



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Set Your Sites on Illinois this Summer**

*Top seasonal spots that take the guesswork out of summer travel*

**CHICAGO (April 19, 2004)** – From the rolling hills of Northern Illinois to the natural wonders of Southern Illinois, the state is ideally located within 500 miles – or a days drive – from one-third of the nation’s population making it easy to enjoy cultural, scenic, historic and adventurous spots all summer long.

### **The Heart and Soul of Illinois**

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From Michigan Avenue to the Museum of Science and Industry, and the blues and jazz clubs in between, Chicago offers rich culture, award-winning restaurants, world-class accommodations and some of the Midwest’s best shopping.

- **What’s in season: “Action! An Adventure in Moviemaking”** (opening May 28), a new interactive exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry about the art and technology of the film industry takes visitors behind the scenes. Guests see artifacts from blockbuster films, try their hands at filmmaking by recreating special effects, look through an authentic movie camera, try on movie costumes, learn the latest stunt techniques, and even “meet” industry professionals. Afterwards, patrons will walk right into the action of a real movie soundstage and participate in the creation of their own film. For more information, call 773-684-1414 or visit [www.msichicago.org](http://www.msichicago.org).
- **What to eat:** For lunch or dinner, **Gino’s East of Chicago**, a family-style restaurant known since 1966 for its deep-dish, sauce-on-top pizza, gives guests a real slice of the Windy City. For more information, call 312-943-1124 or visit [www.ginoseast.com](http://www.ginoseast.com).
- **Where to stay:** World-class, five-star hotels line Chicago’s famed Michigan Avenue centrally located for shoppers, theatergoers and museum enthusiasts. Many accommodations found along the **Magnificent Mile** also offer seasonal travel packages with special rates, dining coupons and discounted museum or theater tickets. For more information, call 877-CHICAGO or visit [www.877chicago.com](http://www.877chicago.com).
- **When to go: Millennium Park’s Jay Pritzker Pavilion** opens July 16, with musical performances in a state-of-the-art, outdoor facility designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry. The pavilion will have 4,000 seats and capacity for an additional 7,000 people on the 95,000 square foot lawn. For more information, call 312-744-3090 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org/exploringchicago](http://www.cityofchicago.org/exploringchicago).

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**Governor Rod R. Blagojevich**

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

Additionally, Chicago's summer festival lineup features free entertainment, food and fun for everyone including:

- Paying homage to the city's musical legacy, the **20<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Gospel Music Festival** in Grant Park (June 4-6) features 45 classic and contemporary performances.
- The **21<sup>st</sup> Annual Chicago Blues Festival** in Grant Park (June 10-13) celebrates the roots of Chicago blues with 65 performances on six stages.
- The **Taste of Chicago** in Grant Park (June 25-July 4) offers a taste from 70 different restaurants ranging from classic Chicago to the exotic, as well as cooking demonstrations by the city's top chefs and daily events. The Taste kicks off with the **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Country Music Festival** (June 26 and 27) featuring a showcase of country music's top talents. Visitors enjoy a medley of country music featuring classic country, bluegrass, western swing and cajun.
- Chicago's **47<sup>th</sup> Annual Venetian Night** (July 31) – a procession of lighted boats parading across Lake Michigan's shoreline – can be seen from Grant Park as well.
- The **46<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Air & Water Show** (August 21-22), along Lake Michigan's waterfront, is the nation's oldest and largest free admission exhibition. The United States' Blue Angels headline the weekend with awe-inspiring acts, while professional water skiers are one of the many performances on Lake Michigan.
- The largest outdoor Latin music festival in the Midwest – **16<sup>th</sup> Annual Viva! Chicago Latin Music Festival** in Grant Park (August 28 and 29) – features 30 performances by salsa, Latin pop, rumba, meringue, cha-cha and Latin alternative rock artists from around the world.
- The **26<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Jazz Festival** in Grant Park (September 2-5) showcases the world's finest jazz musicians with nearly 80 performances.
- Closing out the summer, **Chicago's Celtic Festival** in Grant Park (September 18-19) features authentic Irish music, dance and storytelling.

For more information on these and other Chicago festivals, call 312-744-0571 or visit [www.ci.chi.il.us/specialevents](http://www.ci.chi.il.us/specialevents).

## **Out and About in Chicago's Backyard**

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Just beyond the city limits, the Chicagoland region keeps visitors to the Windy City's backyard busy with an amusement park, dinner theaters, an award-winning Fourth of July festival and more.

- **What's in season: Six Flags Great America** in Gurnee offers new thrills this summer by introducing Ragin' Cajun, where riders zigzag through 1,378 feet of quick twists, tight curves and breathtaking drops aboard its uniquely designed four-passenger cars. The park also offers six new shows. For more information, call 847-249-INFO or visit [www.sixflags.com](http://www.sixflags.com).

