



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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ILLINOIS' EVENTS REVIVE THE SPIRIT THIS SPRING

This season discover the essence of Illinois from the inside out

Travelers to Illinois can refresh and renew their senses this spring through an abundance of events and activities. Visitors can take advantage of the warming weather to enjoy stunning natural vistas on a hike through one of Illinois' state parks, or they can enrich their minds with one-of-a-kind museum exhibits, cultural activities or a film festival. No matter what the interest, Illinois offers an array of activities throughout the state to entice travelers this spring.

CHICAGO

Further explore the human body with the sequel to the popular *Body Worlds* exhibit, "**Body Worlds 2**," at the Museum of Science and Industry now through April 29. This exhibit gives visitors the chance to investigate the mysteries of the human body with their own eyes. With more than 20 new whole-body "plastinates" and 200 human specimens, visitors will gain a greater appreciation for human physiology.

For more information, contact the Museum of Science and Industry (773-684-1414, www.msichicago.org).

The Art Institute of Chicago pays tribute to Ambroise Vollard, one of the most influential art dealers of the early 20th century, with the exhibit "**Cezanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde**," now through May 12. The show includes items from Vollard's archives such as handwritten sale and purchase records, photographs, correspondences and more. Visitors will learn about the strategies Vollard used to promote the careers of artists such as Picasso, Matisse and Vuillard, and about his relationships with these artists whose work he exhibited and sold.

For more information, contact The Art Institute of Chicago (312-443-3600, www.artic.edu).

The 2007 St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Chicago last a full week, beginning and ending with two of the nation's most famous parades. Kick off the weeklong St. Patty's Day celebration by joining spectators along Western Avenue for the **Southside Irish Parade** on March 11. St. Patrick's Day in Chicago just wouldn't be complete without the annual dyeing of the Chicago River followed by the **52nd Annual Chicago St. Patrick's Day Parade** along Columbus Drive on March 17.

For more information, contact the Southside Irish Parade organization (773-393-8687, www.southsideirishparade.org); or the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee of Chicago (www.chicagostpatsparade.com).

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Governor Rod R. Blagojevich

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

Head to the ballpark this spring to cheer on Chicago's first-rate baseball teams. The world-champion **Chicago White Sox's** first official home game is April 2 against the Cleveland Indians at U.S. Cellular Field, and the **Chicago Cubs** open Wrigley Field for their home opener against the Houston Astros on April 9.

For more information, contact the White Sox box office (312-674-1000, www.whitesox.com); or the Cubs box office (773-404-2827, www.cubs.com).

This May, Chicago is home to America's first dusk-to-dawn cultural and artistic spectacle, **Looptopia**, May 11. An event that showcases the vibrant and historic Loop neighborhood will feature more than 75 events staged in museums, gardens, plazas, cultural halls, theatres, night clubs, restaurants, alleyways and more throughout the Loop. Participants in Looptopia will experience a sensory playground as they watch the Joffrey Ballet's splashing performance in the Millennium Park's Crown Fountain, the first-ever "Opera Idol", and the Largest Outdoor Silent Dance party as guests move to the music available through individual headphones, and much more.

For more information, contact the Chicago Loop Alliance (312-782-9160, www.chicagoloopalliance.com).

CHICAGOLAND

Experience a tropical getaway in the Midwest this spring at the new **Coco Key Water Resort** in Arlington Heights. Located in the Sheraton Chicago Northwest, the 65,000 square-foot indoor water park features four exhilarating water slides, an activity pool, a "dip-in" floating movie theater, an indoor adventure river, an interactive play island, a wave beach, an outdoor splash pad and more. Perfect for parties, Coco Key Water Resort lets families enjoy the feel of the islands without having to leave the mainland.

For more information, contact Coco Key Water Resort (847-394-2000, www.cocokeywaterresort.com).

Fly through the air like Superman, loop the streets of Gotham like Batman or spin and swirl through the 60-foot-wide Tornado at **Six Flags Great America & Hurricane Harbor**, opening for the season this May. A world-class family destination, the Six Flags theme park and Hurricane Harbor water park offer kids and adults thrilling experiences, from fast-paced rides to spectacular shows. This year, Six Flags Great America has added Wiggles World, a new family area themed after the popular children's singing group, The Wiggles. It is filled with themed rides and attractions for children ages 2 to 6, including the Big Red Car, the Big Red Plane, Bouncin' with Wags and the S.S. Feathersword Pirate Ship.

For more information, contact Six Flags Great America & Hurricane Harbor (847-249-4636, www.sixflags.com).

