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MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHOOSE CHICAGO ANNOUNCE RECORD TOURISM IN 2015

*Domestic Visitors to Chicago Topped 50 Million for the First Time;
Total Tourism Expected to Surpass 52 Million, Supporting 3,800 New Jobs in 2015*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Choose Chicago Board Chair Desiree Rogers today announced that in 2015 domestic visitors to Chicago passed 50 million for the first time. Total visitors to Chicago are expected to exceed 52 million, surpassing last year's record performance and moving Chicago even closer to reaching Mayor Emanuel's goal of 55 million visitors annually by 2020. Chicago's tourism industry has added more than 15,000 jobs since 2010, including an estimated 3,800 new jobs in 2015.

"Chicago's tourism industry continues to reach new heights and break new records, having now surpassed the 50 million domestic visitor mark for the first time in history. The more visitors we attract, the more jobs we support for residents all throughout the city of Chicago," Mayor Emanuel said. "While I am proud of the 15,000 jobs that our tourism industry has created in the past five years alone, I know we can do even better. With the help of marquee events like this week's NFL Draft, we will build on this progress and continue generating jobs in neighborhoods throughout Chicago."

Chicago is one of only three U.S. cities to welcome more than 50 million visitors annually with direct spending by visitors reaching an estimated \$14.9 billion in 2015, a 34 percent increase since 2010. Domestic visitors to Chicago increased 4.6 percent to a record 50.97 million in 2015. The total number of visitors, including international, is expected to exceed 52 million. In 2015, Chicago's tourism industry supported an estimated 139,800 jobs.

"We are firmly on target to reach Mayor Emanuel's goal of 55 million visitors by 2020. This record-breaking year was achieved while an additional 529,000 room nights were added to the market in 2015," Choose Chicago Interim CEO Marc Anderson said. "Choose Chicago's advanced marketing efforts to both the leisure and business segments are critical to Chicago's success, and we remain dedicated to advocating for legislative policies that allow our visitor industry and Chicago's economy to thrive."

Leisure visitation reached a record of 39.31 million in 2015, a gain of 4.5 percent. Since 2011, leisure visitation has grown by 24 percent. Overnight leisure visitation was a standout, up 5.6 percent over 2014 levels to a record 20.57 million, topping 20 million for the first time in history.

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Business visitation grew 5.1 percent to 11.65 million in 2015, the second post-recession occurrence of business visitation over 11 million. In addition, day business visitation rebounded and grew by 3.5 percent. Overnight business visitation was the 2015 growth leader, up 5.8 percent to 7.92 million.

“Chicago continues to set new records and attract exciting and unique events like the NFL Draft and James Beard Foundation Awards—which we are thrilled to welcome back this week. This summer we debut another marquee event, America’s Cup, which will make maritime history when Chicago’s Lake Michigan becomes the first freshwater venue in the competition’s 164-year history,” Rogers said. “It’s this kind of thinking that defines Chicago as an epicenter of culture and innovation. We are the premier destination for first-time and reimagined events that inspire.”

Tourism in 2015 generated \$935 million in total tax revenue, \$2.2 billion in revenue for Chicago’s hotels and \$124.1 million in hotel tax revenue. Every dollar invested in Choose Chicago generates \$25 in state and local taxes.

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