



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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ALL ABOARD: EXPLORE ILLINOIS THIS SPRING

Illinois invites travelers to enjoy new beginnings and events Mile After Magnificent Mile

CHICAGO – This spring travelers to Illinois are encouraged to jump aboard Amtrak and visit all seven distinct regions of Illinois. The Illinois Bureau of Tourism's (IBOT) new partnership with Amtrak offers travelers a 20 percent discount off a regular adult rail ticket in Illinois through June 30 providing an easier and environmentally friendly way to head to Chicago for opening-day ball games or visit free art and music festivals across the state. There's something for everyone to enjoy this spring season in the Land of Lincoln.

Illinois makes it easy to find affordable spring events and attractions with the exciting 3-Day Getaway itineraries at www.enjoyillinois.com.

CHICAGO

There's so much to see and do at Navy Pier this spring season. At the **2009 Belgard Chicago Flower and Garden Show**, March 7–15, visitors will enjoy beautiful flora and the sweet smell of springtime blooming before their eyes. During free educational seminars visitors will learn from experts about how to grow and maintain perfect gardens, new trends in landscaping and shade gardening, and more. More than 25 gardens will be on display in a new themed midway, showcasing some of the best cultural institutions such as The Lincoln Park Zoo, The Museum of Science & Industry, The Chicago Botanic Garden, Garden Clubs of Illinois and the Chicago Park District.

For more information, contact the Chicago Flower and Garden Show (773-435-1250, www.ChicagoFlower.com).

Whether rooting for the Chicago Cubs or the Chicago White Sox, opening-day ball games are fun for baseball fans of all ages. North Side visitors can head to Wrigley Field for the **Cubs Home Opener** on April 13 against the Colorado Rockies. Fans cheering for Chicago's South Side team will want to head to Cellular One Field for the **White Sox Home Opener** on April 6 against the Kansas City Royals.

For more information, contact Cubs box office (773-404-2827, www.cubs.com); White Sox box office (312-674-1000, www.whitesox.com).

Visitors who want to give their feet a break can jump aboard a **Wendella Boat Tour** to enjoy some of the best views of the city while floating along the Chicago River or heading out onto Lake Michigan. Visitors can choose from an architectural, sightseeing or wine tasting tour of the city's downtown lakefront. No sea legs? Check out the city from atop Chicago's **Double Decker Bus Tour**. Explore the sites, sounds and smells of the city while hopping on and off the bus through a two-hour, fully narrated tour that covers 13 miles of Chicago's downtown and the Loop.

-more-

Governor Pat Quinn

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

For more information, contact Chicago Wendella Boat (312-337-1446, www.wendellaboats.com); Chicago Double Decker (773-648-5000, www.coachusa.com/chicagotrolley).

CHICAGOLAND

Starting this spring, take a step back in time to an era when dinosaurs roamed the earth at **Brookfield Zoo's** exhilarating new exhibit, **Dinosaurs Alive!**, April 1 – October 31. The exhibit features 18 animatronic dinosaurs, the largest of which, the Ruyang Yellow River dinosaur, measures nearly 30 feet high and 60 feet long. Visitors can see just how small they really are compared to massive replicas of a Tyrannosaurus rex, Triceratops and Pteranodon dinosaur – all of which are flesh-like to the touch and incorporate lifelike sounds and movements. Guests will be able to manipulate four of the dinosaurs using remote control consoles and participate in an interactive dig site, where “junior paleontologists” can unearth replica artifacts.

For more information, contact Brookfield Zoo (708-688-8000, www.CZS.org).

Bring the whole family for a reenactment of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry at Camp Kane in St. Charles during a **Civil War Weekend**, April 18–19. Watch as this celebrated unit is joined by other units from around Illinois for a two-day encampment and muster. Visitors are encouraged to take part in these realistic events and watch troops practice battlefield tactics to prepare themselves for great Civil War battles. General Grant, General Lee and President Lincoln will also be attending this free event and are scheduled to make appearances on April 19 at 1 p.m.

For more information, contact Farnsworth Mansion (224-856-9049, www.farnsworthmansion.com).

Help kick off spring this year at the annual Plainfield **Spring Fest**, May 15–17, in downtown Plainfield. The area's first outdoor festival of the season includes food, live entertainment from local bands, a beer tent, a craft and business booth, kid's carnival rides, local shopping and more. Visitors to this vibrant town will enjoy the city's transformation into an exciting fairground where everyone from the community gathers to enjoy the seasonal merriment.

