

TOURISM DAY

AT THE CAPITOL

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ExploreGeorgia.org

JANUARY 2010

Tourism Industry Generates \$850.6 Million to the State of Georgia

The tourism industry gathered for the 2010 Tourism Day at the Capitol to celebrate the significant role tourism plays in Georgia's economy. The tourism industry presented a check representing the \$850.6 million in state tax revenue generated from tourism-related expenditures. Tourism is the state's second-largest industry, providing 241,500 jobs and \$6.9 billion in resident wages.

2010 State Travel Guide Unveiled

The new 2010 annual Georgia Travel Guide was also unveiled to the industry. This full-color, magazine-size guide provides visitors with information on hundreds of Georgia cities, towns, attractions and accommodations. 750,000 guides are distributed through Visitor Information Centers, ExploreGeorgia.org, travel and trade shows and 1-800-VISIT GA. The guide represents a \$1 million investment from the private sector and is produced at no cost to the state through advertising sales. The Georgia Department of Economic Development partners with Emmis Custom Publishing, (publisher of Atlanta Magazine), on the Georgia Travel Guide each year.



2010 Georgia Travel Guide features the Okefenokee Swamp at Stephen C. Foster State Park on the cover.



Check presentation from the 2009 Tourism Day at the Capitol

Georgia Tourism Division Gets New Leader



The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) named Kevin Langston the Deputy Commissioner for tourism. In this role he will spearhead the state's work to grow the tourism industry in Georgia. Mr. Langston has served as Assistant Commissioner for the tourism division since May 2007, returning to the division after serving as Director of International Operations and Director of Projects, managing the state's offices in ten locations around the world. He has previously served as Assistant Deputy Commissioner for the tourism division, where he

oversaw marketing, sales and product development initiatives. Other positions at the agency have included Director of Communications and a number of roles in the department's International Trade Division. Mr. Langston's new role took effect December 1 upon the retirement of Charlie Gatlin, Deputy Commissioner for Tourism and Marketing, who has served the state for 24 years. In addition, Greg Torre has been named Division Director of the Marketing and Communications division for the department. Mr. Torre will be responsible for the strategies, execution and results of GDEcD's marketing and communications initiatives.

New Director Named To Georgia Tourism Foundation



The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) named Fred Huff the director of the Georgia Tourism Foundation, a public-private entity and non-profit organization that leverages investments and forges partnerships to strengthen the state's tourism marketing. The foundation works to bring corporate

citizens to the table with tourism industry members, aligning their goals to promote tourism across the state of Georgia. Mr. Huff served as Director of Marketing for the department since June 2005. Mr. Huff has more than 20 years of experience in marketing, advertising and interactive. The previous director of the Foundation, Gilda Watters, retired in August after 30 years of government service.

Marketing Grant Awards from Tourism Division

The Georgia Department of Economic Development's (GDEcD) Tourism Division awarded co-operative tourism marketing grants to 41 communities, convention & visitor bureaus, regional travel associations and other non-profit tourism entities across the state. A total of \$500,000 was awarded. The program assists communities in reaching a larger audience through marketing projects they may not be able to fund on their own.

Recipients of the 2010 co-op marketing grants include:

Alpharetta Convention & Visitors Bureau
Altamaha River Partnership
Antebellum Trail
Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau
Atlanta Metro Travel Association
Augusta Canal Authority
Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau
Classic South Travel Association
Clinch County Tourism Team
Columbia County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Columbus Convention & Visitors Bureau
Coweta County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce
Darien-McIntosh Chamber of Commerce
Downtown Cartersville
Fannin County Chamber of Commerce
Forsyth-Monroe County Chamber of Commerce
Friends of Georgia State Parks - Sam Shortline
Georgia Coast Travel Association
Georgia's Lake Country
Golden Isles Parkway Association
Greater Augusta Sports Council
Historic Heartland Travel Association
Historic High Country Travel Association
Hospital Authority of Valdosta & Lowndes County
Jekyll Island Foundation
Macon Convention & Visitors Bureau
Magnolia Midlands Travel Association
Milledgeville Convention & Visitors Bureau
Museum of Arts and Sciences, Macon
Parks at Chehaw, Albany
Presidential Pathways Travel Association
Rabun County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Richmond Hill Convention & Visitors Bureau
Savannah Music Festival
Thomson-McDuffie County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Toccoa-Stephens County Chamber of Commerce
Upton County Chamber of Commerce
Vidalia Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Governor Perdue Honors Tourism Leaders at Governor's Conference on Tourism

