



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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WARMING UP FOR WINTERTIME FUN IN ILLINOIS

Seasonal and cultural attractions make Illinois the perfect winter playground

CHICAGO – The arrival of winter signals a season of exciting activities and events in Illinois. A flurry of attractions such as festivals, cultural delights and icy outdoor pursuits await travelers to the state.

Winter Events and Festivals: Gathering to celebrate the season

The Chicago Children's Museum provides a sweet experience with its **Gingerbread Fantasy Factory** on November 26-January 9. Kids of all ages are invited to step inside the fantasy and pretend to make, bake and decorate gingerbread goodies; read and sing-a-long with the Gingerbread Man; and participate in creating gingerbread-scented sculptures.

While at Navy Pier, families can take part in **Winter WonderFest**, December 10-January 2. Chicago's popular attraction features hundreds of decorated trees, sparkling lights and wintertime decorations, as well as an indoor ice skating rink, bungee jump, children's craft area, entertainment stage, inflatable games and slides. (Chicago)

For more information, contact Chicago Children's Museum (312-527-1000, www.chicildrensmuseum.org); Navy Pier (312-595-PIER, www.navypier.com).

By combining discounted hotel rates with exciting events, this season's **Chicago Winter Delights** will satisfy all types of travelers. Each weekend, January 6 through February 27, offers a theme that blends the city's best entertainment, dining, cultural and historical offerings. "Let's Dance," "Just Say Cabaret" and "Paint the Town Blues" are just a few examples of the colorful package themes visitors may experience. (Chicago)

For more information and a full listing of Winter Delights activities, contact a Chicago Travel Counselor (877-CHICAGO, www.877chicago.com).

Kids and adults alike can venture outside the city for magical storytelling on December 11 and 12. **Polar Express and Yuletide Celebration** takes place at Blackberry Farm's Pioneer Village in Aurora and charms guests with a narration of the legendary tale *Polar Express* and a traditional Victorian Christmas party. (Chicagoland)

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For more information, contact Blackberry Farms (847-634-3291, www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org).

Winterfest, January 14-16, at Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park in Lena offers a full weekend of winter activities, starting Friday with a Festival of Lights, candlelight ice skating and a traditional chili supper. The activities continue Saturday and Sunday with snow sculpting sessions, the Winterfest Parade, horse-drawn sleigh rides and the Winterfest Dance. Visitors return year after year for the **Annual Bed Races** in which participants find any bed they can, attach wheels and roll down the six-block Main Street course for the win. (Northern)

For more information, contact Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park (815-369-4282).

Springfield's 80-acre Lincoln Memorial Gardens celebrates the sweet and sticky during **Maple Syrup Time**, February 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 and 27 and March 5 and 6. Visitors can observe as experts tap the trees, collect sap and reduce 40 gallons of sap into one gallon of syrup. Perhaps more enticing is the chance to taste the delicious final product. (Central)

For more information, contact Lincoln Memorial Gardens (217-529-1111, www.lmgnc.com).

The **Galesburg Historical Society Chocolate Festival**, February 12 and 13, prepares guests for the delicious celebration of Valentine's Day. Galesburg's Antique Mall overflows with countless homemade and commercially made treats for tasting, including tortes, cakes, pies and creams. Additional sweets are available for sale in downtown stores. (Western)

For more information, contact the Galesburg Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (309-343-2485, www.visitgalesburg.com).

Cultural Attractions: Warming up the heart and mind

Chicago's Field Museum features **Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years – Selections from the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum** from November 13-May 8. Visitors can reminisce about a legendary era while exploring how Jacqueline Kennedy's taste and style influenced American women. *Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Years* presents photographs, documents, film clips and more than 70 garments worn by the celebrated political and fashion icon. (Chicago)

For more information, contact The Field Museum (312-922-9410, www.fnmh.org).

