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ILLINOIS HOSTS A FLURRY OF WINTER ACTIVITIES

*Themed vacation weekends, eagle watching, candlelight skiing
and professional ice carving await in Illinois*

CHICAGO (October 22, 2002) – In the upcoming season, Illinois offers plenty of fun to warm up winter. With themed weekends, one of the largest populations of wintering bald eagles outside of Alaska, new facilities at the state’s recreation sites, and entertaining festivals and competitions, the Land of Lincoln starts off the year with several great winter activities.

Contact information for all featured events is included at the end of this release. Information is accurate as of release date; however, visitors should call each outlet before traveling to verify details.

CHICAGO

The third annual **Chicago Winter Delights** begins January 2 and extends through March 2 offering cultural, historical and entertaining activities for all types of travelers. By combining special hotel rates with exciting events, visitors can experience the city’s best shopping, entertainment, dining and hospitality.

Showcasing luminous sculptures and lighted skyscrapers, **Light Nights on the Magnificent Mile** features weekly Saturday evening fireworks displays throughout the Winter Delights promotion. In addition, shops along Michigan Avenue “lighten” their prices from January 4-March 2.

For even more winter fun, travelers will want to visit Chicago during the Winter Delights themed weekend celebrations, **Weekend Delights**. Each Thursday through Sunday will be filled with citywide events and entertainment surrounding one theme, from *Stir it Up*, January 9-12, with chef demonstrations and gourmet tastings at Chicago’s best restaurants, to *Embrace Opera*, January 30-February 2, including a variety of operatic performances and lectures throughout town. Additional Weekend Delight themes include *Clown Around Town* (January 2-5), *Paint the Town Blues* (January 16-19), *Play It Cool* (January 23-26), *Tour the Treasures* (February 6-9), *Just Say Cabaret* (February 13-16), *Act on It* (February 20-23), and *Let’s Dance* (February 27-March 2).

Immersion Weekend vacation packages are offered during five of the themed Weekend Delights. All packages include a two-night stay in first-class accommodations, tickets to events surrounding the weekend’s theme, and special receptions hosted by leading experts. From January 31-February 2, the *Embrace Opera* Immersion Weekend offers music lovers an easy way to enjoy the entire roster of Weekend Delight activities, in addition to some special “VIP” events. Reservations are available now for this weekend

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vacation package, which includes tickets to the Lyric Opera's "La Traviata," a backstage tour of the Civic Opera House, and an Opera Dinner and Cabaret at Maxim's restaurant. Prices for the *Embrace Opera Immersion Weekend* start at \$495. Additional Immersion Weekends, available for booking starting December 1, include: *Stir It Up* (January 10-12), *Paint the Town Blues* (January 17-19), *Play it Cool* (January 24-26), and *Just Say Cabaret* (February 14-16).

Chicago Winter Delights is a collaborative effort on behalf of six organizations, including the Illinois Bureau of Tourism.

"The Medici, Michelangelo and the Arts of Late Renaissance Florence," at the Art Institute of Chicago from November 9-February 2, offers a view of 180 Florentine paintings, sculptures, graphics, porcelain, tapestries and costumes. Complimentary with general admission, the display provides a detailed survey of Florentine art and culture between 1537 and 1631. Just up the street at Navy Pier's Chicago Children's Museum, children can make, bake and decorate their own cookie treats at the **Gingerbread Fantasy Factory** from November 16-January 16. Admittance is complimentary with general museum admission. The Gingerbread Fantasy Factory provides kids with the opportunity to work the gears and cranks of a factory assembly line, attend daily baking workshops and visit the Gingerbread Man.

Also at Navy Pier, the Chicago Shakespeare Theater kicks off its new lineup with a poetic performance of **Julius Caesar** on December 7, continuing through February 23. Highlighting Chicago's rich Irish culture, the fourth annual **Irish Film Festival** features full-length, animated and short films at the South Side's Beverly Arts Center from February 28-March 2. Direct from Ireland, this three-day event is one of only a few Irish film festivals in the country.

