

Illinois Tourism News from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ IBOT's spring advertising campaign launches April 21.
- ▶ National Tourism Week is May 10-18. More to come in the May edition of the ITN on how you can celebrate this national event.
- ▶ International Pow Wow 2004 will be held May 17-21 in nearby St. Louis. The Illinois evening reception will be held May 19 in Collinsville.
- ▶ IBOT's summer advertising campaign launches May 19.
- ▶ The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library opens this spring, and the museum will open in late 2004.

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR



Jan Kostner

(Editor's note: Earlier this week, Jan Kostner, IBOT's new deputy director, addressed tourism industry representatives from around the state at a luncheon sponsored by the Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association. Following please find an overview of her remarks.)

Good afternoon. I'm honored to be here today to acknowledge your efforts to build industry recognition and legislative support for Illinois' dynamic and growing tourism industry. You all have a successful track record of which to be proud.

Visit Illinois has warmly welcomed me into the industry and has asked me to serve on their board. I look forward to becoming an active participant and being your link to the Illinois Bureau of Tourism.

I'm fortunate to be joining an industry so full of talent, success and enthusiasm, and one that is clearly poised for continued success.

Illinois is recognized as a national leader in the travel industry largely due to your ongoing commitment to growing tourism statewide.

Congratulations on all that you have accomplished in helping to ensure the continued growth of this vital industry.

I am looking forward to applying my experience with all of you to further our mutual goal of making the state of Illinois a top tourism destination.

One of my favorite experiences is when I had the honor of working on the announcement of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission at the Old State Capitol. Little did I know that nine months later I would be involved in the actual promotion of the 200th year anniversary. I was honored then, and am honored now to be in the position of public service that I am today.

As you know, these are challenging times. "War" and "terrorism" now punctuate our planning efforts – keeping in mind that every day brings with it the threats of economic instability, wavering consumer confidence, security alerts and even worldwide health scares. This too will pass. It may be a long journey, but the Bureau of Tourism is here to help chart a course to keep us moving forward so that we may reap the economic impact that enhances the quality of life of all Illinoisans.

I have been following trends in the industry, and I would like to share some information with you.

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MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR (Continued)

None of us would be surprised to learn that the Travel Industry Association of America reports spring travel is down. A recent survey showed while interest in travel continues to grow, the war has greatly impacted travel plans.

The biggest decline will be business travel, which is anticipated to be down 2.5 percent from last year and more than 13 percent lower than the 60 million trips taken nationwide during the spring of 2001.

Leisure travel, however, will continue to grow, but not at the record levels that we have seen in the past. More common is last-minute travel and even postponing leisure travel altogether. And, if we are fortunate, this trend will subside as we enter our important summer travel season.

Hotel occupancy is expected to rise with slightly rebounding room rates, although a significant comeback isn't anticipated until next year.

The air travel outlook remains uncertain, with record deficits among major carriers and declining passenger lists worldwide due to the war.

Our state hotel tax receipts – the sole source of funding for our state tourism program – continue to be on track this fiscal year for a slight increase over last year. Through March deposits, we are up about 2 percent with strong 4th quarter numbers expected to boost this increase even higher.

Even as our industry suffered from the aftereffects of terrorism on our own soil, we welcomed a record 85 million domestic travelers in

2001, a 7 percent increase from the previous record of 79 million in 2000. Leisure travel in Illinois climbed 10 percent, compared with 3 percent nationally. Business travel here in Illinois was up 3 percent, even as it fell 7 percent nationally.

But even as our visitor numbers reached an all-time high, traveler spending decreased. The economic impact of domestic travel-related spending in Illinois fell 5.2 percent to \$20.8 billion in 2001, down from \$21.9 billion in the banner year of 2000.

Clearly, we have our work cut out for us. But we are resilient and we will remain diligent in our effort to let everyone know that Illinois is a great travel destination.

And despite these challenges, we're seeing many positive developments here in Illinois. New additions to Illinois' wide array of attractions include the Lewis & Clark sites, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum complex, new exhibits such as the Shedd's "Wild Reef" and the Burpee's "Tyrannosaurus Rex – Jane" – will provide new reasons for travelers to visit us, and to come back again and again.

Looking forward, we have the tools to encourage people to continue traveling to Illinois. The 2003 Illinois Travel Guide includes more information than ever before. This rich guide is the perfect planning tool for any Illinois getaway.

Thanks to our Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director, Jack Lavin, we also now have the ability to "close the deal" and convert callers into travelers.

We are also continuing to produce the widely successful *Illinois Now!* magazine – a perfect seasonal compliment to the new travel guide.

Our message is clear – make the most of your life right here in Illinois by taking advantage of the abundance of travel experiences we offer.

