



**NEW TO TWITTER? ... SO MAY BE YOUR CONGRESSMAN**

*TweetCongress* There is a new website that allows you to see if your elected officials are signed up and “tweeting”. We here at NITDO are just learning all about Twitter, and tweeting and others are more advanced. Visit [TweetCongress.org](http://TweetCongress.org), a website that allows people to search by location and find out if their Congressman or Senator is on Twitter - and if they aren't, people sign a petition asking them to join Twitter. The goal is to aid in transparency and communication between elected officials and constituents. TweetCongress was created by Addison, TX - based Squeejee. According to their website, the site believes transparent government is better government. Twitter enables real conversation between lawmakers and voters, in real time. Find your representatives in Congress, follow them and give them a tweet full!



**TRAVEL INDUSTRY SCRAMBLES TO COPE AS AMERICANS SPEND LESS**

The sinking U.S. economy is forcing many Americans to cut back on or give up a hallowed tradition: the family vacation. A USA TODAY/Gallup Poll finds that 58% of people who normally take an annual vacation away from home will shrink their vacation spending this year -- or just not go. The finding mirrors a 2009 travel forecast newly issued by consultants D.K. Shifflet & Associates and IHS Global Insight, which research travel behavior monthly.

The firms forecast Americans will

**EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS ... GENERATIONAL MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA IN A DIGITAL AGE**

NITDO is once again offering a workshop on key topics, ones that we hope will be of value to our regional partners. On **April 22 at the Starved Rock Conference Center in Utica**, renowned speaker Jodi Rudnick will lead the discussions on two key areas.

The morning session (8:00 a.m. – noon) covers the subject of **Generational Marketing: Talkin’ About My Generation**. Jodi describes the session as follows: Whether you grew with watching Ozzie Nelson or Ozzie Osbourne, Leave it to Beaver or Beavis and Butthead, it's clear that times have definitely changed over the past 50 years. Learn how to tune in, assess, communicate and motivate staff, customers and city leaders no matter what their age and life experience. Through music, pop culture and lively discussion you'll learn how to improve your overall marketing strategy as well as specific written, verbal and electronic communication tools.

The afternoon session (1:00 – 5:00 p.m.) tackles the subject which we've already written about, **Digital Media, Cutting Edge Marketing and Public Awareness for the Digital Age**. Again Jodi describes the session as: From blogs and podcasts to social networking and viral sites such as MySpace, FaceBooks and YouTube - it's no secret that new public awareness and communication tools are rapidly replacing “old-school” tactics.

So, whether you already have your own space or are feeling a bit intimidated by all this new technology, this is a workshop not to be missed. You will learn how to use the power of Web 2.0 to raise awareness, money, support and participation for your park and recreation agency, programs or cause. Web Logs or “Blogs” may be the single best public awareness tool – ever. Some predict that, someday, everyone, everywhere will be part of this virtual conversation. Don't get left behind.

So mark your calendars for **Wednesday, April 22nd**. Location is **Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center** in Utica. The cost for one session is \$35 with materials and break foods provided; \$60 if you want to attend both sessions. Note: Lunch is on your own, but there is a restaurant on site. A separate flyer and registration form will be sent out, as well as posted on our website. The workshop is sponsored and supported by ISEN (Illinois Special Events Network) who first hosted Jodi at their State Convention back in 2008.

**twitter FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA**

Okay – this is where we all need to be to succeed and survive in the new world of tourism and hospitality, and this was a key focal point at the 2009 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism. Hope you all attended and took advantage of the educational sessions, networking and other conference amenities. If you missed sessions, or want to get the hand-outs, be sure to check-out the official conference website, [www.iltourismconference.com](http://www.iltourismconference.com) where you can now download the presentations. Great reference materials and a valuable tool (even if you couldn't attend).

spend 9.7% less on leisure travel in April, May and June, and 9% less in July, August and September than in 2008. In sum, Americans could spend \$30 billion less on leisure trips this spring and summer.

The travel industry sees the storm coming and is hustling to respond. For April, spring break time, airlines have scheduled 8.5% fewer seats than last April on domestic and international flights from the USA, according to OAG - Official Airline Guide. They've scheduled 8.4% fewer seats for June.

