

# Old jail in Galena named best B&B in the U.S.

BY LORI RACKL  
Chicago Tribune

The best B&B in the country — and the second-best in the world — is about a three-hour drive from Chicago, according to the travel website TripAdvisor.

Jail Hill Inn in Galena nabbed top U.S. honors in the bed-and-breakfast/inn category in this year's TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice hotel awards.

On a global scale, the six-room inn and former county jail ranked just behind The 25 Boutique B&B in Torquay, England.

"It's kind of a juxtaposition, going from being a place nobody wanted to be, to being a place everybody wants to be," innkeeper Matthew Carroll said about his historic hoosegow that housed prisoners for nearly a century in this charming north-west Illinois city.

The 140-year-old regal, four-story brick building stopped serving as a jail in 1977. It has changed hands a few times since then and was languishing in foreclosure when Carroll snapped it up in 2015.

"It was kind of an eyecore when I bought it," said Carroll, who spent several years managing the Inn at Irish Hollow in



A strata, left, may be one of the three courses served during breakfast at Jail Hill Inn, right, in Galena.



JAIL HILL INN PHOTOS

Galena's countryside before branching out on his own.

"With my hospitality experience and being a lifelong Galena resident," he said, "I was able to bring a team on board to restore the property ... and bring some luxury lodging to downtown, which was sort of lacking."

Situated at 319 Meeker St., just a short walk from this tourist-friendly town's historic Main Street, Jail Hill Inn has half a dozen spacious suites, each measuring 800 square feet.

The property's old cells were

demolished long ago, although a few vestiges of the past remain, like inmates' names etched into the window frame in one of the third-floor suites.

Rooms come tricked out with a fireplace, wet bar, king-size bed, high-end linens and a Bluetooth-connected sound system. Champagne and chocolate are complimentary at check-in. Carroll serves a three-course breakfast each morning, and an afternoon wine and cheese reception is held 4-8 p.m. daily in the lobby.

"It's about really pushing that luxury and having pampering amenities that make it over the top," he said.

Overnight rates start at \$295 for a midweek stay and can go up to about \$445, depending on the season.

Guests, many of whom are "repeat offenders," seem to think it's well worth the price. The inn's 300-plus reviews on TripAdvisor are overwhelmingly positive: "Hands down the best place we have stayed," "I wish I could give more than 5 stars" and "AWE-

SOME!!" are a few of the enthusiastic props.

It's that kind of gushing feedback that won Jail Hill Inn the No. 1 spot in the Travelers' Choice awards, now in their 17th year.

Jail Hill Inn isn't the only Illinois property to get top billing from TripAdvisor travelers. The Peninsula Chicago rated top of class in the luxury category for U.S. hotels.

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## NEWS TO USE

### Film fest, beer month and sled dog demos

BY PHIL MARTY  
Chicago Tribune

Here are some of the more interesting events, deals, websites and other travel tidbits that have come across our desk recently:

■ The 14th season of the Beloit International Film Festival gets rolling Feb. 22 and the action doesn't cut until March 3. More than 100 films will be screened at multiple locations in Beloit, Wis. There also will be a variety of sessions with filmmakers and

other special events. [www.beloit-filmfest.org](http://www.beloit-filmfest.org)

■ Grand Rapids, Mich. has lots of craft breweries, and you can raise a glass to them during Beer Month GR, Feb. 15 to March 15. On tap are plenty of special events, including the 14th annual Winter Beer Festival, scheduled Feb. 22-23, showcasing more than 1,000 beers from 100-plus Michigan breweries. [tinyurl.com/y782qr8m](http://tinyurl.com/y782qr8m)

■ If beer isn't your proverbial cup of tea, there are plenty of wineries to explore in Michigan during the winter when fewer folks are milling about. Check out what's available at [tinyurl.com/yd8xvz2](http://tinyurl.com/yd8xvz2).

■ Sled dog demos will be held Feb. 17 at Starved Rock Lodge in Starved Rock State Park in Oglesby, Ill. There will be indoor seminars and outdoor demos presented by Free Spirit Siberian Rescue. [tinyurl.com/yb2u2d43](http://tinyurl.com/yb2u2d43)

■ Cedarburg, Wis., will celebrate its 45th annual Winter Festival on

Feb. 16-17. Based at Cedar Creek Settlement, the weekend will include bed races, a parade, wine sampling, live music, an outdoor chili bar and snow bar and more. [www.cedarcreeksettlement.com](http://www.cedarcreeksettlement.com)

■ Cross-country skiers and snowshoers of all abilities travel to Ashland, Wis., every winter for the Book Across the Bay competition. The 6.2-mile course from Ashland to Washburn follows a route across frozen Lake Superior. This is the 23rd year for the event, which will be Feb. 16. [www.batb.org](http://www.batb.org)

■ The Shelf Ice Brewfest will be held Feb. 16 in downtown Michigan City, Ind. About 40 area breweries will be showing off their best beers. Food will be available too. Tickets must be purchased in advance. [tinyurl.com/y8fx4zd7](http://tinyurl.com/y8fx4zd7)

■ Nearly 10,000 model train fans typically turn out each year for the Mad City Model Railroad Show in Madison, Wis. The 52nd show will be Feb. 16-17 at the

Alliant Energy Center. There will also be exhibits and more than 300 vendors selling model train gear. [www.nmra-scwd.org](http://www.nmra-scwd.org)

■ Birds of prey are the stars of the show Feb. 16-17 at the Masters of the Sky presentation in Alton, Ill. Live eagles, falcons and owls will be among the birds shown at the Melvin Price Locks and Dam. [tinyurl.com/y9ry9uf6](http://tinyurl.com/y9ry9uf6)

■ The Parke County Maple Fair will be held Feb. 23-24 and March 2-3 in the popular Indiana destination. Headquarters will be in Rockville, but sugar camps throughout the county will be open to show how maple trees are tapped and syrup is produced. [tinyurl.com/yecmwb4q](http://tinyurl.com/yecmwb4q)

■ The Science Center of Iowa in Des Moines presents a traveling exhibit aimed at raising awareness about mental health. Mental Health: Mind Matters uses hands-on interactives and immersive multimedia experiences to help visitors understand mental illness and its prevalence in soci-

ety. It will be on display from Feb. 5 to April 28. [tinyurl.com/y9ff7a27](http://tinyurl.com/y9ff7a27)

■ The 11th annual Centennial Beer Festival will be held Feb. 21-23 in St. Louis. Some tasting sessions sell out early, so advance ticket purchase is recommended. [www.centennialbeerfestival.com](http://www.centennialbeerfestival.com)

*Deals and websites listed here have been checked for availability as of press time. Listings are not endorsements. Send tips at least a month in advance to [ChicagoTrib-Travel@gmail.com](mailto:ChicagoTrib-Travel@gmail.com).*

Phil Marty is a freelancer.

## GEOQUIZ ANSWER

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