



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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MAKE YOUR GROUP'S TRAVEL PLANS HISTORIC IN 2009

The Land of Lincoln is packed with activities and attractions for the best in group travel

CHICAGO –Mile after Magnificent Mile awaits your exploration and is sure to leave groups with boundless memorable experiences. From north to south and everywhere in between, there is something everyone can enjoy across the state of Illinois.

Tour operators will find planning a visit to Illinois convenient and efficient with www.tourillinois.org, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Bureau of Tourism's group tour travel site. This informational Web site features pre-planned 3-Day Getaway group tour itineraries sorted by region or theme, plus student group tours and a seasonal calendar of the state's festivals and events.

"In 2009, join us in celebrating Abraham Lincoln's historic 200th birthday with numerous attractions, events, and festivals across the state – you're definitely invited to this birthday party," says Tour Illinois Chair, Angela Ingerson. "There are so many options at your fingertips and we have made them even easier to find."

CHICAGO

Originally built on rubble from the 1871 Chicago fire for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the internationally acclaimed **Art Institute of Chicago** is known chiefly for its renowned collection of Impressionist and American Art. Today the museum collection encompasses more than 5,000 years of human expression from cultures around the world. Its influence in the art world will bring the likes of *The Scream* by Edvard Munch (February 14 – April 26, 2009) and the visual expression of Cy Twombly (May 6 – September 13, 2009) to Chicago. Groups can book guided tours of the Art Institute and take advantage of the many slide lectures and gallery talks available, which can feature masterpieces of the collection or a special exhibition. The Institute's \$200 million Modern Wing expansion project will open on May 16, 2009, adding an additional 33% of gallery space and new educational facilities.

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

One of the nation's largest facilities devoted to the art of our time, the **Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)** offers exhibitions of the most thought-provoking art created since 1945. The MCA documents contemporary visual culture through painting, sculpture, photography, video and film, and performance. The Museum's standing collection contains 2,345 pieces of visual art with a strong focus on surrealism, minimalism, conceptual photography, and work by Chicago-based artists. Art enthusiasts will be inspired by the stunning paintings, sculptures, and photography to installations and videos. The MCA provides a number of opportunities for groups to get up close and personal with the artworks on exhibit, the artists and the curators.

For more information, contact the Museum of Contemporary Art (312-280-2660, www.mcachicago.org).

Chicago's most recent arts showplace, **Millennium Park**, features year-round, free performances and unique art and architecture for visitors of all ages. Walking tours, offered by the Chicago Architecture Foundation, explain how the park was transformed into one of the world's finest architectural and artistic attractions. Now one of the most popular parks in the country, this 24.5-acre park located in the heart of downtown Chicago features the work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists and designers, including Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate, or "The Bean," and Frank Gehry's architectural masterpiece – the Jay Pritzker Pavilion. Join the Grammy-Nominated Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus for free concerts throughout the summer as part of their 75th Anniversary Season in 2009, the nation's only remaining free, outdoor classical music series.

For more information, contact Millennium Park (312-742-1168, www.millenniumpark.org).

CHICAGOLAND

The Lombard Park District in Lombard will once again host the **Lilac Time Festival** May 2 – 17, 2009. The Festival will feature 8.5 beautiful acres with more than 1,200 lush lilacs of 200 varieties and 25,000 stunning tulips covering 50 varieties. Each year also includes a wide-range of free concerts and entertainment in Lilacia Park. The Festival is free to visitors, but donations to the park are appreciated. Groups and buses are welcome.

For more information, contact Lombard Park District (630-620-7322, www.lombardparks.com)

The 385-acre **Chicago Botanic Garden** in Glencoe is one of the country's most visited public gardens and a preeminent center for learning and scientific research. The Garden features 2.3 million plants, representing 9,434 plant varieties on 23 display gardens and three native habitats, situated across nine islands surrounded by lakes. To make it easier for groups of all shapes and sizes, there are basic tour packages available that include free parking and 10% discount coupons to the Garden Shop. From May 9 – October 25, 2009, *The Model Railroad Garden: Landmarks of America*, entering its ninth season, highlights the country from coast to coast with model trains, miniature representations of America's most beloved landmarks and colorful small-scale gardens.

