

Illinois tourism director highlights 2016 statistics during National Travel and Tourism Week

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DeKALB – The state’s tourism director spoke Thursday at the Egyptian Theatre about how his office has managed to do more with less.

Despite little funding from the state to market its various tourism destinations, Illinois welcomed 110 million domestic visitors in 2016, 1 million more than the previous year, Cory Jobe said.

Because of the increase, domestic travelers spent \$35.1 billion in 2016, a 1.8 percent increase from 2015. That growth helped support an additional 9,600 jobs in Illinois in 2016, Jobe said.

“Tourism is big business,” Jobe said. “For every dollar we spend, it continues to generate over \$9 in economic return.”

Jobe was wrapping up a series of presentations across the state as part of National Travel and Tourism Week, which recognizes the positive effects of tourism on the state and will conclude Saturday.

“Tourism is an industry that continues to grow and evolve, and it continues to be an economic engine for the state, and I want to thank everyone for driving economic tourism in the state,” Jobe said.

He also complimented the [Enjoy Illinois website](#) for making leaps and bounds in promoting Illinois tourism. In addition to statistics, Jobe highlighted the Illinois Made program, which features various artisans and small-business owners in the state who help to drive tourism.

In 2016, less than \$4 million was spent on marketing Illinois tourism, Jobe said, yet \$15 million is projected to be spent in 13 Midwest markets and six international markets this year.

“The hope is for Illinois Made to get more of the state involved in marketing efforts,” Jobe said. “Illinois is a big state with a lot of great product, but it’s hard to capture all of that great product in a 30- to 60-second video.”

DeKalb Mayor Jerry Smith said a possible opportunity to promote local tourism is collaboration between small businesses – for instance, Waterman Winery and Whiskey Acres Distilling Co. hosting some type of countywide sampling.

Jobe said the goal is to keep visitors in the state as long as possible, and craft spirits often are a strong passion point of travel.

“That’s an idea I think we can perhaps collaboratively put together,” Smith said.

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