As been our practice, we continually research new websites that may be of interest to our regional partners. Here are some sites for websites for you to check out.

**Illinois Tourism:**

[www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com)

**Northern Illinois Tourism:**

[www.visitnorthernillinois.com](http://www.visitnorthernillinois.com)

**Chicago Tourism:**

[www.explorechicago.org](http://www.explorechicago.org)

**Lincoln Bicentennial:**

[www.lincoln200.net](http://www.lincoln200.net)

**Travel Industry of America:**

[www.tia.org](http://www.tia.org)

**Illinois Wine Industry:**

[www.illinoiswine.com](http://www.illinoiswine.com)

**Northern Illinois Wine Trail:**

[www.northernillinoiswinetrail.com](http://www.northernillinoiswinetrail.com)

**National Scenic Byways:**

[www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

**Illinois Byways:**

[www.illinoisbyways.org](http://www.illinoisbyways.org)

**Illinois Agri-Tourism (ATPI):**

[www.agfun.com](http://www.agfun.com)

**Traveling Green:**

[www.travelgreen.org](http://www.travelgreen.org)

**Illinois Film Locations:**

[www.onscreenillinois.com](http://www.onscreenillinois.com)

**Lincoln Bicentennial Commission:**

[www.alpm.org](http://www.alpm.org)

**US Travel Association:**

[www.ustravel.org](http://www.ustravel.org)

**Power of Travel – info & stats:**

[www.poweroftravel.org](http://www.poweroftravel.org)

**Discover America:**

[www.discoveramerica.com](http://www.discoveramerica.com)

**Tour Illinois:**

[www.tourismillinois.org](http://www.tourismillinois.org)

**Meet In Illinois:**

[www.meetinillinois.com](http://www.meetinillinois.com)

**Sports Illinois:**

[www.sportsillinois.com](http://www.sportsillinois.com)

And, one of the best topics, I thought, was a keynote presentation by Bruce Turkel where he outlined the Seven Steps to Building Brand Value. Not only did the session detail the steps needed, but provided a visual element that you can use to clarify what is needed to be achieved. Check out his website to see a better (and larger) rendering of the artwork. And, the seven steps are as follows: 1) All About Them; 2) Hearts Then Minds; 3) Make It Simple; 4) Make It Quick; 5) Make It Yours; 6) Use All 5 Senses; and 7) Repeat, Repeat, Repeat! Bruce was accompanied on stage by an incredibly gifted graphic interpreter by the name of Brandy Agerbeck. What came out of their time together was unanimously agreed to be engaging, visceral, and totally unique. In Bruce's blog (sign-up at his ebsite, [www.turkeltalks.com](http://www.turkeltalks.com)), he wrote, that, "The audience went completely bat guano."

And, check out Bruce's blog on facebook and Twitter – really interesting and insightful (check out blog dated February 26 and February 27, 2009) where he writes, "I believe Twitter is going to be the breakout story of 2009. They are adding users by the thousands daily, and the site is perfect for what the Internet was designed to do. Anyone serious about marketing needs to be on this now."

Twitter is in essence a micro-blog, since your messages are limited to 140 characters. And instead of dropping by your website or getting a RSS feed, people choose to "follow" you. So when you log on to Twitter, you get a "stream" of all the postings (called "Tweets") from the people you follow. Bruce's colleague and fellow blogger Randy Gage ([www.randygage.com](http://www.randygage.com)) says you can use Twitter to build your brand, expand your database, and make more sales. So if you're not on Twitter, go to: twitter.com. The best way to learn to use a new technology is to use it. And there's no cost so there's no reason not to get signed up now. This is going to be huge! NITDO is getting a crash course from fellow RTDO Director, Anne Hornyak, who is becoming an expert in this media.

Lastly, we are interested to know how many of our regional partners are on facebook, Twitter, etc. If you are on, please send us an email so we can check you out. At this time we are listed as individuals but are considering a regional facebook page for the office. Let us know how you are handling facebook for your destination and staff. Thanks!

**2009 NORTHERN ILLINOIS VISITORS GUIDE AND REGIONAL WEBSITE**

Hot off the press -- the 2009 Northern Illinois Visitor Guide. This new 50+ page guide features the vast array of things to see and do in our 14 counties, and offers the visitor a chance to make their getaway plans.