McCormick Place is *the* destination for auto and boat aficionados this winter, as it hosts the **Chicago Boat, RV & Outdoors Show** from January 1-5, and the **Chicago Auto Show** from February 14-23. The Midwest's first outdoors show of the year, the Chicago Boat, RV & Outdoors Show features more than 600 boats, 300 RV's and hundreds of booths offering everything from travel destinations to the latest in marine accessories. Some of the highlights of this year's show are Sea Lion Splash, the only traveling sea lion show in the United States, and the Wave Box – the world's first portable hydraulic whirlpool – which lets kayakers practice on simulated whitewater rapids. In its 102nd year, the Chicago Auto Show is the nation's largest, with more than 1,000 vehicles on display. Visitors to the 2003 show can see a complete range of domestic and imported passenger cars and trucks, sport utility vehicles and the latest experimental and concept cars, in addition to numerous accessories and auto-related exhibits.

CHICAGOLAND

Blackberry Farm in Aurora celebrates **Winterfest**, featuring a host of outdoor activities on January 18. Weather permitting, visitors can come prepared for sledding and cross-country skiing, or can use Blackberry Farm's fishing poles to cast a line in an ice-fishing hole. Most of the Farm's buildings are closed

for the winter, but during Winterfest both indoor and outdoor activities are planned, including games and craft workshops.

Featuring kids' entertainment and hayrides, the **Downers Grove Ice Sculpture Festival & Ice Carving Competition** in downtown Downers Grove takes place from January 24-26. Themed "It's a Jungle Out There," this festival includes a competition during which professional ice carvers create theme-based sculptures, live actors perform jungle-themed plays, and tropical street characters stroll the downtown area. A free town trolley takes visitors to and from each event. Also taking place January 24-26 is DuPage County's **Ice Carnival**, a five-day national ice-carving competition held at Bensenville's Redmond Recreational Complex.

Across Interstate-88 from Bensenville are the woods of Lisle's **Morton Arboretum**, where snowshoers can bustle through the 1,700 acres of forest on their way to programs and special events. In addition to the year-round horticulture lessons, lab experiments and wildlife demonstrations, the Arboretum provides special indoor and outdoor activities for individuals and groups from December 29-February 28.

NORTHERN

The 17th annual **Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition**, from January 15-18 in Rockford's Sinnissippi Park, features thirty teams from countries around the world including Italy, Argentina, Bulgaria and Poland. Competing for a chance to represent Illinois at the national level, the three- and four-person teams create stunning sculptures, which are lighted at night and remain on display as long as weather permits. Judging takes place on Saturday, and visitors should come early to watch the crowning of the champion.

Winterfest in Lena features skating, snow sculpting and candlelight skiing at Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park from January 17-19. After the whirlwind of outdoor activity, visitors can warm up indoors at the homemade soup tasting event on January 19 as they watch competitors race their beds down Lena's Main Street.

The rolling hills of Chestnut Mountain Resort provide incredible views, beautiful scenery and **Klondike Kapers** – Galena's on-the-slope festival on January 25 and 26. Featuring a barbeque, live entertainment, "silly slalom" skiers, skydivers, fireworks and a "Find Your Twin & Win" competition, Chestnut Mountain Resort offers a wealth of winter activity. Later in the season on February 22 and 23, this Galena recreation site also is home to the **Winter Carnival**, a Mardi-Gras-themed festival with ice sculptures and Cajun food specialties.

All winter long, Stephenson County's **Jane Addams Recreation Trail** offers skiers and snowmobilers more than 13 miles of nature paths that pass the Pecatonica River, numerous bridges, rocky outcroppings and Richland Creek. Beginning in Freeport, the trail connects to more than 300 miles of snowmobile paths throughout northern Illinois, eventually ending in Orangeville.

As one of the country's largest nesting grounds for migrating bald eagles outside of Alaska, Illinois boasts breathtaking views of the nation's most symbolic animal. One hot spot is Galena where visitors can enjoy awe-inspiring views via four-hour, guided **Bald Eagle Bus Tours**. Departing from Stoney Creek Inn, the tours are offered each Saturday morning from January 18-March 8. Tour participants can see from 30 to 150 eagles while learning about eagle habitats, threats and preservation.

There are several additional eagle-viewing spots throughout the state including **Starved Rock State Park** in Utica and the surrounding area. On January 18 and 19, Starved Rock State Park hosts the **Winter Wilderness Weekend** during which guests can enjoy guided hikes to the spectacular ice falls, cross-country skiing with basic instruction and bird watching. The Illinois Waterway Visitor Center, in neighboring Ottawa, hosts the **Bald Eagle Weekend** on January 25 and 26, featuring outdoor tours, live bald eagle seminars, and awareness programs. Windows encompass the entire west side of the two-story visitor center providing clear views of the eagles from the indoor comfort of the facility.