Nearby, in the town of Wadsworth, the **Tempel Farms Lipizzan** stallions (June 23-September 1) – the largest team of championship equestrian horses outside Austria – execute an intricate ballet dance as traditionally performed since the 1600s in Vienna. For more information, call 847-623-7272 or visit [www.templefarms.com](http://www.templefarms.com).

And at **Arlington Park** (May 19-September 19), horse lovers can watch Thoroughbred competitions each weekend with races, special family days, musical performances and facility tours. Before a race, guests can visit the paddock to watch horses being saddled and visit the announcer's booth. For more information, call 847-385-7550 or visit [www.arlingtonpark.com](http://www.arlingtonpark.com).

- **What to eat: Walter Payton's Roundhouse** has long been known for great service, fantastic food and historic atmosphere, but this season its courtyard opens offering several bars, a putting green and a large gazebo. Guests dining on summer weekends enjoy live music as well as weekly pasta and seafood specials. A lasting tribute to the late Walter Payton's legacy, the campus museum is filled with memorabilia from his college, pro and post football years including his Super Bowl ring, racing gear and special tribute videos. For more information, call 630-264-BREW or visit [www.walterpaytonroundhouse.com](http://www.walterpaytonroundhouse.com).
- **Where to stay:** In St. Charles, visitors can take it easy at **Pheasant Run Resort and Spa**. The complex includes an 18-hole golf course, comedy and fitness clubs, Mario Tricoci Salon and Day Spa, shops, and in- and outdoor pools. Additionally, Chicago's Noble Fool Theatre performs its comedy routines at Pheasant Hall's Preservation Hall Studio and Mainstage theaters each weekend. For more information, call 630-584-6300 or visit [www.pheasantrun.com](http://www.pheasantrun.com).
- **When to go:** Fourth-of-July travelers shouldn't miss Lisle's **Eyes to the Skies Hot Air Balloon Festival** (July 1-4). This American Bus Association "Top 100" event offers two daily hot-air balloon launches, musical entertainment, a special children's area, an exotic animal educational show, a carnival, 30 food vendors and 100 craft booths. For more information, call 630-575-9798 or visit [www.eyestotheskiesfestival.com](http://www.eyestotheskiesfestival.com).

### Escape into the Serenity of Northern Illinois' Rolling Hills

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Vast plains decorate the scenery throughout Northern Illinois, an expansive region offering rest and relaxation at Rockford's award-winning gardens, an educational view of "Jane" the dinosaur, lakefront dining, accommodations at the state's most historic hotel and a 30-block music festival.

- **What's in season:** Rockford's 12-acre **Anderson Gardens** (open May 1-October 1) comprised of two distinctly different authentic areas; a formal Japanese Garden from the Kamakuru period, and a contemporary, globally inspired reflection garden. Waterfalls, Koi ponds, quiet corners and a 16<sup>th</sup>-century-style teahouse provide guests with endless relaxation.

Also located in Rockford, the **Burpee Museum of Natural History** showcases "Jane," a one-of-a-kind Nanotyrannus discovered in 2002. Visitors can watch as archeologists excavate, clean and treat the skeleton. For more information, call the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-521-0849 or visit [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com).

- **What to eat:** The recently opened **Cove Restaurant** on Apple Canyon Lake is the area's only lakefront dining restaurant, with specialties ranging from salads and appetizers to pizza

and apple pie. Located near Galena in Apple River, diners can take a break on the deck or in the restaurant. For more information, call 815-492-2700 or visit [www.applecanyonlake.org](http://www.applecanyonlake.org).

- **Where to stay:** History abounds west of Rockford at Galena's **DeSoto Hotel** – the state's oldest hotel with beautiful signature décor, oversized rooms and high ceilings. The hotel was made famous by former guests such as Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Mark Twain, Teddy Roosevelt and Susan B. Anthony. For more information, call 800-343-6562 or visit [www.desotohouse.com](http://www.desotohouse.com).
- **When to go:** Rockford's **On the Waterfront** (September 2-5), a 30-block, 150-performance music festival held annually on Labor Day weekend, lures thousands of visitors to Northern Illinois. Featuring a variety of music such as rock, oldies, big band, gospel, country, children's and reggae music, the festival includes performances by The Allman Brothers, Foreigner and Journey. Additionally, more than 40 food booths serve up cuisines such as pork chop sandwiches, apple fritters, shish-ke-bobs and Polish sausages, as well as domestic and foreign brews. For more information, call 815-964-4388 or visit [www.onthewaterfront.com](http://www.onthewaterfront.com).

