



# ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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## **ILLINOIS GIVES THE GIFT OF AFFORDABLE FESTIVE FUN THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

*Enjoy Illinois this winter with free events across the state*

CHICAGO – Friends and families seeking excitement and a low cost adventure this winter season need look no further than the Land of Lincoln. Travelers are encouraged to take a road trip and explore the different regions of Illinois, or stay close to home and enjoy activities that can be found in their own backyards. From free parades and lights festivals to reduced rates at some of the state's coolest attractions, Illinois has something for everyone – and every type of getaway – this winter.

Illinois makes it easy to find affordable winter festivities by providing exciting 3-Day Getaway itineraries highlighting the events and attractions of the season. To find out more, check out [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

### **CHICAGO**

Visitors to Chicago's Michigan Avenue will take home a lot more than full shopping bags this holiday season as memories will be made at the **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Magnificent Mile Lights Festival**, Nov. 22. For the 40<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, trees will be illuminated along North Michigan Avenue to signal the official start of the holiday season. Kids can join Mickey Mouse and his Disney pals and enjoy free performances by Justin Roberts and the Not Ready for Naptime Players, Jason Mraz, and the Cheetah Girls for a magical holiday celebration in the Magnificent Mile district. A fireworks display over the Chicago River at North Michigan Avenue will truly light up the night.

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

Travelers can discover the **Magic of Macy's** this holiday season and join Tommy Hilfiger as he lights the Macy's Centennial Great Tree in the world famous Walnut Room. The Centennial Tree will be on display through Jan. 6 and decorated with more than 1,200 themed ornaments and 25,000 sparkling lights. The 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Animated Christmas Windows will tell the enchanting story about how the Great Tree was decorated using local Chicago landmarks. Both the Great Tree lighting and window unveiling will take place Saturday, Nov. 8.

For more information, contact Macy's on State Street (800-329-8667, [www.visitmacyschicago.com](http://www.visitmacyschicago.com)).

Take a break from holiday shopping and check out Chicago's best views from **John Hancock Observatory**. From Nov. 15 through Dec. 21, the Observatory will usher in holiday cheer with Christmas trees, mistletoe and visits from Santa, as well as breathtaking views of the city's holiday lights from 94 stories above the Magnificent Mile. Kids get in free on the weekends with every paid adult throughout

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November and December.<sup>1</sup> While there, visitors can warm up with a steaming cup of coffee or hot cocoa at the world's highest Espresso by Lavazza Café.

For more information, contact John Hancock Observatory (888-875-VIEW, [www.hancockobservatory.com](http://www.hancockobservatory.com)).

### **CHICAGOLAND**

This winter, culture enthusiasts can take a **Holiday Mansion Tour**, Nov. 28 – Dec. 31, at the Cuneo Museum in Vernon Hills to experience the elegance and artistry of a time gone by. In addition to the tour, visitors can drive through the **Winter Wonderland Holiday Lights Show**, Nov. 28 – Jan. 3, to view animated displays and holiday decorations. Built as a private residence in the early 1900s, the Cuneo mansion is now a historic house museum highlighted by European furnishings, tapestries and treasured works of art, including several ceiling murals painted by late Chicago-area artist John Mallin. Holiday Mansion Tours are offered daily (except Mondays) and during select evenings for \$8 per person. Additional admission is \$5 per car, Monday through Thursday; the Winter Wonderland Holiday Lights Show is \$10 per car on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings.

For more information, contact Cuneo Museum (847-362-3042, [www.cuneomuseum.org](http://www.cuneomuseum.org)).

All aboard the **Wonderland Express** at the Chicago Botanic Gardens Nov. 28 – Jan. 4. There is always something new to see at the Model Railroad Garden, where 16 classic model trains cross bridges, zoom through tunnels, and wind their way past many of America's most famous landmarks – all made from natural materials. And now in its sixth year, the Reindog Parade (Dec. 6) will be a howling good time for everyone! Dogs and owners will celebrate the holiday season in a parade led by Santa and compete in a dog costume contest. Additional events include "Winter Wonders" family drop-in activities throughout the month, plus Christmas Breakfast with Santa (Dec. 13, 20), Christmas Supper with Santa (Dec. 11, 16, 18), and a Hanukkah Dinner and Concert (Dec. 22).

Don't just see the trains at the Botanic Gardens; save money and ride Metra. Take Metra's Union Pacific North Line to the Glencoe station and hop on the Botanic Garden's holiday trolley every weekend during Wonderland Express, and every day from Dec. 26 to Jan. 4. Round trip trolley tickets are only \$2.

