



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MAYOR EMANUEL OUTLINES VISION FOR CONTINUED EXPANSION AND GROWTH OF
TOURISM IN CHICAGO**

*Extends Goal to 55 Million Visitors a Year; Launches International Lighting Competition;
Formally Announces Citywide Chinese New Year Celebration*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel this morning gave a major speech about tourism in Chicago in which he extended the city's goal for annual tourists, increasing the goal to 55 million visitors a year. The achievement of this goal by 2020 will result in 30,000 additional jobs related to the tourism industry and hundreds of millions of dollars in additional revenue into the city of Chicago.

"Since taking office, I have been focused on tourism as a key driver of our economy and an area in which we needed a comprehensive strategy and focus," said Mayor Emanuel. "We addressed issues that were impeding our convention business, centralized our strategy to drive tourism, and are making the investments we need to grow this industry, and the results have been dynamic. Now is the time for us to continue that growth, including focusing on iconic events and opportunities that will place Chicago at the center of the global conversation."

When Mayor Emanuel took office, the City of Chicago had approximately 40 million visitors a year. Two years later there are over 46 million visitors a year and today Mayor Emanuel set a more ambitious goal of 55 million visitors a year by the year 2020 – which will create 30,000 additional jobs.

In his speech, Mayor Emanuel outlined two major initiatives under the Elevate Chicago banner that will characterize the sort of globally-focused, iconic events being sought for the city.

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First, he announced that later this month the city will launch an international competition to light the city at night. The competition will seek entries from artists, architects, planners and designers from around the world. It will begin with the river and extend throughout the city and will activate Chicago at night, allowing tourists more opportunities to enjoy the city and presenting another reason for people to visit Chicago.

Second, he announced that the city will host a citywide celebration of the Chinese New Year this year, which is expected to grow each and every year until it is the biggest in North America. The celebration runs from Friday, January 31 through Friday, February 14 from Chicago's downtown Loop to Chinatown to communities across the entire City. The 2014 Chicago Chinese New Year Celebration will be heavily promoted around the United States and overseas – especially in China – and is expected to draw increasing numbers of visitors on an annual basis.

In the coming weeks and months, more major announcements regarding tourism attractions will be announced.

"Elevate Chicago is about putting in place iconic and exciting tourism opportunities that will put Chicago at the top of the list for tourist destinations," said Lou Raizin, President of Broadway in Chicago and a board member of Choose Chicago. "There is now a great opportunity to create lasting, valuable tourism attractions that will foster job growth and economic opportunity for years to come. We are ready to seize this opportunity."

All of this comes as the Mayor and Choose Chicago announced a record year for hotel performance in 2013.

Chicago's hotel occupancy rate was the highest ever at over 75 percent. The city saw 275,000 additional room-nights compared to 2012 and ended with about 9.9 million room nights filled – by far a record. Total Chicago hotel tax revenue set a record at \$105.93 million, a gain of 4.9%, and the second year in a row the total tax has eclipsed \$100 million.

"Choose Chicago is excited about the opportunity to continue to grow Chicago's tourism platform," said Desiree Rogers, chairman of Choose Chicago. "We will strive to exceed the Mayor's ambitious goals and are looking forward to attracting more and more visitors from around the world to our wonderful city."

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