



# Gov. Pritzker Announces, “Time For Me To Drive” Campaign To Jumpstart Tourism In Illinois This Summer

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SPRINGFIELD – Governor JB Pritzker today joined the Illinois Office of Tourism and industry leaders to kick off “Time for Me to Drive,” a new campaign to promote the return of travel across the state. In its first new campaign for tourism since the onset of COVID-19 last year, the State of Illinois is encouraging residents and visitors to get out and enjoy Illinois’ diverse communities and scenic landscapes safely.

To view and download media assets for “Time for Me to Drive” click [here](#).

A multi-state ad campaign set to launch later this week will encourage travel to a broad range of destinations throughout Illinois, while positioning the state to seize on pent up demand. As consumer trends reveal an increased desire to travel by car, the new campaign is timed to highlight Illinois as a top choice for travel ahead of the summer season.

“The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is one of our state’s greatest attractions having welcomed millions of people from around the world. That’s why I chose it as the place to announce Illinois’ new tourism campaign – one designed especially to meet this moment in our history,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “After an incredibly difficult year in which the pandemic kept us all close to home and staying apart, lifesaving vaccines are bringing us back to life and heading toward a summer of fun and venturing out. Today I’m proud to launch the Time for Me to Drive Campaign – inviting people to see all of Illinois, showing off adventures of all kinds: Historic sites and winery tours, state parks and rock climbing, hiking, and zip-lining, hundreds of craft breweries and thousands of excellent restaurants across the state.”

“Time for Me to Drive” highlights the state’s seven national scenic byways and highways as more travelers seek to pack their cars and hit the road, a trend seen

increasingly across the country. Featured trips span the state's iconic museums, world-class architecture, and natural wonders, including Matthiessen State Park in Oglesby, Mississippi Palisades State Park in Savanna, the Shawnee National Forest, and the Garden of the Gods in Herod. Road trip itineraries also promote the discovery of destinations in and around Chicago, including award-winning restaurants, small businesses offering Illinois-made products and unforgettable locations like Chicago's Navy Pier, the Riverwalk and of course the city's diverse neighborhoods.

Overall, the Illinois Tourism Office, housed within the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), has created over 60 original itineraries to help visitors navigate Illinois' unique communities and natural resources.

The campaign will run on television, radio, digital and print media, and highway billboards spanning 18 markets, and with ads also available in Spanish. "Time for Me to Drive" represents the first phase of the State's strategy to revitalize tourism in Illinois focusing on summer trips and regional overnight stays. Future tourism promotion efforts will be launched as indoor tourism activities, large festivals and mainstay attractions resume as public health guidelines allow. This gradual approach to tourism promotion will play an important role in supporting a safe return of the industry and its workers, while also boosting tourism revenues.

"Without question, tourism is a key economic driver for Illinois and is essential to our economic recovery," said Sylvia Garcia, Acting Director of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). "That's why we are excited to roll out this new campaign just in time for summer, marking a critical step forward in bringing visitors back into our communities, supporting our hospitality businesses and helping build consumer confidence. We thank our tourism partners for their continued support as we work to revive the industry and reclaim Illinois' place as a major international destination for business and leisure travel."

The campaign features the hit song, "Time for Me to Fly," by Illinois native rock band, REO Speedwagon. In spots, travelers change the nostalgic song's lyrics from fly to drive, underscoring the excitement shared by many that after over a year of the pandemic, it is now time to venture out and experience everything Illinois has to offer.

New research indicates that over 70 percent of Americans are ready to return to travel, up nearly 20 percentage points since the start of the year, and that many favor road trips. Since the pandemic began, it's estimated that more than two-thirds of Americans have taken a road trip. Additionally, industry experts have consistently recommended road trips to help consumers feel comfortable in light of the ever-changing nature of the pandemic.

