

November 2008

Volume 2, Number 1



LAST CHANCE: 2009 NORTHERN ILLINOIS VISITOR GUIDE – DEADLINES FAST APPROACHING

It's hard to believe that while we continually tell you how fast the 2008 Northern Illinois Visitor Guides are moving into

the hands of potential visitors, we are now looking ahead to the upcoming 2009 guide. Trust me, quantities of the 2008 guide will probably be depleted by end of October (cross your fingers they last that long!).

Regional CVBs are updating editorial content to make sure that we have all things listed current and correctly. And, while all attractions can't possibly be included in the book, we will make sure that everything you submit is include in the regional website.

And, any attraction can submit their own info by clicking on the box on the Home Page of www.visitnorthernillinois.com to "SUBMIT CHANGES OR ADDITIONS" to your listing. The guides are set for delivery in mid-December, and we heavily promote the regional website. Make your changes now to assure your content is correct.

UPDATE: FEDERAL TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT

On September 24-25, a group of Illinois tourism leaders, led by Sara Barnett from the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, convened on Washington DC to attend the TIA Travel Leadership Summit. This group included ICCVB members Mark Theis - Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau; Kimberly Bless - Elgin Area CVB/Chair, ICCVB; Jeanie Cooke - Danville Area CVB; Gina Speckman - Chicago's North Shore CVB and Laura Chmielewski - Chicago Office of Tourism. The group met with our Illinois Representatives and Senators outlining the importance of passage of this act. In a historic development for the travel community, the House of Representatives passed the Travel Promotion Act (TPA)

NITDO OFFERS NEW WORKSHOP FOR FALL 2008 - TOURISM, TECHNOLOGY & YOU!

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? Wkii – 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 is hoping to help you navigate through this new and challenging world at one of our regional workshops, *Tourism, Technology & You!*



So, join us on **Friday, November 14th**, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the **American National Bank Community Room in Sycamore** 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

So, 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 approx. \$30 with session materials included in a reference binder. You will leave feeling confident and full of new and affordable ideas!!!

Look for BIG PROMOTIONS at the Tollway Oasis

With the tremendous success with the Visitor Information kiosks at five (5) of the Oases along the Illinois Toll Roads, we have been offered a tremendous opportunity by our contacts with Wilton Partners (Oasis Management Organization) and the Illinois Toll Authority. Ever seen the large lighted banners facing the traffic as you travel underneath the Oasis? Well, starting in November, look for a large banner to appear at the Belvidere Oasis – that's right, Welcome To Northern Illinois has a GREAT IMPACT for potential visitors. What an impact on the travelers who see the banner each day. And, while the banner will first be displayed at the Belvidere Oasis, it has the potential to move to other Oases in the system as ad space is available. To recognize all of the regional partners in our Visitor Information kiosk, we are now including a button on our website home page to allow travelers to see the information specifically available at our kiosks. And, we have just renewed our partnership for the Belvidere Oasis (all partners returning), DeKalb renews this month, and in late spring we'll we be asking for commitments for our Chicagoland kiosks. It's been a great program that allows visitors to get key travel information and we're pleased at the success of the program. Thanks to our regional partners who make this a success!



while the group was there, which would create a public-private partnership to communicate security policies and promote the United States as a premier destination. An enormous achievement for the travel community.

Travel promotion was not on anyone's radar when Congress came into session 20 months ago and is now on the verge of becoming a reality. House passage of TPA is the culmination of many individual's efforts and shows the collective voice of our industry can have in Washington when we craft a focused strategy and commit the resources necessary to achieve our goals. There is an uphill battle in the U.S. Senate and with the Bush Administration. We remain hopeful and will keep you informed of the progress of this initiative.

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

Northern Illinois Tourism:

www.visitnorthernillinois.com

Chicago Tourism:

www.choosechicago.com

Lincoln Bicentennial:

www.lincoln200.net

Lincoln – Douglas Reunion:

www.lincolndouglasreunion.com

Travel Industry of America:

www.tia.org

Illinois Wine Industry:

www.illinoiswine.com

Northern Illinois Wine Trail:

www.northernillinoiswinetrail.com

National Scenic Byways:

www.byways.org

Illinois Byways:

www.illinoisbyways.org

Illinois Agri-Tourism (ATPI):

www.agfun.com

Film Locations:

www.onscreenillinois.com

Lincoln Bicentennial Commission:

www.alplm.org

Tour Illinois:

www.tourismillinois.org

Meet In Illinois:

www.meetinillinois.com

Sports Illinois:

www.sportsillinois.com

Illinois African-American Travel:

www.soulfulillinois.com

Illinois Hispanic Travel:

www.disfrutailinois.com

IBOT ENGAGES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism has long been touting the advantages of social media and how the Illinois tourism industry can benefit from being at the forefront of this sweeping trend. In that spirit, IBOT is currently active on Flickr and Twitter.

