



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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EXPLORE WINTER WONDERS THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The season ushers in holiday celebrations, winter festivals, outdoor adventures and more

This winter, Illinois is the place to enjoy the brilliance of the season with a flurry of events and activities. Discover how cool winter can be with twinkling light festivals, snowy outdoor adventures and holiday happenings throughout the state.

Chicago

Michigan Avenue kicks off the holiday season with flair during the **Magnificent Mile Lights Festival**, Nov. 18. As more than one million lights twinkle along North Michigan Avenue, visitors will experience a magical winter wonderland where the young, and young at heart, will enjoy ice-carving demonstrations, caroling, live Disney musical performances and evening fireworks.

For more information, contact the Greater North Michigan Avenue Association (312-642-3570, www.gnmaa.com).

Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo puts on the glitz with its annual **Lincoln Park ZooLights**, Nov. 24 – Jan. 1. Children and adults can stroll through walkways ablaze with lights while viewing animals and ice-carving demonstrations, enjoying live musical entertainment, and dining on delicious cuisine.

For more information, contact the Lincoln Park Zoo (312-742-2000, www.lpzoo.org).

Chicago's No. 1 tourist attraction becomes a winter wonderland during **Navy Pier's Winter WonderFest**, Dec. 8 – Jan. 7. With dazzling decorations, beautifully ornate trees and sparkling lights as background, guests can enjoy visits with Santa Claus, crafts, ice skating, train rides, puppet shows and much more.

For more information, contact Navy Pier (312-595-PIER, www.navypier.com).

Chicagoland

The Cuneo Museum and Gardens in Vernon Hills is one of Chicagoland's most celebrated historic treasures and host to the **Cuneo Museum and Gardens' Festival of Lights**, Nov. 24 – Jan. 1. This charming historic villa displays festive holiday flora, lights and European décor for visitors to enjoy. Guests can warm up by touring the 1914 villa and discovering 25 brilliantly decorated rooms.

For more information, contact the Cuneo Museum and Gardens (847-362-3042, www.cuneomuseum.org).

Step back in time during the **Victorian Christmas Tours of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home** in Oak Park, Dec. 9 and 16. The renowned architect's home and studio are festively decorated with vintage Christmas tree ornaments, garland and antique toys from the Victorian era. Specially created for children, the tours are led by junior interpreters offering entertaining anecdotes about how the Wright family celebrated the holidays at the turn of the 20th century.

For more information, contact the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust (708-848-1976, www.wrightplus.com).

Children everywhere will also enjoy exciting wintertime diversions at **Winterfest 2007** in Palos Heights, Jan. 27. At Winterfest, children will get to carve ice sculptures, race through an obstacle course, relax on a hayride and explore the grounds by snowshoe at Lake Katherine Nature Preserve and Botanic Gardens.

For more information, contact the Lake Katherine Nature Center and Botanic Gardens (708-361-1873, www.lakekatherine.org).

Northern

Rated the No. 1 ski resort in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa by *Ski Magazine*, **Chestnut Mountain Resort** will open its slopes for the season late in November. Located in historic Galena, Chestnut Mountain offers a range of 17 downhill runs for the novice to experienced skier and a diverse snowboard terrain park. Ideal for a romantic getaway or family trip, the resort's 120-room lodge offers easy access to the slopes, as well as ski lessons and onsite restaurants and shopping.

For more information, contact Chestnut Mountain Resort (815-777-1320, www.chestnutmtn.com).

More than 5,000 luminaria cast a glow on Galena during the **Night of the Luminaria**, Dec. 18. These decorative candlelit bags will sparkle from each corner of town from the rolling hills and parks to Main Street and the riverfront levee, making it the perfect night to take a trolley ride while sipping hot chocolate. The DeSoto House, the oldest operating hotel in Illinois, offers a special "Night of Luminaria" dinner during which visitors can eat by candlelight amid the white twinkling lights that surround the hotel's courtyard.

For more information, contact the Galena Chamber of Commerce (815-777-9050, www.galenachamber.com).

The **Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition** draws nearly 100,000 spectators annually to Rockford's Sinnissippi Park, Jan. 17 – 20. The competition invites professional snow sculptors from around the country to form giant blocks of snow into pieces of awe-inspiring art. Past masterpieces have depicted dolphins, ice fishermen and even Oscar the Grouch.

For more information, contact the Rockford Park District (815-987-8800, www.rockfordparkdistrict.org).

Central

No need to search far and wide for Rudolph. **Hardy's Reindeer Ranch**, in Rantoul, provides guests a chance to see 18 or more Alaskan reindeer. While at the ranch, visitors can also pick the perfect tree at the Christmas tree farm and shop for holiday gifts at the old-fashioned Country Barn Gift Shop.

For more information, contact Hardy's Reindeer Ranch (217-893-3407, www.reindeerranch.com).

Located on the Illinois prairie, each year the historic **David Davis Mansion** in Bloomington is lavishly decorated for a traditional, late-Victorian Christmas. Throughout December, visitors can view the brilliant décor with tour options for the young and old. The ornate mansion offers free tours and a special children's "Make it & Take it Ornament Workshop," where kids can make a copy of an authentic Victorian Christmas ornament to take home.

For more information, contact the David Davis Mansion (309-828-1084, www.davismansion.org).

