

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Fantastic Foliage and Fall Fun Await this Season in Illinois**

*Vibrant colors and unique festivities make Illinois a perfect destination for autumn adventure*

**CHICAGO (July 23, 2002)** – When the leaves turn colors of vibrant oranges and reds and a chill hits the air, it's the perfect time to take off for a weekend getaway, right here in Illinois. From the lush landscape of the Mississippi River bluffs to Southern Illinois' wine country and everywhere in between, towns across the state are celebrating the season with traditional and one-of-a-kind festivities.

This year, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism has chosen a few of the top fall picks throughout the state. Categorized by region, these unique fall experiences are just a sampling of the many things to do and see in Illinois. For a complete listing, travelers can log on to [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com) or speak to an Illinois Travel Counselor at 800-2CONNECT.

**CHICAGO**

For an urban autumn escape, the Windy City has it all. From world-class shopping along North Michigan Avenue and miles of scenic Lake Michigan shoreline, to cultural celebrations at Grant Park and neighborhood tours, Chicago is fantastic in the fall.

- Food lovers can taste the selection of Chicago's ethnic cuisine one neighborhood at a time on the **Chicago Neighborhood Sampling Tour** on October 19. During this walking tour, visitors can follow a guide through Greek, Swedish, Mexican and Polish neighborhoods while learning about traditional cultural recipes and uniquely diverse cuisines. Local delis, bakeries and restaurants will also offer delectable samples. For more information, call Chicago Neighborhood Tours at 312-742-1190 or visit [www.chgocitytours.com](http://www.chgocitytours.com).
- From September 20 through 29, Chicago visitors can swing into fall by listening to music from around the globe during the **4<sup>th</sup> Annual World Music Festival: Chicago 2002**. At locations throughout the city, music lovers can tap to the rhythm of jazz, soul, house, country and blues. For concert times and venues, call the Mayor's Office of Special Events at 312-742-1938 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org/worldmusic](http://www.cityofchicago.org/worldmusic).
- This Halloween, visitors can dress up and visit the **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Pumpkin Plaza in Daley Plaza**, from October 11 through 31. This year's Pumpkin Plaza features a Haunted Village that will thrill children and adults alike. Visitors can view the display of pumpkins, take in The Midnight

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Circus Show, or watch the characters as they roam the plaza and entertain visitors with free theater performances throughout the day. For more information, call the Chicago Mayor's Office of Special Events at 312-744-3370 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents](http://www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents).

## **CHICAGOLAND**

Bustling cities, neighborhoods rich in history, picturesque storefronts and fall festivals make the Chicagoland area a perfect destination for an autumn getaway. With hiking trails along the Fox River in St. Charles, Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in Oak Park and vintage wines from Roselle's Lynfred Winery, this region is full of activities perfect for fall.

- Rated as a top Midwest fall festival, the **St. Charles Scarecrow Festival** is an all-American event welcoming folks from around the country. During the festival, thousands of visitors can view more than 100 scarecrows and vote for their favorite. But the festival isn't just about scarecrows; fair-goers can sample corn on the cob, taffy apples, homemade lemonade and funnel cakes while live music wafts through the air. While in the St. Charles area, travelers can end the afternoon with a roadside apple-picking excursion at **Pine-Apple Orchard**. For more information, call the St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-777-4373 or visit [www.visitstcharles.com](http://www.visitstcharles.com).
- Offering more than 3,000 trees and shrubs from around the world in one location, the **Morton Arboretum** in **Lisle** is a perfect place to appreciate fall colors. From September 28 through 30, travelers can visit the Arboretum for the annual **Fall Color Festival**, and take guided nature walks through stunning landscapes while munching on hand-dipped taffy apples. Visitors can also find serenity by driving through the Arboretum's 1,700 acres of North American trees and manicured gardens. For more information, call the DuPage Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-232-0502 or visit [www.dupagecvb.com](http://www.dupagecvb.com).
- This October, **Six Flags Great America** in **Gurnee** turns into a Halloween playground every weekend during **Fright Fest**. From October 5 through 26, roaming characters, haunted houses, children's theme areas, and spooky live entertainment set the stage for family fun. Thrill seekers can find adventure on the new roller coaster, Déjà Vu, or ride backwards on an old favorite, the American Eagle. For more information, call Six Flags Great America at 847-249-2133 or visit [www.sixflags.com](http://www.sixflags.com).

## **NORTHERN ILLINOIS**

Whether finding fall serenity at the renowned Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, biking the I & M Canal State Trail in Morris, or perusing antiques along Galena's Main Street, Northern Illinois offers exceptional fall weekend getaways.

- One of the greatest places to purchase traditional harvest fare is at the **47<sup>th</sup> Annual Old Market Days** in **Galena**. On September 28 and 29, visitors can pick up pastries, homemade bread, harvest jams and jelly, and fresh produce from vendors dressed in turn-of-the-century costumes. When the grocery basket is full, shoppers can stop at **Galena Cellars** and buy a bottle of their best selling white

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zinfandel. For more information, call the Galena Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-747-9377 or visit [www.galena.org](http://www.galena.org).

