



# ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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**GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES FIRST-EVER ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS RIDE**  
*Week-long noncompetitive bike ride stretches nearly 400 miles  
along the Rock, Mississippi and Illinois rivers*

CHICAGO – This September hundreds of riders will have the opportunity to experience Illinois' natural beauty and magnificent destinations as they wind their way along three of the state's great rivers during the first annual Illinois Great Rivers Ride, sponsored by Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* Economic Development program, the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Bureau of Tourism.

The seven-day noncompetitive, 385-mile bike ride begins Sept. 11 in the northern region of the state in Rockford and concludes on Sept. 18 in the southwestern region of the state at Pere Marquette State Park making stops each day for various activities, performances and more. Each night riders have the option to sleep beneath the stars in tents at state parks and campgrounds or in designated hotels or motels.

"The Illinois Great Rivers Ride will heighten interest and appreciation for the unique destinations along the Rock, Mississippi and Illinois rivers by creating a new experience for travelers to explore many of Illinois' treasures," said Gov. Blagojevich.

A few highlights of the ride include:

- Disc golf and camping along the Rock River in Rock Falls
- A visit to the Rock Island Downtown Arts & Entertainment District for dinner and entertainment
- Bluegrass music under the stars at the Big River Forest Preserve in Henderson County
- Other activities include camping at Nauvoo State Park; night golf; a historic tour by horse-drawn wagon; a tour of the state's oldest vineyard, Baxter's Vineyards; an architectural tour and evening entertainment at the Back Water Night Club in Quincy; a celebration at the Heartland Lodge in Pleasant Hill; and hayrides, bonfires and more.

The final day takes riders on a ferry ride across the Illinois River and then onto Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton for a Jimmy Buffet-themed party and fireworks.

"The Illinois Great Rivers Ride is perfect for riders looking for outdoor adventure, entertainment, history and beauty – all in one trip," said DCEO Director Jack Lavin. "Our goal is to make this an annual event to highlight the rich landscape of our state and create opportunity for Illinois communities to thrive."

The Illinois Great Rivers Ride is partly funded through a grant from *Opportunity Returns* and

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corporate sponsorships from WREX-TV Rockford, WGEM-TV Quincy and the *Quincy Herald Whig* newspaper, all which are owned by Quincy Newspapers, Inc.

"We are honored to support the first-ever Illinois Great Rivers Ride," said Tom Oakley, president and CEO, Quincy Newspapers Inc. "Our television stations and newspapers serve many of the communities along the route, and we are pleased to play a role in an important event such as this that will enhance tourism and economic impact for the state and these communities."

The cost for the seven-day ride is \$300 and is limited to the first 300 cyclists who sign up before Monday, August 15 at 9:00 a.m. (CST). Children under 18 years old must be accompanied by an adult. An opportunity for adults and children to ride for a shorter number of days is also available.

Registration includes camping, breakfasts, dinners, evening festivities, snacks and beverages. Use of a support and gear truck, as well as transportation from Pere Marquette State Park back to the various starting points, is also included in the registration fee. Lunches will be available for purchase, as well as additional snacks and beverages. Hotel accommodations will be available each night for interested participants at an additional cost.

For more information or to register, visit [www.illinoisgreatriversride.com](http://www.illinoisgreatriversride.com) or call **877-477-7007 (ext. 217)**.

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### **About Opportunity Returns**

Gov. Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development strategy is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – each with a regional team that is empowered and expected to rapidly respond to opportunities and challenges. *Opportunity Returns* is about tangible, specific actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to businesses. It is about upgrading the skills of the local workforce, increasing the access to capital, opening new markets, improving infrastructure, and creating and retaining jobs. *Opportunity Returns* is about successfully partnering with companies and communities, both large and small, to help all of Illinois reach its economic potential.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Illinois images are available electronically or in slide format and may be obtained by contacting Anne Dattulo at [anne.dattulo@edelman.com](mailto:anne.dattulo@edelman.com), 312-240-2829, or Katie Markese at [katie.markese@edelman.com](mailto: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.*