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NATION'S LEADING TRAVEL EXPERTS HEADLINE ILLINOIS' PREMIER TOURISM CONFERENCE; ILLINOIS GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE RETURNS TO SPRINGFIELD

*More than 400 Illinois tourism leaders, partners and elected officials to convene in Springfield
March 21 – 23 to learn latest industry and marketing trends*

Chicago – The state's premier gathering of tourism industry professionals will return to Springfield for the first time in nearly a decade, March 21st through March 23rd. The annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism brings together state leaders, travel experts and other special guests to showcase innovative ideas for promoting travel.

Travel and tourism is an essential component of Illinois' economy. In 2014, Illinois welcomed more than 109.4 million visitors, which generated more than \$36.3 billion in travel expenditures for the state's economy. The Governor's Conference provides an amazing opportunity for professionals of all kinds – from small family restaurant owners to luxury hotel managers – to learn about the latest trends and best practices that can help enhance their business contributions to one of the fastest-growing industry sectors in Illinois.

This year the conference returns to Springfield for the first time since 2008, and will be held at the President Abraham Lincoln – A Doubletree by Hilton Hotel.

"As a lifelong Illinoisan, and Springfield resident, I'm so happy to welcome the state's tourism leaders back to the capital, a city that's such an integral part of the state's tourism landscape," said Cory Jobe, Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism. "The tourism industry is a vital part of our state's economy, not only providing revenue from our visitors, but supporting jobs and quality of life benefits for residents across the state."

Jobe will present the annual State of the State Tourism Address on Tuesday, March 22 at 12:00 p.m. He will reflect on the marketing initiatives and partnerships from throughout the past year, as well as offer a look ahead to special initiatives and new programs being unveiled later in 2016.

Additional conference highlights and presentations include:

- **Opening keynote session** with Peter Greenberg, Travel Editor, CBS News
- **Remarks on the economic importance of tourism** with Jim Schultz, Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- **National Travel Update** with Chris Thompson, President & CEO, Brand USA and Roger Dow, President & CEO, U.S. Travel Association



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- **The Biggest Mistakes in Travel Marketing; And What We Can Learn From Them** with Doug Lansky, travel writer and author
- **Redefining the Female Traveler** with Melissa Luebbe, National Travel Director, Midwest Living
- **The Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards**, which honor innovative tourism marketing initiatives that promote the outstanding destinations, attractions and events throughout the state
- **Innovation Hall Tradeshow** with opportunities to network with other professionals and distribute business collateral
- **Closing Luncheon and Google Presentation** with Laura Sardgna, Head of Industry Catalyst, Google

For a complete conference schedule and list of speakers, or to register for the 2016 Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel and Tourism, visit www.ilgovconference.com.

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents