

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ILLINOIS SHINES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Visit Illinois for unique festivals, colorful parades and millions of twinkling lights

CHICAGO (September 30, 2002) – Offering some of the most unique and festive celebrations in the Midwest, Illinois will ring in the 2002 holiday season with everything from marching elves and bright lights displays to authentic European markets and reenactments of historic celebrations. Visitors will find something special in every region of the state.

Contact information for all featured events is included at the end of this release. Please contact each outlet directly for specific dates, times and prices, as information may change.

CHICAGO

Chicago will celebrate the season by offering visitors many great holiday activities and cultural events, starting with **The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival** on November 23 and 24. Highlighted by a Michigan Avenue parade on November 23 featuring Sorcerer Mickey and his Disney friends, and a spectacular fireworks display after the procession, The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival will be a treat for everyone. The festival starts Saturday morning with such holiday delights as a Disney stage show, a gingerbread house building demonstration from Eli's Cheesecakes, and ice carving demonstrations. Also included in the festivities will be special shopping incentives and entertainment throughout the holiday season.

Another great way to light up the season is to visit the Lincoln Park Zoo from November 22-January 5 for **Zoolights**, which features more than one million lights, a laser water show, family crafts and nighttime musical entertainment. But for a true holiday "glo," travelers will want to take part in the many activities offered during the sixth annual **Chicaglo**. Among the featured activities are Mayor Daley's **Annual Tree Lighting in Daley Plaza** on November 28, the **Target Thanksgiving Parade** also on November 28, and **All That Glitters: A Holiday Bazaar at the Cultural Center** on December 7 and 8. An annual favorite, the Target Thanksgiving Parade will travel on State Street from Congress Parkway to Randolph Street, and will include performances by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, more than 20 marching bands, helium balloons, majestic floats, theater performances, and the arrival of Santa Claus. To make *Chicaglo* even brighter, many of the city's hotels will be offering special rates from November 15-January 1, select restaurants will offer holiday-themed menus, and participating shopping emporiums will host special events.

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Chicago will also commemorate the holiday season by showcasing its diverse heritage. The city's authentic German marketplace, **Christkindlmarket**, will return to Daley Plaza on November 28-December 23. This recreation of a 1545 Nuremberg Christmas market features timber cabins housing a selection of European merchants with unique arts and crafts – a perfect stop for travelers with a holiday gift list. On December 7, the city's **Holiday Delight Kodomo Matsuri** offers an authentic Japanese winter celebration, complete with a children's festival and holiday bazaar. Also on December 7, **A Jewish Legacy Chicago Neighborhood Tour** will embark from the Chicago Cultural Center, taking riders on a half-day, narrated bus excursion through the city's diverse Jewish community. On December 7 and 8, Swedish holiday traditions will be on display during the Swedish American Museum's **Julmarknad** celebration.

The holidays will bring a new lineup of seasonal performances to Chicago, offering many opportunities for visitors to enjoy live theater and ballet, including The Goodman Theater's 25th anniversary production of **A Christmas Carol**, November 17-December 22; the Joffrey Ballet's timeless classic **Nutcracker**, November 29-December 29; and **The American Girl Holiday Celebration**, a musical for girls age 6-16 at The American Girl flagship store on Michigan Avenue, December 10, 11, 17 and 18.

Travelers who want to explore Chicago's shopping delights can take advantage of the "**Chicago for the Holidays**" **Immersion Weekend** package on December 6-8. This shopping-intensive weekend will include complimentary personal shoppers from Nordstrom and FAO Schwartz, tickets to Chicago's seasonal revue, the Noble Fool Theater Company's "Roasting Chestnuts," and a two-night stay in first-class downtown hotel accommodations.

CHICAGOLAND

Cuneo Museum & Gardens' **A Winter Wonderland: Holiday Light Show**, November 29-December 30 in the northern suburb of Vernon Hills, will shine with thousands of twinkling lights covering the 75 acres of lakes, fountains and formal gardens. On the same campus, the Cuneo Mansion will host "**Cuneo Christmas**" on December 2-30, offering day tours of the family home decorated with an 18-foot Christmas tree and original gifts that were given to the Cuneo children. Throughout the campus, visitors will enjoy floral holiday displays and a fairyland of storybook characters.

