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ILLINOIS FORECASTS WINTER FUN

*New season brings migrating eagles, diverse art exhibits,
ice-sculpting competitions and winter getaways*

CHICAGO (November 3, 2003) – Winter fun can be found throughout Illinois. From unusual events such as rolling bed races and ice-sculpting competitions to food festivals celebrating treats like maple syrup and chocolate, Illinois' winter forecast encourages travelers to explore the state, find their own winter high and extend the fun with enticing weekend getaways.

CHICAGO

The city sparkles during **Chicago Winter Delights – It's A Cool Place** with a lineup of the Midwest's best entertainment, family attractions, shopping, hospitality packages and cultural highlights.

To kick off the New Year, Chicago Winter Delights presents **Light Nights on the Magnificent Mile** (December 31-February 29). By day, colorful hand-painted glass globes decorate the gardens on Michigan Avenue and by night, they illuminate its busy sidewalks. The Chicago skies light up Saturday evenings, beginning January 4, with a special fireworks display over the Chicago River at Michigan Avenue. For more information or to order an event guide, call 312-409-5560 or visit www.themagnificentmile.com.

Making time for weekend fun is a breeze with **Chicago Winter Delights Weekend Celebrations** (January 1-February 29). More than 60 downtown hotels roll out the red carpet with discounted rates and several restaurants offer prix-fix meals throughout the city. Nine themed weekend events range from jazz, blues and opera weekends to gourmet tastings and

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chef demonstrations. Beginning with “Clown Around Town” (January 1-4), families enjoy a visit to *Zoolights* at the Lincoln Park Zoo, and a meet and greet with Sue Hendrickson, founder of “Sue,” the T. rex, at The Field Museum’s *Sue School*. For more information and a full listing of weekend celebrations, call 877-CHICAGO or visit www.877chicago.com.

Nearly 100 works on sea-related themes are showcased during the first “**Manet and the Sea**” exhibit (now through January 19) at the Art Institute of Chicago. The exhibit brings together seascape paintings of Edouard Manet, considered by some to be Impressionism’s father, and the artists who influenced and succeeded him, including Pierre Auguste Renoir and Claude Monet. For more information and admission prices, call 312-443-3600 or visit www.artic.edu.

From Michael Jordan’s 1992 Dream Team Olympic jersey to Joe Louis’ boxing gloves, **Chicago Sports! You Shoulda Been There** (now through January 25), an exhibit of the Windy City’s proud sports history, is on display at the Chicago Historical Society. Sports fanatics can relive the moments and experience the triumph as they view photographs and other memorabilia. For more information and admission prices, call 312-642-4600 or visit www.chicagohs.org/chicagosports/index.

For a getaway to Chicago, themed **Immersion Weekend** packages invite visitors to immerse themselves in the best of Chicago’s blues, jazz and opera events. Paint the Town Blues (January 16-18), Play it Cool Jazz (January 23-25) and Embrace Opera (January 30-February 1) packages include a two-night stay in a first-class downtown hotel, along with tickets to the hottest events in the city and special receptions hosted by leading experts. They include Barry Dolins, organizer of the Chicago Blues Festival; Neil Tesser, jazz critic and author; and Brian Dickie, general director of the Chicago Opera Theater. For more information, call 877-CHICAGO or visit www.877chicago.com.

CHICAGOLAND

Headlining the **17th Annual Winterfest: Coping with the Cold** in Itasca (January 18), the men’s 16-inch snowball softball tournament – named for the snow-covered field on which the games are played – is a free and public event. The festival is

located at and sponsored in part by the Spring Brook Nature Center, offering free snowshoes rentals, and ice-carving and falcon demonstrations. Visitors can take hayrides to and from the center, as well as the Itasca Historical Depot Museum, which offers facility tours, railroad history lessons and refreshments. For more information and special activity prices, call 630-773-2257 or visit www.itasca.com/naturecenter.

National Ice-Carving Association (NICA) professionals at the Downers Grove **Ice Sculpture Festival & Ice Sculpting Competition** (January 23-25) compete for prize money, but more importantly, for points that decide NICA ranking. Sculptors base their carvings on this year's "Alice in Wonderland" theme, which can also be seen throughout town with strolling costumed characters from the children's story. A free trolley service is offered to give spectators a tour of the carvings placed at the Main Street Train Station, Downers Grove Museum and throughout the downtown area. For more information and ticket prices, call 800-934-0615 or visit www.vil.downers-grove.il.us.

