



The Soul of Illinois

For Immediate Release

Contacts:

Treva J. Marshall, 800-653-0450, treva@tjmcommunications.com
Meghan Haynes, 312-751-9689, mhaynes@beamaninc.com

ILLINOIS: A MECCA FOR ARTS AND CULTURAL TRAVEL

CHICAGO – Illinois is full of drama...and concerts, museums and more. Travelers opting for a getaway filled with arts and cultural activities need not look any further than this great state.

According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), cultural travel ranks among the top activities of African-American travelers. Illinois is an ideal getaway destination with its impressive variety of arts and cultural venues statewide. Illinois is home to a number of significant places dedicated to the African-American experience as well as locales with broad appeal.

“Illinois is a must-visit state for travelers who place a premium on rich and diverse cultural venues,” said Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (IBOT).

In Chicago, the nation’s third largest city, popular attractions include tours of neighborhoods such as the historic Bronzeville community, where Black southerners settled after leaving the south. Kids will enjoy the Bronzeville Children’s Museum, the first African-American children’s museum in the country, offering exhibits and programs to educate children about African-American history. Chess Records, once the famous recording site for musical legends like Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, is now a popular museum and recording studio in the area as well.

On Chicago’s famed South Side, visitors will enjoy a unique look into the city’s past at the DuSable Museum of African-American History, the oldest museum of its kind in the country. The museum was named after Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable, a Haitian fur trader who became the city’s founding father.

The Art Institute of Chicago houses an impressive collection of more than 300,000 works of art from noted African and African-American artists such as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence. Visitors can

walk over to the Harold Washington Library Center, which is dedicated to the city's first African-American mayor. Theater fans shouldn't miss live performances at the Chicago Theater Company, an award-winning African-American performing arts venue for more than 20 years, which has nurtured noted actors such as Robert Townsend and Irma Hall. The theater has provided artistic and economic opportunities to more than 1,500 Chicago-based minority artists in its history and continues to feature the works of noted African-Americans.

History lovers should make time to journey outside of the Chicago area to central Illinois to visit the home of President Abraham Lincoln, a national historic site. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is also a noted attraction which shouldn't be missed. This 200,000-square foot complex in downtown Springfield, the state's capitol, chronicles Lincoln's life and presidency, including addressing the issue of slavery in the U.S. and paying tribute to freedom fighters such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth. Other interesting Lincoln sites include the Lincoln Douglas Debate Museum, which retraces the senatorial debates of 1858 between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, and the Old State Capitol state historic site, which is an exact replica of the state capitol building as it was when Lincoln lived and worked in Springfield.

Located in the western Illinois city of Peoria, the African-American Museum Hall of Fame features exhibits on African-American culture. Heading south to Carrier Mills, the nine-foot tall Lake View Monument on the grounds of the Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church - one of the oldest African-American churches in the U.S. - pays homage to African-American settlers who lived in the all-Black community previously located there. Alton, located in the southwest region of Illinois, is ideal for those wishing to explore the history of slavery, as the city remained at the forefront of the Underground Railroad movement, housing six of the 38 documented Illinois stations in the network.

Travelers looking for arts and cultural venues have an impressive variety of choices throughout Illinois.

For more information about Illinois destinations and attractions, visit **www.soulfulillinois.com** or call **1-800-2CONNECT**.