- One of the best places to see fall colors in Northern Illinois is at the **Volo Bog State Natural Area in Ingleside**. Outdoor enthusiasts should mark the calendar for the **Fall Color Walk** on October 12 and discover why this park is listed on the National Natural Landmark Register. A trained naturalist will lead hikers on trails surrounded by a colorful canopy of leaves. During the walk, visitors can identify trees and start a leaf collection, or stop for a picnic. For more information, call Volo Bog State Natural Area at 815-344-1294 or visit [www.dnr.state.il.us](http://www.dnr.state.il.us).
- The **Scarecrow Festival** on October 12 and 13 at **Rockford's Midway Village and Museum Center** is truly a family affair. Parents and children alike can let their imaginations run wild while they create frightening and friendly masterpieces for the scarecrow contest, or participate in candle making or bobbing for apples. Before leaving town, travelers won't want to miss spectacular fall flora at the **Anderson Japanese Gardens**, rated as one of the best in the world outside of Japan. In this authentic Asian setting, vibrant hues of gold, red and orange create a picture-perfect autumn backdrop. For more information, call the Rockford Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-521-0849 or visit [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com).

## **WESTERN ILLINOIS**

Along the Mississippi River, the bluffs of Western Illinois offer peak foliage viewing opportunities.

From John Deere's headquarters in Moline to Peoria's Wildlife Prairie Park and the great Illinois River, Western Illinois' river country offers a surplus of fall activities and beautiful scenery.

- Visitors can view one of the most unique weddings around at the **64th Annual Grape Festival in Nauvoo**. During this festival, wine connoisseurs can sample merlot from Illinois' oldest winery, **Baxter's Vineyards**, and watch the unique ceremony of the "Wedding of the Wine and Cheese." Taking place from August 30 through September 1, this colorful festival celebrates the ripening of the grapes with live bands, arts and crafts, antique shows and wine tasting. The festival culminates with the "wedding," a traditional French culinary rite bringing together cheese - representing rich prosperity - and wine - representing good health. For more information, call the Nauvoo Area Chamber of Commerce at 217-453-6648 or visit [www.beautifulnavoo.com](http://www.beautifulnavoo.com).
- A solitary highway bordering the great Mississippi River, the **Great River Road** is the perfect route for a fall excursion. Spanning more than 550 miles along the river from Galena to Cairo, the Great River Road highlights some of Western Illinois' most beautiful stretches of fall landscape. Just off the road, apple lovers can visit the Quad Cities area and take a quick detour to **Stone's Apple Barn**, located on the Mississippi bluffs one mile east of Hampton. At this fall harvest headquarters, travelers can visit the petting zoo, pick the perfect pumpkin and sample 42 homegrown varieties of apples. For more information, call the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-747-7800 or visit [www.visitquadcities.com](http://www.visitquadcities.com).
- As the night falls and the full moon rises, Halloween thrill seekers can celebrate the holiday in the Quad Cities at **Rock Island's Fright Night** on October 25 and 26. For a "spook-tacular" time, visitors can tour a haunted house or take a trolley ride through the historic downtown district, where goblins hide in the shadows. Visitors can end the evening by listening to ghost stories or watching

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a captivating rendition of the “Rocky Horror Picture Show.” For more information, call the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-747-7800 or visit [www.visitquadcities.com](http://www.visitquadcities.com).

## **CENTRAL ILLINOIS**

Illinois’ heartland offers travelers a variety of unique colorful experiences this fall. The state capital offers travelers a trip back in time to Abraham Lincoln’s day, where he practiced law, started a family and owned his first and only home. This region is also home to the Amish, where their traditions and customs live on today in Arcola and Arthur. During the autumn, Central Illinois is ablaze with color and fall festivals.

- Nobody takes corn and brooms more seriously than the folks in Arcola do! That’s because they have been making brooms from cornhusks for centuries. From September 6 through 8, Arcola residents celebrate this tradition at the **32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Broom Corn Festival in Arcola**. Visitors can learn how to make a broom from cornhusks, listen to a barbershop quartet, partake in the kiddie tractor pull or savor delicious sweet corn. For more information, call the Arcola Chamber of Commerce at 800-336-5453 or visit [www.arcola-il.org](http://www.arcola-il.org).
- Nature lovers can spend a weekend at **Kickapoo State Recreation Area in Oakwood**, and take in all the scenery and excitement fall has to offer. Kickapoo has unlimited recreational activities, including hiking, fishing, biking and camping and canoeing, all perfect activities for viewing autumn splendor. Travelers can enjoy the deep golden and red hues of fall on an afternoon hike or rent a canoe and traverse one of 22 lakes that offer beautiful scenery. For more information, call Kickapoo State Recreation Area at 217-442-4915 or visit [www.dnr.state.il.us](http://www.dnr.state.il.us).
- Route 66 fans can break out the poodle skirt and letterman’s sweater and get ready for the World’s Largest Sock Hop at **Springfield’s first International Route 66 Mother Road Festival**. The city revs up its engines at this first-ever tribute to the “Old Road,” from September 27 through 29. Hundreds of Route 66 cruisers will roll into town for the Downtown City Lights Celebration, where a neon parade will light up the night. The festivities continue through the weekend with daily free live music, vintage cars and motorcycles on display, a Route 66 Mother Road Antique Show and cook-off competition, strolling entertainers and kids’ events. For more information, visit the festival’s Web site at [www.route66fest.com](http://www.route66fest.com) or call 866-RTE-66IL.