Christkindlmarket at Chicago's Daley Plaza replicates Germany's famous Nuremberg market and features more than 40 lively, colorful booths November 26-December 22. Just like the traditional German Christmas market, it provides visitors an opportunity to taste special holiday treats such as Glühwein (hot spicy red wine) and Lebkuchen (gingerbread), and shop for traditional German holiday gifts such as toys, candles, ornaments, cookies, woodcarvings and nutcrackers. Holiday trees, illumination and ornaments give the market its festive flair while a series of choral and orchestral performances further enhance the experience. (Chicago)

For more information, contact the Mayor's Office of Special Events (312-744-3370, www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents).

Visitors can celebrate Black History Month this February with a visit to the **West Town Museum of Cultural History** in Maywood. The Museum has been the center of black history in Maywood since 1857 and its archives depict the struggles and triumphs of local African-Americans. Not to be missed is a pictorial exhibit of the Ten Mile Freedom House, which was a stop along the Underground Railroad for runaway slaves in the 1880s. (Chicagoland)

For more information, contact the Oak Park Convention and Visitors Bureau (708-524-7800, www.visitoakpark.com).

The **Julmarknad Christmas Market**, November 26-28 and December 4 and 5, in Bishop Hill, breathes life into Swedish traditions with a festival of lights procession, Scandinavian folk dancing and a chocolate walk. Children will love the folk characters who roam the village, such as The Julbok (Swedish goat-man) and jul tomten (Swedish gnomes). Additionally, handmade wares, folk art, antiques and Swedish delicacies will be available for purchase. (Northern)

With more Swedish-Americans per capita than any other city in America, Rockford is proud of its many Swedish holiday traditions. On December 4, Rockford hosts **Lucia Fest**, a traditional winter festival with authentic Swedish foods such as lingonberries and limpa bread, as well as the time-honored Lucia Pageant. The pageant features one "Lucia," wearing a crown of lighted candles, who leads dozens of young girls down the altar of Rockford's First Lutheran Church. The group sings traditional Swedish songs, followed by the telling of Lucia's story, which states that she was an Italian woman who brought food to the Swedish people during a famine. The Fest also features traditional Swedish crafts and imported gifts direct from Sweden. (Northern)

For more information, contact Bishop Hill (309-927-3061, www.bishophill.com); Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-521-0849, www.gorockford.com).

Families looking for holiday music from afar should not miss "Scottish Christmas," December 8 at the **Krannert Center** in Urbana. This holiday celebration, featuring Scottish fiddle champion Bonnie Rideout and her Celtic band, draws the audience into a rich musical heritage of carols, wassail tunes and dance music. (Central)

For more information, contact the Krannert Center (217-244-4620, www.krannertcenter.org).

On November 17-December 18, individuals can warm up with nostalgia and a different kind of tune at the **Prairie Cabaret Theatre** in Peoria. "The Winter Wonderettes" return to the theatre this season to perform a concert full of 1950's and 1960's holiday tunes sure to have audiences tapping their toes. (Western)

For more information, contact the Prairie Cabaret Theatre (309-494-9100, www.prairiecabarettheatre.com).

Keeping Christmas at Apple River Fort, December 11 and 12, allows visitors to experience all the trimmings of an 1830's Christmas. Hot cider flows freely while costumed interpreters demonstrate winter activities, such as candle dipping and sausage making, and explain the importance of keeping holiday traditions alive. (Southern)

For more information, contact Apple River Fort (815-858-2028, www.applesriverfort.org). Held in Cahokia on February 5, **Fete du Bon Vieux Temps** is the colonial version of Mardi Gras with music and dancing reminiscent of the celebrations held by the area's French settlers more than 200 years ago. This "Festival of the Good Old Days" takes visitors on candlelit tours of historic sites such as the Jarrot Mansion and the Martin-Boismenu House, and delights listeners with costumed storytellers. The evening culminates with the Colonial Mardi Gras Ball featuring dancing from this time period. (Southwest)

For more information, contact the Tourism Bureau of Southwestern Illinois (800-442-1488, www.thetourismbureau.com).

