



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennifer Elving
312/240-2813
jennifer.elving@edelman.com

COME ALIVE THIS SPRING IN ILLINOIS

*Vibrant new experiences throughout the state blossom
into perfect weekend getaways*

CHICAGO (January 28, 2004) – Flowers and trees won't be the only things blooming this spring in Illinois. Bursting with a colorful array of activities and attractions, the state offers family trips down roller coasters and through historic sites, weekend getaways for friends that tap into spring festivals, season openers, golf courses and gardens, and romantic retreats at extraordinary bed and breakfasts – all perfect ingredients for memorable vacations.

Family Affair

Families just waking up from a long winter's nap can find sunshine and budding springtime fun in Illinois. From tots to grandparents, there's enough going on throughout the state to keep families entertained and young at heart.

- **CityPass:** Families that purchase the Chicago CityPass can save at least \$80 and advance to the front of the line at some of Chicago's top museums and attractions including the Adler Planetarium, The Field Museum of Natural History, Hancock Observatory, Museum of Science and Industry, Navy Pier, and the John G. Shedd Aquarium. For more information and prices, call 877-2CHICAGO or visit www.877chicago.com. (Chicago)
- **Six Flags Great America:** This world-class family entertainment complex in Gurnee kicks off the season on May 1 with a new roller coaster, four new rides and a newly themed Mardi Gras section of the park. Ragin' Cajun, the first roller coaster of its kind in the Midwest, zigzags guests through 1,378 feet of quick twists, tight curves and breathtaking drops. Its uniquely designed four-passenger cars spin independently throughout the course of the ride, so that no two ride experiences are alike. Families can also experience six new shows and exciting meet and greet opportunities with the park's famous characters. Family discount rates are available online when purchased in advance. For more information and prices, call 847-249-INFO or visit www.sixflags.com. (Chicagoland)

-more-

- **Burpee Museum of Natural History:** Visitors can get up-close in Rockford to see an old friend, “Jane,” a one-of-a-kind *Nanotyrannus* found in 2002. And after watching archeologists clean and treat Jane’s skeleton, families can head over to the Discovery Center Museum, a hands-on museum located next door. Discounted admission rates are offered to families visiting both museums in the same day. For more information and prices, call 815-965-3433 or visit www.burpee.org. (Northern)
- **Lincoln sites:** Visitors to the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield can tour the only home Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln ever owned, and then drive to nearby Petersburg, where New Salem’s reconstructed 1830s pioneer village showcases life as Lincoln experienced it, complete with timber houses, shops and stores that come to life with costumed interpreters. Coming soon: The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, opening in Springfield in 2004 and 2005 respectively, will pay homage to Illinois’ favorite son with an exciting collection of interactive exhibits and rotating displays showcasing the world’s largest collection of Lincoln items. For more information on the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, call the Visitor Information Center at 217-492-4241 ext. 221 or visit www.nps.gov/liho; for New Salem, call 217-632-4000 or visit www.lincolnsnewsalem.com; and for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, call 800-545-7300 or www.alincoln-library.com. (Central)
- **Wildlife Prairie State Park:** At this 2,000-acre zoological park in Peoria, travelers looking to get outdoors to enjoy springtime sunshine can rediscover the animals that once roamed the Illinois prairie. Bison, wolves, elk, cougars and otters are located throughout the restored prairie. Visitors can explore the prairie on special train tours and stay overnight in a renovated train caboose or prairie cabin. For more information and prices, call 309-676-0998 or visit www.wildlifeprairiestatepark.org. (Western)
- **Charlie Brown Park:** Packing a picnic lunch for dining at the 100-acre park located in Flora makes for a perfect warm weather outing. The park includes a swimming pool, horseshoe pits, nine-hole golf course, camping, fishing and steam engine rides. The swimming pool opens May 28, and all other activities are available pending weather. Visitors can grab a quick snack at Duke’s Drive-In on the outskirts of Flora, then head to Red Hill State Park for Old Settlers Days, held in April, and learn about the lives of our Pioneer ancestors. For more information, call 618-662-8313. (Southern)
- **Lewis and Clark National Signature Event: Illinois Bicentennial Commemoration:** Two hundred years in the making, the national signature Lewis & Clark Bicentennial event, located in Hartford May 13-16, commemorates the westward departure of the Corps of Discovery from Camp River DuBois to the uncharted lands of the U.S. All weekend, a special art exhibit highlights the work of Karl Bodmer, resident artist for the German Prince Maximilian who participated in the Lewis & Clark journey. Leading Friday’s activities are The U.S. Army “Old Guard” fife and drum core performing Twilight Tattoo – a United Remnant Band rarely seen outside Washington D.C. The event continues Saturday and Sunday with a performance by Federal Interagency Program: Corps II, a Breakfast with Jefferson event, the Anniversary Launch of Keelboat Flotilla, and Camp River DuBois activities. For more information and prices, call 618-465-6676 or visit www.visitilton.com. (Southwest)

