



ILLINOIS

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**2016 ILLINOIS GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE AWARDED  
INDUSTRY INNOVATORS, HIGHLIGHTED ECONOMIC INDICATORS THAT  
POINT TO CONTINUED GROWTH IN ILLINOIS' TOURISM INDUSTRY**  
*Annual gathering of more than 400 tourism leaders, partners and elected officials highlighted  
Illinois' tourism marketing initiatives and national travel trends*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois travel professionals and national tourism industry leaders gathered in Springfield March 21 through March 23 for the Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism. The annual conference brings together state leaders, travel experts and other special guests to showcase innovative ideas for promoting travel.

Special guests at this year's conference included Illinois Governor, Bruce Rauner, and Illinois Department of Commerce Director, Jim Schultz. In addition, U.S. Travel Association President & CEO, Roger Dow, and Brand USA President & CEO, Christopher L. Thompson presented updates on the state of the national travel industry. Dow and Thompson announced preliminary 2015 economic indicators that point to continued growth in the state's tourism industry.

According to preliminary estimates from the U.S. Travel Association, travel spending in Illinois increased by 2.1% in 2015 to \$37.1 billion. This spending directly generated \$6.9 billion in tax revenue for the state, an increase of 5.6% over 2014. Most notably, this spending directly supported more than 314,400 Illinois jobs, a 2.7% increase from 2014, and a significantly higher growth rate than Illinois' total private industry employment, which grew by 1.5%

The conference kicked off with a special Illinois VolunTourism event. More than 50 participants gathered on Sunday, March 20, to help beautify the Illinois War Memorials at Oak Ridge Cemetery. In addition, Illinois Office of Tourism Director Cory Jobe highlighted domestic and international marketing initiatives from the past year in the annual "State of the State of Tourism" address. During the address Jobe also previewed the state's upcoming seasonal promotional campaigns and new marketing efforts.

The conference also honored the creative work of tourism industry professionals with the "Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards." Awards were presented in 11 categories, plus the Best in Show and Friend of Tourism awards. Entries were judged by a panel of marketing and tourism professionals on clarity of message, creativity, originality and the project's overall success. Award winners included:

**Best in Show:** Alton Regional Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Friend of Tourism Award:** Nicky Stratton, Springfield Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Best Leisure Collateral:**

**Division A:** Alton Regional Convention & Visitor's Bureau



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**Division B:** Visit Galena

**Best Sales Collateral:** Springfield Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Best Social Media Marketing:**

**Division A:** Rockford Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Division B:** Visit Galena

**Best Cooperative Partnership:**

**Division A:** IllinoisSOUTH

**Division B:** Visit Galena

**Best Branding Initiative:**

**Division A:** Alton Regional Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Division B:** Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway

**Best Website:**

**Division A:** Alton Regional Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Division B:** Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway

**Best Visitors Publication:**

**Division A:** Rockford Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Division B:** Quincy Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Best Event:**

**Division A:** The Magnificent Mile Association

**Division B:** Quincy Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Best Hotel/Lodging Campaign:** Visit Galena

**Best Culinary Marketing Campaign:** Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau

**Best Marketing Campaign:**

**Division A:** Adler Planetarium

**Division B:** Streator Tourism

For a complete recap of the 2016 Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel and Tourism, including conference schedule and list of speakers, visit [www.ilgovconference.com](http://www.ilgovconference.com). To learn more about Illinois tourism, and to plan your trip, visit [www.Enjoyillinois.com](http://www.Enjoyillinois.com).

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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*