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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heritage Corridor Destinations Celebrates the Power of Travel During National Travel and Tourism Week

Travel Powers the Economy, Creates Opportunity, and Connects Communities

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Heritage Corridor Destinations proudly joins the nationwide celebration of National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW) May 4-10, recognizing the profound impact travel has on our economy, workforce, and communities.

As the U.S. Travel Association highlights, the travel industry remains a critical driver of economic prosperity. In 2024 alone, it generated \$2.9 trillion in economic output, supported over 15 million American jobs, and contributed \$190 billion in tax revenue—equivalent to \$1,490 in tax savings per household.

“Travel is one of our nation's most powerful economic engines—supporting millions of jobs, fueling businesses and propelling industries forward,” said Geoff Freeman, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “National Travel and Tourism Week reinforces the pivotal role travel plays in building a stronger, more prosperous America.”

Across the six Heritage Corridor counties, visitor spending reached a record of nearly \$1.6 billion in 2023, according to research from US Travel and Illinois Office of Tourism. Visitor spending on food, retail, lodging, entertainment, transportation and other hospitality services led to over 12,000 tourism related jobs across the region – that’s up 1.24% from the previous year. Visitors are generating more than \$54.4 million in local tax receipts to the communities and counties along the historic I&M Canal National Heritage Area, Starved Rock Country, and The First Hundred Miles of Route 66.

During this week’s national celebration of the impact of travel and tourism, you can catch up with Heritage Corridor Destinations staff at a variety of activities and events, including:

- New I&M Canal Towns and Starved Rock Country Travel Guide – A launch party is planned for Tuesday, May 6th at 10 a.m. at Heritage Harbor Ottawa to celebrate the new publication. HCD plans to distribute 50,000 of these travel guides through Spring 2026.

- Germany's TUI Travel FAM Tour – Staff will be hosting tour operators from Germany at various Route 66 locations to provide them with first-hand experiences in region.
- Hospitality Happy Hour at Village of North Utica – On Friday, May 9th, HCD team will join Heritage Corridor Festivals in recognizing the positive impact the Village of North Utica creates for visitors to Starved Rock Country. The Village often serves as the gateway to the Starved Rock State Park region and recently opened the Market on Mill retail plaza. The Village continues to invest in events and services which attract visitors to the region for shopping, dining, lodging, and entertainment.
- Run Starved Rock Country – On Saturday, May 10th LaSalle County will welcome running enthusiasts and their fans for 5K, Half-Marathon and Full-Marathon races. For more than 10 years, runners have had the opportunity to experience the majestic scenery along the Illinois River and throughout Starved Rock State Park, and to celebrate their athletic achievements with a medal and local libations. HCD will be staffing a hydration station for the half and full marathons.
- The Landing Pad Souvenir Shop – a new Route 66-themed souvenir shop in Wilmington will be open next weekend (Thursday to Monday) from noon to 6 p.m. The new shop is just steps away from the world-famous Gemini Giant, and offers official Route 66 Centennial merchandise, Gemini Giant souvenirs, Will County-made products and more.

There are many ways to celebrate the impact of travel to the region. Locally, travel and tourism are vital to the strength and growth of the communities.

“Travel drives economic opportunity and strengthens our community,” said Robert Navarro, President and CEO of Heritage Corridor Destinations. “This National Travel and Tourism Week, we celebrate travel’s undeniable impact and reaffirm its importance in shaping our local economy and enhancing our quality of life.”



About Heritage Corridor Destinations

Heritage Corridor is a destination of six Illinois counties (Will, Grundy, Livingston, LaSalle, Bureau, and Putnam) southwest of Chicago including The First Hundred Miles of Route 66, I&M Canal towns and Starved Rock Country. Experience heritage with a modern twist in dining, culture, vintage shopping and outdoor activities for visitors to explore whether it be a day trip or weekend visit. Cruise through the first hundred miles of Route 66 where a visitor can enjoy more than a taste of the Mother Road and midcentury Americana style. Stroll through the I&M Canal towns and experience the amenities of this cultural, natural, and economic resource with a combination of industrial grit and up-cycled architecture that leaves a visitor inspired about the past and future. Starved Rock Country, one of the Midwest’s original vacation destinations, invites visitors to unplug and experience the charm and beauty of the area waterfalls, canyons and the Illinois River valley. Visiting the Heritage Corridor is time well spent; the essence of midwestern hospitality, outdoor rejuvenation, and vintage flair with a modern twist.

Visit HCDestinations.com for more information.

