeks, one of the hardest hit sectors of the Illinois economy has been the tourism industry," Governor Ryan said. "By visiting the many events and attractions that our great state offers, residents will help stimulate the economy while taking time out to enjoy life."

The value-oriented fall campaign, headed by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism (DCCA/IBOT), will run throughout October and will include advertising in newspapers throughout Illinois and in St. Louis. The state industry-wide effort aims at encouraging people to travel in Illinois to reconnect with family and friends and experience one of the nation's best fall forecasts.

"Tourism is big business in Illinois, providing significant tax and economic benefits for both the state and local communities," said DCCA Director Pam McDonough. "By going out and participating in the 'Make it Illinois' campaign, Illinois citizens will be supporting this statewide industry."

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A "Make it Illinois" micro-site on the state's tourism Web site, www.enjoyillinois.com, has been designed to help consumers find out more about the "Make it Illinois" special values. Consumers are also encouraged to call an Illinois travel counselor at 1-800-2CONNECT and ask for "Make it Illinois" specials.

"Make it Illinois" special values and discounts will include accommodations, restaurants, attractions, and shopping. Among the highlights are a 50 percent discount on tickets for "The Full Monty" and "South Pacific" now playing in Chicago; buy one get one free dinners at Bambina's in Aurora; 20 percent off all antique and estate jewelry at Main Street Antiques in Freeport; and buy one miniature golf round or go kart ride and get the second free at Collinsville's Gateway Fun Park.

In a show of support for Illinois tourism, this weekend, Lt. Governor Corinne Wood plans promote "Make it Illinois" with visits to the Long Grove Apple Festival, the Mexican-American Fine Arts Museum and Art Institute in Chicago, and the Wildlife Prairie Park in Peoria.

Members of the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association, Illinois Restaurant Association, Illinois Council of Convention and Visitor Bureaus, the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, The Chicago Office of Tourism and Visit Illinois loaned support to this statewide effort to continue to strengthen Illinois's tourism industry.

"With 'Make it Illinois,' travelers can find dozens of ways to explore all that Illinois has to offer this fall while taking advantage of some very attractive values," said Cathy Ritter, deputy director of DCCA's Illinois Bureau of Tourism. "The lineup of fall values is unprecedented--there are more than 200 fall travel packages, from \$49 and

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up, as well as discounts on everything from world-class entertainment to charming, off-the-beaten-path experiences."

A major partner in this effort, the City of Chicago has also launched a "Make it Chicago" program to emphasize the travel opportunities and special values that are available in the Windy City. "Make it Chicago" is designed to help consumers experience all of the great activities Chicago offers and find special values on Chicago hotel stays. With first-class offerings, including the only U.S. showing of "Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South" at the Art Institute, "Make it Chicago" highlights some of the best at the best prices. Visitors can find out more about the Chicago values by calling toll-free 877-CHICAGO or by visiting Chicago's Web site at www.877chicago.com.

From Chicago's Magnificent Mile to the endless miles of scenic byways, there is no shortage of places where visitors can reconnect with family and friends this fall. For more information about the new "Make it Illinois" special values and discounts, to receive complete information on exciting things to do and see this fall throughout Illinois, or to request a copy of the new seasonal travel magazine *Illinois NOW!*, call an Illinois travel counselor at 1-800-2CONNECT or visit the Bureau of Tourism's Web site at www.enjoyillinois.com.

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