



# ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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## **GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES CONTINUED RECORD RISE IN VISITORS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM ACROSS ILLINOIS**

*In 2006, Illinois Broke Most Previous Records with 91 Million Visitors Generating Nearly \$27 Billion in Economic Impact; Over Past Five Years, Domestic Tourism has Pumped Almost \$6 Billion More into State's Economy*

CHICAGO – The Blagojevich Administration announced today that the Illinois tourism industry continues to grow at a record pace, which is generating billions of dollars in economic impact and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs across the state. Illinois hosted 91 million domestic visitors in 2006, which is a 6.4 percent increase over 2005, and is the state's highest level ever, according to data from D.K. Shifflet & Associates. The domestic economic impact of tourism increased by more than \$2 billion in 2006 to a record setting nearly \$27 billion, which was an 8.3 percent increase from 2005, according to the Travel Industry Association of America. Over the last five years, the domestic economic impact has grown by more than \$5.8 billion in Illinois, which is a 28 percent increase. Domestic travel also created 1,800 new jobs in 2006.

“The Illinois Bureau of Tourism and all of our partners are doing a tremendous job promoting Illinois to people across the state, the country and throughout the world. Tourism is thriving today as people have taken notice of all the diverse attractions we have to offer. Our investments in spreading this message are being returned many times over with billions of new dollars coming into Illinois that are creating better jobs for more people,” Gov. Blagojevich said.

State and local taxes grew by almost 7 percent, generating almost \$1.9 billion from travel spending, which is its highest level ever and \$149 million more than last year. Since 2002, state and local taxes have grown by \$335 million, which is a 22 percent increase (Travel Industry Association of America).

Illinois' strong growth in leisure volume helped to increase the state's share of U.S. leisure travel in 2006. Leisure visitor volume was the highest level ever in Illinois at 71.8 million, a 9 percent increase from 2005. Leisure overnight paid accommodations volume increased by almost 17 percent statewide to more than 16 million visitors, which is another all-time high (D.K. Shifflet & Associates).

The City of Chicago had more than 44 million visitors last year, which set an all-time record and is a nearly 10 percent increase from 2005. Chicago also saw a 13.5 percent increase in leisure visitors. Leisure overnight paid accommodations volume increased by nearly 16 percent to more

**Governor Rod R. Blagojevich**

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

than 9 million visitors, which also was a record high (D.K. Shifflet & Associates).

This trend continued across the state. Downstate Illinois (all but City of Chicago) welcomed a record nearly 47 million visitors, which was a 3.3 percent increase over the previous year thanks to the 5.5 percent growth in leisure travel. Leisure overnight paid accommodations volume increased by 18.4 percent to more than 7 million visitors downstate (D.K. Shifflet & Associates).

"Since the tourism industry plays such an important role in our economy, this is absolutely fantastic news and is a testament to the commitment Gov. Blagojevich and I both have made to ensuring that these numbers only keep on getting better through strategic investments and creative campaigns to encourage even more visitors," State Senator Rickey Hendon (D-Chicago) said.

"Over the last several years, tourism in Chicago and across the state has been growing at such an incredible pace, which means more money and jobs for our economy. The Governor and I are certainly hopeful that this winning streak will continue throughout 2007 and beyond," State Representative Ken Dunkin (D-Chicago) said.

"We must continue taking advantage of all of our assets to continue expanding our economy. These tourism numbers are proof positive that our innovative efforts to bringing more visitors to Chicago have been tremendously successful and are providing an enormous economic boost," State Representative Art Turner (D-Chicago) said.

"Illinois' tourism industry continues to be a significant tool for statewide economic development, and Gov. Blagojevich is helping attract even more visitors, who are pumping billions of dollars into our economy and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. Through the Illinois Bureau of Tourism's continued innovative efforts, we are committed to building upon our incredible successes over the last several years," Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said.

"The Illinois tourism industry continues to attract visitors from around the globe making it a significant piece of the local and state economy. Our continued partnership with the Illinois Bureau of Tourism and the City of Chicago is leading to the right kinds of investments that are bringing more visitors to the city and creating remarkable economic momentum," Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau's President and CEO Tim Roby said.

"Marketing Chicago's abundant cultural offerings to a worldwide audience has drawn a record number of visitors looking for one-of-a-kind attractions such as Millennium Park and a variety of free arts programs," said Dorothy Coyle, Director, Chicago Office of Tourism. "Promoting Chicago's cultural activity as a primary reason to visit has elevated the city's profile throughout the country and the world and added millions of dollars to our city's economy."

Kicked off today in Chicago, representatives from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT) and its marketing agency partners are traveling the state during the 2007 Illinois Road Show to present the 2006 visitor and economic impact numbers and future marketing initiatives. Themed "Wonders of Illinois," the Road Show is emphasizing the Bureau's dedication to using new technologies to drive travel to and throughout the state, such as IBOT's recently updated 3-Day Getaways, including Google

mapping technology and the Seven Wonders of Illinois program that invited consumers to vote online for their favorite sites around the state. During the Illinois Road Show, participants are visiting the recently announced Seven Wonders of Illinois, in addition to other key tourism attractions in each market.

In each market, IBOT representatives are providing an overview of successful 2006-2007 marketing initiatives and upcoming programs to draw visitors to Illinois. These include:

**2006-2007 initiatives:** IBOT is highlighting some of the Bureau's milestone marketing programs from the past year, including the first Great Performers of Illinois, a showcase of the state's best performance art held at Chicago's Millennium Park; the Illinois Sports Congress, which promoted the state's sports facilities to sports rights holders across the country; and Seven Wonders of Illinois, Illinois' first online, consumer-driven marketing campaign designed to highlight a wide variety of destinations throughout Illinois.

**New and upcoming programs:** IBOT is presenting new programs for the year ahead, such as the Illinois Travel Guide, enhanced with new themed feature sections, such as Fun for the Family, Destination Romance and Onscreen Illinois; and a new Fall-O-Ween program to encourage visitors to explore Illinois' distinctive events and scenic drives during the important fall travel season.

**Advertising:** Representatives from IBOT's advertising agency are announcing the Bureau's new spring/summer advertising campaign for 2007, including new touch screen interactive bus shelters featuring Illinois road trips —the first advertising effort of its kind in Chicago. They'll also discuss IBOT's "Year of Shell Gas" promotion, which gives consumers the chance to submit a video from a 3-day Illinois Getaway to win a \$2,500 Shell gift card, and new 3-Day Getaways on **www.enjoyillinois.com** featuring Google mapping technology.

"Illinois is such a tremendously unique and diverse state that has something for absolutely everyone," said Jan Kostner, deputy director, Illinois Bureau of Tourism. "Gov. Blagojevich's strategic vision for promoting Illinois is paying record-breaking economic dividends, and we're very positive that this critical economic engine will continue to grow in 2007."

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers additional information on one-of-a-kind attractions, events statewide and suggested 3-Day Getaways on the Bureau's Web site, **www.enjoyillinois.com**, or through its travel counselors at **1-800-2CONNECT**. Travelers can also order the all-new Illinois Travel Guide, the most comprehensive guide to travel in the Land of Lincoln. Guides are available at Tourist Information Centers, local convention and visitors bureaus, regional tourism development offices statewide and can be downloaded on-line.

*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.*

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