For more information, contact Chicago Botanic Garden (847-835-5440, [www.ohwow.org](http://www.ohwow.org)).

In its 27<sup>th</sup> year as a Chicago-area favorite, the **Brookfield Zoo** welcomes visitors once again to its annual **Holiday Magic** celebration, taking place Saturdays and Sundays, Dec. 6 – 31. Zoo-goers can find adventure as they marvel at the nearly 1 million twinkling lights illuminating the zoo's walkways, a dazzling Laser and Light Spectacular, ice-carving demonstrations, magicians and much more. Santa will make a special appearance to hear children's wish lists (through Dec. 21). On Dec. 31, families can ring in 2009 during Counting Down the Zoo Year with Radio Disney from 6 – 8 p.m.

For more information, contact Brookfield Zoo (708-688-8400, [www.brookfieldzoo.org](http://www.brookfieldzoo.org)).

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<sup>1</sup> Adult must provide valid Illinois state I.D. to receive discounted child's admission. Valid for children ages 12 and under.

### **NORTHERN**

A winter adventure can be found amidst the rolling hills of Illinois' beautiful Galena Territory. At the **Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa** guests can relax and enjoy the perfect balance of the area's serenity and holiday activities. Spa-goers staying between Nov. 27 and Dec. 27 will certainly catch the holiday spirit with self-guided driving tours to view nearby homes brilliantly decorated for the season; special packages feature deals for families, couples and spa enthusiasts.

For more information, contact The Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa (815-777-2444, [www.eagleridge.com](http://www.eagleridge.com)).

Beginning Thanksgiving weekend, the shops and streets of Richmond will be reminiscent of years past as they are trimmed with seasonal cheer and sparkling lights at the **Christmas of Yesteryear** in historic downtown Richmond. The festivities run Nov. 28 – 30, and children of all ages will love to experience the days before motor cars with free horse-drawn wagon rides that will be offered all weekend long. Santa Claus will arrive to light the majestic Christmas tree, and visitors are encouraged to contribute their own special ornament to the tree. Visitors will enjoy perusing the historic downtown, shopping throughout the antique district's quaint shops, and dining in locally owned restaurants.

For more information, contact McHenry County CVB (815-363-6177, [www.visitmchenrycounty.com](http://www.visitmchenrycounty.com)).

Will winter extend for six extra weeks this year? Head over to Woodstock for their annual **Groundhog Days** celebration, Jan. 29 – Feb. 2, and find out as the city watches to see whether or not Woodstock Willie sees his shadow. The weather-curious can enjoy a weekend of activities all related to the 1993 movie, "Groundhog Day," which was filmed in Woodstock. Activities include Lighting of the Groundhog kick-off event on Feb. 1, free walking tours of film sites, free screenings of the movie at the downtown Woodstock Theater and more.

For more information, contact Groundhog Days Hotline (815-338-2436, [www.woodstockilchamber.com](http://www.woodstockilchamber.com)).

### **CENTRAL**

Celebrate the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reading of the Gettysburg Address at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Nov. 19 – Jan. 31. The exhibit, **Sam Fink's The Gettysburg Address**, will feature original art created for the book, *The Gettysburg Address*, illustrated by master calligrapher and artist Sam Fink. The art will go on display on the anniversary of the 1863 reading of the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln. The exhibit can be viewed free of charge with general admission to the museum.

For more information, contact Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (217-558-8934, [www.alplm.org](http://www.alplm.org)).

Visitors at **Hardy's Reindeer Ranch** can meet real reindeer at this central Illinois treasure in Rantoul. Hardy's is home to an ever-growing herd of real, live Alaskan reindeer, and offers an authentic holiday experience year-round. Not only can visitors pet and feed friendly reindeer, it's a wonderful place to find the perfect Christmas tree, warm up with cups of hot Wassail and pick up homemade treats at the barn gift shop.

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

Now in its sixth year, the **Pantagraph Holiday Spectacular** (Dec. 12 – 14) will fill the stage at Illinois State University Braden Auditorium in Normal with a crowd pleasing variety show that celebrates the holidays through singing and dancing. The show is loosely based on *A Christmas Carol*, and incorporates humorous holiday scenes the whole family will enjoy. Music includes classic songs by Irving Berlin, and an amazing Nativity reenactment complete with live animals and traditional carols. Tickets range from \$25 - \$20 for adults, \$10 - \$8 for kids (14 and under).

For more information, contact Illinois State University Braden Box Office (309-438-5444, [www.holidayspectacular.org](http://www.holidayspectacular.org)).

