

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jen Elving
Edelman
312/240-2813

Paint a Picture Perfect Illinois Getaway

Red wines, yellow daffodils, green fairways and blue festivals paint the state this spring

CHICAGO – (January 7, 2003) – Illinois springs into color this year with flowers, golf courses and lively get-togethers to evoke every traveler’s adventurous spirit. The following is just a sampling of how colorful the state will be this season.

Sizzling Shades of Red

From the red roses at the Chicago Botanic Gardens to Collinsville’s giant catsup bottle, Illinois has many destinations for travelers in search of red-hot tones. Visitors can take the “el” – the elevated train – Red Line to both Chicago baseball stadiums or sample merlots and cabernets in Illinois’ wineries – either way, travelers can paint the town red.

- **The Red Line:** The only thing Cubs and Sox fans share is their mode of transportation. Bringing visitors to the front gates of Comiskey Park and Wrigley Field, the Chicago Transit Authority’s (CTA) Red Line is an easy way for visitors to get to the April 4 White Sox home opener against Detroit, and the April 7 Cubs home opener against Montreal. Tickets to most games are available by calling the Sox’ ticket office at 312/674-1000 or by calling the Cubs’ 800/THE-CUBS, or by logging onto www.chisox.com or www.cubs.com. (Chicago)
- **Roses:** The Chicago Botanic Gardens in Glencoe offers visitors more than 385 acres of gardens and walkways. Overflowing with red roses, the 5,000-bush rose garden features an iconic flower-petal fountain and roses of all shapes and sizes. Members and guests alike may enroll in gardening seminars (fees for non-members) or take a tram tour of the 23 gardens, and six miles along the campus ponds and lakes. For more information, call 847/835-8208 or log onto www.chicago-botanic.org. (Chicagoland)
- **Merlot and Cabernet:** With 33 wineries around the state, travelers can find reds, whites and blushes to suit their tastes.

Six miles from downtown Galena is the award-winning Galena Cellars Winery. The vineyard features a wine tasting room, a gift shop, and guided tours that include lessons and tips on how to taste wine. The merlot and red raspberry framboise are favorites. For more information, call 800-397-WINE or log onto www.galenacellars.com. (Northern Illinois)

-more-

The five wineries on the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail in southern Illinois offer award-winning reds. Although harvest usually takes place in the fall, the vineyards host a number of seasonal events with tastings, tours and special lectures. Spring is the perfect time to explore the trail and enjoy the budding scenery of the Shawnee National Forest, as well as taste the cream of last year's wine crop. The Shawnee Hills Wine Trail includes Alto Vineyards in Alto Pass; Owl Creek Vineyards and Winghill Vineyard and Winery, both in Cobden; and Von Jakob Vineyard (known as the little Germany of Illinois) and Pomona Winery, both in Pomona. For more information, call Alto Vineyards at 618/893-4898, Owl Creek Vineyards at 618/893-2557, Winghill Vineyard and Winery at 618/618-WINE, Von Jakob Vineyard at 618/893-4500 and Pomona Winery at 618/893-2623; or log onto www.shawneewinetrail.com. (Southern Illinois)

- **Chili peppers:** At the Amishland Country Village in Tuscola, the Cinco de Mayo (May 5) celebration honors Mexico's victory over the French. A Mexican snack of red pepper salsa and other traditional foods are served, including Amish breads and pies. In true multicultural style, an Elvis impersonator performs "Spanish Eyes" among other numbers. Travelers should stick around for the piñata bust, costume competitions, arts and crafts, and special culinary offerings. For more information, call 800/500-3705 or log onto www.amishcountry-il.com. (Central Illinois)
- **Classic redheads:** The 14th Annual Original Raggedy Ann & Andy Festival on May 17 and 18 celebrates the history of two of America's favorite rag dolls. The festival offers free admission to the Johnny Gruelle Raggedy Ann & Andy Museum, free entertainment, parades, a carnival and petting zoo, and a charity walk to help preserve the museum. For more information, call 217/268-4908 or log onto www.raggedyann-museum.org. (Central Illinois)
- **Cherry red:** The Washington Cherry Festival 2003, May 30-June 1, features everything from cherry pie eating contests and cherry pit spitting competitions to cherry bake-offs. After visitors have had their cherry fill, the carnival rides, merchant's hall, festival garden and sporting events offer a change of pace. Even the Ferris wheel at this festival is red. For more information, call 309/444-9921. (Western Illinois)
- **Cavaliers:** Weekends in Metropolis from March through July are filled with re-enactors showcasing early-settlers lifestyles from the mid-1700s. The Fort Massac Living History Weekends feature gun-cleaning and prepping demonstrations, performed by men in Britain's classic red uniforms. For more information, call 618/524-4712 or log onto www.metropolisil.usl.myareaguide.com. (Southern Illinois)