Palos Heights' Lake Katherine Nature Preserve takes visitors for a ride during **Winterfest** (January 24) with "dog-mushing" (dog-sledding) competitions between statewide racing teams. Children can get involved as dog-mushing captains offer rides after the races. In an adjacent field, daring competitors race through tires, over an eight-foot snow embankment, and through an igloo and other winter obstacles for a chance to take first place. Free snowshoeing equipment rentals, children's interactive ice-sculpting sessions, hayrides and the annual bonfire offer even more activities. For more information and ticket prices, call 708-361-1873.

Honoring African American Heritage, **Black History Month** (February 21) is celebrated at Schaumburg's Prairie Center during an evening of lectures and musical performances that celebrate unity, peace and cultural understanding. For more information and ticket prices, call 847-517-6304 or visit www.ci.schaumburg.il.us/prairiecenter/html/events.

For a weekend getaway to Chicagoland, **Oak Park** features tours of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home & Studio, great offerings at Harrison Street art boutiques and antiques stores, fine dining at many area restaurants and one-of-a-kind exhibits at the Oak Park Conservatory. Home to the largest number of Frank Lloyd Wright establishments in the world, visitors can also tour Wright's Unity Temple and 13 other public and private

homes. Located just up the street from the Wright Studio, the Cheney House Bed & Breakfast, designed and built by Wright in 1903, was recently renovated with hot tubs in each suite. For more information on the Frank Lloyd Wright tours and prices, call 708-524-7800 or visit www.oprf.com/opvc/omdex; for the Cheney House Bed & Breakfast, call 708-524-2067.

NORTHERN

Thirty of the nation's top sculpting teams wow audiences at the 18th annual **Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition** in Rockford's Sinnissippi Park (January 14-17). Eager eyes can watch as professional snow sculptors form giant blocks of snow into abstract shapes and whimsical figures. Sculptures in the juried competition are judged on creativity, technique and message. For more information and admission prices, call 815-987-8844 or visit www.rockfordparks.org/SnowsculptingWeb/snowsculpting.

Lena's free **Winterfest** (January 16-18) at Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park, sends competitors on Illinois' only bed race and an intriguing scavenger hunt. To win the race, participants need to find any size bed, attach wheels and make it down the six-block, Main Street course in the least amount of time. The festival scavenger hunt challenges participants to find quirky and hard-to-find items – past items have included everything from a 1979 photograph to a Tonka Truck. Horse-drawn sleigh rides, cross-country skiing and candlelight ice skating are great family activities, all of which are offered on Family Fun Day (January 18). For more information, call 800-369-2955.

The movie “**Groundhog Day**,” filmed in Woodstock in 1992, inspired a namesake festival (January 30-February 2) celebrating the groundhog's shadow and what it means for the season. This city keeps the local tradition alive with Willie the Groundhog's anticipated prediction, a walking tour of the “Groundhog Day” film sites, ice-sculpting demonstrations and a community pancake breakfast. For more information and admission prices, call 815-338-2436.

Bald Eagle Bus Tours (select Saturdays from January 17-March 6) in Galena guide visitors along four Mississippi River communities known as nesting ground for migrating bald eagles. Between 100 and 300 nesting, roosting and feeding eagles are seen every day. The day-long tours provide insights about America's most symbolic

animal – its history, habits and current preservation efforts. For more information and ticket prices, call 815-594-2306 or visit www.eaglenature.com.

For a weekend getaway to Northern Illinois, **Galena** also offers beautiful scenery in an historic town setting. From the sophistication of the Galena Cellars Winery's tours to the history behind former President Ulysses S. Grant's childhood home and the Illinois Stagecoach Trail, Galena is packed with winter adventures. There is plenty of room in Galena, too, offering everything from one of the state's oldest hotels and charming bed and breakfasts to pristine villas and lodges just outside the downtown area. For more information, call 877-GO-GALENA and www.galena.org.