Friendly Get-Togethers

Friendships blossom and grow in Illinois this season with events and activities that bring even the busiest of bees together. From teens to seniors, friends of all ages can find the perfect place to reconnect and celebrate spring.

- **St. Patrick's Day Parade:** Chicago's St. Patrick's Day Parade, March 13, marches to the beat of a different drum with more than 30 bands, Irish dancers in Celtic costumes, and 2,000-plus high-steppers making their way down Wacker Avenue. The true highlight is the view from the Michigan Avenue Bridge, which overlooks the Chicago River dyed green for the festivities. Chicago's South Side Irish St. Patrick's Day Parade, March 14, serves as the largest community St. Patrick's Day Parade in the United States, stretching through two and one-half miles of Western Avenue. For more information on the City of Chicago's St. Patrick's Day Parade, call 312-942-9188 or log onto www.chicagostpatsparade.com; for the South Side parade, call 773-239-7755 or log onto www.southsideirishparade.org. (Chicago)
- **Baseball Openers:** Baseball fans can head to Wrigleyville for the Chicago Cubs home opener, April 12, or to the South Side for the White Sox season opener, April 13. For more information, call the Sox ticket office at 312-674-1000 or the Cubs ticket office at 800-THE-CUBS, or visit www.chisox.com or www.cubs.com. (Chicago)
- **Arlington Park:** Arlington Park racetrack in Arlington Heights opens May 14 with 21 Thoroughbred races. Before a race, guests can visit the paddock to watch the horses being saddled and visit the announcer's booth to witness the horse-calling process. The campus also houses luxury suites and restaurants overlooking the track including the Governor's Room, the Marquee on the Green, International Room and the Million Platform. For more information and prices, call 847-385-7550 or visit www.arlingtonpark.com. (Chicagoland)
- **Anderson Gardens:** Travelers can take a break from the hustle and bustle of everyday life at Rockford's Anderson Gardens. Visitors can tour two very different gardens – a formal Japanese garden and a Garden of Reflection, the latter of which is a contemporary international garden with a strong Japanese influence. Daily tea ceremonies at the authentic Japanese Tea House and courses on ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement, at the horticulture center give participants an added sense of peace. The Gardens open May 1. For more information on Anderson Gardens, call 815-229-9390 or visit www.andersongardens.org. (Northern)
- **Classics and Chrome 2004:** Classic and Chrome 2004 in Loves Park, April 17 and 18, features more than 100 premium antique, classic and specialty cars. Located at the Indoor Sports Center, this exclusive indoor car show gives guys a chance to chat with owners and buy raffle tickets to win a brand-new BMW. A special People's Choice Award honors the best owner-automobile combo. For more information and prices, call 800-521-0849 or www.gorockford.com. (Northern)
- **Roger Ebert Overlooked Film Festival:** Held at the Virginia Theater in Champaign, April 21-25, the Roger Ebert Overlooked Film Festival introduces lesser-known films to mainstream audiences. Friends can catch a movie and attend the forum hosted by Ebert and the filmmaker after each showing, including this year's special "Brown vs. Board of Education" commemorative film.

