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**CHICAGO SETS NEW TOURISM RECORD OF 55 MILLION VISITORS IN 2017**

*Tourism Industry Supported More Than 146,000 Jobs Reaching Every Part of Chicago;  
A 17 Percent Increase in Jobs Since 2010*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Choose Chicago today announced that visitors to the city in 2017 reached 55.2 million – a new record and 2.5 percent increase over the previous year. The increase of 1.4 million reaches the Mayor's ambitious goal of 55 million visitors annually – two years early. Chicago's tourism industry supported an estimated 146,500 jobs in 2017, a 17 percent increase since Mayor Emanuel took office.

"Tourism in Chicago means jobs throughout Chicago," Mayor Emanuel said. "By continuing to set new tourism records and bring millions more people to Chicago every year, we are generating economic opportunities that reach every Chicago neighborhood."

Prior to 2011, there were an estimated 124,400 tourism-related positions. The projected 55.2 million visitors to Chicago in 2017 generated an estimated additional 22,000 jobs. In 2010 Chicago saw approximately 39.25 million visitors. 2017's performance is an approximately 40 percent increase.

2017 marked another major increase in leisure visitors to the city as Chicago hotels reported an overall annual increase of 6.3 percent. This increase of the leisure segment was particularly strong in the key summer months as hotels reported an increase of 7.4 percent during the four-month period June through September – more than double the growth of the previous summer. Overall, Chicago hotel demand in terms of rooms occupied grew 3.3 percent in 2017.

Another key segment generating overnight visitors is the important convention and meetings industry convening at McCormick Place. Of the largest 40 conventions held, 21 achieved increased attendance over their prior year event including 10 that experienced all time attendance records. Seven of the 40 largest conventions broke previous records in terms of the sale of exhibit space – another encouraging industry trend.

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To build on that progress, the Global Business Travel Association has committed to hosting their Annual Convention in July of 2019 which is the world’s largest business travel event. More than 7,000 business travel professionals from around the world will gather in Chicago at McCormick Square for state-of-the-art education, exclusive networking opportunities and news on the latest innovations in the industry.

“The combination of record-setting growth in leisure visitors accompanied by record-setting results from the major conventions that choose to meet here is an outstanding barometer for the overall success of Chicago as a thriving destination,” Choose Chicago President & CEO, David Whitaker said. “The impact of the visitor and meetings economy translates into increases in jobs, tax receipts from visitor spending as well as helping fuel the city’s reputation as not only an amazing place to live, work and play – but also an amazing place to visit and invest in.”

The positive momentum being generated is also helping fuel industry growth as Chicago opened five new hotels in 2017 with another eight new hotels currently scheduled to open in 2018.

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