



The Soul of Illinois

For Immediate Release

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ILLINOIS ATTRACTS AFRICAN-AMERICANS WITH MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE OF TOP-NOTCH SHOPPING OPTIONS

CHICAGO, IL — Without question, the toddlin' town of Chicago has earned its bragging rights. Here, gospel music was born, superstar athlete Michael Jordan took flight, and the late Lou Rawls honed the smooth R&B sound which earned him three GRAMMY® awards. Illinois' claim to fame goes even further, as the state's shopping scene offers even more to brag about.

Hitting a high note with African-American visitors as well are the region's shopping destinations, comprised of impressive department stores, outlet malls, antique shops and specialty boutiques. From the swanky Oak Street to the suburban mega-malls and outlet centers, Illinois' offerings stand shoulder-to-shoulder with trendsetters on Beverly Hills' Rodeo Drive or New York's 5th Avenue. But true to its gritty, blue-collar roots and Midwestern charm, this city also is chock-full of good deals and one-of-a kind buys, so bargain hunters will feel right at home.

"The wide variety of impressive shopping choices in Illinois makes the state a shopper's paradise," said Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT). "That special something awaits you at our many stores, boutiques and markets."

No visit to Chicago would be complete without a trip to the famed Magnificent Mile, a 1.6-mile stretch along Michigan Avenue with more than 460 retail stores. It is home to major retailers such as Nordstrom, Lord & Taylor and Bloomingdale's, as well as designer boutiques such as Kenneth Cole, Burberry, Gucci and Salvatore Ferragamo.

From the picturesque Chicago River, stroll north along Michigan and be wowed by the mix of high-end and bargain retailers, from Neiman Marcus and Tiffany & Co. to Banana Republic and H&M. Stop in one of the four

vertical shopping malls—Water Tower Place (anchored by Marshall Field's, soon to be Macy's), Westfield North Bridge (Nordstrom), Chicago Place (Saks Fifth Avenue) and the 900 N. Michigan Shops (Bloomingdale's)—to access various retail stores and multi-ethnic food courts.

Specialty shops such as Niketown, The Disney Store, Crate & Barrel and American Girl Place are tourist attractions of their own. For music lovers, there's the three-level Virgin Megastore at the corner of Ohio and Michigan. Head due west to check out the Jazz Record Mart, at 27 E. Illinois St., a staple in the Windy City renowned for its impressive collection of new and used CDs, and posters of jazz greats such as Billie Holiday, Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie available for purchase.

Chicago, known for history-making entrepreneurs like the late founder of *Ebony* magazine, John H. Johnson, is often referred to in the business world as a bastion for African-American entrepreneurship. The retail scene is no exception. Dozens of African-American-owned boutiques are just a cab ride away, such as Accessorize! in the Gold Coast shopping area and Flaunt, a women's clothing and accessory store in the South Loop. Women who long for unique styles in shoes and accessories should also check out Heelz in Hyde Park or Sole Lounge in the historic Woodlawn community.

Festival-goers can also seize great opportunities to shop. For instance, the annual African Festival of the Arts in Washington Park lures thousands of African-Americans to the city's Hyde Park community on the South Side. Usually held over the Labor Day weekend, hundreds of vendors gather to sell ethnic-inspired art, clothing, books, posters and jewelry.

SUBURBS NOT TO BE MISSED

Chicagoland, which refers to the city and its surrounding suburbs, contains some of the state's most premium outlet shopping, all less than an hour's drive from downtown. Gurnee Mills, known as "the Midwest's largest value retail and entertainment mall," boasts more than 200 manufacturers and retail outlet stores, including Liz Claiborne, Gap and OFF 5TH Saks Fifth Avenue. The massive Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg (northwest of the city) - one of the largest shopping malls in the U.S. - is the place for serious shoppers, featuring fashion, food and fun with more than 300 stores plus plenty of restaurants. The various strip malls in the area along Golf Road, are also great places to find deals all year long.

In Aurora, just 37 miles west of the city, lies a regional treasure: Chicago Premium Outlets, where some of the biggest names in fashion, such as Kate Spade, Giorgio Armani, Elie Tahari, Kenneth Cole and Calvin Klein, offer merchandise at cut rates.

OPTIONS FOR ANTIQUE SHOPPERS

Antique lovers have a lot to enjoy, with several enticing venues to explore. Vintage shoppers flock to Antique Row on the city's north side, a popular strip of antique stores which showcases Chicago's proud heritage. A 15-minute drive from Aurora takes you to historic St. Charles, where one can

peruse a plethora of antique shops. Shoppers can also journey 90 miles west from Chicago to Rockford with some 40 antique shops and malls.

Whether it's antiques, bargaining or splurging, visitors won't be disappointed in the variety of options available in Illinois.

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