For a fantasyland of chocolate, travelers will want to visit **Long Grove's Countryside Christmas**, November 16-December 31, where they can sample sweets from the Long Grove Confectionery, Co., then shop the more than 60 stores offering great seasonal gifts, all while surrounded by holiday carolers and decorations. **Holiday Magic at Brookfield Zoo**, now in its 20th year, will offer activities for the entire family every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from November 23-December 23. Included in the festivities is the Storybook Theater featuring live entertainment and local celebrities reading their favorite holiday tales.

To the west of Chicago, St. Charles is sure to be a haven of holiday activity with several celebrations, including the **Century Corners Historic Walkabout** on November 29, during which visitors can shop and tour this historic neighborhood dressed in a Charles Dickensque holiday setting complete with costumed shopkeepers. During **Holiday Homecoming**, November 29 and 30, St. Charles will provide trolleys and horse-drawn carriages to transport shoppers from one downtown retailer to another. The **Second Annual Electric Christmas Parade**, on November 30, will feature an illuminated procession with bands, equestrian units, and floats, and from December 6-14, **Christmastime at the Barn** will provide holiday shoppers with yet another great location for finding art, handmade clothing and accessories.

NORTHERN

On November 29, the **Ottawa Festival of Lights Parade** will march through Ottawa bringing with it Santa Claus, extended shopping hours and the official lighting of Washington Square. North of Ottawa is Belvidere, yet another town sure to be decked for the holidays. On December 6-8, Belvidere will host a **Hometown Christmas Festival** with “living windows” in the downtown area and horse-and-buggy rides.

Rockford’s holiday season will shine during the **Holiday Festival of Lights** in Sinnissippi Park, open weekends from November 28-December 31. This popular driving tour of giant light displays is situated along the banks of the Rock River, thus offering double the sparkle from the reflection. On December 7, Rockford’s Erlander Home Museum will host **Lucia Fest** featuring traditional Swedish craft items, festive heritage foods and imported gifts from the homeland.

From December 1-15, visitors to De Kalb’s **J.F. Glidden Homestead & Historical Center** will enjoy delicious holiday cookies while viewing two new exhibits: a display of celebrated feminist Annie Glidden’s possessions and an exhibit devoted to tabbing, a special kind of knitting. Just down the street, holiday revelers can take a special tour of an 1879 Victorian mansion during **Christmas at Ellsworth House**. Tours are offered on December 7, 8, 14 and 15, and will include live music, a craft bazaar, refreshments and a visit from St. Nick. To the west in Galena, special **Lamplight Tours of the U.S. Grant Home** on Saturdays from November 29-December 15 will take travelers back in time to an 1860s holiday celebration.

From lamplights to twinkling lights, visitors will not want to miss Utica’s **Trolley Christmas Light Tour** through the decorated neighborhoods of the LaSalle-Peru area, which borders Starved Rock State Park. Offered only on December 20-22, the tour ends at Starved Rock Lodge where riders will receive hot chocolate, cider and cookies.

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CENTRAL

A great way to start the holiday shopping season in central Illinois is to visit Champaign's **Chris Cringle Craft Sale** on November 1 and 2 at the University of Illinois' Assembly Hall. Perfect for those who shop early in the season, this sale will include unique handmade arts and crafts. For those who wait until after Thanksgiving, the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season, Bradley's **Holidays in Historic Riverview** on December 1 will provide shopping, plus tours of traditional Victorian homes and tempting Christmas treats.

For a traditional Abraham Lincoln-style holiday, travelers will want to visit the Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site on December 14 and 15 for Lerna's **Prairie Christmas**, which celebrates the humble holiday traditions of the 1840s. Within the same historic site is the Reuben Moore Home, which during the same weekend will highlight the Christmas traditions of the 1860s when decorations, gifts and all the trimmings gained popularity.

From December 11-29, the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Dana-Thomas House in Springfield will shine with luminary displays and gorgeous holiday decorations throughout the home. **Christmastime at the Dana-Thomas House State Historic Site** will also include live music on the weekends.

For even more music and a distinctive cultural experience, Decatur will host the **Kwanzaa Celebration with Family and Friends** on December 28. This free event is open to people from all cultures and will feature song, dance and refreshments.

