

Welcome to Chicago from the 2014 Co-Presidents

Hi everyone!

It's almost time for the ITA to blow into the "Windy City of Chicago"! So excited! Lindy Miller, Cindy Hockensmith and the two of us can't wait until you all get here and we can experience Chicago together. And, this convention is also significant because it's the ITA's 80th birthday! This will indeed be a special time to be a part of the convention. We also have commemorative t-shirts available with a pre-order deadline date of July 29th. If you come to the convention, you can always say you were in Chicago for that special milestone! You'll start off with a cookie from the Doubletree, welcoming you to the city. Then, you'll enjoy the sweet location of this hotel when you journey across the street to the Westfield Old Orchard Mall and soak in so many shops and restaurants that you might forget why you're in town. Labor Day Weekend is so busy in Chicago, we recommend you book your hotel room as soon as possible. We also suggest you book your flights early, fly into O'Hare (markedly less expensive than Midway), and book online for the best deals. Remember to plan for those taxi fares to/from the airport as O'Hare runs upwards of \$35-\$50 and Midway upwards of \$80-\$100. But, getting here is just half the fun. We want to take this opportunity to give you a sneak preview of what we have planned for the ITA's 80th Convention in Chicago, a city that has something for everyone.

On Thursday for those early arrivers, we have a trip planned to the Navy Pier. The Navy Pier is a 50-acre mini-amusement park on Lake Michigan. It's full of shops, restaurants, live music and rides including a 15-story tall ferris wheel. For those of you who even come a day earlier on Wednesday, on your own you can take a dinner cruise, an architectural river tour or even catch the Navy Pier Wednesday night fireworks over Lake Michigan. It is a beautiful site.

Friday morning will feature a trip to the Museum of Science and Industry, which has many, many, MANY interactive exhibits. It's one of a kind. And this museum is BIG. When we say "BIG," we mean B-I-G! There's so much to do and see at this museum that you'll have a hard time trying to cram everything into 2 ½ hours – but you're guaranteed to have fun trying. Did we say it's BIG? And, of course, Friday night will be our Welcome to Chicago Opening Ceremony and Buffet. The folks at the Doubletree have really gone out of their way to make our trip to Chicago unforgettable! They are as excited about our convention coming to stay with them as we are looking forward to adding Chicago, 2014 to our ITA tour itinerary. We hope you will enjoy our DJ for the evening as well. And don't forget to take a good look at those gorgeous table decorations by Lindy and Cindy!

On Saturday, we wanted everyone to get their taste buds going and get a real taste of the city, which is famous for its great food – like hot dogs and pizza. Our mouths are watering just thinking about it. Saturday morning will begin with a tour of the city. We'll get a guided tour of some of the most famous spots in Chicago, plus we'll have at least one, maybe two opportunities at taking a group photo. What a nice keepsake that would be for any of us! The city has such a beautiful skyline that photos won't do it justice, but we'll give it our best shot. We'll start off the tour with a visit to Portillo's Hot Dogs and a chance to sink our teeth into one of those famous Chicago dogs. (If you want to know what a real Chicago hot dog is, come and find out for yourself). There are non-meat lunch options on the menu as well for those of you who choose not to eat a hot dog.

On Saturday evening, we will travel downtown to get another taste of Chicago when we visit the famous Gino's for deep-dish Chicago-style pizza. Again, there are options for you vegetarians out there. After we eat, we'll take a guided tour of gangster hang-outs of the 1920's. Who knows? We might even learn some history along the way. By the time we return to our hotel on Saturday night, we will have learned enough about Chicago since our arrivals in the area to rival Chicagoans on knowledge about their native city.

For those of you who want to join us, we will end our Chicago Convention with our normal Sunday activities including the Gospel Hour, Business Meeting, Group Photo and Judging Contest. Then, we will laugh along with Angela Riccio as she entertains us at our Sunday Night Banquet as we wind down the 2014 ITA Convention in Chicago. We will enjoy a delicious meal, 50/50 and dancing as we make Chicago part of ITA history.

Looking forward to seeing you in Chicago,
Meryl and Cheryl Hollar
Co-Presidents