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

Visitors to the **LEGOLAND Discovery Center** in Schaumburg can join Mr. Brick a Brack and learn about how LEGOs are made, experience a 4-D medieval adventure film and try out their own designs with thousands of LEGOs in the Build + Test Center. There is even a 200-pound replica of the Sears Tower made from over 190,000 LEGOs. Interaction, learning, and fun go hand in hand when groups visit and take advantage of group rates and package options.

For more information, contact the LEGOLAND Discovery Center (866-929-8111, www.legolanddiscoverycenter.com/chicago).

NORTHERN

Galena Trolley Tours are the best way for any group to discover Galena's historic offerings. Take a narrated tour through historic downtown and see the Ulysses S. Grant State Historic Site, or take the architectural tour through three of Galena's most historic homes. Enjoy beautiful views as you explore Galena's vintage charm and contemporary spirit. The Trolley's group packages make this an enjoyable, convenient way to see the nestled town's extensive history.

For more information, contact Galena Trolley Tours (815-777-1248, www.galenatrolleys.com).

The **Burpee Museum** in Rockford is the perfect stop for groups looking to explore natural history. The Museum is home to Jane, the most complete adolescent *T. rex* in the world, as well as more than 70,000 other Paleontology, Geology, Biology and Anthropology specimens. The Burpee Museum is much more than the “region’s window to natural history,” and groups are constantly amazed by the collections and exhibits that depict billions of years of earth’s history.

For more information, contact the Burpee Museum (815-965-3433, www.burpee.org).

Step into the **Anderson Japanese Gardens** in Rockford and enjoy the natural beauty of two amazing gardens. Groups will be delighted by the formal Japanese garden and the Garden of Reflection, both designed to allow guests to leave the stressors of everyday behind while communing with nature and reconnecting with one's self. More than 30,000 visitors annually discover what hundreds of Japanese koi and Chinese grass carp call home. Senses unite for an amazing experience that extends far beyond the plant and animal life.

For more information, contact the Anderson Japanese Gardens (815-229-9390, www.andersongardens.org)

CENTRAL

The Land of Lincoln is celebrating the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln in grand fashion, especially at the **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum** in downtown Springfield. Combining scholarship and showmanship, the Museum immerses groups in the era of this legendary president like no place else can. State of the art exhibits will take groups from Lincoln’s rustic Indiana cabin to the Executive Mansion in the nation’s capital as they follow the president and share the joys and sorrows of a family—and a nation. Group rates are available when you reserve in advance.

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

Hardy’s Reindeer Ranch in Rantoul has been delighting guests since it opened in 1995 with more than 16 Alaskan reindeer, 80 acres of land, and year round activities including cook outs, hay rides, an old-fashioned saloon and more. Groups have been making Hardy’s part of their programs for more than a decade.

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

Lincoln’s New Salem Historic Site in Petersburg offers groups a unique glimpse into the place where our 16th President spent several of his formative years and made a name and career in politics. The reconstructed village of New Salem is an amazing place to visit, featuring 23 log buildings, farm animals, split-rail fences, and re-enactors in period clothing doing chores like quilting and blacksmithing. Group tours of the 800 acre site are available with a reservation.

For more information, contact the Lincoln New Salem Historic Site (217-632-4000, www.lincolnsnewsalem.com).

WESTERN

Groups of all ages will enjoy learning about the American agribusiness industry at the **John Deere Pavilion** in Moline. Visitors will discover the significant impact John Deere has had on the farming industry through exhibits celebrating the past, present and future of agribusiness. Exhibits include the virtual factory tour of the 11-step process involved in making the tractors, the Cornucopia field to table exhibit, and how future technologies will play a role in our lives.

For more information, contact John Deere Pavilion (309-765-1000, www.deere.com/en_US/attractions/pavilion).

Experience the **Spirit of Peoria**, one of the only traditional paddleboats in the United States. This one-of-a-kind ship features many decorative fixtures, including the captain's bell and a brass tube that once served as a telegraph from the pilot house to the captain's quarters. The boat is one of the only in the country that maintains the use of its paddlewheel to power it down the river. The Spirit of Peoria offers a variety of sightseeing, theme, charter and also overnight cruises tailored for groups of varying sizes.

