



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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THIRD ANNUAL ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS RIDE KICKS OFF IN CHICAGO SEPT. 9 *A new route, new activities, and new adventures invite travelers to cycle the state*

CHICAGO – This year’s annual Illinois Great Rivers Ride will give participants the chance to explore the state’s rich history, culture, and beauty along a *new* route that winds its way south from Chicago to Springfield, Sept. 9-15, 2007. The seven-day 330-mile noncompetitive 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 Illinois Great Rivers Ride is a unique opportunity for visitors to take in the state’s natural beauty and enjoy some of its most exciting attractions,” said Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Bureau of Tourism. “First-time and returning riders will experience an itinerary that showcases the best of what the state has to offer.”

Each leg of the trip will average 56 miles along a hard-surface route, with stops in Joliet, Utica, Kewanee, Peoria, and Petersburg before concluding in Springfield. Every evening cyclists will have the opportunity to visit various attractions and enjoy activities and live entertainment.

Ride highlights

With an all-new itinerary, this year’s ride is full of surprises, including:

- Visits to the Sears Tower, Millennium Park, Navy Pier and Shedd Aquarium in Chicago and a reception aboard Chicago’s First Lady cruise boat. Riders will camp out under the stars at the 31st Street Beach (Saturday, Sept. 8)
- Rides on a Formula One-Style Racing Circuit at the Autobahn Country Club in Joliet (Sunday, Sept. 9)
- Native American reenactments at Utica’s Starved Rock State Park (Monday, Sept. 10)
- Dinner aboard the Spirit of Peoria paddle wheel (Wednesday, Sept. 12)

The final two days take cyclists to Springfield where riders will explore various Abraham Lincoln sites, including the acclaimed Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. The ride will conclude with dinner, dancing and fireworks at the Governor’s Mansion.

Registration

The cost for the seven-day ride is \$450 and registration is limited to the first 300 cyclists who sign up before Monday, Aug. 13 at 9 a.m. (CST). 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 Chicago back to the various starting points. Lunches will be available for purchase. Hotel accommodations will be available each night for interested participants at additional cost.

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

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 Stephanie Aenchbacher at stephanie.aenchbacher@edelman.com, 312-240-2688, 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.