The **8th Annual Long Grove Chocolate Festival**, May 4-6, is one of Illinois' sweetest events for chocolate lovers. Guests of the festival will enjoy watching demonstrations, participating in contests, listening to live entertainment and – best of all – tasting the delectable chocolate confections. In addition, guests will marvel at the 4th Annual Chocolate/Candy Fashion Show, which features children's apparel adorned with candy, chocolate, jewels and glitter.

For more information, contact Historic Long Grove (847-634-0888, www.longgroveonline.com).

Visitors with an eye for art should not miss the **9th Annual St. Charles Fine Art Show**, May 26 and 27. Located on the pristine banks of the Fox River, visitors can roam the grounds in search of the perfect addition to their art collection. The live music of Chord on Blues performers provide a soundtrack for the weekend while guests discover the work of more than 100 local painters, jewelers, sculptors and photographers.

For more information, contact the Downtown St. Charles Partnership (630-513-5386, www.dtown.org).

The United States' largest railway museum, the **Illinois Railway Museum** in Union, opens for its 2007 season on May 26. Train enthusiasts can explore the vital role railroads had in the development of U.S. cities and also have the opportunity to experience train rides on both diesel and steam trains.

For more information, contact the Illinois Railway Museum (1-800-BIG-RAIL, www.IRM.org).

NORTHERN

Spring doesn't get much sweeter than during the Coral Woods **Festival of the Sugar Maples**, in McHenry County, March 10, 11, 17 and 18. Tours trace the history of maple sugaring and explain how to identify a maple tree as well as how it produces sap. As part of the beautiful half-mile hike, guests practice tapping a tree, observe the modern-day process of sap collection and taste the final product – Coral Woods pure maple syrup.

For more information, contact the McHenry County Conservation District, (815-479-5779, www.mccdDistrict.org).

Boasting 18 hikeable canyons, **Starved Rock State Park** in Utica is the perfect outdoor getaway in Illinois this spring. A nature enthusiast's dream, Starved Rock offers visitors horseback riding, hiking and biking trails, boating options and more. The perfect backdrop for any camping trip, Starved Rock reconnects guests with nature after the winter season.

For more information, contact Starved Rock State Park (815-667-4726, www.utica-il.com).

For a weekend filled with wine tasting, wine dinners and wine education, the **Galena Wine Lovers Weekend**, March 30-April 1, is an ideal getaway. A complete culinary weekend, participants will not only attend wine tastings, but can also sample a variety of whiskeys, tequilas, and even Extra Virgin Olive Oils and Balsamic Vinegars. Wine lovers will enjoy the live entertainment, food and drinks – and beginners will leave with a new appreciation for the world of wine.

For more information, visit the Galena Wine Lovers Weekend Web site (www.wineloversweekend.com) or contact the Galena-Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau (877-GO-GALENA, www.galena.org).

Appearing exclusively in Rockford, the Rockford Art Museum presents the “**HE & SHE: Vallien & Hydman-Vallien Exhibit**,” March 30-July 8, which showcases the work of the Valliens, two of the world’s most significant studio glass artists. Throughout the exhibit, the Swedish glass artists will offer presentations and tours, and the museum offers hands-on workshops and collaborative discussions about the art form.

For more information, contact the Rockford Art Museum (815-968-2787, www.rockfordartmuseum.org).

Celebrate spring at the lively **Mount Carroll Mayfest**, May 25-27. Visitors will enjoy a weekend of nonstop live musical entertainment, arts and crafts, sporting events, a classic-car show and more. After enjoying the antique appraisal fair and helicopter rides, guests can continue the celebration by visiting the many food and wine tents to satisfy their palates.

For more information, contact Mount Carroll Mayfest (815-244-4424, www.mount-carroll.il.us).

CENTRAL

The **Spring Bloom Arts Festival** in Bloomington on March 17 offers everything from oil painting, photography and blown glass to jewelry and ceramics. With more than 70 exhibitors, the Spring Bloom Arts Festival is the first of its kind during this time of year in Central Illinois, allowing local artists and art lovers another venue for expressing their cultural passions.

For more information, contact the McLean County Arts Center (309-829-0011, www.mcac.org).

April through October, visitors to Springfield are surrounded by Lincoln images and folklore during the **Lincoln’s Ghost Walk Legends & Lore Walking Tour**. A costumed guide takes guests on a lantern-lit journey through Lincoln’s Springfield to explore significant sites while explaining strange and unusual stories about Lincoln’s life and death.

For more information, contact Springfield Walks (217-525-1825, www.springfieldwalks.com).

The College of Communications at the University of Illinois will host the **9th Annual Overlooked Film Festival** in at the Virginia Theatre in Champaign on April 25-29. This event gives cinema lovers the chance to view films deemed “overlooked” by film critic, Roger Ebert. Festival-goers can also enjoy a panel discussion about the films as well as an Ebert book signing on April 27. This year’s lineup of films is still to be determined.