Governor Sonny Perdue honored several of the state's most dedicated tourism professionals at the 2009 Governor's Conference on Tourism at Lake Lanier Islands Resort. The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (GACVB) and the Tourism Development Alliance of Georgia (TDAG) hosted the joint tourism industry conference from August 31 - September 2. More than 400 tourism industry professionals from around the state attended the annual conference.

- Award recipients were nominated by Georgia's tourism industry professionals. Recipients of the 2009 Tourism awards include:
- The Antebellum Trail was recognized with the Paul Broun Award for Marketing Initiatives, given in memory of Senator Paul Broun of Athens.
- Lisa Smith, Executive Director of the Greater Rome Convention & Visitors Bureau, received the Larry Allen Award for Excellence in Tourism, given in memory of the late Larry Allen, general manager of Stone Mountain.
- The Macon Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) received the Al Burris Award for Creative Expression, named after Representative Al Burris of Marietta.
- Bill Hardman, Jr., President & CEO of the Southeast Tourism Society (STS), was honored with the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award. Hardman, Jr. has worked tirelessly to promote travel and tourism in the state of Georgia since 1969.
- Georgia State Representative Larry O'Neil was awarded the Legislative Award for his outstanding support of the tourism industry during the Legislative session.
- The Tourism Champion Awards were created in 2003 to acknowledge the support and guidance given to the state's tourism industry by individuals and organizations who have taken leadership roles in developing tourism opportunities in communities across the state.

This year's private industry partner is Sean McGinnis and Emmis Publishing. The partner agency award goes to the Department of Transportation for establishing Georgia's Old Federal Highway Driving Trail, a first-class heritage tourism product. The product development award went to Martin Harmon Director of Public Relations at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

The Governor's Conference on Tourism is intended to further educate members of the tourism industry about travel and tourism related issues on a national and statewide level, reinforce existing tourism development efforts and plan for future initiatives. It offers a opportunity for discussion on the challenges and opportunities faced in a changing world, an economic forecast for the industry, current travel trends, the development of a strategic plan, methods of supplementing tourism dollars and how to develop tourism products. The 2010 Governor's Conference on Tourism will take place August 30 - September 1 in Athens, Georgia.



Governor Sonny Perdue awarded Bill Hardman, Jr., President & CEO of the Southeast Tourism Society (STS), with the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 2010, GDEcD's tourism division plans to attend 28 travel and trade shows:

- 11 international
- 7 Group Tour and Travel
- 10 Consumer



In 2009,
11,366,805 travelers visited
Georgia's 11 Visitor Information Centers.

GA's Visitor Information Centers Win International Marketing Award

Georgia's Visitor Information Centers (VICs) were honored with an international marketing award for their tourism partnership promotion program. The National Council of State Tourism Directors (NCSTD) announced the winners of the 2009 Mercury Awards program Sept. 1 at the Travel Industry Association's annual Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO). The Mercury Award honors the best in state tourism office marketing and promotion programs each year.

The Tourism Partnership Promotion Program was created to give tourism entities more opportunities to partner with the state's 11 Visitor Information Centers and market their attraction, hotel or destination to travelers stopping at the centers. The Visitor Information Specialists spent time educating

the tourism industry to get them involved in the new program. They met with the community members inviting local tourism partners including Convention and Visitors Bureaus, hotels, attractions and even non-traditional tourism businesses to get involved. Tourism partners were encouraged to take advantage of the free opportunities through the center including brochure distribution, special promotions and hotel booking.

