



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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CYCLISTS GEAR UP FOR THE SECOND ANNUAL ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS RIDE

Visitors from around the country will head to Illinois for the weeklong noncompetitive bike ride along the Rock, Illinois and Mississippi rivers

CHICAGO – Hundreds of cyclists will travel along Rock, Illinois and Mississippi rivers during the second annual Illinois Great Rivers Ride, Sept. 10-16. The seven-day noncompetitive, 400-mile bike ride is sponsored by Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* economic development program, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, and the Western Illinois Tourism Development Office. The ride will begin in Northern Illinois in Rockford and conclude in Southwest Illinois in the city of Alton, highlighting the state's rich natural beauty along the way. In 2005 the inaugural Illinois Great Rivers Ride hosted more than 200 cyclists from 23 states.

"The Illinois Great Rivers Ride gives travelers an opportunity to enjoy the scenic beauty of our magnificent state from a unique perspective," said Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Bureau of Tourism. "We are thrilled that last year's ride was such a tremendous success and look forward to presenting the event again this September."

Each leg of the trip will average 57 miles along a hard-surface route. The ride will make stops in Rock Falls, the Quad Cities, Henderson County, Nauvoo, Quincy and Nebo before concluding in Alton. Each evening, cyclists will have the opportunity to visit various attractions and to enjoy activities and live entertainment. Highlights include:

- A ride down the Mississippi River on the Channel Cat Water Taxi in Rock Island;
- Native American reenactments and a fish fry under the stars at Big River Forest Preserve in Henderson County;
- Tours of the state's oldest vineyard, Baxter's Vineyards in Nauvoo;
- A German fest offering authentic food and entertainment in historic Quincy; and
- A celebration at Harpole's Heartland Lodge in Pleasant Hill with hayrides, bonfires and more.

The final day takes cyclists to the National Great Rivers Museum at Melvin Price Locks and Dam in Alton where they will enjoy dinner, dancing and fireworks along with a visit to the Lewis & Clark State Historic Site in Hartford.

The cost for the seven-day ride is \$450 and registration is limited to the first 300 cyclists who sign up before Monday, Aug. 14 at 9:00 a.m. (CST). Individuals also have the option to register for the one-day ride on Sept. 15 or the two-day ride Sept. 15 and 16. Children under 18 years old must be accompanied by an adult.

Registration includes camping, breakfasts, dinners, evening festivities, a shuttle service to all events and attractions, use of a support and gear truck, as well as transportation from Alton

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Governor Rod R. Blagojevich
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

back to the various starting points. Lunches will be available for purchase. Hotel accommodations will be available each night for interested participants at an additional cost.

For more information or to register, visit 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: Media materials and downloadable images are available on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism online media center at www.illinoismediacenter.com. Additional images are available electronically or in slide format and may be obtained by contacting Julie Connolly at julie.connolly@edelman.com, 312-233-1246, or Emma Douglas at emma.douglas@edelman.com, 312-240-2730.

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.