It is the companion piece to our comprehensive website, [www.visitnorthernillinois.com](http://www.visitnorthernillinois.com) which is getting increased hits and visits each month. And the website has a new look, recently unveiled, with graphics to mirror the stunning new cover of our regional guide.

Make sure that your listing info on the website is accurate and complete. **You can now add or edit your information via our online form – so check us out to check you out!** Remember - listing info is FREE. Each listing contains information on your attraction or business, description, address, phone and where available, your website. While we can't possibly list every attraction in the entire 14-county area, we try to be as inclusive as possible on the website.

If you have a specific question about the website, or perhaps want to get a copy of the new 2009 Visitor Guide, email [mary@visitnorthernillinois.com](mailto:mary@visitnorthernillinois.com).

**Illinois African-American Travel:**

[www.soulfulillinois.com](http://www.soulfulillinois.com)

**Illinois Hispanic Travel:**

[www.disfrutailinois.com](http://www.disfrutailinois.com)

**Chicago Olympics:**

[www.chicagoolympics2016.org](http://www.chicagoolympics2016.org)

**University of Illinois Extension**

**Agritourism:**

[web.extension.uiuc.edu/agritourism/](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/agritourism/)



**CO-OP MAILINGS ... WE NEED YOUR MATERIALS**

We have coordinated a regional fulfillment mailing for partners showcasing the various things to see and do along the Illinois Lincoln Highway Corridor. We use the leads from Madden Preprint's newspaper inserts (Spring 2009 was just released on March 8th) well as ads placed in the 2009 Illinois Travel Guide.

In the mailings, we showcase several communities with their materials, the 2009 Northern Illinois Visitor Guide, ILHC 2009 Visitor Guide (yes this too just was delivered this past month), Illinois Scenic Byways rack cards, Northern Illinois Wine Trail brochure, and brochures supplied by community partners. If your attraction or community would like to take part in these co-op mailings, please send 3,000 of your brochures or rack cards along with a check made payable to ILHC in the amount of \$475 to cover the cost of bulk mailing. Where else can you mail out your brochure for less than \$.16 each?

If interested, call Diane at 815-547-3854.



And, if you're in the Belvidere area (or planning to see staff members at a meeting), let us know and we can bring them to you.

**LEISURE TRAVEL INTENTIONS TREND SLIGHTLY UPWARD**

According to the February travelhorizons™ survey, the U.S. Traveler Sentiment Index™ rose to 90.2 in February 2009 from 78.2 in October 2008 due to an increase in the perceived "affordability of travel." The Index is a derivative of six separate statistical measures that have been tracked since March 2007, at which time the Index was pegged at 100.

The spike in the perceived affordability of leisure travel appears to be a direct result of many travel suppliers' recent efforts to stimulate short-term demand through the aggressive promotion of discounted fares and rates. Promotional pricing and related incentives are now offered by suppliers representing practically every segment of the travel industry from airlines to cruise lines, hotel companies, attractions and rental car companies, some of which are featuring rates and fares that are up to 50 percent off the prices being quoted just six months ago.

"We are very encouraged that more people are signaling a willingness to travel for leisure purposes," said Peter C. Yesawich, chairman and CEO of Ypartnership. "This is the first increase we have observed in the Index since January 2008, which indicates that the discounts travel providers and destinations are offering are working to attract more travelers, even in this down economy. As it turns out, this is actually a terrific time to travel because some of these great deals are sure to disappear once the industry begins to recover."

The outlook on the business travel side remains one of concern to the industry, however. According to the U.S. Travel Association, business travel is now projected to decline as much as 5.6 percent in 2009 (the original forecast at the end of 2008 was a 3.5 percent decline). The sagging economy, coupled with political demonization of business meetings, events, and incentive travel, has resulted in a significant decline in demand for business travel services.