WESTERN

Hosting the largest light celebration in Illinois, East Peoria will be ablaze this season during the annual **Festival of Lights**, November 30-December 31. Showcasing millions of twinkling lights in unique holiday designs, this festival always draws visitors from throughout the Midwest. Travelers should plan to be in Peoria on November 29, one day before the start of the Festival of Lights, for the **115th Annual Santa Parade**. Billed as America's longest running holiday parade, the Santa Parade will feature floats, bands and holiday characters. Even more sparkling lights will be found in Quincy during the **Avenue of Lights**, a light extravaganza with more than 30 displays and two million bulbs in Moorman-Wavering Park from November 20-January 2.

The **Quad City Arts Festival of Trees**, November 22-December 1, at the RiverCenter/Adler Theater complex, will host a lineup of holiday activities including silent auctions and gourmet cooking demonstrations. For children, the festival will include a Teddy Bear Tea during which they can learn about the traditions of drinking tea and take home a fluffy new friend. On December 6 and 7, Macomb's Horn Field Campus will host a **Country Holiday** with old-fashioned Christmas activities, from storytelling to horse-drawn carriage rides.

Families looking for an active way to celebrate the New Year should consider **Ski Snowstar's New Year's Eve Family Ski** in Taylor Ridge. In addition to offering great skiing and beautiful views, Ski Snowstar will have a special midnight celebration with fireworks and free food and drink.

SOUTHERN

Southern Illinois will be illuminated all season beginning with the **Olney Festival of Lights Display**, showcasing thousands of lights and dozens of animated figures in City Park from November 28-January 1, and the **Lights Fantastic Parade** in Carbondale on December 7, featuring more than 70 sparkling entries.

Travelers will find plenty of sparkle and holiday cheer as these citywide celebrations take over the region: **Christmas Town USA at Carlyle Lake** on December 7 and 8, **Cave-in-Rock Christmas Parade & Festival** on December 21, and **DuQuoin City Celebration** from December 1-23. During these events, visitors will be able to view community lights displays and take advantage of special holiday shopping with extended hours and seasonal sales.

Revelers can celebrate the end of a great year and ring in a new one at the **Mt. Vernon New Year's Celebration** on December 31. Held at the Times Square Mall, this celebration provides a perfect atmosphere for families and includes games, food and musical entertainment.

SOUTHWESTERN

One of the state's most spectacular celebrations of light, the **Way of Lights Christmas Display**, can be found in Belleville at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows. On November 22-January 5, the Shrine will glow with more than one million white lights decorating a mile-and-a-half route through the grounds. As visitors drive through the scenic fantasy of lights, they will wind past electro-art sculptures and life-size figures depicting the Christmas story. At the Visitors Center, travelers will find a display of artistically themed Christmas trees and The Christmas Village, which resembles Bethlehem and features storytelling, coloring, face painting and live-animal displays. Other events at the Shrine include special musical programs at the Church of Our Lady of the Snows on December 1, 8 and 15, and Christmas masses on December 24 and 25. Also in Belleville, travelers can feast their eyes on the intricate gingerbread window displays lining the downtown shops during the **8th Annual Gingerbread Walk**, November 29-January 2.

For a new view on holiday lights, travel to Alton and see displays through the eyes of a child. Alton's **Celebration of Christmas** at the Alton High School Annex Building will feature 100 lights displays from a child's point-of-view, November 22-December 27. Also in Alton, the **Olde Alton Arts & Crafts Fair** on December 7 and 8 will offer shoppers unique holiday gifts from more than 250 crafters.

HOLIDAY TRAVEL

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers several ways to help travelers make the most of the holiday 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 holiday events and festivals. Also available is the latest issue of *Illinois Now!*, a seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel throughout Illinois. The magazine can be obtained by calling 800-2CONNECT or by visiting the Bureau's Web site.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Holiday photography is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Rebecca Olchawa at 312/729-1710.

