



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE OF GUILTY PLEASURES IN ILLINOIS *Quirky indulgences and things you hate to love abound throughout the state in 2005*

With the New Year comes new resolutions, which are typically the tried and true promises to lose weight, exercise more and save money. This year, though, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism wants to help travelers resolve to do something far more achievable – celebrate the simple, fun and sometimes quirky indulgences in life known as guilty pleasures.

Lou Harry, co-author of “Encyclopedia of Guilty Pleasures”, says, “We’re told what’s cool today, which isn’t usually what was cool yesterday or what will be cool tomorrow. Life’s little pleasures should be embraced in the moment, from watching a “Baywatch” marathon to spending your paycheck shopping on Michigan Avenue.”

With New Year’s resolutions rampant, now is the perfect time to plan a reprieve from the ordinary. Whether it’s a calorie-packed bakery binge along Route 66, a return to the days of disco or a lavish spa treatment, Illinois is the perfect place to indulge in guilty pleasures all year.

Winter

Bushy sideburns, sparkly jumpsuits and blue suede shoes await visitors January 14 and 15 at the **Midwest Elvis Impersonators Competition and Winter Jam** in Springfield. Twenty national and international Elvis-tribute artists compete for the title of The King – or the closest thing to it. Of course, the Elvises won’t leave the building until the final \$3,000 prizewinner is announced. (217-793-3733) *Central*

On February 15, world-famous ABBA tribute band, **Bjorn Again**, takes the stage in home “Swede” home Chicago at the House of Blues. Take a chance, take a chance, take a chance on this ABBA-solutely amazing night on the town! (www.ticketmaster.com) *Chicago*

Indulge as the lush longhaired musical phenomenon **Yanni** performs at Chicago’s United Center. And just in time for Valentine’s Day, there’s no need for cliché gifts when the performer takes to the stage on February 17, creating a world of romance in his wake. Even Cupid would get a run for his money. (312-455-4500, www.united-center.com) *Chicago*

Visitors can treat themselves to a Valentine’s evening with pop phenom **Donny Osmond**. It’s a real toss up as guests find out if they’re a little bit country or a little bit rock-n-roll, and lovers won’t want to miss Donny as he performs “Puppy Love” at the Peoria Civic Center February 14. (www.peoriaciviccenter.com) *Western*

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For a romantic Valentine's evening of dancing and dining, visitors can travel to Crystal Lake where the 1930's-style **Porter's Oyster Bar and Night Club** is located. The Motown group New Orleans Beau and the Big Easy plays Friday night, and Saturday features Libido Funk Circus, covering the best of the ultimate guilty pleasure: disco. Polyester suits can only enhance doing "The Hustle." (815-477-0340, www.portersoysterbar.com) Eighty "outta sight" guest rooms are available just five minutes away at Crystal Lake's Country Inn & Suites. (800-456-4000, www.countryinns.com) *Northern*

Spring

Visitors can live in the lap of luxury—even if only for a day—and escape to a French country cottage nestled along the Fox River's edge. The **Herrington Inn & Spa** in Geneva offers indulgent treatments, from Spirulina Algae and Dead Sea mud body wraps to cornmeal and honey facials. This Chicagoland escape provides lavish guest rooms and superior pampering with effects lasting long beyond the actual visit. (630-208-7433, www.herringtoninn.com) *Chicagoland*

Dinner theater is the only guilty pleasure that not only allows, but requires, audiences to dig into a carved-meat and mashed potato buffet, all while catchy show tunes fill the room. At White Pines Inn and Dinner Theater guests can relish "**A Star is Born: The Music of Barbra Streisand**" on March 30 and 31 at the intimate open-beamed log cabin lodge in Mt. Morris. Though "Babs" won't be there to belt out the tunes in person, Grammy nominee Maureen Christine will deliver a collection of Streisand favorites sure to make everyone *verklemt*. (815-946-3817, www.whitepinesinn.com) *Northern*