"While this increase in short-term leisure travel intentions is positive, the overall decline in meetings, events, and incentive travel threatens to erode any net gains for the total travel economy," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. "One of every eight jobs in the United States is linked to travel and tourism, and business travel alone accounts for 2.4 million American jobs. With the federal government projecting that the travel industry will lose nearly 450,000 jobs in 2008-2009, it is critical that policymakers work with us to encourage businesses to engage in legitimate meetings and events. We need businesses and consumers back on the road and in the air to help turn this economy around.

For you number crunchers, about the Index & Survey: The Traveler Sentiment Index(TM) is a derivative of six variables measured in a quarterly survey: interest in travel; availability of time to travel; availability of money to travel; perceived affordability of travel; quality of travel services; and safety. All six measures increased from levels observed in October 2008, the most recent survey flight. Four measures displayed double digit increases: interest in travel (+10.3 percent); availability of time to travel (+12 percent); quality of travel services (+14.1 percent); and perceived affordability of travel (+97.2 percent). Travelhorizons™ is co-authored by the U.S. Travel Association, formerly the Travel Industry Association, and Ypartnership. ([www.ustravel.org](http://www.ustravel.org), [www.ypartnership.com](http://www.ypartnership.com)).

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## Calendar of Events - Illinois Tourism Happenings . . .

### **Mar 31-Apr 2**

TravelCom '09, Atlanta, GA

### **Apr 2-8**

IOC Evaluation Visit to Chicago

### **Apr 14**

ILHC Board Meeting, DeKalb

### **Apr 18**

International Heartland Tattoo,  
Hoffman Estates

### **Apr 22**

Generational Marketing/Digital  
Marketing Workshops, Starved Rock

### **May 1**

FY10 Grant Submissions Can be  
Received by IBOT

### **May 4-6**

ICCVB Meetings (General & All  
Committees), Peoria

### **May 9-17**

National Tourism Week, Discover  
Great American Traditions

### **May 12-13**

State Scenic Byway Conference,  
Galena, IL

### **May 16-20**

International POW WOW, Miami, FL

### **June 2-4**

National Value Added Agriculture  
Conference, Moline

### **June 16-20**

Lincoln Highway Assn National  
Convention, South Bend, IN

### **June 20**

MVPA Convoy through Illinois,  
Overnight Stop, Rochelle

### **Aug 23-26**

NSB Conference, Denver, CO

### **Aug 30-Sept 1**

ESTO Conference, Reno/Lake  
Tahoe, NV

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## **Illinois Scenic Byways Statewide Conference...May 12-13**

It is hard to believe that in the past decade, not only did the State of Illinois create its Scenic Byway program, but it now boasts seven (7 – yes that's right), premier and well-respected Byways. And, to fully educate partners on each byway's happenings and bring educational opportunities to the partners of each of the individual organizations, the **Alliance of Illinois Byways** is hosting a State Convention. Mark your calendars and join the byways in **Galena on May 12-13, 2009**. Rooms are being held at the Irish Cottage for

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## **A COLLEAGUE'S THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S TRAVEL INDUSTRY**

*This article appeared in March 12th issue of the Washington Post. This is a great message from Bill Marriott about the importance of our industry to the economy. I encourage you to share this with partners, colleagues and our elected officials:*

### **MEMO TO BUSINESS: LET'S MEET (BY J.W. MARRIOTT, JR.)**

When the Democrats held their national convention last August, 50,000 delegates, politicians, journalists and others descended on the Mile High City for several days. Forty thousand hotel rooms were booked. Restaurants and entertainment venues were packed. In the end, Denver benefited from more than \$260 million in revenue, creating significant tax income for the city and state. Now that's what I call a great meeting.

What would have happened if no one attended the convention? In real terms, a lot of Denver businesses would have suffered -- but their employees would have suffered more. Waitresses would have had no customers. Housekeepers would have had no rooms to clean. Taxi drivers wouldn't have had passengers to ferry. And instead of addressing 84,000 people when he accepted his party's nomination for president, Barack Obama would have been looking out into an empty stadium.

The hotel industry confronts such a scenario today. As many as a million jobs are at risk because of attacks on business travel and meetings by members of Congress, the administration and the media. Companies -- even those not receiving government assistance -- are so afraid of being criticized, they'd rather cancel their meetings and pay the penalty fees. It's time to focus on the unintended consequences of this toxic rhetoric, which threatens not only our industry but also our employees and the communities where we do business.