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

Chicago

- **The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival:** 312/409-5560; www.themagnificentmile.com
- **Zoolights** at the Lincoln Park Zoo: 312/742-2165, www.lpzoo.org
- **Chicaglo:** 877/CHICAGO (877/244-2246), www.877chicago.com
- **Annual Tree Lighting in Daley Plaza:** 312/744-3370, www.ci.chi.il.us/SpecialEvents/
- **Target Thanksgiving Parade:** 312/744-3370, www.chicagofestivals.org
- **All That Glitters: A Holiday Bazaar at the Cultural Center:** 877/CHICAGO, www.877chicago.com
- **Christkindlmarket** (Daley Plaza): 312/644-2662, www.christkindlmarket.com
- **Holiday Delight Kodomo Matsuri:** 773/275-0097
- **A Jewish Legacy Chicago Neighborhood Tour:** 312/742-1190, www.chgocitytours.com
- **Julmarknad:** 773/728-8111, www.andersonville.org
- **A Christmas Carol** (The Goodman Theater): 312/443-2800, www.goodman-theatre.org
- **Nutcracker** (Joffrey Ballet): 312/902-1500, www.joffrey.com
- **The American Girl Holiday Celebration:** 877/AGPLACE, www.americangirl.com
- **Immersion Weekends:** 877/CHICAGO (877/244-2246), www.877chicago.com

Chicagoland

- **A Winter Wonderland: Holiday Light Show** (Cuneo Museum & Gardens, Vernon Hills): 847/377-2000, www.lakecounty.org
- **Cuneo Christmas** (Cuneo Mansion, Vernon Hills): 847/362-3042, www.lake-online.com/cuneo
- **Long Grove's Countryside Christmas:** 847/634-0888, www.lakecounty.org
- **Holiday Magic at Brookfield Zoo:** 708/485-0263, ext. 879, www.brookfieldzoo.org
- **Century Corners Historic Walkabout** (St. Charles): 630/377-6161, www.visitsstcharles.com
- **Holiday Homecoming** (St. Charles): 630/513-5386, www.visitsstcharles.com or www.dtown.org
- **Second Annual Electric Christmas Parade** (St. Charles): 630/513-5386, www.dtown.org
- **Christmastime at the Barn** (St. Charles): 630/584-9490, www.visitsstcharles.com

Northern

- **Ottawa Festival of Lights Parade:** 815/434-2737, www.ottawa.il.us
- **Hometown Christmas Festival** (Belvidere): 815/544-4357
- **Holiday Festival of Lights** (Sinnissippi Park, Rockford): 815/965-0768
- **Lucia Fest** (Rockford): 815/963-5559, www.gorockford.com
- **J.F. Glidden Homestead & Historical Center** (De Kalb): 815/756-7383
- **Ellsworth House** (De Kalb): 815/544-4357
- **Lamplight Tours of the U.S. Grant Home** (Galena): 815/777-3310, www.granthome.com
- **Trolley Christmas Light Tour** (Utica): 815/667-4211

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Central

- **Chris Cringle Craft Sale** (Champaign): 217/333-5000
- **Holidays in Historic Riverview** (Bradley): 815/928-9662
- **Prairie Christmas** (Lerna): 217/345-1845
- **Christmastime at the Dana-Thomas House** (Springfield): 217/782-6776
- **Kwanzaa Celebration with Family and Friends** (Decatur): 217/429-7458

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Holiday/8

Western

- **Festival of Lights** (East Peoria): 309/698-4711
- **115th Annual Santa Parade** (Peoria): 309/681-0696, www.peoriaevents.com
- **Avenue of Lights** (Quincy): 217/222-7980, www.quincy-cvb.org
- **Quad City Arts Festival of Trees** (Quad Cities): 563/324-FEST, www.quadcityarts.com/festoftrees/
- **Country Holiday** (Macomb): 309/833-1315
- **Ski Snowstar's New Year's Eve Family Ski** (Taylor Ridge): 309/798-2666, www.skisnowstar.com

Southern

- **Olney Festival of Lights Display**: 618/392-2241
- **Lights Fantastic Parade** (Carbondale): 618/529-4147
- **Christmas Town USA at Carlyle Lake**: 618/594-4015
- **Cave-In-Rock Christmas Parade and Festival**: 618/289-3921
- **DuQuoin City Celebration**: 800/455-9570, www.duquoin.org
- **Mt. Vernon New Year's Celebration**: 618/988-9397

Southwestern

- **Way of Lights Christmas Display** (Belleville): 618/397-6700, www.snows.org
- **Gingerbread Walk** (Belleville): 618/233-6769
- **Celebration of Christmas** (Alton): 618/466-8858
- **Olde Alton Arts & Crafts Fair** (Alton): 618/467-8860

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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*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.*