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Illinois Casinos

By Adel Awwad

Illinois is home to riverboat casinos, and there are 9 major casinos in Illinois. Illinois casinos have been limited by the government's restrictions and are taxed at the highest rate in the nation. The laws also limit the amount of gaming licenses that can be issued to 9, and the state is now at the maximum for gaming licenses. Illinois casinos do, however, offer a wide range of gaming options.

Illinois was the 5th state admitted to the union on December 3, 1818. It covers an area of 57,918 square miles. It is a Great Lakes state, and is nicknamed the "Prairie State". The population, as reported in December 2000, is 12,419,293 and it is the 5th most populated state in the U.S. With the introduction of the Alton Belle, Illinois became only the second state to allow riverboat casinos. All of the casinos offer great gaming from Slots to Blackjack to Roulette, and welcome all guests over the age of 21.

Argosy's Alton Belle Casino was the first riverboat casino in Illinois, opening its doors in 1991. It is located at 1 Front Street in Alton. There are three restaurants available for guests. The casino occupies 23,000 square feet and operates from 9am to 5pm every day. It features a 1,200-passenger yacht and a barge.

Argosy's Empress Casino is located at 2300 Empress Drive in Joliet. There are 85 rooms and 17 suites available at the casino hotel. The casino operates from 10am to 4am on Friday and from 10am to 4am on Saturday. There are three restaurants on site. The casino occupies 50,000 square feet, and has special features like an 80-space RV park and 2,500-passenger barge.

Casino Queen is located in East Saint Louis at 200 South Front Street. There are 150 rooms and 7 suites available at the casino as well. The casino operates from 9am to 7am daily. It occupies 27,500 square feet and offers many features. Besides gaming, Casino Queen offers a 2,500-passenger paddle wheeler, a 140-space RV park and easy access to MetroLink light-rail station.

These are only three of the nine Illinois casinos. They all offer special features that are worth taking a look at, like paddleboats and barges. Most casinos also offer great dining on site. Illinois casinos offer much more than gambling – they offer a great vacation experience.

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Riverboat Casinos

By Adel Awwad

Riverboat casinos were first legalized in Iowa in 1991 and their popularity has increased dramatically since that time. At first, gambling on riverboat casinos was limited to \$5.00 bets and a maximum loss of \$200.00 for each cruise passenger. Riverboat casinos gradually moved to Illinois and Mississippi, where there were no limits and casinos were open 24 hours a day. In 1994, riverboat casinos were introduced to Missouri, the last state to legalize riverboat casinos.

Riverboat casinos are legal in six states, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Missouri. They resemble the grand riverboats of the past; however, they seldom leave the shore and remain at dockside. The Mississippi riverboat casinos must be permanently docked, with gangplanks from the shore to the casino. Some riverboat casinos, "boats on moats," are large barges with casinos on deck, designed to float on pools adjacent to the river. The majority of the riverboat casinos operate on the Missouri, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers, with the exception of Illinois, which allows them on the Des Plaines, Ohio, and Illinois rivers, as well. Each state has its own gambling restrictions for riverboat casinos, including number allowed, types of games, admission charges, number of hours spent in cruising, and amount of gambling time allowed.

There are a variety of games on riverboat casinos, including blackjack, craps, roulette, poker, slots, and video poker, as well as frequent shows, featured performers, dinner, and dancing. Some popular riverboat casinos include the Argosy VI in Indiana, with 2,300 slots and 80 table games for over 4,000 passengers; the Grand Victoria Casino in Illinois; the Ameristar Casino in Missouri, with the largest floating casino floor in the world; and the Mississippi Belle II in Iowa. The Tunica Queen, a 3-deck riverboat casino featuring afternoon and evening gambling cruises, is very popular in Mississippi. One of the newest riverboat casinos is L'Auberge du Lac in Louisiana, a single-level deck, with 30,000 square feet of gambling space, 60 table games, and 1,600 slot machines. Another well-known riverboat casino in Louisiana is the Treasure Chest, featuring 1,000 slot machines and several types of poker games.

Riverboat casinos add millions of dollars in revenue to the economy of each state, as well as providing employment for thousands. Although natural disasters affect the riverboat casinos each year, gaming developers and individuals contribute to rapid reconstruction and reopening. There remains a bright future for riverboat casinos because of their convenience, reasonable prices, and inexpensive

entertainment.

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