



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



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!

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

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. **You can now add or edit your information via our online form – so check us out to**

**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 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 are now available and speakers offer a great line up of timely and informative topics. So, make your plans, 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.

**26TH ANNUAL NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK MAY 9-17, 2009 "TRAVEL MATTERS"**



Join hundreds of cities, states and businesses nationwide in the annual salute to travel and tourism in America, presented by the U.S. Travel Association. **National Travel and Tourism Week** is a collective effort to promote the power of travel through customized events in communities nationwide. The goal is to enhance the country's economy, security and perception, and recognize the cultural and social benefits created by travel and tourism.

In 2009, the first-ever U.S. Travel Rally Day will be staged in communities nationwide on May 12, with convention and visitors bureau leaders uniting with local government and business leaders to promote the message that **"Travel Matters"**. Consumer-oriented promotions are also available with DiscoverAmerica.com and AOL Travel. Review the 2009 National Travel and Tourism Week Toolkit for details.

How did it all begin you ask? National Travel and Tourism Week was established as National Tourism Week in 1983 when the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution designating the week to be celebrated in May 1984. In a White House ceremony, President Ronald Reagan signed a Presidential Proclamation urging citizens to observe the week with "the appropriate ceremonies and activities."



President Ronald Reagan signed the Proclamation establishing National Tourism Week at the White House in 1984.

Industry leaders and public relations professionals from the major travel and tourism trade associations were the first volunteers to manage the annual event. By January 1986 industry leaders had formed a permanent full-time office at the U.S. Travel Association to sponsor the event and expand tourism awareness into year-round programs.

**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). 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.

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.alplm.org](http://www.alplm.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:**

If you have questions about National Travel and Tourism Week, please contact Greg Staley, U.S. Travel Manager, Communications, at 202-408-2128.

**WHERE I'VE BEEN™ LAUNCHES NEW TRAVEL PLATFORM TO ITS 8 MILLION USERS**

Where I've Been™ (WIB) ([www.wherivebeen.com](http://www.wherivebeen.com)) announces the launch of its new Social Travel Platform, which features a powerful combination of social networking tools and location-based information services. Where I've Been currently has more than 8 million users, approximately 1/2 billion travel intents and over 2 million "User Reviews," with integration spanning the world's top social networks including Facebook, Bebo, MySpace, hi5, Friendster and its own homepage.



The new site launch offers the ability to research and plan travel, share videos, photos, stories, as well as post and receive reviews and travel advice, all within the context of each member's preferred networks. New features include:

- A shift from "countries and cities" to local points of interest
- Ability to search, review and get information on more than 30 million global data points including destinations, hotels, restaurants and bars
- Aggregated videos, reviews, and other content from members and leading travel sites such as Citysearch, Kayak and hotelvideoreviews.com
- Third party integration tools such as the online travel itinerary and trip planning service TripIt ([www.tripit.com](http://www.tripit.com))
- Travel Bucks Virtual Currency. Earn Travel Bucks to save the rainforest or feed a child in Mali or other philanthropic projects. The more actions you perform on the site, the more Travel Bucks you earn
- "News-feed style" updates from friends, other users and trusted resources that are weighted and filtered for relevancy to each member
- "Ask an Expert" allows members to get intimate knowledge from the community and reputable travel professionals
- A continuously growing community on Twitter with [traveltuesday.org](http://traveltuesday.org) and [#traveltuesday](https://twitter.com/traveltuesday)



**TRAVEL INDUSTRY LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND BUSINESS MEETINGS AND EVENTS FROM POLITICIZED ATTACKS: "MEETINGS MEAN BUSINESS" GIVES VOICE TO MILLIONS OF WORKING AMERICANS, HUNDREDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

The U.S. Travel Association today launched the "Meetings Mean Business" campaign, a major initiative intended to push back against the political demonization of business meetings and events. The campaign comes as companies – most of whom have not received taxpayer assistance – cancel thousands of meetings and events, often out of fear that they will be singled out by politicians. "Make no mistake, companies that have received taxpayer assistance must be held to a different standard and conduct their business in a transparent and responsible manner," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. "But the pendulum has swung too far. The climate of fear is causing a historic pullback of business meetings and events, with a devastating impact on small businesses, American workers and communities."

According to a new survey by Meetings and Convention Magazine conducted prior to last week's firestorm over Northern Trust, more than 20 percent of companies that have not received taxpayer assistance have cancelled events due to recent media and political attention. More than half (52%) claim the news coverage has been extremely or moderately influential on their companies' decisions to hold events. "Our campaign will challenge policymakers to tone down the dangerous rhetoric, embrace sensible guidelines for companies receiving assistance and promote travel as an economic solution."

[www.meetinillinois.com](http://www.meetinillinois.com)  
**Sports Illinois:**  
[www.sportsillinois.com](http://www.sportsillinois.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/)

The "Meetings Mean Business" campaign – [www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com) – is a comprehensive effort, including extensive grassroots mobilization, paid advertising and new media strategies. Campaign components include:

- Development of local coalitions representing workers, small businesses and community leaders, who will speak out on the benefits of meetings and events;
- Groundbreaking research that demonstrates the return on investment of meetings, events and performance incentive travel;
- Economic impact analysis at the state and congressional district level in terms of jobs, economic growth and tax revenue associated with meetings and events;
- Aggressive print and online paid advertising that clearly identifies the value of meetings and events and the unintended victim of its demise; and
- The creation of a rapid-response war-room to counter-act false accusations against legitimate travel activities.