Icy Encounters: Outdoor events in Illinois

McCormick Tribune Plaza Ice Skating Rink opens late November and remains open seven days a week throughout the winter. Located in Chicago's Millennium Park, the 200-foot-long and 80-foot-wide rink hosts a variety of skating opportunities from hockey leagues to instructional clinics. To rest and warm up, skaters can head to The Park Grill, a 300-seat restaurant nestled beside the rink. (Chicago)

For more information, contact the Mayor's Office of Special Events (312-744-3370, www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents).

Palos Heights' **Winterfest**, January 22, brings people to the Lake Katherine Nature Preserve to experience the joys of the season. The highlight of Winterfest is the dog-sledding competition where bold participants race along a slippery, obstacle-filled course for the prestigious dog-sledding champion title. Additional festival events include cross-country skiing, ice skating, bobsled rides, children's crafts, a hearty winter soup contest and folk music performances. (Chicagoland)

For more information, contact the City of Palos Heights (708-361-1873, www.palosheights.org).

Nearly 100,000 spectators gather annually for the **Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition** in Rockford's Sinnissippi Park, January 19-22. As one of Northern Illinois' major winter events, the competition invites professional snow sculptors from around the country to form giant blocks of snow into pieces of awe-inspiring art. Past masterpieces have depicted dolphins, ice fishermen and even Oscar the Grouch. (Northern)

For more information, contact Rockford Park District (815-987-8844, www.rockfordparkdistrict.org).

While in the northern region, visitors can venture to Galena for a trolley ride through the town in which more than 85 percent of the buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also, nearby **Chestnut Mountain Resort** sits high above the Mississippi River and offers exciting skiing for beginners and experts alike, with more than 17 trails. The mountain touts trails up to 3,500 feet and a 475-foot vertical descent. A full-service resort, Chestnut Mountain is ideal for both family and romantic getaways. (Northern)

For more information, contact Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention and Visitors Bureau (877-GO-GALENA, www.galena.org).

Hardy's Reindeer Ranch in Rantoul, open November 18-December 30, feels like the North Pole with nearly 20 resident reindeer entertaining the crowds. After visiting Dasher and Dancer, visitors may pick a holiday tree from the extensive collection, look for special presents at the gift shop and enjoy live entertainment. (Central)

For more information, contact Hardy's Reindeer Ranch (217-893-3407, www.reindeer-ranch.com).

Another place to have a great time in the snow is at the 28-acre **Ski Snowstar Winter Sports Park** located minutes from the Quad Cities. With downhill ski runs of all levels, a snow tubing hill and plenty of lifts, anyone can race down the slopes. Additionally, Ski Snowstar offers discounted holiday rates on New Year's Eve (Dec. 31), Martin Luther King Day (Jan. 17) and President's Day (Feb. 21). (Western)

For more information, contact Ski Snowstar (800-383-4002, www.skisnowstar.com); Quad Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau (800-747-7800, www.visitquadcities.com).

Whether it's bass, catfish or walleye an ice fisherman is after, one of the best places to find all three is at **Carlyle Lake** in Southern Illinois. Carlyle covers more than 26,000 acres of water and 11,000 acres of land, making it the largest manmade lake in Illinois and the perfect destination for individuals seeking the icy catch of the day. (Southern)

For more information, contact Carlyle Lake (618-594-2484, www.carlylelake.com).

Located five miles west of Grafton, **Pere Marquette State Park** is Illinois' largest state park, comprising more than 8,000 acres. With its many trails and scenic overlooks, the park is an ideal destination for cross-country skiers. Also, wintertime is the perfect time to stay at Pere Marquette's Lodge and stone guest cabins in order to watch Illinois' bald eagles soar. (Southwest)

For more information, contact the Pere Marquette State Park (618-786-3323, www.greatriverroad.com/Pere/PereIndex.htm).

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on **3-Day Getaways**, winter festivals, events and attractions. All are available by calling **1-800-2-CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting the Bureau's Web site at enjoyillinois.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Statewide photography is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Katie Markese at katie.markese@edelman.com, 312-297-7561 or Amy McGee at amy.mcgee@edelman.com, 312-240-2829.

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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