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Governor Pritzker Announces Record Tourism Growth in Illinois

An additional 3 million travelers visited Illinois in 2018, bringing an increase in visitor spending, tax revenue and local jobs

SPRINGFIELD – More than 117 million visitors traveled to Illinois in 2018, setting a new record number of visitors for the state, Governor JB Pritzker announced today.

Visitors to the state spent \$41.7 billion, boosting Illinois' economy by \$2 billion over the previous year, according to data provided by the U.S. Travel Association. This record growth resulted in a 5.1 percent increase in visitor spending over 2017— higher than the national visitor growth rate of 4.9 percent. State and local tax revenue generated from visitor spending jumped 7.1 percent to \$3.3 billion, creating an additional \$220.8 million for the state and local communities.

“From the limestone caves at Mississippi Palisades State Park to summer music festivals in Chicago, Illinois is full of vibrant cities and towns with endless attractions that receive millions of visitors each year. Travel and tourism in Illinois is a \$40 billion industry and an integral part of our state's economy. I'm proud to be governor of the state where visitors can explore ‘amazing,’” said Governor JB Pritzker.

The Illinois travel and tourism industry supported 342,300 jobs in 2018, an increase of 5,200 jobs from 2017. Domestic travelers came to Illinois for business (16 percent) and pleasure (84 percent). Over the last 10 years, the number of visitors to Illinois has increased by more than 26 million, with tourism becoming one of the state's leading industries. This marks the 8th consecutive year of record tourism growth in Illinois.

“Tourism is a critical part of our economy, helping to create jobs and lower taxes,” said Erin Guthrie, Acting Director of the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO). “From exploring our

beautiful state parks to adventures along Route 66, the Land of Lincoln offers amazing experiences to visitors from around the world. I commend DCEO and the Office of Tourism for their work promoting our great state and these record-breaking results.”

Illinois Office of Tourism Acting Director, Jan Kemmerling credits the record numbers to successful integrated marketing efforts in 2018 that resulted in a return investment of \$271 for every dollar spent in advertising.

In June, Illinois Tourism rolled out its new advertising and marketing campaign that will leverage its tag line, “Are you Up for Amazing?” to spotlight new Illinois experiences, near and far. The campaign highlights Illinois destinations from the visitor’s point of view and will also include breathtaking visuals from user generated content. The new ads redefine the word ‘amazing’ with the message, “**Amazing isn’t just a place you take yourself. It’s where that place takes you.**”

“We are thrilled to see this new campaign come to life this summer targeting our Midwest drive markets as well as national advertising to reach more visitors. We are confident these ads will inspire even more people to plan a trip to visit Illinois,” said Jan Kemmerling. “Our goal with this new campaign is to touch our consumers’ hearts and evoke real emotion with the sights, sounds and tastes that are unique to Illinois.”

The Illinois Office of Tourism receives domestic visitor numbers from DK Shifflet and international visitor numbers from Tourism Economics. Visitor expenditures, tax revenue and jobs numbers come from U.S. Travel Association.

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.

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