### **Discover the Land of Lincoln**

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Visitors to Central Illinois take a step back into history for an experience rich with lore and legacy. Historic Lincoln locations pepper the region, along with Route 66 attractions, a water park, cozy bed and breakfasts, and the annual state fair.

- **What's in season:** The 60-acre **Knights Action Park and Caribbean Water Adventure** features a 400,000-gallon wave pool, two waterslides at Pirates' Plunge, two playing pools in Seal Bay, a 1,297-foot-long lazy river, and bumper and pedal boats on the seven-acre lake. The park's newest attraction, Tsunami, takes tube-riders two at a time on what feels like a free-fall off a four-story wave. The theme park also offers go-karts, miniature golf, batting cages, laser tags and a 50-tee heated driving range. For more information, call 217-546-8881 or visit [www.knightsactionpark.com](http://www.knightsactionpark.com).
- **What to eat:** At Springfield's **Alexander's Steakhouse**, patrons choose their own large steaks and then grill them over open pits inside the restaurant, or for a slight fee, the grill side chef cooks steaks for guests. Steaks come with a baked potato, Texas toast and a trip to the salad bar, all enjoyed in the restaurant's rustic, relaxed and family-friendly atmosphere. For more information, call 217-793-0440 or visit [www.mercedesrestaurants.com/alexspring](http://www.mercedesrestaurants.com/alexspring).
- **Where to stay:** At **Linda's Country Loft Bed & Breakfast** – a quaint escape located on the Sangamon River's banks in Monticello – guest rooms overlook the wooded, 1,500-acre Robert Allerton Park. Each room hosts a view of nature reserves, formal gardens, statue-lined walkways and 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings. For more information, call 217-762-7316.
- **When to go:** The **Illinois State Fair** (August 13-22) celebrates summer with carnival rides and entertains with a grandstand lineup of national headliners, five themed activity areas,

horse races and shows, musical ensemble performances, and educational seminars. Additionally, more than 200 food vendors showcase their culinary specialties including pork on a stick and fried Snickers™. For more information, call 217-782-6661 or visit [www.state.il.us/fair](http://www.state.il.us/fair).

### **Take a Trip along Illinois' River Country**

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Nestled between the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, the Western region provides travelers with stunning views along the Great River Road, agricultural exhibits at the world-class John Deere Pavilion, and national events nestled throughout quaint Mississippi River towns.

- **What's in season:** Tracing the Mississippi River throughout Illinois, the 355-mile Great River Road stops in the Quad Cities – home to Moline's **John Deere Pavilion**. The Pavilion also hosts the annual John Deere Classic – an official PGA golf tournament (July 5-11), outdoor music festivals and educational programs. For more information, call 309-765-1000 or visit [www.johndeerepavilion.com](http://www.johndeerepavilion.com).
- **What to eat:** At **Jim's Downtown Steakhouse** in Peoria, diners choose from an upscale surf-and-turf menu served in an old English country inn. After dinner, patrons can relax in the elegant pub and listen to nightly piano bar performances. **Fairview Farms Restaurant** offers a more economical option, with family-style, all-you-can-eat, homemade dinners served in a turn-of-the-century farmhouse. For more information, call Jim's Downtown Steakhouse at 309-673-5300 or Fairview Farms Restaurant at 309-697-4111.
- **Where to stay:** Peoria's **Hotel Père Marquette** has charmed travelers since 1927, offering guests a range of amenities and activities. Weekend travelers can enjoy Friday night jazz ensemble performances hosted in the hotel's lobby. For more information, call 309-637-6500 or visit [www.hotelperemarquette.com](http://www.hotelperemarquette.com).
- **When to go:** The **Grand Excursion 2004 Flotilla** (June 25–27), in East Moline, features a recreation of the historic steamboat journey that traveled up the Mississippi to Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1854. The **Taste of the Quad Cities** kicks off the city's lineup of Grand Excursion activities, with Mississippi River boat cruises, tours of area art galleries, studios, special offers at area restaurants and shops, historical presentations and musical performances. For more information, call 651-298-0444 or visit [www.grandexcursion.com](http://www.grandexcursion.com).

### **Illinois' Great Outdoors**

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The impressive waterways and scenic landscapes of Southern Illinois add an element of adventure for visitors to the area. Some of the best outdoor spots in the state are located in the Shawnee National Forest, Cave-In-Rock State Park, and Rend Lake, and visitors can also enjoy riverfront dining and a relaxing night at a bed and breakfast.

- **What's in season:** Whittington's 19,000-acre **Rend Lake Recreation Area**, located at Wayne Fitzgerald State Park, provides water-sports rentals, sailing, fishing and swimming. The area also features a 27-hole championship golf course, 10-station championship bird-trap range, field dog trial grounds and an abundance of wildlife.