Additionally, the festival hosts four academic panels on the University of Illinois campus. For more information and prices, call 217-244-0552 or visit www.ebertfest.com. (Central)

- **The Rock Island District:** The Rock Island Arts & Entertainment District hosts “Hornucopia,” May 21 and 22 in Rock Island, a horn-music festival with all types of solo and ensemble music, as well as hot and spicy foods. Past performers include Liquid Soul, The Toasters, Ray’s Music Exchange and The VooDoo Kings. Located on the Mississippi River, friends can enjoy The District’s artist galleries and studios, restaurants, brew pub, coffee shops, nightclubs, comedy clubs, casino, dinner theater, unique shops and other attractions. For more information and prices, call 309-788-6311 or visit www.ridistrict.com. (Western)
- **Vertical Heartland Rock Climbing School:** Friends can literally lean on each other at Buncombe’s Vertical Heartland Rock Climbing School, which teaches climber safety, and technical equipment usage and methods. On a private, outdoor team-building course catering to a full spectrum of physical abilities, visitors can try an innovative and forested course in a garden of sandstone boulders. Onsite lodging is available. For more information and prices, call 618-995-1427 or visit www.verticalheartland.com. (Southern)
- **Stone Creek Golf:** Located in Makanda, the 18-hole course encompasses the beauty of Southern Illinois in its lush three and one-half mile grounds. Opening April 1 for the season, Stone Creek Golf Course has weekday and weekend packages for one- and two-bedroom cottages. Great for golfers of all skill levels, Stone Creek features four tee boxes that play to a course rating of 67 from the red men’s tees, up to a challenging 74 from the black championship tees. Bogey’s Restaurant provides post-round fine dining, with steak, duck and lamb specialties. For more information and prices, call 618-351-GOLF or visit www.stonecreekgolf.com. (Southern)
- **Alton Antiquing:** The city’s Broadway Street boasts more than 60 antique dealers. Antiques Riverbend Treasures has long been a favorite boutique, featuring early 1900s country furniture made in the Midwest. The Plain and Fancy Emporium hosts three floors of Amish oak furniture, where every reasonable offer is accepted. For more information, call 800-258-6645 or visit www.visitilton.com. (Southwest)
- **Gateway International Raceway:** One of the largest motor sports venues in the Midwest, this versatile facility plays host to NASCAR events, drag races and other specialty events throughout the spring. Located in Madison, the first major 2004 event takes place May 7 and 8, a top box-car competition in the NASCAR Busch Series. Guests visiting May 28-30 can take a victory lap in a 600-horse power, Winston Cup stock car during the Richard Petty Driving Experience. Guests can ride along for free or sit behind the wheel with various packages available by reservation. For more information and prices, call Gateway International Raceway at 618-482-2400 or visit www.gatewayraceway.com; and the Richard Petty Driving Experience at 800-237-3889. (Southwest)

In the Mood

From newly blossoming love to perennial affection, Illinois has countless romantic travel opportunities blooming this spring. Couples can customize their getaways with historic bed breakfasts, hot-air balloon rides, four-star hotels and private museum tours.