For an extra dose of red, visit Superman's Super Museum while in Metropolis. For more information, call 618/524-5518 or log onto www.supermuseum.com. (Southern Illinois)

Rays of Yellow

Whether travelers want to view eagle beaks, enjoy fresh maple syrup or pass through a golden road of fresh daffodils, yellow tones fill Illinois with warmth and activity this spring.

- **Tulips:** Tiptoe through the tulips at the 9th Annual Chicago Flower and Garden Show at Navy Pier from March 8-16. The largest flower and garden festival in the Midwest offers 30 themed gardens, education lectures, hundreds of gardening products, demonstrations and special children's activities. For more information, call 847/864-7400 or log onto www.chicagoflower.com. (Chicago)
- **Maple syrup:** In early March travelers can participate in a truly unique activity: maple syrup tapping. On March 8 and 9 in Naperville, Maple Sugaring Days at the Naper Settlement gives visitors the opportunity to watch costumed villagers collect sap from maple trees and boil it into sugar and syrup. For more information, call 630/420-6010 or log onto www.napersettlement.org. (Chicagoland)

Springfield's Lincoln Memorial Garden's Maple Syrup Time festival offers demonstrations that encourage spectators to create their own syrup, and then celebrate the harvest afterward with a pancake breakfast. This annual festival takes place on March 9 and 10. For more information, call 217/529-1111 or log onto www.springfield-il.com/attract/lingarden. (Central Illinois)

- **Birthday candles:** Look for a yellow glow in Galena from April 11-13 as the town celebrates the 180th birthday of President Ulysses S. Grant. The celebration includes a variety of period events such as 19th century entertainment, walking tours, period dance classes, workshops, military reviews, encampments and a grand ball. For more information, call 815/777-0336 or log onto www.granthome.com. (Northern Illinois)
- **Daffodils:** Often one of the first signs of spring, these yellow flowers are honored with a namesake festival in Eldorado. The 3rd Annual Daffodil Festival, April 12 and 13, offers travelers opportunities to stroll through the flowers, as well as enjoy gospel music and antique sales. This festival is close to heart for many Eldoradians, as "The City of Daffodils" continues a program started in the 1950s to encourage residents to show community spirit by planting these bright flowers. For more information, call 618/252-6789. (Southern Illinois)
- **Yellow beaks:** Bird watching is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities and Illinois offers many opportunities for travelers to take part in this popular pastime. From bald eagles to white pelicans, spring is a great time to find unique yellow beaks in Illinois.

Wintering bald eagles are often still visible in March at locations throughout the state including Alton, Starved Rock State Park, Grafton's Pere Marquette State Park and even Carlyle Lake, where a few eagles nest year-round. In April, "birders" can look for another rare sight – migrating white pelicans. Some of the best places to view white pelicans are Starved Rock State Park and Pere Marquette State Park, where as many as 30 pelicans have been spotted in one day. Another excellent viewing area is in Alton near the Meeting of the Great

Rivers Scenic Byway. For more information on Starved Rock State Park, call 815/667-4726 or log onto www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/i&m/east/starve/park (Northern Illinois). For more information on Grafton and Pere Marquette State Park, call or log onto www.grafton.il.us. For more information on the Alton area, call 618/465-6676 or log onto <http://visitalton.com>. For more information on Carlyle Lake, log onto www.carlylelake.com. (Southwestern Illinois)

Chicago also offers rare birding opportunities in the spring. From peregrine falcons and red-tailed hawks to spotted sandpipers and white-throated sparrows, many birds frequent the Windy City. Over seven million birds pass through Chicago annually during migration, including more than 300 different species. For more information about bird watching in the city, visit www.cityofchicago.org. (Chicago)

Cloves of Green

Green brings good luck and great opportunities to travelers in Illinois this spring. From the Midwest's finest green fairways to an award-winning Japanese garden, cloves of green are popping up all over Illinois this spring.