Flickr is an image and video hosting site and will be used to collect and showcase photos taken around the state. The micro-blogging site, Twitter, provides timely updates about events, attractions, and activities around the state. It also serves as a valuable platform for interactive discussions. Additionally, plans are underway and content is being developed for an IBOT YouTube channel, Facebook page and the official Enjoy Illinois blog. Overall, the Bureau aims to make its mark and join other states having success with social media.

SEND IMAGES TO PROMOTE YOUR REGION ON THE IBOT FLICKR PAGE

We want to make sure we've got your region covered – please send us any pictures you'd like to include on the IBOT Flickr page. Events, attractions or just landscape photos – we welcome them all. Please send photos in jpg format (ideally file should be 200KB or higher for optimum quality) to enjoyillinois@gmail.com, and include a brief description including where it's from and who (if anyone) should be given credit. Remember, your photos are representing Illinois tourism, so be sure to send the best ones! At the same time, the goal of the Flickr page is to connect with consumers, so please note that photos should not be commercial.

99.5% OF PRESS RELEASES AREN'T OPTIMIZED FOR THE WEB. ARE YOURS?

CAMBRIDGE, MA - While online marketers are racing to adopt today's newest social media techniques, many are missing opportunities in a tested, traditional marketing channel: press releases. Press releases? Absolutely. Traditional press releases are designed to be picked up by journalists and turned into articles. Most people think of online press releases the same way. But with just a little work, they can also become a powerful way of improving your company's ranking in search engine results. Search engines like Google use links from authoritative sites as a key factor in determining the rankings of their results. Since press releases are published on many authoritative sites and can include lots of links back to your site, they're a great opportunity to improve your site's search-engine rankings.

Very few marketers are taking advantage of this opportunity. Data collected from over 11,000 press releases show that 99.5% of press releases aren't optimized for the Web. How do you make sure you're press releases are optimized? Here are a few tips:

1) Make sure your releases include links back to your site. When press releases are published by wire services and news agencies, these links will drive potential customers back to your site. More importantly, the links will give you credit with search engines and improve your ranking in their results.

2) When you publish links, make sure you're linking from relevant keywords. For example, if your company sells custom built homes, the links back to your site should go from keywords like "new homes" and "custom built homes."

3) Linked words are important because they help search engines determine what your site is about. When you link from descriptive phrases like "custom built homes," you'll improve your rank in the results that users get when they run searches on those terms.

4) One last link-related tip: Make sure you put links to your site near the top of your press releases. News agencies and wire services tend to break press releases into multiple pages when they publish them on the Web. You want to be on the first page because that's the one that counts the most with the search engines.

Link structure is the key to optimizing your press releases for search engines, but don't forget the basics. Be certain to include your company's contact information,

Chicago Olympics:

www.chicagoolympics2016.org

University of Illinois Extension

Agritourism:

web.extension.uiuc.edu/agritourism/

DATE SET FOR THE ILLINOIS SPECIALTY CROPS AND AGRITOURISM CONFERENCE

The Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference (sponsored in part by ATPI) will be held January 7-10, 2009, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield. Three pre-conference workshops (concurrent) will be offered during the daytime on Wednesday, January 7, which will include "Pumpkins," "Biocontrol in High Tunnels & Greenhouses," and "Federal Grant Writing Basics." On Thursday and Friday, January 8-9, the conference will kick off with Chefs and Culinary Educators Michael and Brigitta McGreal as the keynote speakers followed by the traditional concurrent breakout sessions on fruits, vegetables, herbs, and agritourism/marketing. The agritourism/marketing track will feature sessions on how to capitalize on consumer trends, how to increase on-farm sales, and how to work with the media. Other topics will include "Creating a Successful Tourism Partnership," "Safety Considerations for Agritourism Operations," and "Virginia Agritourism." A local foods program entitled "Buy Local – Eat Healthy" on Saturday, January 10, 2009, will feature Chef Michael McGreal, Joliet Junior College, who will demonstrate the preparation of delicious and exciting dishes with fresh produce. Other sessions will include cooking with edible flowers and pairing wines with food. A detailed conference agenda can be viewed at www.specialtygrowers.org.

Calendar of Events - Illinois Tourism Happenings . . .

