



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

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January 26, 2009

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ILLINOIS TOURISM OFFICIALS DISCUSS OUTLOOK OF INDUSTRY AT 2009 CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and industry partners to host state's leading tourism education and networking forum March 4–6 in Chicago

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT) and the Illinois Council of Convention and Visitor Bureaus will host the **2009 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism: The Road Ahead**, March 4–6, at The Fairmont Chicago. More than 600 tourism professionals from across the state gather annually to highlight the industry's successes from the previous year and discuss the year's upcoming initiatives. This year's theme, "The Road Ahead," encourages attendees to learn and utilize the tools to ensure a long and vital future for Illinois' travel industry.

"The Illinois tourism industry continues to serve as a vital part of the state's economy. In 2007, Illinois tourism experienced another record breaking year, contributing nearly \$30 billion to the state's economy and hosting more than 90 million visitors both nationally and internationally," said Director of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Jack Lavin. "This year's conference will equip tourism professionals with the skills they need to continue to promote all our state has to offer, and will help ensure we continue to set records moving forward."

Conference Highlights

DCEO Director Jack Lavin and IBOT Deputy Director Jan Kostner will present the annual State of the State of Tourism Address on Thursday, March 5. Lavin and Kostner will provide a comprehensive overview and key learnings from Illinois' past initiatives, and highlight upcoming programs and relevant trends for 2009.

The conference will feature three educational tracks to help make the conference experience effective and relevant for all attendees: *Technology, Marketing & Media*, and *Sales*. Speakers include:

- **Bill Rancic, entrepreneur and winner of Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*®**, who will discuss his professional journey and how thinking out of the box led to his career success;
- **Ted Souder, Head of Travel, Google, Inc.**, who will discuss Google's impact on Illinois tourism and highlight best marketing practices for the tourism industry in today's economy;
- **Bruce Turkel, Advertising & Branding Expert, CEO, TURKEL**, who will illustrate the finer points of effectively communicating and building, maintaining and promoting a strong and lasting brand; and
- **James Feldman, President, Chief Solutions Officer, James Feldman Associates, Inc.**, who will focus on creating long-term benefits, offering value and increasing revenue for the tourism industry through innovative thinking and risk-taking.

An icebreaker reception will be held at John Hancock Observatory on Wednesday, March 4, allowing attendees the opportunity to enjoy a 360-degree view of Chicago while networking with colleagues. On the second evening of the conference, attendees are encouraged to explore Chicago and enjoy discounted tickets to a selection of live theater performances throughout the city.

Governor's Awards Luncheon

The 22nd annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism will conclude on March 6 by recognizing Illinois' tourism industry leaders at The Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards Luncheon. The awards recognize those whose work helps propel innovative, forward thinking within Illinois' travel industry.

For a complete conference schedule and list of speakers or to register for the **2009 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism**, visit **www.ilgovconference.com**.

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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.