This message will be touted throughout our spring and summer advertising campaigns. Our goal is to create awareness that summer is just around the corner and consumers should start planning today. Consumers will be offered the Illinois Travel Kit – which includes the new 2003 Travel Guide, *Illinois Now!* magazine and an official road map. The message will be communicated to our proven travel markets.

While we have our work cut out for us, we have the infrastructure in place – and, I believe with all of your help, the best team in the nation – to continue promoting Illinois as a premiere destination, for everything from a weekend getaway to an extended stay.

I have already spoken with many industry partners. I look forward in the weeks and months ahead to visiting with you and learning from you about your experiences, insights, and ideas on how to make Illinois the best destination in the United States.

Thank you, and I look forward to working with all of you to continue growing tourism in Illinois.

STATEWIDE NEWS

Closing the deal to connect

The Illinois call center is now taking hotel reservations via 800-2-CONNECT. This brand new feature will give Illinois travel counselors the opportunity to "close the deal" after providing helpful travel information and ideas. In exchange for this new feature, the call center hours have been modified. Travel counselors will be available from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. During the off hours, a scripted voice recording unit system will provide the call center hours as well as an option for callers to order brochures through the automated service.

Start spreading the news

As we all know, Illinois offers a wealth of travel opportunities, and this spring and summer we'll be spreading the news with two new advertising campaigns.

Beginning April 21, the spring campaign will remind consumers that summer is just around the corner and to start planning now. Campaign elements will include television, radio and e-mail support – all with a strong call to action for visitors to request the Illinois Travel Kit – which includes the new 2003 Travel Guide, *Illinois Now!* magazine and an official road map.

While the plans are yet-to-be finalized, the summer campaign will begin May 19 and will include television, radio, newspaper, and

out-of-home (such as Metra and outdoor billboards) outlets. The goal is to get people to travel given the multitude of things to do in the state. The call to action will be for consumers to contact us at 800-2-CONNECT or enjoyillinois.com for travel ideas and to order the Illinois Travel Kit. With packaging of growing interest to consumers, we will again offer summer travel packages to make it even easier for visitors to enjoy Illinois.

Media markets for the spring and summer campaigns include: Chicago, St. Louis, Champaign, Springfield, Detroit, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Green Bay, Cedar Rapids, Madison, Quad Cities, Peoria, Rockford and Paducah.

Illinois delivers new eNewsletter

Travelers planning their annual vacations closer to home this spring can now tap into a new resource, an Illinois eNewsletter (e-mail newsletter), for immediate and actionable information to help make their travel plans with ease.

The new eNewsletter will be delivered via e-mail mid-April to current enjoyillinois.com and *Illinois Now!* subscribers, and will provide the latest information on events and activities in Illinois. It will also encourage travelers to visit enjoyillinois.com to research and plan their trips.

Illinois' spring eNewsletter will boast colorful Illinois images and articles including: "Great Getaways," a guide to traveling along Illinois' National Scenic Byways and Route 66; "Out and About" information on blooming gardens across the state; and "Illinois Gems," a glimpse into Illinois' past railroad system.

The eNewsletter will also provide highlights of statewide event listings, interesting Illinois facts, a link to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Web site, and the option to share the eNewsletter with a friend.

To subscribe to the Illinois eNewsletter, log onto enjoyillinois.com, sign up to receive an *Illinois Now!* magazine, and check the box "permission to contact in future." Registrants will automatically be added to the Illinois eNewsletter mailing list.

International Pow Wow 2003

The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) is hosting the 35th annual International Pow Wow May 17-21 in neighboring St. Louis, Missouri. There is no better venue for increasing the \$90 billion international inbound market than the world's premier international travel trade show.

Illinois will use this travel trade show opportunity to highlight some of its favorite tourist attractions at an evening event, The Great Chicago and Illinois Route 66 Street Festival, which will take place at the Gateway Center in Collinsville, Illinois, on May 19. This festival will include food, Chicago blues, 50's music and many strolling performers and novelty acts.

The Collinsville Convention and Visitor's Bureau is looking for volunteers to staff the event. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Smith via email, lsmith@discovercollinsville.com.

New and improved in Illinois

This month, travelers can dive into the new “Wild Reef – Sharks at Shedd” exhibit at Chicago’s John G. Shedd Aquarium. The under-the-sea exhibit, housed in a floor-to-ceiling 400,000-gallon habitat, mirrors an Indo-Pacific island, and is one of the largest and most diverse collections in North America – offering more than 30 sharks.

The journey begins along the shores of the Philippines at Apo Island, then plunges 30 feet below the surface to a re-creation of one of the world’s largest coral reefs. With the smell of saltwater in the air, visitors can encounter more than 500 species of aquatic life, including tropical fish, stingrays, seahorses and live Philippine coral. Interactive hands-on games and aquatic-themed art are found throughout the exhibit offering an educational and entertaining experience for visitors of every age.