Nov 4

Office Closed - Holiday

Nov 11

Office Closed - Holiday

Nov 13

ATPI Board Meeting, Springfield

Nov 14

NITDO Workshop, Tourism, Technology & You!, Sycamore

Nov 18

ILHC Board of Directors Mtg (tentative),

e-mail and Web address in the press release. When reporters find your press release, make sure they know how to get in touch with you. Also, don't forget to include an "about your company" section. Many people who look at press releases are used to scanning for this particular section of the release to learn more about the companies or organizations mentioned. Make it easy for these people to find what they're looking for. There's no reason not to.

This might seem basic, but it makes a difference. With the right tweaks, you can turn your press releases into powerful online marketing tools. Copyright 2008 HubSpot, Inc. All rights reserved. From www.dnnews.com. By Brian Halligan. To view the Internet Travel Monitor Archive, click www.tripinfo.com/ITM/index.html.

UNDER 60 CHARACTER EMAIL SUBJECT LINES INCREASES LIKELIHOOD OF READER OPENING MESSAGE

According to eROI's latest email marketing survey, The Elements of Email, email marketers are missing opportunities to increase their deliverability, opens, clicks and conversions. The study examines several elements of an Email, recommending that readers test their positions to compare to prevailing practices. 50% of respondents say they use the company name as the best "from" name choice, while a third say it's based on the campaign. Responses are based on the question: How do you address your "from" line?

- The Company... 50.89%
- Depends on the Campaign... 31.95%
- Individual... 17.16%

Email authentication verifies messages, allowing recipients to automatically recognize the nature of each incoming communication. About 60% of marketers do not know how they authenticate email. Of those that do, Sender ID is the type of authentication used by the majority, with Domain up about one-third. Based on "How do you authenticate your email?" the response is:

- Don't Know... 55.07%
- Sender ID... 32.16%
- PF... 28.19%
- Domain Keys... 24.67%
- DKIM... 10.13%

Many companies avoid blacklists by verifying senders and certifying the email they send. These services are growing, but are still used by only about 25% of marketers. With the majority of email marketers not currently doing this, a large opportunity is presented. Methods of certification include:

- None... 70.09%
- Sender Score... 10.28%
- Other... 10.33%
- GoodMail... 7.94%
- Habeas... 7.01%

Email marketers seem to be paying close attention to the content of their subject lines, finds the study. 75% say they try to ensure subject line relevance to the content of the email and 50% focus on keeping it concise.

Studies have shown that using a subject line with 72 characters or more gives added relevance, with click through and conversion tending to increase. By going with a 60 character or less subject line, the open rate will tend to increase. The area between 60 and 72 has been shown to be a "dead zone," according to the report.

Respondents report subject lines as follows:

- Relevant content... 72.57%
- Short and to the point... 50.44%
- Testing subject lines... 28.32%
- Personalized... 19.03%
- Other... 2.21%

DeKalb
Nov 20

MCCVB Workshop – Email Marketing with
Constant Contact

Nov 21

Nouveau celebration, Galena

Nov 27

Office Closed – Holiday

Jan 25-30

The Special Event Show, San Diego, CA

Feb 4-5

ISEN (Illinois Special Event Association)
Annual Convention, Tinley Park

March 4-6

Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism,
Chicago

Nearly 30% of marketers duplicate their site navigation in email. Of those, 15% find it more effective than the main content in driving clicks, while 11% of marketers find their navigation converts better than the main content of their email. Article is Copyright 2008 MediaPost Communications. All rights reserved. From www.mediapost.com. By Jack Loechner. To view the Internet Travel Monitor Archive, click www.tripinfo.com/ITM/index.html.



2009 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism

New web site has been launched where you can regularly check back for registration information and other details as we get closer to the March 4-6 dates. And, it's shaping up to be a very exciting conference as we're confirming a wide variety of dynamic speakers and industry experts. We look forward to seeing you at the Fairmont Chicago for what's sure to be a fun and educational event.



SIPPING LOCAL...A NEW INITIATIVE FOCUSES ATTENTION ON REGIONAL WINES

According to a recent article in the Chicago Tribune, a new initiative allows wine drinkers to focus their attention on regional wines. Wine is made in all 50 states, not that you'd know it given all the attention paid to wines from California, Oregon, Washington and even New York. Now there's a new initiative designed to wake us wine drinkers up. It's called

www.DrinkLocalWine.com.