- **St. Patty's Day:** Everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day and Illinois offers numerous celebrations throughout the state to show it including two honorary parades in Chicago. On March 15, the city of Chicago's St. Patrick's Day Parade marches on with more than 30 bands, Irish dancers in Celtic costumes, and 2,000-plus high-steppers shimmying down Wacker Avenue. The true highlight is the view from the Michigan Avenue Bridge, which overlooks the Illinois River dyed green for the festivities. For more information, call 312/942-9188 or log onto www.chicagostpatparade.com. (Chicago)

Second is Chicago's South Side Irish St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 16. As the largest community St. Patrick's Day Parade in the United States, this Western Avenue gathering annually draws 300,000 spectators along the one and a half mile parade route. For more information, call 773/239-7755 or log onto www.hometown.aol.com/SSIPC. (Chicago)

The seventh annual Southern Illinois Irish Festival in Carbondale, April 27 and 28, hosts a wealth of Celtic culture including performances from professional Irish dance troops and internationally famous Irish bands. The festival also includes dance workshops, Celtic foods and music lessons. For more information, call 800/526-1500. (Southern Illinois)

- **Green flag:** Watch the green flag go down at the Chicagoland International Speedway in Joliet. The 2003 pre-season events begin in March with Mike Guglielmucci, Sr.'s Race Fest on March 9. The pre-season continues with the True Value IROC Racing Series Test Session on April 30, the Fan Appreciation Cruise with Rusty Wallace on May 9, and the Goodyear Tire Test on May 13. For more information and tickets, call 815/722-5500 or log onto www.joliet.com/raceways/chicagoland. (Chicagoland)
- **The Park:** The green grounds at Arlington Park open May 9 for a new season of some of the finest thoroughbred racing in America. The Park, a grassy knoll located on the racetrack campus, offers a great view of the final turn while encouraging guests to enjoy a picnic

spread across a blanket or at one of the picnic tables. For more information and race dates, call 847/385-7550 or log onto www.arlingtonpark.com. (Chicagoland)

- **Fairways and putting greens:** Illinois offers more than 700 golf courses and several professional tournaments for participants and spectators.

Pheasant Run Resort & Spa in St. Charles offers a Maddox-designed, 18-hole, championship, par-71 course. Beginners and pros will enjoy tree-lined fairways, pristine lakes and carefully manicured greens. The course is open to the public seven days a week. For more information, call 800/4-PHEASANT or log onto www.pheasantrun.com/golf. (Chicagoland)

Eagle Ridge Inn & Resort Golf Courses in Galena features 63 holes of nationally ranked fairways. The campus offers three 18-hole courses, the newest of which – The General – has already been ranked in *Golf Digest's* top ten “Best New Upscale Public Courses.” Eagle Ridge also offers a 9-hole course for shorter, but challenging runs to the greens. For more information, call 800/892-2269 or log onto www.eagleridge.com/golf. (Northern Illinois)

Quail Creek Golf Course in Robinson is considered the “best kept secret in southern Illinois.” The twists and turns coupled with the course’s foliage make for a true test of skill. For more information, call 800/544-8674 or log onto www.quailcreekcc.com. (Southern Illinois)

Carlyle is home to the Governor’s Run Golf and Country Club, where golfers are awed with impeccably manicured greens. The grounds also offer a lighted driving range, perfect for practice before or after the big match. For more information, call 618/594-4585 or log onto www.governorsrun.com. (Southwestern Illinois)

- **Gardens:** The two formal and contemporary gardens of Rockford’s Anderson Japanese Gardens, opening May 1, collectively make up the largest Japanese Gardens outside of Japan. The gardens represent the three qualities of Japanese life: water, for its soothing qualities; rock, for its permanence; and plants, for their textures and color. The 12-acre site includes a guesthouse and teahouse, and several Sukiya-style buildings, as well as the main garden. For more information, call 815/229-9390 or log onto www.andersongardens.org. (Northern Illinois)

Quad Cities Botanic Center in Rock Island is a year-round tropical paradise on the Mississippi riverfront. The facility houses a 70-foot skylight peak, and the Center’s “Sun Garden” conservatory showcases a 14-foot waterfall, rainforest mural and reflecting pools. For more information, call 309/794-0991 or log onto www.visitquadcities.com. (Western Illinois)

- **John Deere:** From green tractors to the timeless green logo, John Deere takes this color to new heights at the John Deere Pavilion. Created as a celebration of the past, present and future of agribusiness, the Pavilion’s new exhibit showcases how a typical farm family meets the challenges of the changing seasons. For more information, call 309/765-1000 or log onto www.johndeerepavilion.com. (Western Illinois)