To learn more about the “Wild Reef – Sharks at Shedd” exhibit, pick up a free copy of the spring *Illinois Now!* issue by calling an Illinois Travel Counselor at 800-2-CONNECT or by visiting enjoyillinois.com.

Copies of the seasonal magazine are also available at tourism information centers, convention and visitors bureaus, regional tourism development offices, and at state park lodges throughout Illinois.

Did you know?

- The Chicago Cubs have their own world record. The Major League Baseball team hasn’t won the World Series since 1908.
- Bag tags at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport read ORD because the airport was once called Orchard Field.
- The Chicago River was the first river to have its course reversed. The revision took place in 1900.

INDUSTRY INSIDER: JAN KOSTNER

To help you get to know who’s who in Illinois tourism, ITN profiles an industry leader each month. This month we introduce Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Bureau of Tourism.

Jan Kostner has more than 19 years experience in the public relations/public affairs industry. She began her career at Jasculca/Terman and Associates, one of the nation’s leading independent public affairs and strategic communications firms, as an intern and worked her way up to her most recent post as senior vice president. As senior vice president, Jan oversaw strategic planning for a variety of national and international clients, and was responsible for new client development and firm marketing.

During her tenure at Jasculca/Terman, Jan worked with a variety of clients including Target Stores, for which she oversaw events marketing and logistics for more than 200 store openings. Jan also managed the events surrounding the renovation of the Washington Monument and the introduction of championship auto racing into Chicagoland.

And while no good deeds go unnoticed, Jan was acknowledged by her peers in the public relations industry and was awarded five Golden Trumpet Awards from the Publicity Club of Chicago for her work on projects including the opening of the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, the Target Grand Prix, and the Tourist Office of Spain.

In her spare time, Jan loves to cook, travel and read – especially biographies. When it comes to international travel, China is of particular interest. Closer to home and outside of her first love – Illinois, Philadelphia is a favorite because of its history and culture.

Biographies are a page above the rest for Jan, and she enjoys reading about successful women including Claire Booth Luce, Katherine Hepburn and Katherine Graham.

When dabbling on the domestic side, Jan heads for the kitchen where favorites include Italian and French cooking. But cooking a full-course Thanksgiving dinner is by far her favorite.

Jan, a lifelong Chicago resident, holds a bachelor of arts degree in communications from New England College, and serves on the board of directors of the Chicago Sister Cities China Committee.

To find out more about the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, please contact Jan at:

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To add Jan to your mailing list, her address is:

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NATIONAL NEWS

War could cost travel industry \$30 billion

A prolonged war in Iraq could cost the global travel industry about \$30 billion and three million jobs, a worst likely scenario, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). The U.S. is expected to bear the brunt of that burden. Under its worst-case scenario, the WTTC predicts a 3.7 percent decrease in the U.S. travel industry's gross domestic product, for a loss of nearly \$17 billion and about 450 jobs. The WTTC called for tax breaks for industry organizations and increased government spending for tourism infrastructure and promotion.

Source: *Travel Advance*

Record number of Americans traveling at home

A new War Impact Survey released by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) shows that Americans won't be traveling much overseas this spring and summer, potentially creating a significant economic loss to countries that rely on the influx of American tourist dollars. Urban areas will be hit doubly hard this spring and summer as they feel the effects of the downturn in international inbound visitation and the downturn in business travel. According to the TIA survey, 71 percent of Americans are not interested in traveling overseas, 31 percent of those say that it is a direct result of the war and the weak economy. The good news is that 81 percent of Americans

surveyed still plan on traveling for pleasure this spring and summer. The study found increased interest in travel by auto, RV or motor-coach, staying within the U.S. and visiting small towns and rural areas.

Source: *Travel Advance*

Corporate travel declines due to war, SARS, economy

Some two-thirds of corporate travel managers participating in a National Business Travel Association survey said the war with Iraq has depressed travel in their companies. More than half attributed the decline to the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Asia. About one-third of those responding to the survey, conducted April 1-7 among about 240 corporate travel managers, said the recent elevated-risk alert issued by the Department of Homeland Security also contributed to travel reductions. The economy also played a big factor; with nearly half of respondents saying corporate profit estimates were driving down travel in their companies. Looking forward, more than half the respondents expected their total travel spending in 2003 to be down from 2002 levels. Recovery in the business travel industry is not expected until 2004 or later, according to three-quarters of the respondents.

Source: *Travel Advance*

Gas prices to keep falling

After falling nearly a dime in three weeks, gasoline prices are expected to keep sliding to a national average of \$1.56 a gallon this summer thanks to lower oil prices and optimism about the war in Iraq, the government says.

The Energy Department's statistical agency revised its price forecast sharply downward to reflect the recent fall in crude oil prices. But it also warned of uncertainties that could cause prices of both crude oil and gasoline to rebound.

Source: *Travel Advance*

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