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ADVENTUROUS NEW VIEWS OF ILLINOIS' FALL COLORS
"Leaf" behind the traditional and get a new perspective of autumn in Illinois

CHICAGO (October 14, 2002) – Fall just wouldn't be complete without an annual pilgrimage to view the changing leaves. This year, instead of embarking on the usual hike or drive, get a different perspective on the season's beauty. The Land of Lincoln offers unique takes on the fall colors – from a perch up, up in the sky to a serene glide along a scenic waterway. With Illinois' fall colors peaking in mid-October through early November, now is the best time to experience a new view of the foliage.

Skydiving

For thrill seekers, fall can take on a whole new meaning with a skydive over Illinois' rolling plains. This season, both Skydive Illinois in Morris and the Greater St. Louis Parachute Club in southwestern Illinois offer solo jumps for the experienced, or tandem jumps for the more novice jumper. Skydive Illinois offers jumps over the rolling plains of Ottawa, with a great view of the fall colors at the 2,600-acre Starved Rock State Park. Observation rides are also available for those who prefer the view from inside the plane. The Greater St. Louis Parachute Club, the longest continuously operating United States Parachute Association-affiliated parachute club in the country, also offers jumps this fall over the picturesque southwestern Illinois landscape.

For more information, please contact these companies: Skydive Illinois in Chicagoland, (815) 941-1149, www.skydive-illinois.com; or the Greater St. Louis Parachute Club in southwestern Illinois, (314) 579-JUMP, www.greenville-chamber.com/gslpc.

Hot Air Ballooning

A more relaxing aerial alternative, a hot air balloon ride is one of the best ways to see a "new view" of Illinois' colors. Galena On The Fly, Inc. in the northwest portion of the state, offers rides twice daily at sunrise and sunset. Lifting off from the Eagle Ridge Inn and Resort in Galena, the balloon ride first takes visitors to treetop level for a perfect view of the sky and foliage. After that, the balloon will ascend 3,000 to 4,000 feet above the ground – high enough to see the colors of three states and the abundant whitetail deer that roam the area. The central portion of the state offers great ballooning as well, with the Ca-Zoo Hot Air Balloon Team in Danville. Ca-Zoo is owned and piloted by the Carlton family, who work behind the scenes to make every balloon flight an unforgettable experience. Guests on this balloon adventure will be treated to a breathtaking voyage over the central Illinois region's 12,000 acres of colorful parks, wildlife, ponds and lakes.

For more information, please contact these companies: Galena on the Fly, Inc. in northern Illinois, (800) 690-1287, www.buyaballoonride.com; or Ca-Zoo Hot Air Balloon in central Illinois, (217) 446-7789, www.heritagedevelop.com/balloon/rides.htm.

Rock Climbing

The hills and bluffs at several of Illinois' state parks provide some of the best vantage points for viewing the autumn scenery – and rock climbing makes for an even more exciting journey. In northern Illinois, the Mississippi Palisades Park is known for its Sentinel Rock and Twin Sisters climbing areas, which provide phenomenal views of the Mississippi River, local wildlife and the wooded ravines surrounding the park. In southern Illinois, the cliffs at Giant City State Park's Shelter One area offer awesome views of the surrounding Shawnee National Forest. In addition, Giant City's Devil's Standtable – another prime climbing location – offers a challenging ascent on Pennsylvania

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bedrock, over the ravines, yellow sugar maples and red sumacs lining the bluffs. For beginners, Vertical Heartland Climbing School in the southern Illinois town of Buncombe offers expert instructors to guide new climbers.

For more information, contact these parks: Mississippi Palisades State Park in northern Illinois, (815) 273-2731, www.dnr.state.il.us; or in southern Illinois, contact Giant City State Park, (618) 457-4836, www.dnr.state.il.us, or Vertical Heartland, (618) 995-1427, www.verticalheartland.com.

Canoeing

Those looking for a workout that is easy on the eyes *and* body can view fall foliage while paddling a canoe down one of Illinois' 3,000 miles of waterways. Schmidt's Canoe Service in Chicagoland offers prime canoeing on its Fox River Trip, starting at Algonquin's Buffalo Park and ending at Voyageur's Landing in Elgin. This route takes new and experienced canoeists through rural farmland, forest preserves and quaint towns including Dundee, where riders can take a break at Dairy Queen for a sweet treat along the way. This trip is also a great way to get close to nature and Illinois wildlife along the route, including ducks, great blue herons and deer. Farther south on the Fox River, the Canoe Shack in South Elgin also offers canoe trips, embarking from the western Chicago suburb of St. Charles. Travelers can also venture to southwest Illinois where Slow Canoe Rentals in Wood River offers canoeing opportunities on the Mississippi River. While paddling, canoeists can view the unique sandstone bluffs carved millions of years ago in this ancient riverbed landscape.