Visitors can satisfy their craving for dazzling displays of Irish song and dance by attending the original **Riverdance** at Aurora's Paramount Arts Centre. Chicago native Michael Flatley created the show in which the Lycra-wearing Irish dancing troupe twirls, taps and amazes audiences March 4-6. (630-896-6666, www.paramountarts.com) Also jiggling their way to the newly renovated Genesee Theatre in Waukegan on February 14 and 15 is Flatley's **Lord of the Dance**. (312-902-1500, www.ticketmaster.com) *Chicagoland*

Summer

Dodgeball is no children's game this summer as players and fans from across the country converge on Olympic Park in Schaumburg for the **National Amateur Dodgeball Association's Outdoor National Championship and Dodgeball Days** July 22 and 23. (847-985-2115) *Chicagoland*

It's a bird. It's a plane. It's...a man in tights? Superman, the popular "DC Comics" superhero, takes center stage in his hometown of Metropolis, June 9-12, when visitors to this southern town salute the "Man of Steel" at the **Annual Superman Celebration**. The 2005 festival features mini-guilty pleasures such as a Superman play and a Superboy pageant. (800-949-5740, www.metropolischamber.com/events.htm) *Southern*

Heading into its 152nd year, the **Illinois State Fair** in Springfield is the celebration of Illinois' rich agricultural history. But the fair also offers attendees a chance to see a life-sized cow made of butter, tractor pulls, carnival rides and more. This year's fair is August 12-21, and mouths are already watering for deliciously guilty delicacies, such as elephant ears, foot-long corn dogs and the decadent deep-fried Snickers™ bars. (www.agr.state.il.us/isf)

If visitors need a rest after their decadent consumption, beautiful turn-of-century rooms are offered at The Inn at 835. The bed and breakfast offers luxurious suites within walking distance of downtown Springfield. (217-523-4468, www.innat835.com) *Central*

Fall

“Like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives” is a passage steeped in sentiment for thousands of daytime television aficionados throughout the country. Die-hard fans can take their love affair a step further at the **Days of Our Lives Fest** in Salem, which shares its name with the soap opera’s fictional town. Each September provides the chance to meet and greet actors from the legendary soap opera – baby switches, amnesia and extramarital affairs are optional. *Southern*

Route 66 is internationally recognized for its historical significance and famed stops along the way. The “Old Road” also offers the **best of bakeries** offering homemade sweets – a “must-binge” when enjoying guilty pleasures and storing food for the impending winter. Visitors can get their kicks (and treats!) at the historic Weber House in Springfield where the French-inspired bakery, **Incredibly Delicious**, is known for its flaky croissants, chocolate pistachio cake and customer favorite lemon raspberry cake with buttercream frosting.

Gorging on sweets on 66 must also include a stop at **Blue Stem Bake Shop** in Elkhart, which offers comfort food such as macadamia nut cookies and Abraham Lincoln’s favorite cake, vanilla almond. Also, **Ariston Café** in Litchfield has been serving homemade cheesecake, baklava and oh-so-sinful Red Velvet cake since 1924. (Incredibly Delicious in Springfield: 217-528-8548, Blue Stem Bake Shop in Elkhart: 217-947-2522; Ariston Café in Litchfield: 217-324-2023) *Central*

Gourmet cheese in one hand, a glass of wine in the other, and a stunning view to soothe the eyes highlight a visit to **Piasa Winery** in Grafton. Located along the National Great Rivers Scenic Byway, Piasa inspires lively conversation and an appreciation for the finer things in life. It may not be as guilty as boxed wine with a spigot, but Piasa’s delicious prices sure feel that way. (618-786-9463, www.piasawinery.com) Afterwards, in nearby Alton, charming guest rooms welcome visitors at the Beall Mansion...An Elegant Bed & Breakfast. (618-474-9100, www.beallmansion.com) *Southwest*

To get travelers started on their guilty pleasures getaways, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers additional information on one-of-a-kind attractions, events statewide and suggested 3-Day Getaways through the Bureau’s Web site, **www.enjoyillinois.com** or its travel counselors at **1-800-2CONNECT**.

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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.

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.