-more-

- **Easter Sunrise Service:** Since 1937, Bald Knob Mountain in Alto Pass has been the ideal place for the Easter Sunrise Service. Situated in the heart of southern Illinois, the cross and reflection area are surrounded by green trees and virgin forests. Visitors are encouraged to arrive early, as a breakfast is served beginning at 4 a.m. and seating on Bald Knob Hill's green grass is limited. This nondenominational service will commence at 6:30 a.m. on April 20 and is held at the highest point in southern Illinois. Visitors can choose to bike to Bald Knob Cross or hike to the site via trails in the Shawnee National Forest. For more information, call 618/833-6311 or log onto www.shawneeheartland.com. (Southern Illinois)

Blues Hues

Vibrant shades of blue flow through Illinois this spring – down the Mississippi River, across the lakes and through downtown Chicago. Visitors will quickly learn that being blue is not so bad.

- **Blues:** Chicago has an internationally recognized blues music scene, offering a full spectrum of local hangouts, and the history and legends that made them significant. Eight blues clubs throughout Chicago, including Blue Chicago, Buddy Guy's Legends, House of Blues and Kingston Mines all offer unique experiences. In addition, the Chicago Blues Festival takes place this spring from May 29-June 1 in Grant Park. For more information, call 312/744-3315 or log onto www.ci.chi.il.us/SpecialEvents/Festivals/Blues2003. (Chicago)
- **Blue Man Group:** The Briar Street Theater offers a different form of vaudeville with the Blue Man Group. Performing theatre, music, art and science, the trio provides audience members with a multi-sensory experience – much of which is established through instruments the group created themselves. For more information, call 773/348-4000 or log onto www.bluman.com. (Chicago)
- **Aquariums:** Opening this spring is a new exhibit at the John G. Shedd Aquarium. "Wild Reef – Sharks at the Shedd" features a diver's-eye view of a coral reef in the Philippines. The underwater exhibit will be home to more than 30 sharks from North America and more than 500 species of beautiful reef fish. The 75,000-gallon tank will combine 26 miniature aquatic habitats and feature live coral. For more information, call 312/939-2435 or log onto www.sheddnet.org. (Chicago)
- **Bluebells:** Pay homage to the dainty bluebell during Earlville's 16th Annual Bluebell Festival, April 25 and 26, in Maple Leaf Park. Visitors can follow Big Indian Creek through acres of brilliantly colored bluebells, as well as many varieties of wildflowers and bird species. For more information, call 815/246-8751. (Northern Illinois)
- **Rend Lake:** The 18,000-acre Rend Lake in Whittington offers countless land and water activities, from horse and hiking trails to aquatic activities. Illinois is also home to 3,000 other inland lakes on which to boat, fish and play. For more information, call 618/279-3110 or log onto www.rendlake.com. (Southern Illinois)

-more-

- **The Mighty Mississippi:** Offering one of the most beautiful trails in Illinois, Alton features a 25-mile bike path along the Mississippi. Bikes can be rented, as can kayaks and canoes, at locations throughout the Alton area. Travelers who choose to drive will want to cruise the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway, a 50-mile stretch along the Mississippi decorated with vibrant spring colors. For more information, call 800/258-6645 or log onto www.altoncvb.org. (Southwestern Illinois)

Visitors to this portion of the Mississippi River won't want to miss Hartford where Lewis & Clark departed on their pioneering voyage. It has also recently become home to the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, an interactive museum chronicling the duo's voyage and life in Illinois. The spring exhibit, "Time Not Wasted: Winters with the Corps," features a span from 1803-1806, when the men spent time at three camps to make preparations for the next leg of their journey. The exhibit continues through June 15, 2003. For more information, call 406/727-8733 or log www.visitalton.com (Southwestern Illinois)

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers an even more colorful list of statewide events and attractions. Travelers can call **800-2CONNECT** to talk with an Illinois travel counselor or visit the Bureau's Web site at **www.enjoyillinois.com** for information on spring events and festivals. Also available is *Illinois Now!*, a seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel throughout Illinois. The spring edition will be available in mid-February. The magazine can be obtained by calling 800-2CONNECT or by visiting the Bureau's Web site.

###

EDITOR'S NOTE: Spring photography is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Jen Elving at 312/240-2813.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (prior name: Department of Commerce and Community Affairs), Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.