Last year, Georgia's Visitor Information Centers were recognized with a Mercury award for their Canadian Visitor Recognition program, which introduces Canadian travelers to Georgia. In 2007, Georgia's Visitor Information Centers were recognized with a Mercury award for the Hurricane Awareness and Sister Center Network programs.

State Awards Product Development Grants

The Georgia Department of Economic Development's (GDEcD) Tourism Division has awarded tourism product development grants to 14 communities, convention & visitor bureaus, downtown development authorities and other non-profit tourism entities across the state. A total of \$103,000 was awarded. This year, the Georgia Department of Economic Development received 29 applications with grant requests totaling more than \$260,500 dollars.

Recipients of the 2010 tourism product development grants include:

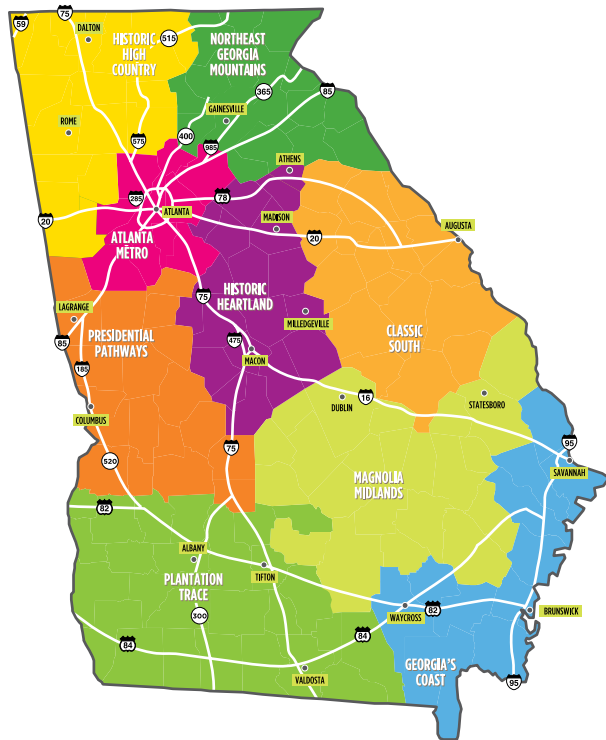
- Better Hometown of Nashville
- City of Swainsboro Downtown Development Authority
- City of Thomasville Planning Department
- Decatur Downtown Development Authority
- Downtown Development Authority of Union Point
- Hapeville Association of Tourism and Trade
- Jekyll Island State Park Authority
- Montezuma Downtown Development Authority
- North Georgia Canopy Tour
- Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.
- Rose of Athens Theatre, Inc.
- The Historic Marietta Trolley Company
- The President Theatre, Inc.
- Vidalia Convention & Visitors Bureau

ExploreGeorgia.Org Goes Mobile

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) launched a new mobile web site for people 'on-the-go.' Visitors can access ExploreGeorgia.org to explore all there is to see and do in Georgia on any mobile device. Visitors can view attractions, accommodations, restaurants, special events, coupon offers and contact information via web access on their mobile devices or through text messages. The interactive mobile Travel Guide is now available to the 2.7 billion mobile phone users in the world today. GDEcD partnered with Emmis Publishing and ITI Marketing to develop the site.



Exploring Georgia's Nine Tourism Regions



The next morning, they left for Nash Battlefield in McDonough and then went up to the Road to Tara Museum and historic tours (\$49.90) and Stateley Oaks Plantation (\$24) in Jonesboro, GA. They grabbed lunch at a quaint BBQ restaurant (\$14) before heading back towards Atlanta to the Atlanta History Center (\$30) and then over to Stone Mountain Park to tour the plantation and eat dinner and enjoy the laser show (\$48).

On Saturday morning, the Drews headed out to Marietta to visit the Scarlett on the Square Museum (\$14) and took a ride on Marietta's historic trolley tour (\$40). They stayed to have lunch on the square at Marietta Pizza Company (\$25) and then headed to the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park (\$4) and the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History (\$15). They rounded out their day with a walking tour of the historic homes in downtown Roswell and a stop for dinner in Alpharetta at Buca di Beppo (\$80) for great Italian cuisine.

