



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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CONTACT: Emma Douglas 312-240-2730
emma.douglas@edelman.com

ENJOY ILLINOIS' WINTER WONDERLAND

Dazzling festivities from Chicago to Carbondale celebrate the season

CHICAGO – Illinois is warming things up this winter, offering travelers a wide variety of seasonal activities statewide. Celebrate the holiday season with nationally recognized lights festivals, take a road trip to visit live reindeer or pack your gear for an outdoor adventure in one of Illinois' beautiful state parks or ski areas.

This year, Illinois makes it easier than ever to find the perfect winter celebration by providing exciting 3-Day Getaway itineraries highlighting the events and attractions of the season. To find out more, check out www.enjoyillinois.com.

CHICAGO

Chicago's famed Michigan Avenue is transformed into a winter wonderland as the city kicks off the holiday season during the **16th Annual Magnificent Mile Lights Festival**, Nov. 17 and 18. A variety of events will get everyone into the holiday spirit, including live performances from *High School Musical* star Corbin Bleu, Eli's Cheesecake decorating, a live performance from the actors of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and much more. The celebration culminates when one million twinkling lights are turned on along North Michigan Avenue, followed by an explosive firework display over the Chicago River.

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

A perennial favorite, **Lincoln Park ZooLights** (Nov. 23 – Jan. 1) is a spectacle of fantastic lights displays, holiday decorations, ice sculpting, crafts and more. This year, over 1 million lights will make favorite nursery rhymes come to life, and Santa's visitors will enjoy exploring his workshop. Warm drinks and seasonal treats will also be available.

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

Navy Pier, one of Chicago's top attractions, will be magically transformed for its annual celebration, **Winter Wonderfest**, Dec. 7 – Jan. 6. A holiday favorite, families will enjoy hundreds of ornately decorated trees, thousands of lights and a variety of seasonal entertainment.

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

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Governor Rod R. Blagojevich

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

CHICAGOLAND

Holiday revelers will enjoy the many activities and exhibits featured at the **Holiday Celebration at Morton Arboretum**, Nov. 23 – Jan. 1. Every Sunday evening, guests can enjoy “Solstice Feast,” an engaging dinner theater performance with song, dance and storytelling. And visitors will love participating in the hysterical holiday adventures of the residents of “Arboretaville” while aboard “The Evergreen Express” trolley.

For more information, contact Morton Arboretum (630-968-0074, www.mortonarb.org).

Presented by Steel Beam Theatre in the quaint town of St. Charles, **A Christmas Story** (Nov. 23 – Dec. 23) is a wonderful holiday treat for the whole family. The beloved story of nine-year-old Ralphie and his pursuit of a Red Ryder BB gun is brought to life in a stage adaptation of this seasonal cinema favorite.

For more information, contact Steel Beam Theatre (630-587-8521, www.steelbeamtheatre.com).

With changing temperatures outside, the Chicago Botanic Garden echoes the holiday spirit inside with a seasonal display offering entertainment and education for its visitors. Inside the Regenstein Center, the 10,000-square-foot “**Wonderland Express**” exhibit (Dec. 1 – Jan. 6) features miniature trains winding over bridges, past waterfalls and through some of Chicago’s famous landmarks. Visitors will marvel at the 14 decorated holiday trees surrounded by stunning displays of hot pink amaryllis, orchids and tropical plants.

For more information, contact Chicago Botanic Garden (847-835-5440, www.chicagobotanic.org).

NORTHERN

Whether it’s the rush of speeding down a mountain atop piles of fresh snow or relaxing in front of a fireplace, Galena’s **Chestnut Mountain Resort** offers something for every traveler this winter. Consistently rated as one of the top ten ski resorts in the Midwest by *Ski Magazine*, Chestnut Mountain provides 19 runs for skiers and snowboarders in the largest terrain park in the Midwest. After a day on the slopes, guests can explore Galena’s charming restaurants, winery and shops or unwind in the resort’s pool, sauna or whirlpool.

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

Step back in time and celebrate a Victorian holiday in Rockford’s charming, turn-of-the-century Midway Village during **Holiday Traditions**, Dec. 8 and 9. The senses will be awakened by the clip-clop of horses’ hooves during a wagon ride, the spicy scent of gingerbread and the taste of seasonal favorites cooked on the wood-burning stove. Visitors can also tour the Village to learn more about Northern Illinois at the end of the

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19th century.

For more information, contact Rockford Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-521-0849, www.gorockford.com).

Spend a romantic evening in Galena when more than 5,000 luminaria – tiny candles lit inside paper bags – light up the town during the **Night of the Luminaria**, Dec. 15. This charming town will sparkle from end to end: from the Galena River to Main Street to the rolling hills of Galena. Visitors can enjoy the beauty of this favorite seasonal event while taking a trolley ride along the cobblestone streets.

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

CENTRAL

Where can one find the perfect Christmas tree, meet friendly reindeer like Klondike, Mistletoe and Flurry, and warm up with cups of hot Wassail? It's all at **Hardy's Reindeer Ranch**. This Central Illinois gem is home to an ever-growing herd of real, live Alaskan reindeer, and offers an authentic holiday experience year-round. No trip to Hardy's is complete without a stop in the barn gift shop for western-themed souvenirs and homemade treats.