CENTRAL

On January 26, the **Palestine Teeny Tiny Tea Party** invites women of all ages – and their dolls – to the Fife Opera House for a traditional formal tea party. For more than a decade, hundreds of women donning hats, gloves and pearls have gathered here on Super Bowl Sunday to share tea and petit fours. The afternoon concludes with a grand march where participants can display their dolls while parading across the house stage.

This February, Springfield and nearby Lincoln sites celebrate Illinois' favorite statesman's birthday with a lineup of activities to honor Honest Abe. Two notable **birthday open houses** are taking place, including one on February 8 at Mt. Pulaski's 150-year-old Eighth Circuit courthouse – one of only two surviving Eighth Judicial Circuit courthouses in Illinois where Abraham Lincoln practiced law – and another at the Vermillion County Museum in Danville on February 9.

Springfield's 80-acre Lincoln Memorial Garden offers a sweet winter deal with **Maple Syrup Time**, an interactive experience encouraging guests to learn about producing maple syrup. From tapping trees and collecting sap, to boiling the syrup and sampling the product, visitors will enjoy this unique demonstration on the southern shore of Lake Springfield on February 15, 16, 22 and 23.

WESTERN

Up and down the Illinois banks of the Mississippi River, visitors can observe bald eagles returning from their long Canadian migration and arriving at the unfrozen waters around the dams. **The Mississippi River Visitors Center on Arsenal Island** in Rock Island hosts Clock Tower tours and eagle watches every weekend during January and February. Visitors can travel 30 minutes to Lock and Dam 14 in Hampton on

their own, or take a tour with a local guide, departing from the Mississippi River Visitor Center. Also in Rock Island, the **Bald Eagle Days Environmental Fair and Wildlife Art Show** at the Quad City Conservation Alliance Expo Center features bald eagle and live wolf demonstrations. Held on January 11 and 12, this year's exhibit offers free bus tours from the exhibit to the Lock and Dam area, where hundreds of eagles soar over the open waters looking for food.

A must-do on every chocolate-lovers list is the **Historical Society Chocolate Festival** at Galesburg's Browning Mansion on February 8 and 9. Visitors wind through four mocha-filled rooms on a tour of the mansion, sampling homemade chocolates from local confectioneries along the way. Although the edibles – including the chocolate chili – are not for sale, visitors can purchase sweets at the downtown stores.

Just minutes from the Quad Cities, **Ski Snowstar Winter Sports Park** in Taylor Ridge offers customized lessons, ski clinics, new trails, a new guest services center, and a cozy fireplace by which tired skiers can warm up. In addition to the skiing facilities, Ski Snowstar's tubing hill provides tubes and a towrope that releases tubers at the top of five chutes. Open early December through mid-March, Ski Snowstar offers family ski and tubing packages, as well as great amenities for groups.

SOUTHERN

From January 3-5, Carterville hosts the seventh annual **Avery International Goose Calling Invitational & Waterfowl Hunt**. The three-day event, held locally at John A. Logan College, is one of the world's largest calling events with 25 international goose-calling competitors in a three-round rivalry. The weekend closes with the Waterfowl Hunt, a tribute to the sport's heritage in southern Illinois, offering prime Canada geese access at 47 hunting clubs throughout Williamson County.

Also highlighting the region's heritage are the **Living History Weekends with the Massiac Marines** at the Fort Massac State Park in Metropolis. During January and February, the "Massiac Marines" demonstrate how the French Marines and settlers lived in the mid-17th century through a reenactment at the Fort Massac Historic site. The museum and visitors center complete the experience, showcasing displays that chronicle the site's rich history.

SOUTHWESTERN

Travelers visiting the southwest region in January can spend **A Day in Eagle Country**, Alton's month-long eagle celebration, on the **Bluff City Tour**. After a continental breakfast, riders depart on a day-long motorcoach tour of eagle and wildlife spotting, breaking for lunch at the beautiful Pere Marquette State Lodge. The tour follows the Mississippi River for 20 miles from Alton to Grafton and provides views of eagles and the nearby rock palisades.

The **Fete du Bon Vieux Temps** celebration at Cahokia Courthouse on March 1 is a French colonial Mardi Gras. This “Festival of the Good Old Days” takes visitors on candlelit tours of historic sites offering period music, storytellers, and a special cultural exhibit of garments and community documents.

