

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **THE MAGIC OF ILLINOIS' HOLIDAY SEASON**

**CHICAGO** (November 12, 2001) -- From lights festivals to cultural celebrations to unique shopping opportunities, Illinois has all of the trimmings for a perfect holiday getaway.

### **UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR IN CHICAGO**

The Windy City kicks off the holiday season with **Chicaglo**, a series of winter activities, including lights festivals and cultural fairs, running from October to January. Children's imaginations can run wild at the **Gingerbread Fantasy Factory** at the **Chicago Children's Museum** through January 2. Watch little bakers operate gears, cranks and levers as they make their own special gingerbread creation. For more holiday fun, visit **Navy Pier's Winter Wonderfest** from December 15 through January 6 where families can enjoy a holiday circus, large-scale inflatable games and a special visit with Santa and his elves.

Wish upon a shooting star and maybe you will see Mickey Mouse at the Greater North Michigan Avenue Association's **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Magnificent Mile Lights Festival** on November 17. The parade features Disney characters and a light show, along with a special appearance by Santa and Mrs. Claus. Extend your holiday stay and enjoy a festive weekend as the city bustles with activity including, ice carving demonstrations and caroling.

Also during Chicaglo, holiday revelers can experience several cultural events, such as **Christkindlemarket** at the **Daley Plaza**. This festival runs November 22 through December 20 and features German food, gifts, ornaments and toys, replicating the Nuremberg market. On December 1 and 2, the **Swedish American Museum** presents **Julmarknad**, which features the traditional Lucia festival of lights procession, along with Scandinavian folk dancing. The **DuSable Museum of African-American History** offers the opportunity to celebrate **Kwanzaa** with festive programming and exhibits running throughout December.

Visitors should not miss the chance to tour the **Museum of Science and Industry's Christmas Around the World and Holiday Lights**, featuring the Robert Lesser Collection of Robots from November 16 through January 6. Take a trip around the globe and view 45 shimmering Christmas trees each representing a different culture and heritage. Next, check out more than 200 robots and toys that date from the pre-war era. Extend your holiday visit to **Marshall Field's** on

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State Street. This year, Marshall Field's magical holiday window displays tell the classic story of "The Night Before Christmas," a holiday favorite sure to enchant the whole family.

To help travelers take advantage of all the exciting holiday happenings, the new "**Make it Chicago**" program offers deals and discounts at more than 35 hotels, plus a tempting selection of \$20.01 pre-fix menus at more than 75 restaurants. Also offered through "Make it Chicago" are discounts on popular theater productions and attractions throughout the city.

## **SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO CHICAGOLAND**

From November 23 through December 23, young and old travelers alike will have a jolly good time at the **Brookfield Zoo** during **Holiday Magic**. Special holiday happenings include, hands-on activities, ice sculpting, storytelling and caroling to the animals.

For a spectacular display of lights entwined with flora and fauna, visit the **Chicago Botanic Garden's Festival of Lights, Flowers and Music** from November 23 through January 6 in **Glencoe**. Holiday cheer is in the air at this magical floral landscape with more than 750,000 lights, botanic displays, ice sculpting, carriage rides and storytelling for children.

Visitors to **Long Grove's Countryside Christmas** will feel as if they're in the 1800s as the entire historic village returns to its Victorian roots for the celebration. From November 23 through December 24, visitors can dine with Santa, sample a Nutcracker tea or take a carriage ride. For country crafts, visit **St. Charles' Christmastime in the Barn** from December 7 through 15 and choose from pottery, jewelry, beadwork, basketry and paintings.

The **Polar Express & Yuletide Celebration** at **Aurora's Blackberry Farm's Pioneer Village** on December 15 and 16 will enchant youngsters and adults alike. Return to the Victorian days for a traditional Christmas party and sit down for a re-telling of the popular yuletide favorite, *The Polar Express*.

The holiday express leads to **Dickens in Dundee** from November 30 through December 2. This Charles Dickens-inspired celebration offers family fun, carriage and sleigh rides, ice carving, breakfast with Father Christmas, and a Fezziwigs Ball where families can re-live the delights of *A Christmas Carol*.

## **NORTHERN LIGHTS**

Set the holiday aglow with a getaway to Rockford's **Holiday Festival of Lights**, December 9 through 26, and while in the area, stop at the **Sinnissippi Forest Christmas Tree Farm** in **Oregon** to select the perfect fresh-cut tree. The farm bustles with activity from November 23 through

December 23 as families enjoy horse-drawn wagon rides and a visit with Santa Claus.

Another popular Northern Illinois holiday spot is the **Belvidere Hometown Christmas Festival** on December 7 through 9. After watching the parade on Saturday, travelers can stroll by the “living windows” with holiday scenes, then take a horse and buggy ride or sample some of the delicious holiday sweets.

A short drive away, **Christmas at the Ellwood House** in **De Kalb** combines a season of good tidings and old-fashioned customs on December 2 through 4 and 7 through 9. Visitors can enjoy live holiday music, a craft bazaar and a special visit from Santa Claus in this 1879 Victorian mansion.

Return to nature for the **Trolley Christmas Light Tour** in **Utica** from December 21 through 23. Marvel at the bright holiday lights that glisten and illuminate the astounding beauty of the LaSalle-Peru area. Snuggle all the way to the Starved Rock State Park Lodge where you can warm up with hot cocoa, cider and cookies.