CENTRAL

Featuring world-class performers of Dixieland, Chicago and New Orleans jazz, swing and ragtime tempos, the 29th annual **Central Illinois Jazz Festival** (January 23-25) hits high notes with performances by Midwest favorites Bill Allred's Classic Jazz Band, Titan Hot Seven, Cornet Chop Suey, Jean Kittrell's St. Louis Rivermen and Queen City Jazz Band. All performances take place at Decatur's Holiday Inn Select. For more information and ticket prices, call 217-877-4114 or visit www.juvaejazz.com.

Disney's **Toy Story 2 on Ice** (January 30 and 31) at Springfield's Prairie Capital Convention Center treats families to a spectacular production bursting with special effects. Performers Woody, Buzz, Jessie and all of Andy's toys take to the ice and come face to face with rockets, airplanes, and a show-stopping traffic jam. For more information and ticket prices, call 217-788-8800 or visit www.springfield-pccc.com.

Pancake and nature lovers come from miles around to enjoy **Maple Syrup Time** (weekends from February 14-March 7) during interactive sap demonstrations at the Lincoln Memorial Garden in Springfield. From tapping trees to cooking sap, visitors get a taste of all the steps in the maple syrup process. For more information and ticket prices, call 217-529-1111 or visit www.lmgnc.com.

Central Illinois is host to a number of Abraham Lincoln birthday celebrations each February. Visitors can take guided tours to **Abe's Birthday Party** (February 14) at the Lincoln Courthouse in Beardstown, a free event honoring the nation's 16th president with a birthday cake, and then proceed to the Postville Courthouse in Lincoln for a tour

of the courthouse where Lincoln once practiced law. For more information, call 217-323-3225 or visit www.ohwy.com/il/l/lincctmu.

For a weekend getaway to Central Illinois, the **Heartland Spa** is one of the state's best kept secrets. A nationally recognized, all-inclusive wellness spa known for holistic health treatments, the Heartland Spa was ranked by *Travel + Leisure* magazine among the "Top 10 Spas" in the U.S. Located in Gilman, the Heartland Spa has two- to five-day packages based on nutrition, stress management or beauty. For more information and prices, call 815-683-2182 or visit www.heartlandspa.com.

WESTERN

Peoria's Lakeview Museum hosts the **Dale Chihuly Glass** exhibit (December 7-March 3) featuring 140 works from Chihuly's 25 years of artistic and technical development, and delighting visitors with surprises not yet seen in any public exhibition of his work. Chihuly is known internationally as an innovator, engineer and consummate glass artist. For more information and admission prices, call 309-686-7000 or visit www.lakeview-museum.org.

Live eagle programs, a wildlife art show, environment fair and guest appearances by International Wolf Center speakers are featured at the 18th annual **Bald Eagle Days** event (January 10 and 11) at Rock Island's Quad City Conservation Alliance (QCCA) Expo Center. Held in conjunction with the eagle migration along the Mississippi River, the event also offers free tours to Lock and Dam 14 where hundreds of eagles peruse the open waters looking for food. For more information and ticket prices, call 309-788-5912 or visit www.qccaexpocenter.com.

Visitors to the 18th annual **Galesburg Historical Society Chocolate Festival** (February 7 and 8) are greeted with a seemingly endless selection of chocolate goodies. Located at the Galesburg Antiques Mall, the event offers tastings of homemade and commercial tortes, cakes, pies, creams and other delicacies. All edibles are offered for sale in select downtown Galesburg stores. For more information and admission prices, call 309-343-2485 or visit www.visitgalesburg.com.

Just in time for the ice-fishing season, the **QCCA Outdoor Show** (February 19-22) at the QCCA Expo Center, offers hundreds of fishing exhibits, from boats and gear to

resorts and charters. Additionally, special sports and fishing seminars, including a fishing how-to lecture for children (February 21), are offered throughout the show. For more information and admission prices, call 309-788-5912 or visit www.qccaexpocenter.com.

