

Written by Erin Wilson

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State ramps up effort to attract Brazilian visitors as Illinois delegation promotes tourism

São Paulo – September 24, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn invited Brazilians to Illinois today during his trade mission to Brazil to increase tourism, education and business between the state and the South American country. The Governor is addressing members of the travel industry in São Paulo this afternoon to showcase Illinois and Chicago as a visitor destination. Joining Governor Quinn are a host of Illinois businesses and organizations, including Chicago-based United Airlines, to encourage travel to Illinois. The trip is part of Governor Quinn's economic development program, which promotes Illinois' business advantages on a global stage.

"Illinois offers Brazilians an authentic American experience," said Governor Quinn. "Whether it is the world-class culture and scenic lakefront in Chicago, the history of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, the bluffs along the Mississippi River or the farmlands surrounding the historic Route 66 highway, Brazilian travelers will find plenty to enjoy in Illinois."

Governor Quinn's effort to draw more Brazilian visitors to Illinois builds on recent tourism gains. Illinois welcomed 56,000 visitors from Brazil in 2011, making Brazilians the seventh largest group of overseas travelers to Illinois. Inbound travel from Brazil to the U.S. is expected to grow 70 percent between 2011 and 2016.

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The Illinois tourism industry generated a record \$31.8 billion in 2011, up 8.4 percent from a year ago, fueled by a record increase in leisure travel. The robust results emphasize the critical role tourism plays in fueling Illinois' economic growth, creating jobs and providing additional revenue to the state.

Governor Quinn's trade mission to Brazil also coincides with increased efforts by Choose Chicago, the city's official sales and marketing organization, to attract Brazilian visitors and promote Chicago as a business and leisure travel destination. Choose Chicago recently established a new partnership with São Paulo-based Interamerican Network to support Chicago's tourism efforts in Brazil. Interamerican will provide support for travel trade sales and relations in this important Latin American market.

"Brazil is among Chicago's top overseas inbound markets," said Don Welsh, president and CEO of Choose Chicago, who joined Governor Quinn in Sao Paulo. "With extensive efforts underway to ease the visa process for Brazilian travelers to the United States coupled with daily nonstop service between São Paulo and Chicago, we have a great opportunity to share compelling reasons for Brazilians to travel to Chicago, whether for the first time or as returning visitors."

United Airlines offers a daily nonstop flight from São Paulo to Chicago. The airline also serves Rio de Janeiro with daily one-stop flights from Chicago.

"More and more Brazilians are choosing Chicago as their destination, whether for business or tourism, and United wants to support and invest in this opportunity," said Cristiane Franck, country director for Brazil and Argentina at United Airlines. "We recently celebrated 20 years of operations in Brazil and are aligned with the development of the local market."

More information about Illinois trade and business opportunities can be found on the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's website at illinoisbiz.biz.

Tourism Facts

- Illinois is the 8th most visited state by international travelers. (Source: [Office of Travel and Tourism Industries](#))
- Chicago is the 10th most popular destination for international travelers. (Source: [Office of Travel and Tourism Industries](#))
- Inbound travel from Brazil to the US is expected to grow 70% from 2011 to 2016 (second highest rate of forecasted growth). (Source: [Office of Travel and Tourism Industries](#))
- Inbound travel from Brazil to the US grew 26% to 1,508,000 in 2011 from 2010. (Source: [Office of Travel and Tourism Industries](#))
- Brazil ranks fifth in visitor spending in the U.S., spending a record \$8.5 billion in 2011, up 36% from a year earlier. Brazil has seen double-digit growth for eight consecutive years. Travel and tourism account for 39% of all U.S. services exports to Brazil. (Source: [Office of Travel and Tourism Industries](#))

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