In addition to the \$6 million campaign, the Illinois Office of Tourism is working with convention and visitor bureau (CVB) partners statewide to gain feedback on how the state can support renewed business for their communities. DCEO has also launched extensive stakeholder engagement around tourism recovery initiatives, bringing CVBs as well as industry groups to the table to gain input on how to best reinvigorate travel and the revenues visitors bring to the state.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, tourism was identified by the Pritzker administration as a hard-hit industry, prompting State of Illinois relief funds to be prioritized for tourism and tourism-related businesses. As a result, \$75 million went to tourism and tourism-related businesses as part of the Business Interruption Grant program, with an additional \$133 million for restaurants and bars statewide. With the recent passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) the Administration is again exploring additional opportunities to address the needs of tourism businesses facing continued losses due to COVID-19.

“As some of the first business to be shuttered due to COVID-19, our hospitality industries have been among the hardest hit,” said Sen. Sara Feigenholtz, Chair of the Senate’s Tourism and Hospitality Committee. “This campaign will help breathe new life into these struggling businesses, including neighborhood restaurants and hotels, while generating broad economic activity for the communities that rely on tourism to make ends meet.”

“Illinois is back open for business and we are excited to welcome back visitors with open arms,” said Michael Jacobson, President and CEO, Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association. “Investing in tourism promotion efforts allows for Illinois to compete in the regional, national and global marketplaces to get travelers to our great state. This helps our economy, boosts tax revenues, improves our state’s image and puts people back to work. Hotels across the state have taken significant steps to ensure the wellbeing of our staff and guests and we are ready to safely welcome travelers to our properties soon.”

“Illinois is ready to once again showcase all that we have to offer,” said Jayne DeLuce, Chair of the Illinois Council of Convention & Visitor Bureaus and president/CEO of Visit Champaign County. “The launch of this campaign means visitors to our state, customers for our local businesses, and jobs for our workforce.”

A return to tourism in Illinois is supported by progress made toward key health metrics identified in Governor Pritzker’s Restore Illinois framework, as well as a major expansion of vaccine administration and availability in Illinois. The Illinois Office of Tourism will continue working closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and CVBs to ensure adherence to the latest safety guidelines throughout the summer.

“Illinois has been a model for the rest of the country in efforts to control the spread of the coronavirus, and we tip our hats to a job well done by Governor Pritzker,” said House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch (D-Westchester). “Now we get to focus our sights on rebuilding our economy and revitalizing our tourism industry. I want to encourage people from across the Midwest to get out, take a drive and enjoy all of what our beautiful state has to offer.”

“From big city excitement to scenic rural backdrops, Illinois has long been a gateway for business and leisure travelers and tourism is crucial for our economic recovery,” said Senate President Don Harmon (D-Oak Park). “As we continue to move back to ‘normal’ and again welcome visitors, it’s investments like this that will provide a much-needed economic shot in the arm for the tourism industry and allow its workforce to get back to work and back on their feet.”

“I’m proud of the way Illinois has led the Midwest in pandemic recovery, but as vice-chair of the Senate Tourism and Hospitality Committee, I’m conscious of the economic loss and financial devastation our state has suffered over the past year,” said State Senator Rachelle Crowe (D-Glen Carbon). “This campaign comes just in time to help those planning their summer vacations find ways to travel safely while supporting Illinois’ tourism industry.”

“As vice chair of the arts and cultural events committee, I see firsthand the importance of Tourism,” said State Representative Sue Scherer (D-Springfield). “It is so connected to economic opportunities, especially in my district where tourists come from all over the world. I truly appreciate the priority the governor places on it.”

“Nothing brings families and friends together for fun and adventure like a road trip,” said State Representative Tim Butler (R-Springfield). “I’m proud that my district covers many of the Land of Lincoln’s greatest destinations, and I encourage folks to hit the Mother Road and take in the scenic beauty of world-famous Rt. 66.”

“We’re making this announcement at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum for a reason: Illinois has a rich history and heritage that brings in visitors every year” said State Senator Doris Turner (D-Springfield). “Thank you to Governor Pritzker for putting forward a campaign that showcases everything Illinois has to offer.”

To view and download media assets for “Time for Me to Drive” click [here](#). To learn more about the new travel itineraries, please visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).