For a weekend getaway to Western Illinois, **Galesburg** is well-known for its array of historical landmarks and attractions. As the only remaining original building of the historic 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates, “Old Main” at Knox College invites visitors to sit in the chair Lincoln once did. Just down the street, the Carl Sandburg Historic Site pays homage to the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and Lincoln biographer with tours of the home in which Sandburg once lived and wrote. Overnight visitors can stay at the Fahnestock Bed & Breakfast Suites. Dating back to the 18th century, the bed and breakfast features a three-story turret, bay window, beautifully carved woodwork, open staircase, beveled glass and etched windows. For more information on Galesburg, call 309-343-2485 www.visitgalesburg.com; for the Fahnestock Bed & Breakfast Suites, call 309-344-0270 or visit <http://home.gallatinriver.net/fahnestock>.

SOUTHERN

The **Living History Weekend** (January 10 and 11), a free event in Metropolis, features Massac Marines re-enacting daily life from the 18th century. Located on the north side of historic Fort Massac State Park, the re-enactments include tours of the barracks, officer’s quarters, blockhouse, stockade and dry moat. New this year are the visitors center and museum built to honor the rich history of Native American, French, Spanish and English settlers that once occupied the territory above the Ohio River. For more information, call 618-524-4712 or visit www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/r5/frmindex.

The **Avery International Goose Calling Invitational & Waterfowl Hunt** (January 24), a fierce competition featuring nearly 30 of the best callers in North America, is the Midwest’s largest goose-calling contest. A two-day goose hunt in Southern Illinois follows the contest, giving visitors an opportunity to hunt with the world’s most talented goose-callers. For more information and ticket prices, call 217-785-2003 or visit www.ilcf.org.

For a weekend getaway to Southern Illinois, travelers should consider **Giant City State Park**, a 4,000-acre park located in the Shawnee National Forest and known for its huge bluffs of sandstone. The park features more than 18 miles of hiking trails, as well as horseback-riding and birding-watching opportunities only available this time of year. The lookout tower at the Giant City Lodge in Giant City State Park offers a stunning 360-degree view of hills, lakes and woodland areas. The stone-and-timber lodge – surrounded by 34 cabins for additional lodging – is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. For more information, call 618-457-4921 or visit www.dnr.state.il.us/Lodges/gc.

SOUTHWEST

Visitors to the free annual **Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rock Bridge** (January 17 and 18) in Madison line the only bicycle-pedestrian bridge spanning the Mississippi River – and one of the longest in the world – for close-ups of eagles nesting in its steel frame. On the east side of the bridge, local re-enactors offer a Lewis and Clark lesson on life during preparation for the 1804 journey. For more information, call 314-416-9930 or visit www.trailnet.org/events.

Cahokia honors history and tradition with its **Fete du Bon Vieux Temps** (March 1), a colonial version of Mardi Gras celebrating the social season between Christmas and Ash Wednesday. Four of Cahokia's 18th-century historic sites – the Cahokia Courthouse, Holy Family Parish Log Church, Jarrot Mansion and the Martin-Boismenu House – offer free tours led by costume-clad volunteers. The evening culminates with a Colonial Mardi Gras Ball featuring 18th-century contra dancing taught and performed by veterans. For more information and ticket prices, call 618-332-1782.

For a Southwest Illinois getaway, **Alton** is hard to top. A hub for a variety of small Mississippi River communities, Alton is an antique mecca, former stop on the Underground Railroad, a top-viewing spot for migrating bald eagles and a gateway to Illinois' Lewis and Clark attractions. Alton is located 20 minutes from Hartford's Lewis and Clark Historic Site #1 – the departure point for the duo's journey and host to the 2004 bicentennial kick off, May 13-16. Alton is also home to the Beall Mansion Bed & Breakfast, a three-story, 9,100-square-foot museum and luxury estate. Today the

mansion is regarded as one of the most luxurious bed and breakfasts in the state, with world-class service and amenities. For more information on Alton, call 618-465-6676 or visit www.visitalton.com; for the Beall Mansion Bed & Breakfast, call 618-474-9100 or visit www.beallmansion.com.

WINTER TRAVEL

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on winter festivals, events, attractions and getaways statewide. All are available by calling **800-2CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting the bureau's Web site at **www.enjoyillinois.com**. The winter issue of *Illinois Now!*, a free, seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel in Illinois, will be available mid-November for holiday and winter travel planning. The magazine can be obtained by calling 800-2CONNECT or by visiting the bureau's Web site.

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

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