- **The Peninsula Chicago:** Catering to couples, The Peninsula Chicago offers two packages both of which include a five-star stay in the hotel's deluxe or junior-suite rooms. The Peninsula Experience package includes one dozen long-stem roses upon arrival and a five-course meal at the hotel's Avenues restaurant with wine to complement each course. The Serene Indulgence package includes his and her bathrobes, two 30-minute massages and a Mandi Susu Milk Bath. For more information, prices and availability, call 312-337-2888 or visit <http://fasttrack.chicago.peninsula.com>. (Chicago)
- **Pheasant Run Resort and Dinner Theater:** One of Chicago's most all-encompassing resorts, this St. Charles getaway includes an 18-hole golf course, dinner theater, comedy club and a variety of shops. The "Rekindle the Flame Whirlpool Getaway" for couples includes deluxe overnight accommodations in the new two-story luxury whirlpool suites, a bottle of champagne and strawberries upon arrival, breakfast for two, a \$50 dinner credit, two Pheasant Run robes, a Mario Tricoci Hair Salon & Day Spa basket, a massage for two at Mario Tricoci Hair Salon & Day Spa, and access to the indoor and outdoor pools and fitness center. For more information, prices and availability, call 800-PHEASANT or visit www.pheasantrun.com/golf. (Chicagoland)
- **Galena Getaway:** Flowers are popping up all over Galena this spring – even in select downtown Galena hotel rooms. Throughout the season, the Galena Convention and Visitors Bureau welcomes travelers with fresh flowers upon arrival at area hotels. Couples looking to customize their retreat can choose from a variety of first-class lodging and activities in Galena, from taking a 45-minute romantic carriage ride through the pristine countryside and staying at a bed and breakfast to visiting the DeSoto House Hotel, the state's oldest hotel, for spa treatments and a stay. Visitors to Galena can also see the nationally renowned Galena Cellar Winery for a wine-tasting session and tour or head just outside of town for hot-air balloon rides. For more information, prices and availability, call 877-GO-GALENA or visit www.galena.org. (Northern)
- **Springfield Escape:** The "Venus and Mars" package at the Northfield Inn & Suites in Springfield encourages couples to relax on their own and then rekindle together. Guys can play a round of golf at the acclaimed Rail Golf Club, while gals can relax at the BJ Grand Salon & Spa. Back in the room, couples can reconnect over strawberries and champagne. Guests can add to their package with dinner at one of Springfield's oldest and finest restaurants, Chesapeake Seafood & Steak House. For more information, prices and availability, call 800-545-7300 or visit www.visit-springfieldillinois.com. (Central)
- **Baxter's Vineyards:** The Nauvoo Grand – A Bed and Breakfast Inn caters to couples with wine from Baxter's Vineyards & Winery – Illinois' oldest winery – and a cheese tray upon arrival. Horse-drawn wagon tours of historic Nauvoo showcase the area's rich heritage and a stop at Baxter's winery offers guests free wine samples. Nauvoo Glassworks' owner Jim Topic, a

- renowned Illinois glass artist, presents guests with a complimentary souvenir to remember their trip. For more information, prices and availability, call 309-837-7460. (Western)
- **Isle of View Bed and Breakfast:** Located in Metropolis, this historic bed and breakfast caters to couples with an “I Love You Package” featuring one-night lodging for two people in a Victorian-style master suite. The rooms also offer a whirlpool tub and king-size canopy bed, both facing a romantic coal-burning fireplace, and have a private bath with claw foot tub and shower. The package also includes champagne, homemade chocolates, appetizers and a full breakfast served at guests’ convenience in the formal dining room. For more information, prices and availability, call 618-524-5838 or visit [www.bbonline.com /il/isleofview](http://www.bbonline.com/il/isleofview). (Southern)
- **Bilbrey Farms Bed and Breakfast:** Edwardsville’s Bilbrey Farms truly is a rare find, incorporating an exotic animals farm with a bed and breakfast. The 80-acre farm has more than 40 animals, including a zebra, an emu, a llama, pygmy goats and miniature horses. The Castle Suite has its own entrance, complete with a living room with gas fireplace, a fully equipped kitchen and luxury bathroom, and a spacious bedroom looking out over the countryside. In the bath, a hand-painted ceiling by a local artist crowns the Jacuzzi tub and shower. For more information, prices and availability, call 618-692-1950 or visit www.bilbreyfarms.com. (Southwest)

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on spring 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 spring issue of *Illinois Now!*, a free, seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel in Illinois, will be available mid-February for more travel planning ideas. 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.

*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism
manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and
quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.*

###