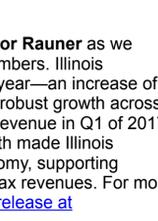


## Happy Travel Tuesday

### National Travel & Tourism Week

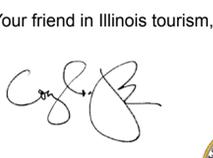
(NTTW) is finally here, which means I've been here, there, and everywhere myself. Yesterday, I was in Chicago to kick off the week by introducing one of our **Faces of Travel** —Graham Thompson of [Optimo Hats](#). Graham is one of the newest artisans to join our *Illinois Made* program, which we've recently expanded to include new attractions and new travel itineraries in offshore markets.



I was also proud to stand alongside **Governor Rauner** as we announced our newest economic impact numbers. Illinois welcomed 110 million domestic visitors last year—an increase of 1 million people from 2015. That translates to robust growth across the board, including a 4% increase in hotel revenue in Q1 of 2017 alone. In Illinois, our tourism efforts have both made Illinois residents proud and boosted the state economy, supporting 302,000 jobs and generating \$2.6 billion in tax revenues. For more on our latest numbers, see our [latest press release at EnjoyIllinois.com](#).

But I'll have to celebrate later, as NTTW moves on! This evening I'll be in Springfield for the annual Legends in Tourism Awards. Tomorrow I'll speak to Bloomington–Normal and Champaign County, then swing by DeKalb County on Thursday.

It's a lot, to be sure, but week is all about celebrating the **Faces of Travel** in our local communities—such as Rock Island, which is hosting a two-day celebration of local literature this weekend as part of the Quad Cities' NTTW festivities. I'm actually in the Quad Cities this morning to join the Sports Huddle, which began last night and runs through today. During the annual conference, CVBs and sports commissions collaborate on a game plan for how to attract sporting tournaments and events to Illinois. I love meeting with rights holders from around the country to showcase the best in our business.



I'm still recovering from all the excitement (and good food) of the James Beard Awards on May 1. We had 10 nominees proudly representing Illinois, and two of them ended up taking home awards. Congratulations to **Rick and Deanna Bayless** of [Topolobampo](#), now the nation's reigning Outstanding Restaurant.

Congrats, as well, to **Sarah Grueneberg**, named Best Chef for the Great Lakes region. At her restaurant, [Monteverde](#), Chef Sarah taps into her family heritage to craft traditional yet adventurous Italian food—including some of the freshest hand-made pasta you'll ever taste.

It's that personal, handcrafted spirit that makes me so proud of the fine culinary scene throughout Illinois, and especially the award-winning **Faces of Travel** that turn Illinois restaurants into must-taste destinations. Congrats again to all the James Beard Award winners and nominees in Illinois and beyond.

Your friend in Illinois tourism,

**Cory M. Jobe**  
Director  
Illinois Office of Tourism



**Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity**  
OFFICE OF TOURISM  
Bruce Rauner, Governor

### TRAVEL ILLINOIS

## ILLINOIS SPOTLIGHT



### NCAA Division I Golf Championships

The [NCAA Men's and Women's Division I Golf Championships](#) will be held from May 26–31 at Rich Harvest Farms in Sugar Grove. The nation's best college golfers tee off on one of Illinois' many great golf courses.

[Get Your Tickets](#)



### American Writers Museum Opening

Chicago already has its fair share of world-class museums, but there's always room for one more. The [American Writers Museum](#) opens next Tuesday, May 16. The first of its kind in the U.S., the museum celebrates the American writers who've influenced the nation's history, culture, and identity.

[Plan Your Visit](#)



### Travel Back in Time on the I&M Canal

Last Friday, May 5, marked the first voyage of 2017 for the [I&M Canal Boat](#). The 76'x15' boat is a full-size replica of the vessels that carried pioneers down the hand-dug I&M Canal since it opened in 1848. Hop aboard and relax while real-life mules pull the boat along, just as they did in the 19th Century.

[Hop Aboard](#)



Fresh Salmon at Miga in Champaign

### Champaign: A Great Midwestern Food Town

In a quest to name the Midwest's most delicious town, *Midwest Living* has narrowed the field down to a dozen competitors that are home to great food scenes. Representing our state: the great college town of Champaign, home to the University of Illinois and a variety of great restaurants, from upscale wine bars ([Bacaro](#)) to classic beer and BBQ joints ([Black Dog Smoke & Ale House](#)).