My company has a hotel and golf resort in Half Moon Bay, Calif., that employs 500 associates. Many of the employees at this hotel used to be seasonal farmworkers. That's right -- working in the fields. We have provided them with training, health insurance and other benefits and the prospect of lifelong careers. In the past few weeks, more than 32 groups have canceled meetings at this hotel. That means we've lost millions of dollars of expected business, the city has lost tax revenue, and, sadly, some people have lost their jobs. This story is being played out at hotels across the country in rural and urban areas. The Labor Department has reported a loss of nearly 200,000 travel-related jobs in 2008, and Commerce Department data project a loss of 247,000 travel-related jobs in 2009. That number may well grow if the vilification of business events and travel doesn't stop.

Sure, there have been some flagrant abuses; we make no excuses for the bad actors. But the vast majority of events serve a legitimate business purpose, including professional development and recognition to motivate high-performing employees. Last week, I went to New Orleans to join 1,500 general managers from the Courtyard, Spring Hill Suites and Fairfield Inn hotel brands for our annual meeting. They shared best practices on how to create sales opportunities in a recession, learned about innovations in the design of our services and products, and improved their communication skills. This is how we promote our culture, leadership and teamwork. It is also how we drive revenue. We held this meeting even though the business environment is challenging because it's an investment in the future. We believe it gives our general managers and Marriott an advantage over the competition.

Marriott, like many businesses, is making tough choices. Indeed, we have scaled back on some of our meetings and travel. Making those cuts was

only \$79 per night.

We have secured partners from the Scenic Byways Resource Center in Minnesota to join us for this conference. And, now we hope we can count on you. Information on the event can be secured from any of the Illinois byway organizations – or by calling/emailing NITDO. Conference registration fees are \$50 per person which includes workshop materials, lunches on Tuesday and Wednesday, wine reception on Tuesday evening and more.

Details will follow – but the time is NOW to mark your calendar. Space at the Irish Cottage and the conference is limited; plan to make your reservation ASAP. Remember, Galena is perfect in the springtime and a great getaway spot in Northern Illinois.



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the right thing to do. But canceling meetings and events to dodge unwarranted criticism is shortsighted and will have a detrimental effect on the U.S. economy.

We understand that members of Congress are accountable to their constituents and want to ensure that tax money is spent responsibly. The Treasury Department has already required companies receiving government assistance to adopt policies related to business events. Our industry has responded by aggregating best practices and developing model standards they can use. Championing the use of these guidelines, which can be found at <http://www.ustravel.org>, is a productive way for Congress and Treasury to ensure accountability.

One in every eight jobs in the United States is linked to travel and tourism, the U.S. Travel Association has found. Meetings support 1 million jobs and provide \$16 billion in annual tax revenue at the federal, state and local levels. A healthy travel industry is a powerful stimulus and is pivotal to economic activity and growth. Continuing to scapegoat business travel will only hinder recovery. Meetings mean business. Meetings create jobs. If critics want America to lose another million jobs, they should keep talking.

### **CHICAGO OLYMPICS 2016 UPDATE ... NOTE THE NEW SLOGAN - LET FRIENDSHIP SHINE**

According to Patrick Ryan, Chicago is approaching another major milestone in the bid process as we prepare to host the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Evaluation Commission in Chicago. From April 2-8, the delegation will be in Chicago, learning about all our city has to offer the world and what Chicago could contribute to the Olympic Movement. A crucial component of this visit is to demonstrate the character of Chicago and its residents as warm, engaging and passionate about sports. As Chicago 2016 prepares the city for their arrival, we hope that as a supporter and friend of the bid you will get involved.



There are many ways for people to show their support for Chicago 2016 in the coming weeks. Hopefully, you are registered as a Chicago 2016 volunteer—if not, please do so by visiting their website, [www.chicago2016.org](http://www.chicago2016.org). They will need thousands of people to help the city come alive in a celebration of the Olympic spirit during the IOC's visit. You'll see in the stories on the website that there are a number of ways to get involved and help us extend the hand of friendship to the world as we welcome the IOC to Chicago. And, the major announcement of the final selection takes place in early October – fingers crossed for Chicago!