Meetings and events are responsible for nearly 15% of all travel in the United States and create \$101 billion in spending, one million jobs and nearly \$16 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state and local level. Without the jobs generated by travel for meetings and events, the unemployment rate in the United States would jump from 7.6% to 8.2%.

U.S. Travel is conducting its campaign in partnership with the American Hotel and Lodging Association, Destination Marketing Association International, International Association of Exhibitions and Events, Meetings Professional International, National Business Travel Association, Professional Convention and Management Association and SITE (formerly the Society of Incentive Travel Executives). These associations recently released recommended meetings and events guidelines for companies receiving taxpayer assistance. The groups are strongly encouraging the U.S. Treasury Department to embrace these guidelines and, in so doing, establish transparent standards for those who have accepted federal government support.

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

### **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**

Illinois 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

### **July 1**

Happy New Year – FY10 Begins!

### **Aug 23-26**

NSB Conference, Denver, CO

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

ESTO Conference, Reno/Lake Tahoe, NV



## **TOURISM, TECHNOLOGY & YOU! NITDO WORKSHOP RETURNS JUNE 4TH**

Ever feel confused as your colleagues are talking about the latest video they saw on YouTube? And not only to update your Facebook, but actually create one? Wiki – what is it, a new online encyclopedia – and how to manage, add or correct content? And, want to know exactly how to blog, how to set-up a blog and how to work within one? Well, within the tourism industry, these are becoming more common means to market your attraction or destination, and NITDO and our byway partners, the ILHC, are helping to help you navigate through this new and challenging world at one of our regional workshops, **Tourism, Technology & You!**

Join us on **Thursday, June 4th, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at Kishwaukee Community College** for this interactive and engaging workshop presented by Dr. Bruce Wicks and colleagues from the University of Illinois, Department of Recreation, Sports & Tourism. Come learn about the latest technology - Actual product demonstrations! Topics will include:

- Software - maps, YouTube, virtual tours, social networks, RSS
- Hardware - Podcasts, audio tours, navigation devices
- Recent changes in technology and functions of new technology

Mark your calendars for the date (that much is firmed up at this time). The workshop format will follow our other half-day session. Cost is \$30 with session materials included in a reference binder. You will leave feeling confident and full of new and affordable ideas!!! For details check out our website or call office to have a registration form sent to you. Hope you can attend this fast-paced, energetic and engaging session on what to do, what not to do and how to make it happen! See you there!



## FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA

Yes, NITDO has a Facebook page. We have had one-on-one instruction, the workshop in late April and constant reminders on the proper procedures of Facebooking. And, we are excited about the friends within our Illinois tourism industry that are already chatting and sharing news and information. So, be sure to find **Northern Illinois Tourism** when seeking new friends or fans on Facebook. We try to post updates on things to see and do, as well as fun facts about our region. It's easier when sitting at the desk (and travel schedules don't always give me the time). So, if you have news to share, please shoot me an email so I can blast it out.

And, the other new social media is Twitter – yes we do tweet from our office as well. We can be found @VisitNorthernIL on Twitter and the same goes for the ability to blast out messages on happenings. In late April, we had last minute news that one of the questions to be featured on Jeopardy concerned one of our region's finest corn mazes, the Richardson's Corn Maze. This was the answer to the question in a category of 'Wonders of the Midwest'. As soon as the release hit my desk, I had sent out the news – and guess what, many people taped, DVR'd the show and more. It was a simple and efficient way to spread the news.

So, the message, please continue to send me short and timely briefs on your business, attraction, event or whatever you think would be relevant to share. We're glad to spread the news, your news, and hopefully keep the interest strong in visiting Northern Illinois. Thanks~



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## iGoogle...ANOTHER TOOL TO COMPLIMENT FACEBOOK, MYSPACE AND MORE. CHECK IT OUT!



Many of you are already using the social networks of Facebook and MySpace to tell "your followers & friends" more about you and what you are doing. In our recent workshop with Jodi Rudick, she spent time talking about another new tool. And, I wanted to get you to another social network platform that is easy to create, could have very positive benefits for your business, and doesn't require frequent updating.

It's called Google Profiles. What Jodi liked and discussed about Google profiles is that your personal/business information will appear on the bottom of a Google search result page if someone uses your name for a search. For instance, go to Google now and input Jodi Rudick and then scroll to the bottom of the page to see what has been already entered. There is a great deal and she is a fabulous speaker.

Anyone can create a Google Profile personal account and have their name and photo appear on the first page of Google search results. Since so many of you use your last name as your business name you might as well take advantage of getting a first page listing telling about you. No one really knows how long this Google opportunity will be available but I'd suggest you register today to take advantage of this FREE listing. And, for those who were unable to attend the sessions we hosted at Starved rock on April 22nd with Jodi, her hand-outs and PowerPoint's are available on our website, [www.visitnorthernillinois.com](http://www.visitnorthernillinois.com) under the button for Education & Resources on our home page.

Also, in reading tips from another colleague, it was recommended from a business point of view, if you don't already own your domain name (such as [www.bonnieheimbach.com](http://www.bonnieheimbach.com)) find out if it's available. You can then have your web designer redirect your personal name to the home page of your website. I personally don't have my own name purchased, but for those in business for yourself, it's a great tip! These two Internet ideas just make good marketing sense! Please don't miss out on these important personal online "Real Estate" opportunities that are easy to do and will yield you positive results.