After an exhausting day, they headed back to the hotel and prepare to depart Atlanta the next day. **Total expenditures for their visit was \$880.90.**

Friday, they wandered around Harlem's shops (ETC. of Harlem an artisan gallery; Lucky Lady Pecans; My Sister's Loft consignment & boutique) and had lunch at Harry O's. (\$25) In the afternoon, they snuck away to purchase the famous Chinaberry Foods cheese straws and ended up going through The Old Frontier Corn Maze both found in Thomson (cheese straws and donation for the maze - \$25). They had dinner and beverages at Rhinehart's in Evans a beyond-casual seafood restaurant for \$45.00

Saturday morning, they woke early and enjoyed breakfast at their B&B before heading out to the 21st Annual Oliver Hardy Festival. Their day included watching the Children's and Festival parades, shopping at hundreds of vendor booths lining Harlem's streets, getting their picture taken with the Laurel and Hardy Look Alikes, and eating as many funnel cakes, BBQ sandwiches, and other great delights as they could. Total festival expenditures including gifts, food and drinks--\$300.

Sunday, they enjoyed a late breakfast at The Acorn, then started their journey back to Florida. They did spend a little more money on the way home with the Georgia State Highway Patrol on US Highway 25. **Total trip expenditures including gasoline (\$75): \$1,015**

1 Atlanta Metro

We followed Megan and Rusty Drew from Cincinnati around Atlanta for two days in search of Civil War and "Gone With the Wind" attractions. Megan and Rusty decided to stay in Atlanta at night and branch out to the surrounding communities during the day. They stayed three nights and three days.

They arrived in Atlanta Thursday afternoon and headed to the Atlanta Cyclorama, a Civil War museum (\$16) and the Margaret Mitchell House (\$24). They checked into the Wyndham Garden Inn (\$410) in downtown before heading to dinner at the Hard Rock Cafe (\$52) and picking up a souvenir t-shirt and lapel pin (\$35).

2 Classic South

The Classic South was delighted to have Sharron and Roy Rioux from Clearwater, Florida as our guests in early October.

They arrived around suppertime via the newly-widened US Highway 25 on Thursday, October 1 ready for a fun-filled festival weekend. On their journey, they stopped in downtown Waynesboro to purchase their very favorite blueberry preserves and butter at the Byne Blueberry Farm. They spent \$25 and tell themselves they'll use the extra jars as gifts. Their accommodations were at the Red Oak Manor bed and breakfast in Harlem (3-night stay - \$475.00). They enjoyed dinner for two at The Acorn Restaurant in the Red Oak Manor for \$45.00



Byne Blueberry Farm, Classic South



Atlanta Metro

3 Georgia's Coast

The Johnsons begin their trip in Savannah...because they're interested in learning all they can about this beautiful city, they board an Old Town Trolley at the Savannah Visitors Center to take in all the sites, sounds and beauty of Savannah's 22 squares. After their fabulous tour, they want to try that famous coastal seafood they've heard so much about. After a short drive across the beautiful coastal marshes they arrive on Tybee Island's own Crab Shack, where "the elite eat in their bare feet." A trip out to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in nearby Pooler completes their first day of exploration on the Georgia Coast. *Expenditures for day one including overnight - \$350.00*



Tellus Museum, Historic High Country

The next morning our visitors leave Savannah, and head south on Highway 17 to visit charming small towns such as Richmond Hill, Midway, and Darien on their way to Brunswick and the Golden Isles. They take a tour of Brunswick with a local guide and hear the tales of the grandeur of Old Town Brunswick. They've been told not to miss St. Simons Island where the shopping is grand, the food is fabulous and the beach is calling their name. After a bit of shopping, they board a trolley for a tour of the island with stops at Christ Church and Fort Frederica. Dinner? Of course they head out to Blackbeard's Restaurant on Jekyll Island, one of Georgia's pristine barrier islands. Now it's time to check-in to the one of the legendary historic hotels in the Brunswick and the Golden Isles area. *Expenditures for day two including overnight - \$500.00*

