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## **Galena's Chestnut Mountain Resort Offers Eco-Cruises of the Mississippi Backwaters**

Galena, IL. -- If you've never been up close and personal with a bald eagle or a blue heron, you can get to know both of them a lot better on an eco-cruise of the Mississippi River backwaters at Chestnut Mountain Resort near Galena, IL.

Operated by Mississippi River Cruises of Lansing, IA, the unique 90-minute eco-cruises depart from Chestnut's dock at the foot of the mountain at 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, from the last weekend in May through October.

"If you've only seen the river from a bridge or a riverboat casino, these leisurely voyages are real eye-openers," says Mike Murphy, Chestnut's operations manager. "You learn about the navigation and history of America's most important waterway, and you have a rare window on an ecosystem that's in a class by itself."

The excursions are aboard a 49-passenger riverboat, uniquely designed to navigate shallow and narrow areas of the river that are not accessible to other commercial boats. The area is part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge and includes both upland and bottomland habitats.

The uplands include hardwood forests, grasslands and agricultural fields that are home to white-tailed deer, wild turkey, hawks, buzzards and bald eagles. The bottomlands are dotted with dozens of islands, sandbars and shorelines that allow peeks at ducks, geese, heron, egrets and other waterfowl in their native habitat. Shorebirds and wading birds can be seen here daily, stalking their prey. Beavers, muskrats and turtles are plentiful, and otters are making a comeback.

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One of America's most important migratory flyways, the Mississippi River corridor provides spectacular views of all sorts of birds, including songbirds and pelicans flying north in Spring and south in Fall. "Mark Twain said the Mississippi River is a wonderful book with a new story to tell every day," adds Murphy. "We think these are stories people want to hear...and see."

Cruise tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for ages 7-11, \$12 for ages 3-6 and free for ages 2 and under. Cruises include transportation between the lodge and dock via a scenic chairlift ride. For the ride down, ticket holders may opt for the Alpine Slide, a thrilling trip on a wheeled sled down a terrain-tailored track to the river.

You don't need to be a resort guest to take the cruise, but the river views and the sunsets are so spectacular, you'll want linger longer, so you can book a room and enjoy a meal overlooking the river. Summer Packages\* include:

- **Mississippi River Cruise Package:** One night of lodging Saturday, one breakfast, one dinner, one round of mini golf, one ride on the Alpine Slide and one Mississippi River Cruise. \$110 (plus tax) per person for the first two people; \$50 (plus tax) for each additional person over the age of six.
- **Summer Saturday Special:** One night of lodging any Saturday through October, with a full hot breakfast on Sunday. \$149 (plus tax) for two people; \$5 (plus tax) for each additional person over the age of six.
- **Summer Weekend Package:** Friday and Saturday nights lodging, breakfasts on Saturday and Sunday, dinner on Friday or Saturday night, two rounds of mini golf, a Galena trolley tour, a 5-ride ticket book for the Alpine Slide, a one-hour horseback trail ride at Shenandoah Riding Center. \$185 (plus tax) for two people; \$95 for each additional person over the age of eight.
- **Midweek Packages** (Sundays through Thursday nights) start at \$89 (plus tax) per night for two people and include a full hot breakfast. Other midweek packages include additional activities and amenities.

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Chestnut Mountain Resort is nestled on a bluff high above the Mississippi River, just 15 minutes from Galena, IL, and 30 minutes from Dubuque, IA. The lodge has 120 rooms and suites, restaurants, lounges, indoor pool, sauna, whirlpool, arcade, gift shop and ski center. Summer resort activities include mountain bike rentals, horseback riding, tennis and miniature golf. For more info about the resort and its amenities, phone 800.798.0098. For room reservations, phone 800.397.1320. For resort info and to book rooms and packages on-line, log on to [www.chestnutmtn.com](http://www.chestnutmtn.com).

Galena is a popular vacation destination in the hill country of northwest Illinois, a leisurely three-hour drive west of Chicago and Milwaukee. For more info about Galena, log on to [www.galena.org](http://www.galena.org) or phone 877-464-2536 or 815-777-3557.

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***\*Note: "Summer Package" rates are for the 2006 season.***

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