



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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CATCH ILLINOIS SEASON OPENERS THIS SPRING

Discover top-notch attractions and events opening throughout the state

The crack of the bat, the smell of freshly roasted peanuts and the roar of the crowd—these are the unmistakable signs of baseball's opening day! And the 2005 World Champion Chicago White Sox home opener isn't the only opening day visitors can enjoy. This spring Illinois will be bursting with an array of exciting events and attractions opening for the season. Whether travelers prefer the exhilaration of the game or the tranquility of nature, visitors will enjoy new events and seasonal favorites in every corner of the state.

Chicago

The wait is over! Baseball fans can officially welcome spring with a visit to U.S. Cellular Field to watch the **2005 World Champion Chicago White Sox** take on the Cleveland Indians at the April 2 home opener. Sports enthusiasts can also head over to historic Wrigley Field for the **Chicago Cubs** seasonal opener on April 7 where the home team will take on their long-time rival, the St. Louis Cardinals.

For more information, contact the Chicago White Sox (866-769-4263, www.whitesox.com) or the Chicago Cubs (773-404-CUBS, www.cubs.com).

Thrill-seekers can meet a live Komodo dragon this spring at Shedd Aquarium's new temporary exhibit, **Lizards and the Komodo King**, April 8, 2006-Feb. 28, 2007. The biggest lizard in the world, the carnivorous Komodo boasts 60 serrated teeth coated with poisonous bacteria and is capable of eating up to 80 percent of its body weight in a single meal! This exciting exhibit features scores of other amphibians ranging in size from the tiny day gecko to the world's longest lizard, the crocodile monitor.

For more information, contact the Shedd Aquarium (866-769-4263, www.sheddaquarium.org).

Chicago's Field Museum will entice travelers from around the country as it opens the tomb of King Tut at its highly anticipated blockbuster exhibit, **Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs**, May 26, 2006-Jan. 1, 2007. Twice the size of the original 1977 exhibit, it features 50 major artifacts from the young king's tomb including his royal diadem — a gold crown found on the king's mummified body that he likely wore while living. The exhibit will also explore the turbulent times in which King Tut lived in more than 3,000 years ago.

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

Chicagoland

Arbor Day was created by the Morton family, and there's no better place for nature enthusiasts to welcome spring's budding season than at **Arbor Day Weekend** at the family's namesake Morton

-more-

Governor Rod Blagojevich

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

Arboretum, April 28-30, in Lisle. Drawing nearly 4,000 children annually, the Morton Arboretum puts kids to work on Arbor Day at their “Plant,” designed to educate children about Arbor Day through fun, hands-on activities. Each child clocks-in at the start of their shift and decorates a hard hat, participates in a “tree-sure” hunt for trees and learns how to make paper and distinguish the parts of a tree. At the end of the day everyone leaves with a sapling to take home and plant on their own.

For more information, contact The Morton Arboretum (630-968-0074, www.mortonarb.org).

When the stakes are high, visitors can come out a winner with a trip to **Arlington Park Racetrack** in Arlington Heights. Attendees can take in the thundering Thoroughbred races at the park’s opening day on May 5 and throughout the season and enjoy other amenities including luxury suites and restaurants overlooking the track.

For more information, contact Arlington Park (847-385-7500, www.arlingtonpark.com).

Children of all ages will delight in the sights and sounds of **Model Railroad Garden: Landmarks of America** at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, May 13-Oct. 29. This unique exhibit displays 15 garden-scale trains traversing bridges and trestles, miniature scenes of America’s best-loved landmarks and beautiful gardens planted to scale.

For more information, contact Chicago Botanic Garden (847-835-5440, www.chicagobotanic.org).

Daredevils can welcome spring with a splash at the season opening of **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor**, a year-old Caribbean-themed water park in Gurnee slated to open in late May. This 13-acre water park boasts more than 25 water slides, an adventure river, family raft rides and a 500,000-gallon wave-making pool.

For more information, contact Six Flags Great America (847-249-INFO, www.sixflags.com).

Northern

Located just outside Utica’s Starved Rock State Park, **Grizzly Jack’s Grand Bear Lodge and Water Park**, is Illinois’ first indoor water park resort. In addition to a wave pool, a lazy river and a rock grotto waterfall, one of Grizzly Jack’s most popular attractions is its motion and sound adventure water slide—the first in America. Riders can select from a variety of adventure experiences to encounter during their 330-foot descent, including animals and aquatic life to a polar winter experience. In early summer, families can look forward to the opening of the large outdoor pool. Guests can also take a break from the water and relax in the comforts of Grand Bear Lodge, a new three-story, deluxe lodge featuring a rustic décor paired with luxurious accommodations.