Springfield's 80-acre Lincoln Memorial Gardens celebrates the sweet and sticky during **Maple Syrup Time**, Feb. 17 – March 11. Visitors can observe as experts tap the trees, collect sap and reduce 40 gallons of sap into one gallon of syrup. Perhaps more enticing is the chance to taste the delicious final product!

For more information, contact the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Garden & Nature Center (217-529-1111, www.lmgnc.com).

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum will help visitors ring in the holidays in presidential-style during its **To Cherish Peace and Good Will: Holidays at the White House** exhibit, Nov. 24 – Jan. 7. Showcasing nine replicas of presidential Christmas trees, visitors will celebrate the holidays from the time of Grant, Hayes Taft, Wilson, Coolidge and more. Displays of popular holiday toys and seasonal music will set the scene of Christmas during these presidential administrations.

For more information, contact the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (800-610-2094, www.alplm.org).

Western

Ranked on the American Bus Association's Top 100 Events in North America in 2005, the **East Peoria Festival of Lights**, Nov. 25 – Dec. 31, offers more than a million lights producing images that range from Santa Claus to menorahs. The festival kicks off with the Parade of Lights featuring 40 dazzling floats and a fireworks spectacular. Additional festival activities include a narrated Nativity scene, an enchanted snow-covered forest for kids and a holiday marketplace.

For more information, contact the City of East Peoria (800-365-3743, www.cityofeastpeoria.com).

Every day is a snow day during **Ski Snowstar Winter Sports Park's** season, Dec. 3 – March 18. Located near the Quad Cities in Andalusia, this 28-acre park offers customized lessons for all levels, as well as night skiing, snowboarding, snow tubing and a cozy fireplace where skiers can warm up with some hot cocoa after a long day on the slopes.

For more information, contact Ski Snowstar Sports Park (800-383-4002, www.skisnowstar.com).

Galesburg's Antique Mall overflows with countless homemade and commercially made treats during the **Galesburg Historical Society Chocolate Festival**, March 2 – 4. Guests can taste the delicious chocolate confections such as tortes, cakes, pies and creams. Additional sweets are available for sale in downtown stores.

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

Southern

Explore a winter wonderland by horseback at the Shawnee National Forest. A tradition in Southern Illinois, a horseback ride through the Shawnee National Forest offers an expanse of snowy trails through crystal blue bluffs, and beautiful views of frosted canyons and sparkling streams. Visitors can take a guided tour or explore the drifting snow on their own for a full or half-day through beautiful Southern Illinois.

For more information, contact the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau (800-248-4373, www.southernmostillinois.com).

Discover the many ways that plants and animals adjust to the winter climate in Shawnee National Forest during the **Wonders of Winter Walk** on Nov. 11 and Dec. 9. This one-mile walking tour through the beautiful landscapes of the Shawnee National Forest offers visitors the chance to reconnect with each other and nature while enjoying the scenic views.

For more information, contact the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau (800-248-4373, www.southernmostillinois.com).

Carbondale provides a sparkling beginning to the holiday season with the **Lights Fantastic Parade** on Dec. 2. This annual evening parade draws spectators from all over the region and features more than 70 floats emblazoned with lights. Visitors will also enjoy the carolers' melodic sounds, the marching bands' rhythmic beats and the dancers' inspiring movements.

For more information, contact Carbondale Main Street (618-529-8040, www.carbondalemainstreet.com).

Southwest

Belleville's renowned **Way of Lights** celebration at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Nov. 15 – Jan. 1, offers a mile-and-a-half of electro-art sculptures and life-size figures depicting the Christmas story. Also ranked on the American Bus Association's Top 100 Events in North America in 2005, the Way of Lights festival features a life-sized Nativity scene constructed from LEGO® blocks, as well as camel and donkey rides, horse-drawn carriage rides, and more.

For more information, contact the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows (618-397-6700, www.snows.org).

Flying high above the snow-covered hills, icy lakes and rivers this winter, more than 3,000 bald eagles will migrate south from the northern states and Canada to make Illinois their temporary home. The World Bird Sanctuary presents live bald eagle demonstrations on Jan. 6, 13, 20 and 27 at the **Alton Eagle Meet & Greet**, giving visitors the chance to view these magnificent creatures both up close and in their natural habitat.

For more information, contact Alton Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau (1-800-ALTON-IL, www.visitilton.com).

Fete du Bon Vieux Temps (Festival of the Good Old Days) at Cahokia Courthouse, Feb. 17, is a French Colonial Mardi Gras. Visitors can take candlelit tours of the 18th-century historic sites led by volunteers dressed in authentic period costumes. Guests will explore the Martin-Boismenu House, built in 1790, and the Holy Family Parish Log Church, dedicated in 1799.

For more information, contact Cahokia Courthouse State Historic Site (618-332-1782) or the Tourism Bureau of Southwestern Illinois (800-442-1488, www.thetourismbureau.org).

To get travelers started on their winter 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: Media materials and downloadable images are available on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism online media center at www.enjoyillinois.com/illinoismediacenter. Additional photography may be obtained by contacting Emma Douglas at emma.douglas@edelman.com, 312-240-2730 or Stephanie Aenchbacher at stephanie.aenchbacher@edelman.com, 312-240-2688.

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.