## **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS**

Southern Illinois is known for its extensive outdoor recreational options and the wineries that dot the countryside. From the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail, a 26-mile drive with stops at five distinctive wineries, to dramatic views of towering sandstone bluffs and the ancient geology of the Shawnee National Forest, Southern Illinois is full of exciting opportunities that will thrill outdoor enthusiasts and wine lovers alike.

- Rib aficionados should bring their appetite and dig in at the first-ever **Wabash Ribberfest in Mt. Carmel**. On September 6 and 7, visitors won’t leave hungry, as nationally ranked teams compete in the rib cook-off. Barbeque lovers can eat all the ribs they want while tapping to the beat of “The Duke

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Boys” rock-n-roll band, or stroll through craft booths and the Wabash County Merchant’s Association art exhibit. For more information, call the Southeastern Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau at 877-273-4554 or visit [www.southeastillinois.com](http://www.southeastillinois.com).

- To view eye-catching fall colors, outdoor enthusiasts can strap on a pair of hiking boots and explore **Giant City State Park** in **Makanda**. While touring the park, hikers can sign up for the Illinois State Geological Survey’s Geology of Giant City tour on October 5, and discover why the unusual rock formations have come to be known as the “streets of Giant City.” For more information, call Giant City State Park at 618-457-4836 or visit [www.dnr.state.il.us](http://www.dnr.state.il.us).
- Travelers can satisfy their wanderlust and sweet tooth this fall by sampling a Heath Toffee Bar at the **Heath Harvest Fest** in **Robinson** on October 5. This tribute to the Heath brothers and the famous toffee they created allows chocolate lovers to truly sink their teeth into the history of the town’s world-famous candy bar. Visitors can watch the Halloween parade and vote for the best candy creation at the toffee bake-off, then end the evening on a “sweet” note while listening to live entertainment. For more information, call the Southeastern Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau at 877-273-4554 or visit [www.southeastillinois.com](http://www.southeastillinois.com).

## **SOUTHWEST ILLINOIS**

Spanning the Western portion of the state, the Great River Road traverses through the Southwest Illinois region – the place where Illinois began. This region is also home to Collinsville’s Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site. From culture and history to entertainment and beautiful state parks, Southwest Illinois offers plenty of fall festivals and foliage, just waiting to be discovered.

- **Eckert’s Farms** in **Grafton** began as a roadside stop in 1910 and has grown into one of Illinois’ largest pick-your-own apple orchards. Travelers can follow the aroma of apple pie and join the festivities every weekend in September at **Apple Fest 2002**. This town favorite features apple treats, country music and family entertainment. For more information, call the Greater Alton/Twin Rivers Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-258-6645 or visit [www.visitalton.com](http://www.visitalton.com).
- Travelers can pack a picnic and a bottle of Illinois wine and watch the sunset atop a bluff in **Pere Marquette State Park**. Several lookout points offer dramatic views, and fall colors promise to be exhilarating. Explorers seeking adventure can hike the scenic trails that intertwine through the park’s 8,000 acres of untouched beauty. For more information, call Pere Marquette State Park at 618-786-3323 or visit [www.dnr.state.il.us](http://www.dnr.state.il.us).
- Wine lovers can taste a colorful bouquet of fruit flavors at the **Piasa Winery** in **Grafton** on September 8 at the **Grafton-Piasa Winery Vineyard Tour**. Visitors can arrive early and sample Piasa’s six distinct wines while enjoying scenic views of the Mississippi River. Participants can then take a trolley ride from the winery to its vineyards in Godfrey to view the vineyards and learn about the wine making process. Along the way, fall enthusiasts can view some of Southern Illinois’ most stunning panoramas along the Mississippi bluffs. For more information, call the Piasa Winery at 618-786-WINE or visit [www.piasawinery.com](http://www.piasawinery.com).

**Illinois Travel Tools**

The events listed above are only a sampling of the top fall picks throughout the state – there are many more events and activities just waiting to be discovered in Illinois. The Bureau of Tourism offers several ways to help visitors plan their fall excursion and make the most of the season. Travelers can call 800-2CONNECT to talk with an Illinois travel counselor or visit the Bureau’s Web site at [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com) for complete information on fall events and festivals.

*Illinois NOW!*, the state’s free, seasonal magazine, is also available to help visitors plan their getaway. The new fall issue features Illinois weekend fall escapes, classic Chicago dining and unique Illinois gifts. Also highlighted in the issue are the top 10 Lincoln sites and Illinois’ most haunted destinations. For a free copy of *Illinois NOW!*, call 800-2CONNECT or visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

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**EDITOR’S NOTE:** 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.*