WINTER TRAVEL

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers several ways to help travelers make the most of the winter season. 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 activities and festivals.

Available in November is the winter issue of *Illinois Now!*, a seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel throughout Illinois. For a free copy of *Illinois Now!*, travelers can call 800-2CONNECT or visit the Bureau’s Web site. The fall issue is currently available.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Winter photography is available immediately upon request, electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Rebecca Olchawa at 312/729-1710.

Contact information for all featured events is included on the next two pages.

For more information about these winter events and attractions, contact:

Chicago

- **Chicago Winter Delights, Weekend Delights and Immersion Weekend packages:** 877/CHICAGO, www.877Chicago.com
- **Light Nights on the Magnificent Mile:** 312/409-5560, www.themagnificentmile.com
- **Gingerbread Fantasy Factory** (Chicago Children's Museum): 312/527-1000, www.chichildrensmuseum.org
- **The Medici, Michelangelo and the Arts of Late Renaissance Florence** (Art Institute of Chicago): 312/443-3600, www.artic.edu/aic/visitor_info/index
- **Julius Caesar** (Chicago Shakespeare Theater): 312/595-5600, www.chicagoshakes.com
- **Irish Film Festival** (The Beverly Arts Center): 773/445-3838, www.beverlyartcenter.org
- **Chicago Boat, RV & Outdoors Show:** 312/946-6242, www.discoverboating.com/chicago
- **Chicago Auto Show:** 630/495-2282, www.chicagoautoshow.com

Chicagoland

- **Winterfest** (Blackberry Farm, Aurora): 630/892-1550, www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org/pages/facility/blackfrm
- **Downers Grove Ice Sculpture Festival & Ice Sculpting Competition** (Downers Grove): 630/434-5921, www.vil.downers-grove.il.us
- **Ice Carnival** (DuPage County): 630/594-1190, www.visitor.vil.downers-grove.il.us
- **Morton Arboretum** (Lisle): 630/968-0074, www.mortonarb.org

Northern

- **Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition** (Rockford): 815/987-8800, www.rockfordparkdistrict.com
- **Winterfest** (Lena): 815/369-4052 or 800/369-2955
- **Klondike Kapers and Winter Carnival** (Chestnut Mountain Resort, Galena): 800/397-1320 (information), 800/798-0098 (ski conditions), www.chestnutmtn.com
- **Jane Addams Recreation Trail** (Stephenson County): 800/369-2955
- **Bald Eagle Bus Tours** (Galena): 815/594-2306
- **Winter Wilderness Weekend** (Utica): 815/667-5351, www.starvedrocklodge.com
- **Bald Eagle Weekend** (Ottawa/Utica): 815/667-4054, www.iit.edu/~travel/iww

Central

- **Palestine Teeny Tiny Tea Party:** 618/586-9418, www.crawfordcountytourism.org
- **Lincoln's Birthday Open House** (Mt. Pulaski Courthouse): 217/732-8930
- **Lincoln's Birthday Open House** (Vermillion County Museum, Danville): 217/442-2922
- **Maple Syrup Time** (Springfield): 217/529-1111, www.lmgnc.com

Western

- **The Mississippi River Visitors Center on Arsenal Island** (Rock Island): 800/747-7800, www.visitquadcities.com
- **Bald Eagle Days Environmental Fair and Wildlife Art Show** (Rock Island): 309/788-5912, www.qccaexpoenter.com
- **Historical Society Chocolate Festival** (Galesburg): 309/343-8440 or 800/916-3330, www.visitgalesburg.com
- **Ski Snowstar Winter Sports Park** (Taylor Ridge): 800/383-4002, www.skisnowstar.com

Southern

- **Avery International Goose Calling Invitational & Waterfowl Hunt** (Carterville): 800/433-7399
- **Living History Weekends with the Massiac Marines** (Metropolis): 618/524-9321,
<http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/Education/interpret/frtmass>

Southwestern

- **A Day in Eagle Country – Bluff City Tour** (Alton): 618/466-8693
- **Fete du Bon Vieux Temps** (Cahokia): 618/332-1782,
<http://medicine.wustl.edu/~mckinney/cahokia/cahokia>

Visit www.enjoyillinois.com for more information about these events and other Illinois travel ideas. Travel counselors are available at **800-2CONNECT**.

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Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant
economic and quality of life benefits for Illinois residents.*