For more information, contact Roger Ebert’s Overlooked Film Festival (217-244-0552, www.ebertfest.com).

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum will present the temporary exhibit “**Mary Todd Lincoln: First Lady of Controversy**,” April 28-Oct. 28. This exhibit is the first to explore the life of Mary Todd Lincoln, from her Kentucky childhood to her days as America’s First Lady to her death. The exhibit includes a number of artifacts, including

newly discovered letters and telegrams from her time as First Lady and from her confinement in Bellevue Sanitarium.

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

WESTERN

Opening for the season in April, the **Niabi Zoo** in Coal Valley allows visitors to view large cats, Asian elephants, monkeys, birds and reptiles. Children can visit the Discovery Station to experience hands-on encounters or explore the petting zoo and Koi pond.

For more information, contact the Niabi Zoo (800-747-7800, www.niabizoo.com).

Fans of Charles Sandburg can celebrate his legacy during the **Sandburg Days Festival** in Galesburg from April 26-28. This three-day festival features literary, history and children's events including a folk music concert, a writer's workshop, poetry and photography contests. Helga Sandburg, the writer's youngest daughter, will be honored at a special reception on Saturday, April 28.

For more information, contact Visit Galesburg (1-800-916-3330, www.visitgalesburg.com or www.sandburg.edu/festival).

Kick off the spring event season in Quincy with the **Annual Dogwood Festival and Parade**, May 5 and 6. Quincy's first outdoor event of the season includes a parade, craft and hobby fair, live entertainment, cuisine and more. Held in the scenic Washington Park, the event draws both locals and visitors from around the region to enjoy the beautiful dogwoods.

For more information, contact the Quincy Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau (217-222-7980, www.seequincy.com).

SOUTHERN

Break out the bicycles and hit the **Tunnel Hill State Trail** in Johnson County. The 45-mile trail stretches from Harrisburg to Karnak and was once the path of the railroad. The hiking and biking trail crosses famed routes such as the River-to-River Trail, the unmarked American Discovery Trail, the U.S. 76 Bicycle Route and the Trail of Tears. The trail offers spring riders a beautiful backdrop for their journey with a wealth of natural vistas and creature-spotting along the way.

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

Visitors to Southern Illinois can tour the great arts and great grapes of the region during March's **Shawnee Hills Wine Trail Vintage Arts 2007**. Throughout the month of March, all eight wineries will be hosting and selling works from local artists. Wine and art aficionados can meet the artists and view their work during the kickoff weekend, March 3 and 4, at each winery.

For more information, visit the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail Web site (www.shawneewinetrail.com) or contact the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau (800-248-4373, www.southernmostillinois.com).

The spirit of the Irish is alive and well in Carbondale, especially during the **Southern Illinois Irish Festival**, April 27-29. For a weekend full of Irish music, Irish dancing and Irish food and drink, guests will surely tap into their Gaelic roots and may even learn to do a jig or two.

For more information, contact the Southern Illinois Irish Festival (618-549-3090, www.silirishfest.org).

The **6th Annual Southernmost Illinois Birding Blitz**, April 28 and 29, at the Cache River Wetlands is one of Illinois' premier birding events and one that avid birders won't want to miss. The weekend event invites teams of birding enthusiasts to scour the countryside to identify up to 300 bird species in 24 hours.

For more information, contact the Southernmost Illinois Birding Blitz (618-634-2231 www.birdingblitz.org).

SOUTHWESTERN

The sky is the limit this spring at **Easy Flight Powered Parachutes**. Flyers will participate in an intensive training program that covers all the bases of power parachuting before learning to assemble their gear and heading for the skies. Introductory flights are available with an instructor, while experienced flyers can go solo. Both options allow individuals to see Illinois from a birds-eye view.

For more information, contact Easy Flight Powered Parachutes (618-664-9706, www.easyflight.com).

From April through October, the **Grafton Riverside Flea Market** will open the fourth weekend of each month to offer visitors the chance to search for hidden gems from antique glassware and furniture to candles and collectibles. Located on the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, the flea market not only allows guests to search for great loot but to view one of Illinois' greatest treasures, the meeting of the Great Rivers.

For more information, contact Historic Boatworks (618-786-8210, www.graftonloadingdock.com)

Celebrate the skies at the first annual **Wings of Spring Festival**, May 5 and 6. Alton offers a number of activities for birders during the festival with offsite birding trips, art and entertainment, educational activities, live bird meet and greets, and much more. Guests of the Wings of Spring Festival will leave with an enhanced appreciation for the many species of birds found in this region of the state.

For more information, contact the Wings of Spring Festival (1-800-258-6645, www.wingsofspring.org).

To get travelers started on their spring 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**.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Statewide photography is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact 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.