For more information, contact Grizzly Jack’s Grand Bear Lodge and Water Park (866-399-3866, www.grandbearlodge.com).

DeKalb will host the first **Heartland International Tattoo**, March 25 and 26. The tattoo, a signal sounded on a drum or bugle to summon soldiers, is an event that honors all U.S. military bands. The show is the first of its kind in the Midwest and will dazzle spectators with more than 350 musicians and entertainers, including brass bands, drum corps, wind bands, bagpipes and an array of dancers.

For more information, contact the Heartland International Tattoo (815-756-1263, www.heartlandtattoo.org).

Central

Located in the heart of Illinois Amish country, **Rockome Gardens** in Arcola is a family-friendly park featuring rock and floral gardens, open April through October. Visitors can also enjoy a trip back in time with activities such as corn husking with antique farm equipment and horse-drawn carriage rides, as well as 15 distinctive shops and a busy calendar of special events.

For more information, contact Rockome Gardens (217-268-4106, www.rockome.com).

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield opens the fascinating exhibit, **Mrs. President: From Martha to Laura**, May 13-Oct. 29, examining the role of America's legendary first ladies throughout history. Gorgeous gowns, historical artifacts, White House furnishings and intimate letters will tell the stories of these amazing, influential women. The exhibit will be complemented by a series of related women's programs, lectures, conferences and more.

For more information, contact the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (217-558-8844, www.alplm.org).

Western

The clear spring sky and gentle winds offer beautiful conditions for **Kites Over Lake Storey** in Galesburg, May 6 and 7. This high-flying event greets spring with a colorful kite celebration that offers kite-making for kids, a kite-flying candy drop, kite-flying lessons and even features the kites of America's top flyers.

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

Sandburg Days Festival, May 11-13, offers three days of literary, cultural and children's activities celebrating the life and legacy of acclaimed poet and political writer Carl Sandburg, Galesburg's native son. The festival provides a spectacular lineup of musicians and poets, a writer's workshop, poetry and photography contests, and events for children of all ages. Various locations throughout Galesburg will host the festivities, including the Discovery Depot Children's Museum and the Carl Sandburg Historic Site and Visitors Center.

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

Southern

The **Shawnee Hills Barn Trail** showcases the rustic charm of barns throughout scenic Union County. The beautiful weather in spring makes it the perfect season to explore the history and architecture of these rural icons. Local communities have preserved the celebrated barns by adding shops and attractions for visitors to enjoy.

For more information, contact Union County Chamber of Commerce (618-833-6311, www.shawneeheartland.com).

Explore the forested hills and ancient cypress swamps at the Cache River Wetlands Center in Southern Illinois during **Birding Fest 2006**, April 28-30. This annual springtime event invites outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy guided canoe tours, birding hikes, owl prowls, live bird demonstrations

and a wildlife photo exhibit. Competitive birders can participate in Birding Blitz, a spirited bird watching competition.

For more information, contact Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge (618-634-2231, www.fws.gov/midwest/cypresscreek).

Toast the warm weather this spring with a glass of hand-crafted Illinois wine at **Alto Vineyards Spring Festival**, May 6 and 7. Alto Vineyards, located across ten scenic acres of the Shawnee National Forest, is the largest and oldest winery in Southern Illinois. This perennially popular event will feature live blues music and delectable Cajun cuisine served alongside Alto's award-winning varietals.

For more information, contact Alto Vineyards (618-893-4898, www.altovineyards.net).

Southwestern

Antique enthusiasts can head to the **Riverside Flea Market** in Grafton to shop for rare, vintage collectibles on the fourth weekend of every month from April through October. The market offers a wide selection of crafts, antiques and a variety of concession areas.

For more information, contact the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-ALTON-IL, www.visitalton.com).

Chirping birds are a sure sign of spring and bird lovers can celebrate the season with the first-ever **Wings of Spring Festival**, April 28 and 29. Located off the Mississippi River near Alton, the Riverland Migratory Bird Sanctuary will host this exciting event, which offers off-site birding trips, birding exhibits, family-centered educational activities, live bird meet and greets, and much more.

For more information, contact the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-ALTON-IL, www.visitalton.com) or the Wings of Spring Festival (www.wingsofspring.org).

To get travelers started on their spring trip planning, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers additional information on one-of-a-kind attractions, events statewide, accommodations and bookable 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: Media materials and downloadable images are now available on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism online media center at **www.illinoismediacenter.com**. Additional photography, available electronically or in slide format, may be obtained by contacting Julie Connolly at julie.connolly@edelman.com, 312-233-1246, or 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.