## **WINTER WONDERLAND IN WESTERN ILLINOIS**

**East Peoria** glows brightly every year during the **Festival of Lights**. This year, November 24 through December 31, travelers will be delighted with breathtaking views while driving through an illuminated park and watching a spectacular holiday parade, complete with a fireworks show, an enchanted snow-covered forest and a narrated Nativity scene. Afterwards, find all the holiday trimmings nearby at the **Folepi’s Marketplace and Holiday Sensations**. Shoppers can browse through more than 100 indoor booths offering crafts, gingerbread art, bakery goods and candies.

While in the area, don’t miss **Pekin’s Winter Wonderland**, where more than 500 trees in Mineral Springs Park are adorned with 100,000 lights, November 25 through December 16.

To step back in time, take part in the **Christmas Holiday Celebration** at the **Colonel Davenport Home** in the Quad Cities on December 2. Located on **Arsenal Island**, this celebration recreates Twelfth Night pioneer celebrations and includes cake and refreshments, antique toy displays and hanging of the greens.

Get into the spirit of the season with a festive **Holiday Walk** in historic **Nauvoo** on November 30 and December 1. During this weekend celebration, local merchants will greet shoppers with goodies and sales. Nauvoo’s Holiday Walk includes fun for kids too with a “teddy bear tea” and a holiday coloring contest. Visitors can end the day with a carriage ride -- the perfect way to discover the charm of Western Illinois.

## **RED NOSED REINDEER IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS**

All reindeer have to learn somewhere ... even Rudolph. To catch a glimpse of how reindeer are trained, visit **Hardy's Reindeer Ranch** in **Rantoul** where reindeer drills are just part of the official training camp. Visitors can get up close and personal with the animals during mealtime -- they can even feed Comet or Blitzen. Open through December 30, Hardy's Reindeer Ranch also offers fresh-cut trees, warm cookies and hot cider.

To warm up your home this holiday season, pick up some Amish décor during the **Christmas in the Country Craft and Gift Show** in **Arcola**. Held November 2 through December 23, the show features Amish-made furniture, crafts and baked goods. As the shops close and night falls, visit **Shelbyville** from November 16 through January 1 and drive through the **Victorian Splendor Lights Festival**.

**Christmastime at the Dana-Thomas House** in **Springfield**, from December 5 through 30, gives visitors the chance to tour a house designed by Prairie style architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, and celebrate with live music and luminary displays.

Take a holiday journey to **Taylorville** on December 7 and 8 and discover its architectural jewels at the **12<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Home Tour**. For three centuries the town has opened its doors to visitors as houses are festooned for the holidays along with live music and complimentary confectionaries.

## **JOY TO SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS**

The 31<sup>st</sup> Annual **Way of Lights Christmas Display**, November 16 through January 6, at the **National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows** in **Belleville** will magically delight children of any age. Travelers can experience the glowing serenity of the lights as they journey by car, trolley or horse-drawn carriage through winding roads illuminated by more than one million twinkling white lights, to a breathtaking Nativity scene set in a cave.

Visitors should extend their time in Belleville to experience the annual **Gingerbread Walk** in downtown, November 23 through January 2. While walking on East Main Street, they'll view more than 100 different artistic gingerbread designs in storefront windows.

For more window-shopping and holiday cheer, downtown **Grafton** hosts a **Christmas Celebration** on December 8 and 9. Visitors can browse through retail shop open houses, listen to carolers, and of course, pay a visit to jolly ol' St. Nick.

## **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS SPARKLERS**

**Carbondale** sparkles during the annual **Lights Fantastic Parade** on December 1. Join spectators from across the region as the streets come to life with music, lights and holiday spirit.

The historical village of **Okawville** welcomes travelers to the **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Country Christmas Stroll and House Tour** on December 1 and 2. Start the day early and have breakfast with Santa, tour homes decorated in holiday splendor and hop on a sleigh ride. Stay a little longer and view the spectacular lights displays and cozy up for the live Nativity pageant.

Visitors can discover the magic of the season at the **DuQuoin Lights Fair**, December 6 through 30 at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds. Admire miles of outdoor lights while listening to musical performances. Relax and sit down for a madrigal dinner while the kids give Santa their wish lists.

## **ILLINOIS' WINTER TRAVEL TOOLS**

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers several ways to help travelers make the most of winter. Travelers can call **800-2CONNECT** to talk with an Illinois travel counselor or visit the Bureau's Web site at **www.enjoyillinois.com** for complete information on winter events and festivals.

A new addition to the Bureau's travel tools is *Illinois NOW!*, a free, seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel throughout the state. The winter issue features romantic holiday travel ideas, weekend getaways, sweet treats from Illinois' finest candy shops and factories, and the state's best eagle watching spots. Also highlighted in the winter issue is everything visitors need to know about Chicago's theater, music and museum scene this winter. For a free copy of *Illinois NOW!*, call 800-2CONNECT or visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Attached is a complete list of the holiday happenings mentioned in this release with additional contact information. Captioned slides representing each region are available immediately upon request. Please contact Rebecca Olchawa, 312-729-1710, for assistance.

*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality of life benefits for Illinois residents.*