### **WESTERN**

Discover a downtown winter wonderland in Bloomington with **Christmas in the Park**. Take a step back in time when old fashioned holiday traditions are featured on center stage as Miller Park and the historic Pavilion are turned into a Christmas wonderland. Free activities will include visits and pictures with Santa Claus, crafts, sleigh rides, storytelling, face painting and holiday games, plus local musical entertainment by The Tri-Valley Madrigals, Mains Street USA and Davis Verchwold.

For more information, contact the City of Bloomington (309-434-2260, [www.cityblm.org/parks](http://www.cityblm.org/parks)).

One of the nation's largest lights festivals, the **East Peoria Festival of Lights** (Dec. 5 – 31), has once again been voted one of the Top 100 Events in North America by the American Bus Association. In its 24<sup>th</sup> year of crowd-pleasing entertainment, this year's event includes the River Trail Classic on Nov. 29, and free tours of historic homes featuring holiday decorations on Nov. 30 and Dec. 7. As always, the festival kicks off with the popular Parade of Lights and fireworks spectacular on Nov. 29.

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

Bringing skiers and snowboarders back to the Midwest for more than 26 years, **Ski Snowstar Winter Sports Park** in Andalusia welcomes in the winter season. The park offers 28 acres of well-groomed snow and a variety of trails that cater to all levels. Ski Snowstar provides customized lessons as well as night skiing, snow tubing and endless fun for snow enthusiasts. For day passes, or for those who will be hitting the slopes all winter long, tickets can now be purchased at a discounted rate online.

For more information, contact Ski Snowstar Sports Park (800-383-4002, [www.skisnowstar.com](http://www.skisnowstar.com)).

### **SOUTHERN**

Offering an enjoyable variety of distinct wine varietals and primarily featuring Illinois-grown grapes, the **Shawnee Hills Wine Trail** has become a favorite destination for wine lovers and travelers throughout Southern Illinois. For a special wintertime getaway, take a weekend trip to one of the many wineries offering cozy bed and breakfasts and stock up on award-winning wines to give as the perfect holiday gift.

For more information, contact Shawnee Hills Wine Trail ([www.shawneewinetrail.com](http://www.shawneewinetrail.com), 618-967-4006).

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century holiday traditions are on display in Metropolis at Illinois' first state park, Fort Massac State Park during the **Olde Tyme Christmas** celebration (Dec. 9). While there, visitors can walk around the replica of the 1802 original fort which will feature re-enactors representing the French, American and

Civil War-time traditions of the holidays including period decorations, live local music and refreshments such as hot spiced tea and cookies baked in the authentic period oven.

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

### **SOUTHWEST**

Experience the enchantment of the holiday season at the **Rock Spring Park Christmas Wonderland Holiday Light Display** in Alton. Visitors can take a moonlit drive through the park and view more than two million twinkling lights strung throughout the trees to make a host of charming displays. Also featured, Santa Claus will welcome guests in the Enchanted Forest, and a variety of animals will keep the kids entertained at the petting zoo. Christmas Wonderland 2008 will be open from Nov. 28 – Dec. 28, with a special walk-through night on Dec. 1. For visitors looking to add some romance to the night, carriage rides are available with advanced reservations by calling Greatting Horse Farm.

For more information, contact Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-ALTON-IL, [www.visitalton.com](http://www.visitalton.com)).

Travelers can celebrate the holiday season with international flare during **Weihnachtsfest**, the annual German Christmas Festival in Millstadt on Dec. 7. The day features an arts and crafts fair, holiday parade and Cookie Walk, plus homemade German food and beverages including favorites such as sauerbraten, bratwurst, potato pancakes, strudel and gluehwein. All events are free and will occur between 11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

For more information, contact The Tourism Bureau of Southwest Illinois (618-476-1812, [www.thetourismbureau.org](http://www.thetourismbureau.org)).

Throughout the winter season, the Mississippi River hosts one of North America's largest concentrations of bald eagles that are drawn to areas of open water in search of fish. Adventure seekers can join the city of Madison for the **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge**, Jan. 17 – 18, featuring an educational program, spotting telescopes and Lewis and Clark re-enactors. The eagle program is repeated every 20 minutes from 10:00 a.m. – 2:40 p.m. daily and viewing telescopes are staffed by trained volunteers to assist visitors in spotting the magnificent eagles.

For more information, contact Trail Net (314-416-9930, <http://trailnet.org>).

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](http://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 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](http://www.illinoismediacenter.com)**. Additional photography, available electronically, may be obtained by contacting Lisa Hadesman at [lisa.hadesman@edelman.com](mailto:lisa.hadesman@edelman.com), 312-552-1165 or Emma Douglas at [emma.douglas@edelman.com](mailto: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.*