[Vote for Champaign as the Midwest's Tastiest Town](#)

## ARE YOU UP FOR FARM-TO-TABLE?



### Taste the Flavors of Illinois at Firefly Grill & Restaurant

Kristie and Niall Campbell first bonded over their mutual love of small family farms. Both grew up in Maine, where they discovered the boundless joys of all-natural food and small, tight-knit communities. Today, they extend both of those virtues to [Firefly Grill & Restaurant](#), a small, farm-to-table eatery in the heart of Illinois.

To ensure the freshness of every meal, Kristie and Niall grow most of their ingredients at Firefly's own organic garden. Almost everything else comes from local artisan farmers, foragers, and fishermen—making for sustainable, community-based dining experience that makes every guest feel like they're enjoying a homemade meal on the farm. [Learn more](#) about how Firefly adds a personal flavor to *Illinois Made*.

[Check out your Illinois Makers](#)

### THE LATEST TRAVEL TRENDS

## NEWS YOU CAN USE



### Hotel-Sponsored Podcasts

Podcasts are more popular than ever, so it's exciting to see that hotel companies are now [producing their own shows](#).

InterContinental Hotels started its "Stories of the InterContinental Life" series in October, closely followed by *Marriott Traveler's* "Behind the Design." If all goes well, these shows will help travelers discover new ways to relate hotels to their personal lives and inspire them to book some overnight stays.

[Learn More](#)

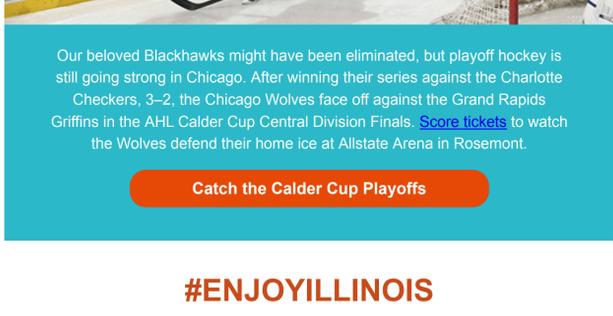


### Gourmet Coffee in Your Room

Travelers' tastes are getting more sophisticated, and so are their palates. Jumping on the ever-growing popularity of craft coffee, a company called Tradecraft Outfitters [has begun partnering](#) with some hotels to bring specialty coffee to guests who might be tired of the standard hotel-room coffee maker. So far, Tradecraft's partners include Graduate Hotels and Commune Hotels, but more hotels—including the nation's largest chains—are sure to follow suit.

[Learn More](#)

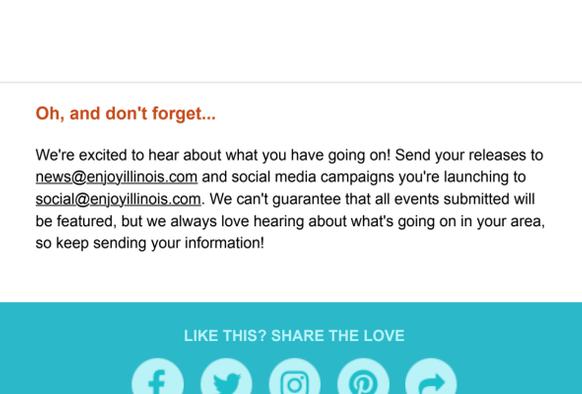
## PLAYOFF HOCKEY IN CHICAGO



Our beloved Blackhawks might have been eliminated, but playoff hockey is still going strong in Chicago. After winning their series against the Charlotte Checkers, 3–2, the Chicago Wolves face off against the Grand Rapids Griffins in the AHL Calder Cup Central Division Finals. [Score tickets](#) to watch the Wolves defend their home ice at Allstate Arena in Rosemont.

[Catch the Calder Cup Playoffs](#)

## #ENJOYILLINOIS

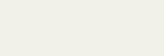
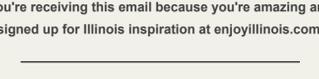


Check out how people from all over the world #EnjoyIllinois every day on our [Instagram](#)

### Oh, and don't forget...

We're excited to hear about what you have going on! Send your releases to [news@enjoyillinois.com](mailto:news@enjoyillinois.com) and social media campaigns you're launching to [social@enjoyillinois.com](mailto:social@enjoyillinois.com). We can't guarantee that all events submitted will be featured, but we always love hearing about what's going on in your area, so keep sending your information!

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