For more information, contact Main Street Plainfield (815-436-5510, www.mainstreetplainfield.org).

NORTHERN

As winter turns to spring, come see how sugary sweet syrup is made from the sap of maple trees at the **Festival of the Sugar Maples**, February 28 – March 1. Admission is free for all syrup lovers, and while there, be sure to take the one-hour tour to learn more about the cultural history of the maple grove, different sap collection methods and the syrup cooking process. The maple syrup tour also includes a half-mile hike along a semi-rugged nature trail through the Coral Woods conservation area and the opportunity to top off the Festival experience with a taste of fresh maple syrup straight from the Coral Woods maple trees.

For more information, contact Marengo Park District (815-338-6223, www.mccdistrict.org).

It's time to break out the balloons and party streamers as Galena celebrates the birth of one of our country's greatest presidents, Ulysses S. Grant, at the **U.S. Grant Birthday Celebration & Civil War Encampment**, April 17–19. Activities will include a living history encampment, reenactment battles with portrayals of military and civilian camp life, Civil War experts, a grand Birthday Ball and more.

For more information, contact Galena History Museum (815-777-9129, ww.galenahistorymuseum.org).

Get your riding boots on and head down to the largest traveling rodeo in Illinois at the 33rd annual **Pembroke Township Rodeo**, May 23–24. Cowboys and cowgirls will want to rope their seats early for this picnic and authentic rodeo featuring the Latting Rodeo Productions performing bare-back riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, relay races, barrel races, flag races and bull riding. Cost to attend the Pembroke Township Rodeo is a \$5 general admission. This is the only stop the Latting Rodeo Productions Tour will make in Illinois.

For more information, contact Kankakee County Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-747-4837, www.visitkankakeecounty.com).

CENTRAL

With the smell of spring cleaning in the air, visitors are encouraged to come down to Champaign for the best home and garden show in central Illinois. The **WCIA 3 Home & Garden Show**, March 28–29, is back this year and better than ever. Free admission and parking allows attendees to enjoy two full days of new and exciting tricks of the trade to improve and maintain their home and garden. The Busey Bank Home Improvement Theatre presents an assortment of helpful how-to seminars, and this year's grand-prize giveaway is a \$4,000 landscape fantasy-come-true from Country Arbors Nursery. The University of Illinois Chief and MIX 94.5 will be sponsoring the Family Fun Zone with games and activities for the whole family.

For more information, contact Champaign County Arts, Culture and Entertainment Council (217-351-9841, www.40north.org).

Art aficionados from around the region join together at the fourth **Annual Artisan Fair**, April 24–25, in downtown Effingham. Artists of all ages are encouraged to submit their masterpieces to this annual contest, which are then judged by a selected panel and fair-goers. In addition to viewing the art, visitors are invited to taste wine from 10 vineyards around Illinois, including Lasata Wines Ltd., Hoghallow Wine, Fox Creek Wines and Collver Family Winery.

For more information, contact Effingham Convention and Visitors Bureau (217-342-53102, www.visiteffinghamil.com).

Fungus lovers unite at the sixth annual **Spores N More Mushroom Festival**, April 24–25, as five communities—Bethany, Findlay, Windsor, Shelbyville and Sullivan—join together to celebrate the mushroom. Opening night of the festival welcomes fans of morels, pacific golden chanterelle and oyster mushrooms to dine with experts on tasty mushroom soup. Festival goers are invited to participate in a mushroom hunt, auction and a wide range of activities highlighting the morel mushroom – a local favorite.

For more information, contact Lake Shelbyville Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-874-3529, www.lakeshelbyville.com).

WESTERN

Help save the environment at the sixth annual **Earth Week Fair**, April 18, at the QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island. This free event encourages people to learn new and easy ways to help the environment. This year, in addition to interactive booths, the fair features three workshops for adults on a range of “green” topics: Energy and Your Home, Local Sustainable Food in Your Kitchen, and Native Plants Perfect for Any Living Space. Green gifts will be given to all participants to encourage living a greener lifestyle.

For more information, contact Quad Cities Earth Week Coalition (563-386-9575, www.qcearthweek.org).

