

Governor kicks-off National Travel & Tourism Week

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110 million visitors from around the country came to Illinois in 2016

CHICAGO – Governor Bruce Rauner today kicked-off National Travel & Tourism Week and released domestic Illinois tourism figures that show robust growth in visitor spending in 2016.

“Illinois welcomed 110 million visitors from around the country in 2016 and last year, tourism revenue grew three percent across the state,” Governor Rauner said. “This is

another example that in areas where we can improve the economy, our administration is moving forward. Illinois is the greatest state in the nation. We have so much to be proud of and so many reasons to invite our out-of-state friends to visit the Land of Lincoln.”

Governor Rauner and the Illinois Office of Tourism announced that in the first quarter of 2017 there has been a seven percent increase in tourism revenue in Chicago and a four percent revenue increase downstate. Since the administration took office, tourism has grown three percent every year. Visitors to Illinois invested \$35 billion in the state’s economy in 2016. In the last two years, Illinois has created 20,000 tourism-related jobs.

At today’s kick-off, the Illinois Office of Tourism announced a new Illinois Made series to feature four new small businesses and artisans based in Illinois. New Illinois Made features include today’s host Optimo Hats. It is in a former Chicago fire house based in Chicago’s Beverly neighborhood. Owner Graham Thompson is Chicago’s last true hat maker known for handcrafting custom hats. Other Illinois Made artisans are Eshelman Pottery in Elizabeth, Heritage Bikes in Chicago and Blaum Brothers Distilling Company in Galena.

“This year’s National Travel and Tourism Week theme recognizes ‘Faces of Travel,’ saluting the amazing people behind the travel industry. Here in Illinois we want to recognize and promote more of our Illinois Made artisans who are small businesses and job creators helping to drive the state’s economy,” said Cory Jobe, Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism. “The expanded Illinois Made program will attract new visitors to explore our state, while supporting local businesses and generating important tourism spending for our communities.”

Video of the press conference can be found [here](#).