Spearheaded by David McIntyre, who just began writing wine columns for The Washington Post, and Jeff Siegel, a Dallas-based wine writer who contributes to the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram and blogs under the pen name of "Wine Curmudgeon," DrinkLocalWine.Com is a Web site designed to draw attention to all those regional wines made elsewhere, like the Midwest, by having wine writers from around the country focus on their local wines. Links to these write-ups will be found on the site. "We want to highlight the new 'wine country' that has sprung up around us, with the U.S. wine industry more than doubling in size since 2002 and most of that being outside of California," McIntyre said.

According to Tribune columnist Bill Daley, "Midwest wines have not received their proper share of attention—or appreciation. Chicagoans generally ignore these wines, believing them inferior to the wines of France or Italy or California. I'll leave it to others to argue over that. For me, Midwest wines are often, well, different and that's good. The best taste true to their grape variety while also offering a sense of their place on earth; terroir is what the French call it. Midwest wineries have long made delicious sweet wines and fruit wines, but a growing number of winemakers are making the dry wines many drinkers say they crave. These can be excellent."

Daley reviewed numerous wines from the Midwest, several from Illinois. Here are his comments on Prairie State Winery Cattleman's Red: This Genoa winery likes to say this blend of two red hybrid grapes, chambourcin and Marechal Foch, is good with barbecue. Easy to see why, the wine has the tannic muscle to hold its own and a rich berry flavor to parry any spice. Yet, this is no fruit bomb; the wine's lean, dry profile would allow that entire luscious smoky barbecue flavor to come through. It's carried by some retail stores or you can order directly from the winery, www.prairiestatewinery.com. Way to go Prairie State Winery!

Want to learn more about the 80 wineries in Illinois – or about the 25+ wineries and winery-owned tasting rooms in Northern Illinois, check out www.drinklocalwine.com and then check out www.northernillinoiswinetrail.com. Salute!

HOTEL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IMPROVES IN FIRST HALF OF 2008, REACHING 5-YEAR HIGH; 75% OF AIRLINES DECLINE IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Despite the current downturn in the U.S. economy, the hotel industry continues to satisfy customers at near-record levels, according to the most recent results of the Market Metrix Hospitality Index (MMHI) for the second quarter of 2008. Customer satisfaction among all hotels is up (+1.0 to 82.7) compared to 2007. This is the highest score for the industry in nearly five years and close to the all time high score of 83 recorded in 2001, just before 9/11. The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) also reports improved customer satisfaction for hotels for 2008 with the industry reaching record high scores.

Customer satisfaction up in a down economy? "The increase in customer satisfaction with hotels is certainly good news and surprising given the current economic pressures to reduce staff and services," said Jonathan Barsky, Ph.D., vice president of research for Market Metrix. "But in this economy hotels are focusing more on their current customers. And with occupancy rates down 2.6 % in the first half of 2008, guest staffing ratios have remained stable. Other factors helping to maintain or improve customer satisfaction include recent investments in customer technology, facilities and new services; expanded satisfaction measurement programs and pay-for-performance compensation; and the growth of online customer reviews which help to manage guest expectations and deliver more pleasing hotel experiences."

Customer satisfaction with airlines rebounded slightly (+.5 to 73.8) from last quarter's all-time record low score. But due to higher fuel prices there is no real improvement in sight. "Airlines continue to reduce flights and staff while raising fares and adding fees," said Dr. Barsky. "That is not a formula to win consumer sentiment." Further, according to the MMHI, three-quarters of all airlines have seen their satisfaction scores drop in the first half of 2008. Among the large carriers, United and Southwest show the biggest declines. Midwest is one bright spot, earning the award for most-improved airline, as well as top score in customer satisfaction for the first half of 2008.

Drury Inns posted the highest score (91.8) among all hotels in the industry, demonstrating that exceeding expectations is the key to guest satisfaction. Guests rave about the personal treatment they receive. Drury Inns was one of the first hotels in the limited-service segment, and all the Drury hotels are still owned and operated by the Drury family.

Among rental car companies, satisfaction is down slightly for 2008 (-0.9 to 79.7). Enterprise placed first despite a drop in its score (-1.6 to 81.7) for the first half of 2008. Thrifty and Alamo, however, show significant gains in 2008 (+1.6 to 79.2 and +1.3 to 79.5, respectively). The rental car industry continues to be tightly clustered (less than 5 points separate the top and bottom brands), indicating that the customers do not see significant differences among the brands. And there is a new kid on the block, car sharing companies (ZipCar and others), that appear to be benefiting from spiraling gas prices and appealing subscription model (renting cars for short periods of time, often by the hour). Copyright 2008 Market Metrix. All rights reserved. From www.hotel-online.com. To view the Internet Travel Monitor Archive, click www.tripinfo.com/ITM/index.html.



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