

Joliet, Illinois

Joliet, Illinois was known as the City of Stone in its early years. It grew into a diversified manufacturing town, and today is a fast-growing, fun-filled community. As the train passes through town, watch for historic Union Station, century-old homes and mansions, and a castle-like high school built in 1901. It's clear that Joliet has had some prosperous times in the past, and now following a period of decline, you can see evidence of downtown rejuvenation.

The Des Plaines River first attracted settlers, and the city of Joliet was incorporated in 1852, just 20 years after Chicago was founded 40 miles to the north. Many of Chicago's projects boosted the economy of this smaller town. When Chicago entrepreneurs planned a canal, limestone quarries in Joliet provided foundation materials for the project. The completed canal continued to help Joliet prosper, as stone was shipped on barges to new markets. It wasn't long before the "City of Stone" was renamed the "City of Steel." The quarries were still going strong when a steel mill opened in 1869. Joliet welcomed immigrants from Slovenia and other European countries, and this large labor force spurred the opening of a broad range of new factories, producing a wide range of goods.

In the 1980's many U.S. cities dependent on manufacturing experienced serious economic problems, and Joliet did not escape hardship. Unemployment reached 25% as factories closed. But Joliet has rebounded and continues to grow as a bedroom suburb for people working in Chicago and neighboring areas. Today it is the fastest-growing city in Illinois, and the downtown is undergoing a total revitalization.

If you are able to spend some time in Joliet, you have options for fast-paced entertainment as well as more relaxed diversions. Joliet's slogan, "Come Play With Us," invites you to experience several car racing venues, casinos and minor-league baseball. Take in a show at the Rialto Square Theatre, built in 1926 and considered one of the world's 10 most beautiful theatres. A walk around town gives you a view of the theatre and nine other buildings listed on the National Historic Register, and it's not far to Joliet Prison, made famous in the 1980 movie, *The Blues Brothers*. The penitentiary is now closed to prisoners, but it is open for tours. Hike and bike trails run along the Des Plaines River, where you can enjoy the same waterway which attracted the first settlers to Joliet.

Source(s):

City of Joliet. (2010). Retrieved December 16, 2010 from <http://www.cityofjoliet.info> .

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