For more information and canoe rental opportunities, contact these Chicagoland liveries: Schmidt's Canoe Service, (847) 697-1678, www.canoetrips.com, or the Canoe Shack, (630) 584-8017, www.canoeshack.com; in southwestern Illinois, contact Slow Canoe Rentals, (618) 254-6966.

Bicycling

From two paddles to two wheels, a bike ride is another great way to view Illinois' fall colors, taking visitors to many locations that just can't be reached by car. Along the 475-mile Grand Illinois Trail, bicyclists can view an authentic Dutch windmill in Fulton, stop for lunch in untouched small towns like Geneseo, or relax for a picnic at Lake County's Chain O'Lakes State Park – 6,000 acres of parkland in the heart of Illinois' largest concentration of natural lakes. In southernmost Illinois, the 32-mile Tunnel Hill State Trail crosses the Trail of Tears, the primary route of the Cherokee Indians on their move from the Great Smokies to Oklahoma during the winter of 1838-1839. Two additional popular bike trails include the Chicago Lakefront Trail and the I&M Canal State Trail in northern Illinois, part of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, America's first national linear park.

For more information and trail maps, contact these Illinois trails: The Grand Illinois Trail, spanning Chicagoland, northern and western Illinois, (815) 625-2968, www.bikelib.org; the Tunnel Hill State Trail in southern Illinois, (618) 658-2168, www.dnr.state.il.us; the Chicago Park District for the Lakefront Trail, (312) 742-PLAY, www.chicagoparkdistrict.com; or the I&M Canal State Trail in northern Illinois, (312) 427-3688, www.canalcor.org.

Paddlewheeling

The legend and lure of the Mississippi River come alive during a trip on Illinois' Anastasia paddlewheel. Departing from the southwest Illinois river town of Alton, the Anastasia offers a great view of fall colors, while helping each guest feel like a modern-day Mark Twain cruising down the river. The minute the stern wheel hits the waters of the Mississippi, visitors will step back in time on this cruise, which travels four hours from Alton to Grafton. The upper deck of the boat allows for open-air foliage viewing, and the enclosed lower deck offers a great view all year round. To make the most of this relaxing trip, visitors should take advantage of the "Fall Foliage Flight of Fancy" vacation package. For \$620, guests can take a cruise on Anastasia, spend a night at the historic Beall Mansion, and enjoy dinner for two at Thymes Past, Inc. and a chauffeured limousine ride along the Great Rivers Scenic Byway. This package is available until November 30, 2002.

For more information and ticket prices for Anastasia, contact the Greater Alton CVB in southwestern Illinois, (618) 465-6676, www.visitilton.com. For more information on Illinois' "Fall Foliage Flight of Fancy" vacation package, contact Kay Kubicek, (618) 659-9591, www.enjoysouthwestillinois.com.

Alpine Slide

Kids of all ages feeling the “need for speed” this autumn should head to Chestnut Mountain Resort’s 2,050-foot alpine slide, the only slide of its kind in Illinois. The daring can board a sled and watch the foliage quickly zoom by while descending the mountain on the fiberglass slide, then enjoy stunning views of the nearby Mississippi River bluffs while riding the ski lift back to the top. Those wanting to take the plunge should do it quickly, as the slide is only open until October 20.

For more information and ticket prices, contact Chestnut Mountain Resort in northern Illinois, (800) 397-1320, www.chestnutmtn.com.

Paintball

In Chicagoland, Joliet offers a new “splash” on fall colors with a park devoted to the sport of paintball. Intense, challenging and most of all fun, paintball action can be found daily at the 150-acre, \$8 million Challenge Park Xtreme in this southwestern suburb of Chicago. Various themed outdoor paintball fields are featured, including “Bedlam, Illinois,” a replica of a 1950s town with turn-of-the-century buildings, cars, park benches and mailboxes. “Bedlam,” in this case, refers to the town’s secret – at any given moment a paintballer could come charging out onto the seemingly quiet streets. Those looking for other activities should note the location offers more than just paintball – in addition to 25 paintball fields, the park boasts two mountain bike courses, a BMX racetrack, a 12,000-foot skate park and a concert stage. Although the colors of paintballs can’t match the leaves, Challenge Park Xtreme is a fall destination that no adventure-seeker should miss.

For more information and prices, contact Challenge Park Xtreme in Chicagoland, (815) 726-2800, www.challengepark.com.

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers several ways to help visitors plan their fall adventures and make the most of the season. For more information, travelers can call 800-2CONNECT to talk with an Illinois travel counselor or visit the Bureau’s Web site at www.enjoyillinois.com.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Captioned slides representing each activity 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.*