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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES A RECORD RISE IN ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM AND VISITORS TO ILLINOIS

In 2004, Nearly 92 Million Visitors Generated \$24.5 Billion and Supported Almost 300,000 Jobs

CHICAGO – Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich announced new evidence today that illustrates how the Illinois tourism industry continues to grow at a record pace, generating billions of dollars in economic impact and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs for working families across the state. In 2004, travel to Illinois directly accounted for nearly 300,000 Illinois jobs, including 1,000 new jobs in 2004, that generated nearly \$7.8 billion in payroll. Economic impact generated by travel spending in 2004 in Illinois grew to a record high \$24.5 billion, an increase of 6.8 percent, generating \$1.77 billion in state and local tax revenue, according to the Travel Industry Association of America. This added an additional \$81.7 million in state and local taxes in 2004.

“Through our Bureau of Tourism’s innovative efforts, travelers are learning about the tremendous diversity and excitement that Illinois offers and are booking more trips, and staying longer, to enjoy Illinois,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “This tourism boom does more than showcase all Illinois has to offer. This is an enormous engine of growth that is fueling our economic recovery by generating more jobs for our hardworking men and women and more revenue for the state and communities throughout Illinois.”

Illinois’ total person-trip volume increased a record 6.7 percent in 2004 from 84.9 million visitors in 2003 to 90.6 million visitors in 2004, according to D.K. Shifflet & Associates. Illinois’ strong growth was largely spurred by an 8.6 percent increase in leisure travel, followed by an increase in business travel of 2.2 percent. Illinois’ market share increased from 2.89 percent of U.S. leisure travel in 2003 to 2.93 percent in 2004 making it the 9th ranked state for leisure travel in the U.S. and 5th in traveler spending.

Overseas visitors climbed by 18 percent greatly contributing to Illinois’ growth. Nearly 1 million people from around the globe came to Illinois making it the 6th most popular U.S. state for overseas travelers. The economic impact generated by international travel spending in Illinois increased by 10.4 percent to \$1.5 billion.

“Our tourism industry is a tremendous asset, and Gov. Blagojevich is helping attract even more visitors, who are pumping billions of dollars and supporting nearly 300,000 jobs. I am certain that our tourism winning streak will continue in 2005 and beyond,” State Senator Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago) said.

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“Illinois is such a tremendously unique and diverse state that has something for absolutely everyone. Gov. Blagojevich’s strategic vision for promoting Illinois is paying record-breaking economic dividends,” State Representative Ken Dunkin (D-Chicago) said.

On the whole, visitors to Illinois spent an average of \$116 per person per day, and leisure travelers to Illinois, on average, spent \$95 per person per day. The primary activities for leisure travelers were dining, shopping, sightseeing, entertainment, visiting a museum/art exhibit and nightlife.

Overall, 2004 visitor volume to the city of Chicago grew 6.6 percent, and Chicago is the nation’s top city for business travel, ahead of Orlando and New York.

“Illinois’ tourism industry continues to be a significant tool for statewide economic development,” Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said. “The tourism industry continues to rebound from challenges experienced in the past several years, and Gov. Blagojevich is committed to building upon the successes that we have achieved.”

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with information on statewide **3-Day Getaways**, festivals, events and attractions. All are available by calling **800-2CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting **www.enjoyillinois.com**.

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