The 40th **Annual Dogwood Festival & Parade** takes place in downtown Quincy, May 2–3. It kicks off with a community parade on Main Street and is a wonderful way to welcome in the warm weather of spring. The dogwood tree is special to Quincy and helps in the town's recognition as part of Tree City USA. During the Dogwood Festival, the beautiful flowering trees can be seen all over town from creamy white blossoms to a vibrant pink bloom. Visitors can participate in a crafts and hobby fair, and dine on the delicious foods of local Quincy restaurants.

For more information, contact the City of Quincy (217-222-7980, www.seequincy.com).

Come fly a kite in western Illinois at the **Third Annual Pontiac Kite Festival**, May 30–31, at the Pontiac Rec Plex. This high-flying free weekend event is sure to be fun for the whole family. Kite Chicago, The Illinois Kite Enthusiast Club, Sparling Entertainment, and 180 GO – the premier Midwest quad kite flying team – will be on site to help fellow kite fliers set sail. Kite flying music and entertainment will be provided by DJ Lane Lindstrom. Grab your favorite kite and the wind will do the rest.

For more information, contact the City of Pontiac (800-835-2055, www.pontiac.org).

SOUTHERN

Considered one of the best free events in southeastern Illinois, head down to Sumner for **Old Settlers Days**, April 25–26. Step back in time for this festival and have fun while learning about life in the early 1800s. From blacksmiths and marionette puppet shows to hand-made broom stores and loom weavers, Old Settlers Days lets visitors experience real pioneer life. The festival features artisans in period clothing demonstrating skills of prairie pioneers including rug braiding, basket weaving, pottery, candle and barrel making and leather work. Many of the crafters have done extensive research to make items by hand and are available to answer questions from visitors. Pioneers looking for a tasty treat can indulge in meat pastries, buffalo burgers, ham and beans, fruit-filled pippins, bread pudding, homemade ice cream and old-fashioned root beer.

For more information, contact Red Hills Settlers Association (618-843-7138, www.redhillsettlers.org).

The spring season is all about new beginnings, so come see the new wildlife at the **Southernmost Illinois Nature Fest 2009**, April 25, at the Cache River Wetlands Visitor Center. Kids of all ages can get an up-close view of animals living in the Wetlands such as owls, hawks and falcons. Staff will be on site to offer birding tips and information about the wildlife seen in the area, and those who come early can watch a hummingbird banding and learn about the research the band will provide about the species. Those who are more adventurous can take part in a guided canoe tour or a nature hike.

For more information, contact Southernmost Illinois Tourism Development Office (618-833-9928, www.southernmostillinois.com).

SOUTHWEST

Experience the joy and excitement of new life as the Rainbow Ranch petting zoo invites animal lovers to feed all the new babies born on the farm. The **Rainbow Ranch Baby Bonanza**, April 4–5, introduces new baby lambs, kids, and calves to visitors annually on this 150 year-old family-owned farm in Okawville. Kids of all ages can visit with animals like Max the scarlet macaw, Lorenzo and Lover the llamas, Granola the goat, Zsa Zsa the zebu, Posey the miniature pony and more.

For more information, contact Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau (618-424-7979, www.thetourismbureau.org).

Warmer spring weather brings our favorite feathered friends back to the state of Illinois. Fly over to **Wings of Spring** in Alton (April 25) for the free birding festival. The fun-filled day consists of off-site birding trips, arts and musical entertainment, birding exhibits and bird watching vendors, family-friendly educational activities and live bird meet-and-greets.

For more information, contact Alton Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau (800-258-6645, www.visitilton.com).

Add some culture to your travel plans this spring and check out one of the great art fairs in the nation in Belleville. **Art on the Square**, May 15–17, features work from 100 artists from around the world, an Illinois and International Art Walk and activities for the whole family. In its seventh year, Art on the Square expects to be bigger than ever in 2009, inviting visitors to view the work of outstanding artists and fine craftsmen. One unique event, Sculpture in the City was developed two years ago and provides the city with a fantastic visual impact for both locals and visitors. Music and games, art activities and more can be found throughout the Belleville Downtown public square area.

For more information, contact Art on the Square (618-233-6967, www.artonthesquare.com).

To get travelers started on their Illinois spring adventures, 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 2009 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**. Additional photography, available electronically, may be obtained by contacting Zachary Morrison at zachary.morrison@edelman.com, 312-240-2848.

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.