Harrisburg's not-to-be missed **Shawnee National Forest** and **Garden of the Gods Recreation Area** stretch across 3,300 acres of undisturbed wilderness. The Garden of the Gods Observation Trail leads travelers to bluffs overlooking the picturesque Camel Rock, Anvil Rock and Devil's Smokestack formations. For more information, call Rend Lake Recreation Area at 618-279-3110 or visit [www.rendlake.com](http://www.rendlake.com); for Shawnee National Forest, call 618-253-1060 or visit [www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee/); and for Garden of the Gods Recreation Area, call 618-253-7114 or visit [www.fs.fed.us/r9/shawnee](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/shawnee).

- **What to eat: Bistro 51** in Carbondale serves classic French cuisine. Specialties include escargot served in cream sauce, foie gras and profiteroles. Additionally, the restaurant hosts one of the regions most comprehensive wine lists, which patrons can enjoy inside the quaint, 18<sup>th</sup>-century French decorated interior, or outside on the terrace. For more information, call 618-549-9700.
- **Where to stay:** At **Rend Lake Resort**, travelers can stay in newly refurbished facilities and play golf on an award-winning 27-hole complex designed by renowned Chicago architect Lawrence Packard. The Rend Lake's Seasons Lodge features a large country porch furnished with plenty of oversized rockers and beautifully furnished rooms. Guests especially enjoy soaking in the outdoor spa under the gazebo and the complimentary bicycles, perfect for a ride along the nature trail. Rend Lake Golf Course, granted a 4½-star rating from *Golf Digest Magazine*, also offers a state-of-the-art, lighted driving range and practice facility with two large tees, raised target greens and a practice bunker. A putting green near the first tee provides a second short game practice area. For more information, call 618-629-2600 or visit [www.rendlake.org](http://www.rendlake.org).
- **When to go:** In mid-June, visitors to Metropolis can celebrate with the King of Adventure at the **Annual Superman Celebration** (June 11-13). Each year the festival attracts 40,000 enthusiasts to its street fair, carnival, strong man competition, Superman and Superboy pageant, costume contests, and auction banquet. For more information, call 800-949-5740 or visit <http://metropolischamber.com/celebrate>.

### **Explore the History and Heritage of Illinois**

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From the ancient remains of Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site to the launching point for Lewis and Clark's famed Corps of Discovery, visitors to Southwest Illinois can explore and experience history throughout this region.

- **What's in season:** Twenty miles north of Alton lies Hartford, where **Camp River DuBois** is home to the new 14,000-square-foot Lewis and Clark State Historic Site and Interpretive Center. This is the largest heritage site dedicated to the Corps of Discovery east of the Rocky

Mountains. A full-scale replica of the cutaway keelboat used by the famous duo is a must-see before travelers visit the Lewis and Clark Monument and five other sites in the area. For more information, call 618-251-5811 or visit [www.greatriverroad.com/lewclark/lewhome](http://www.greatriverroad.com/lewclark/lewhome).

- **What to eat:** Near Camp River DuBois, the **Sweet Olive Cafe and The Cork & Cruet** in Alton serve homemade soups, salads, sandwiches, desserts, hand-pulled espresso and gourmet coffee drinks. More than 40 varieties of teas and 20 coffees are available at this quaint café. Additionally, more than 1,000 bottles of wine are available for purchase. For more information, call 618-465-7669.
- **Where to stay:** Alton's **Beall Mansion**, a historic bed and breakfast off the Mississippi, offers summer packages and the "Best service in Illinois," according to *Illinois Magazine*. Located on "Millionaire's Row," a city block filled with Victorian mansions, the Beall Mansion features 11.5-foot ceilings, hardwood floors, crystal chandeliers, leaded glass windows, pocket doors and original woodwork. For more information, call 618-474-9100 or visit [www.beallmansion.com](http://www.beallmansion.com).
- **When to go:** Located on Carlyle Lake at Eldon Hazlet State Park, the **National Regatta North America Championships** (July 17-23) hosts approximately 70 boats in a Lewis and Clark-themed regatta commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the duo's expedition. Spectators can watch the seven-mile race from stationed boats or from the lake's beaches. For more information, visit [www.csa-sailing.org](http://www.csa-sailing.org).

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on summer 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](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

The spring issue of *Illinois Now!*, a free, seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel in Illinois, is currently available for more travel planning ideas. The summer issue of *Illinois Now!* will be available mid-May. Additionally, the 2004 Illinois Travel Guide provides readers with more than 200 pages of comprehensive travel information including "best of" experiences, regional highlights and scenic drives. The state's magazine and travel guide 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 or Katie Markese at 312-297-7561.

*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.*

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