



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

CHOOSE
CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 11, 2013

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHOOSE CHICAGO ANNOUNCE RECORD LEISURE VISITATION
TO CHICAGO AND 46.2 MILLION TOTAL VISITORS IN 2012**

*More than 10 Percent Growth in Overnight Leisure Travel Fueled Significant
Visitation Gains*

Mayor Emanuel today joined Choose Chicago in announcing 2012 visitation to Chicago returned to pre-recession and near record level totaling 46.2 million visitors to Chicago. The growth was fueled by a significant increase of 10.2 percent in overnight leisure visitation. Chicago exceeded the national growth rate for overnight leisure visitation of 7.2 percent by three percentage points.

"Choose Chicago is well on its way to meeting and exceeding my goal of 50 million annual visitors by 2020," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "These results clearly show that a strategic approach to marketing our great city can and will produce significant economic benefits, including new jobs and tax revenues. I welcome all visitors to Chicago and look forward to more and more people enjoying our wonderful city."

Chicago welcomed 45 million domestic visitors in 2012, an increase of 6.2 percent over 2011. Preliminary data indicate international visitation will increase 3.2 percent to 1.24 million visitors. The resulting total of 46.24 million visitors is a 6.1 percent increase over 2011's total of 43.59 million.

"From its world-class museums and beautiful lakefront to its diverse culture, Chicago offers visitors a truly unique experience," Governor Quinn said. "Generating more than \$31.8 billion in 2011, I am proud to see Illinois' robust tourism industry continue to grow and produce record numbers. I encourage travelers both domestic and abroad to visit Chicago and explore the many wonders our great state of Illinois has to offer."

Earlier this year, Choose Chicago President and CEO Don Welsh was part of a delegation that traveled with Governor Quinn on his trade mission to Mexico. While in Mexico, Quinn and Welsh met with members of the travel industry in order to boost travel to Illinois and the city of Chicago and strengthen the economy. The governor has been strongly committed to driving the Illinois economy forward and making Illinois the most welcoming state in the nation.

“These are incredible results and are largely a result of how we are proactively and aggressively marketing our destination,” said Don Welsh, Choose Chicago President and CEO. “Of particular note is the near-record occupancy rate of 75.2 percent in 2012, an increase of 4.1 percent over the 2011 level of 72.2 percent. This was accomplished even when the city had 1.63 million more available rooms than the city had in the peak visitation year of 2007.”

Although just under the record visitation year in 2007, the 2012 visitor volume generated \$100.8 million in Chicago Hotel Tax Revenue, an incremental gain of \$26.1 million over 2011 tax receipts.

Upon taking office, Mayor Emanuel worked with tourism leaders in Chicago to create one streamlined tourism organization, which is now called Choose Chicago. Mayor Emanuel set an ambitious goal of 50 million visitors by the year 2020, which would be an increase of more than 10 million visitors from 2010’s total of 39.25 million visitors. In 2011, visitation increased 11.1 percent, to 43.59 million, and then increased another 6.1 percent in 2012 to 46.2 million. In just two years, these combined these visitation gains already represent 65% of the mayor’s goal.

The announcement was made in conjunction with IPW, the largest international travel trade show, being held in Las Vegas. IPW will return to Chicago in April 2014. Chicago last hosted this important industry event in 1998. Choose Chicago executives conducted a press briefing to share this positive data and share how Chicago has changed since 1998 at IPW earlier today.

#