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

Shelbyville celebrates the holidays with small-town charm during its tenth annual **Victorian Splendor Light Festival** (Nov. 16 – Jan. 1). Kids of all ages are invited to tour more than 400 lights displays scattered throughout Winter Wonderland, Winter Carnival, Victorian Village and Toyland.

For more information, contact Greater Shelbyville Chamber of Commerce (217-774-2221, www.shelbyville.net).

At the turn of the 19th century, Susan Lawrence Dana's Frank Lloyd Wright-designed mansion showcased a brilliant display of ornamentations, particularly during the holiday season. Now, the public is invited to **Holiday Season at the Dana-Thomas House** (Nov. 23 – Dec.30) to tour the home and, on three special days, to enjoy the famous Wright art glass collection. Special events include a Children's Story Hour in the Library, Family Night and Luminaria Sunday when 1,000 candles line the walkways leading up the home.

For more information, contact Dana-Thomas House (217-782-6776, www.dana-thomas.org).

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WESTERN

One of the nation's largest lights festivals, the **East Peoria Festival of Lights** (Nov. 24 – Dec. 31) is consistently ranked on the American Bus Association's Top 100 Events in the country. This year marks the festival's 23rd anniversary, and event coordinators are making it one of the biggest ever by offering attractions both new and old. As always, the festival kicks off with the Parade of Lights and fireworks spectacular. Folepi's Laser Theatre (added in 2006), invites festival-goers to enjoy a unique, indoor laser light show set to holiday music and sounds.

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

The riverfront town of Quincy is known for its beautiful mansions and landmarks, and during the holiday season residents and visitors alike can see many of those with architectural and/or historical significance during a special **Candlelight Architectural Tour**, Dec. 9 and 10. That same weekend many of the area's lodges, ornately decorated for the holiday season, offer tours which include meals and live music.

For more information, contact Quincy Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-978-4748, www.seequincy.com).

Often referred to as "the Quad Cities' best kept secret," **Ski Snowstar Winter Sports Park** in Andalusia has kept skiers and snowboarders coming back from across the Midwest for more than 25 years. Offering 28 acres of well-groomed snow and a variety of trails, Ski Snowstar provides customized lessons for all experience levels as well as night skiing, snow tubing and a seemingly endless supply of snow.

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

SOUTHERN

Whether looking to kick up their heels or put up their feet, wine aficionados can do both this winter at any of the nine wineries along the **Shawnee Hills Wine Trail** in Southern Illinois. One of the most established wine making regions in the Midwest, the wineries scattered throughout the Shawnee Hills region produce award-winning wines ideal for holiday gifts and special events. For an extra-special holiday celebration, many of the wineries offer cozy bed and breakfasts and suites for an extended getaway.

For more information, contact Shawnee Hills Wine Trail (www.shawneewinetrail.com).

Fort Massac State Park represents a fascinating period of American history with a replica of the 1802 fort that was once on the site. **Olde Tyme Christmas** (Dec. 9) is a celebration of the early Christmas traditions at Fort Massac complete with reenactors who will represent the French, American and Civil War-time traditions of the holidays. Inside the visitor's center, guests can enjoy live music and refreshments.

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For more information, contact Southernmost Illinois Tourism Development Office (618-524-9321, www.southernmostillinois.com).

The town of Du Quoin welcomes visitors to experience its annual **Holiday Lights Fair** (Nov. 24 – Dec. 30). Families can enjoy the two-mile drive-through display that covers the entire Du Quoin State Fairgrounds with animated displays and twinkling lights.

For more information, contact Du Quoin Tourism Bureau (800-455-9570, www.duquointourism.org).

SOUTHWEST

Also rated on the American Bus Association's Top 100 Events in North America is Belleville's **Way of Lights** (Nov. 15 – Jan. 6), a celebration at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows. New this year, wreaths made from local florists will be on display in the Visitors Center and available for auction-style bidding. Additional activities include choir performances, trolley and carriage rides, a petting zoo and a mile-and-a-half life-size nativity scene.

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

Nestled along the Mississippi River, the town of Alton offers something for everyone this winter. An annual mainstay, **Christmas Wonderland** (Nov. 25 – Dec. 27) features more than 2.5 million lights adorning trees and various displays throughout Rock Spring Park. Revelers can ring in 2008 at First Night River Bend, a family-friendly event featuring more than 40 artists, plus music, dancing, hat making and children's activities.

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

Bird enthusiasts can head to one of the state's best places to see many of the winter's species at **Pere Marquette State Park**. Beginning in December and typically lasting through February, the winter bird watching season is a perennial favorite amongst Midwesterners. Often during this time, majestic bald eagles can be seen soaring high above park grounds.

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

To get travelers started on their Illinois winter journeys, the Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers information on related one-of-a-kind attractions, events, accommodations and bookable 3-Day Getaways through the Bureau's Web site, **www.enjoyillinois.com** or its travel counselors at **1-800-2CONNECT**. Travelers can also order the 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, and regional tourism

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development offices statewide.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Media materials and downloadable images are now available on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism online media center at www.illinoismediacenter.com. Additional photography, available electronically, 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.