For more information, contact the Spirit of Peoria (800-676-8988, www.spiritofpeoria.com)

People of all ages will enjoy the **32nd Annual Galesburg Railroad Days** celebration held June 27-28, 2009. The annual festival begins with a carnival full of games and live music and offers history for car and rail enthusiasts. Fun for the whole family will keep groups engaged for hours on end. There are plenty of festivities for groups of all sizes.

For more information, contact Galesburg Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (309-343-2485, www.galesburgrailroaddays.org)

SOUTHERN

Uncorked Tours offers groups a unique experience along the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail in Southern Illinois as they'll enjoy fine wines and knowledgeable staff along the way. A guide can take groups on an eight-hour tour to five wineries on the trail, offering tastings, tours of the vineyards, souvenir wine glass, and a chance to win prizes through wine trivia. Customers of Uncorked Tours leave with many memories and a fondness for Illinois-crafted wines.

For more information, contact Shawnee Hills Wine Trail Tour (618-967-4006, www.uncorkedtours.com).

Explore the **Fort Massac State Park and Museum** and experience what life was like during the 1700s through a replica of the original fort crafted to look as it did during the French and Indian War. Located next to the fort, the museum features Native American relics, French military items and numerous other rare artifacts. Groups of 25 or more are welcome and encouraged to use the park's facilities and are encouraged to register in advance with the site office.

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

Built in the early 1970s, **Rend Lake** in Benton is an 18,000-acre reservoir created to provide a dependable domestic water supply for a two-county area in Southern Illinois. Groups will enjoy the wide-range of recreational activities along the 162 miles of shoreline, including the perfect place for fishing, golfing, bike trails, hiking, museums, camping or just a relaxing time on the beach.

For more information, contact Rend Lake (618-724-2493, www.rendlake.com).

SOUTHWEST

Groups have the opportunity to visit **Fort de Chartres** on the Mississippi River in Prairie du Rocher, the last remaining 18th-century fort erected by France's colonial government. The stone fort, built in the 1750s and abandoned in 1771, has been partially reconstructed to provide a glimpse of life in Illinois under the French regime. Archaeological remains are on display for

groups to view as they tour buildings within the fort. Come see where some of Illinois' earliest history took place, including the oldest building in the state.

For more information, contact Fort de Chartres (618-284-7230, www.ftdechartres.com).

The **National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows** sits on 200 beautifully manicured acres. These bluffs overlook the Mississippi River Valley and host more than one million visitors each year. Employees at the Shrine welcome groups to enjoy the peaceful surroundings and are delighted to design a custom itinerary for each visit to the site. They offer guided tours of the Shrine and devotional sites, group meals in the Shrine Restaurant, a Gift Shop and Bookstore, and more.

For more information, contact the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows (800-682-2879, www.snows.org).

Explore one of the greatest ancient cities of the world at the **Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and Interpretive Center** in Collinsville. Learn how ancient Mississippians built the largest prehistoric Indian city north of Mexico that quickly became the religious, political, economic and cultural center of the time. Groups will discover the variety of construction built for personal and public use millions of years ago, and are invited to explore the Interpretation Center and watch the orientation show *City of the Sun*. Reservations are required.

For more information, contact the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and Interpretive Center (618-398-5995, www.cahokiamounds.com)

Visitors to **www.tourillinois.org** will have access to sample itineraries and a free, downloadable Tour Illinois Profile Sheet full of great suggestions, an events calendar and a sampling of Illinois' tour-friendly attractions. For more information about group tour travel options in Illinois, visit **www.tourillinois.org** or call **1-866-TOURSIL**. The Illinois Bureau of Tourism also offers a vast amount of seasonal travel information available by visiting the Bureau's Web site at **www.enjoyillinois.com**.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Media materials and downloadable images are available on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism online media center at www.illinoismediacenter.com. Additional photography, available electronically, may be obtained by contacting Zachary Morrison at zachary.morrison@edelman.com, 312-240-2848 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.