After a good night's rest our visitors head to the Okefenokee Swamp to take an Eco-tour by boat to see several varieties of plants and animals, including alligators, lichens, hundreds of bird species and many other wild things that call the Okefenokee Swamp home. Sadly their trip to the Georgia Coast must come to an end, but not before they enjoy a delightful lunch in one of the many local restaurants in the Coastal Region. Since there is so much to see and do along Georgia's Coast our visits were only able to see a tiny portion of all there is to see, they know that they will be back to explore again...and soon! *Expenditures for day three - \$155.00*

Total expenditures for three days and two nights for a family of two: \$1,005.00

4 Historic High Country

The Smiths, a family of four, enter Georgia on I-75 in Ringgold, and after stopping at the Georgia Visitor Information Center, decide to make their next stop the tasting room of Georgia's first farm winery, The Georgia Winery, (\$30). After a tour of the Chickamauga National Military Park and lunch in historic downtown Chickamauga (\$25), they make their way to Dalton to visit the historic Western and Atlantic Railroad Tunnel (\$10), purchase a souvenir (\$15), then dinner at the historic Dalton Depot Restaurant (\$50) before turning in for the night (\$90).

In the morning, after a quick stop for fuel (\$35), the Smiths are on their way via the Appalachian Foothills Parkway to Ellijay and Blue Ridge for a train ride on the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway (\$80) with a lunch stop in McCaysville. (\$25) Back from the train ride, the Smiths are ready for a relaxing break, so they pick up dinner to go (\$20), and then check-in to their cabin rental. (\$150) Dad and Mom sit on the deck watching the sun set over the mountains while the kids discover the games and videos provided by the owners.

Ready for a hearty breakfast the next morning, the Smiths find a local eatery where they fill up on good home-style cooking to start their day with energy! (\$25) Now on to Tellus: Northwest Georgia Science Museum in Cartersville for day of discovery, including lunch at the indoor café (\$70), but not before a stop at another one of northwest Georgia's wineries, Sharp Mountain Vineyard where they take home another reminder of Georgia's fruit on the vine (\$30).

With an easy overnight (\$90) and lots of dinner choices (\$60) in Cartersville, the Smiths stay over, watching the sunset on Lake Allatoona, thinking maybe next time they'll rent a houseboat for their lodging.

Up early the next morning, the family takes off for Rome, wanting to tour Oak Hill and Martha Berry Museum (\$16) before heading home. Dad likes the history, Mom loves the gardens, and the kids are excited to learn that the site was also one of the film locations for the movie "Sweet Home Alabama!" One last fill-up on a tank of gas (\$40) and the Smiths head for home with lasting memories and souvenirs in tow, all the while making plans for their next visit.

5 Historic Heartland

There is a lot to see and do in Georgia's historic heartland travel region. We followed two tourists for the day to see how they spent their time and money and what kind of economic impact they left on our area. Here is a synopsis of their day in the Heartland. They spent \$491 during their stay in the area.

Pierre and Gabrielle are here on holiday from the U.K. They are traveling throughout the state of Georgia as well as some other southeastern states. They travel east from Atlanta and begin their journey in Madison. They check into the Farmhouse Inn for two nights and will spoke out to surrounding cities (\$150 per night). They want to concentrate on

Please turn to page 6...



Georgia's Coast

antebellum history so they tour Heritage Hall (\$10) and the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center (\$6). After spending the morning in Madison, they head down Hwy 441 to visit the Uncle Remus Museum (\$2) in Eatonton because Pierre remembers hearing these stories as a child. They set off down the road to Milledgeville for a late lunch in downtown at Aubri Lane's (\$17) and tour the Old Governor's Mansion (\$20) as well as Andalusia, home of author Flannery O'Connor. After their packed day, they head back to Madison to stroll around downtown...Gabrielle picks up a Christmas dress for their little girl (\$25) and they eat a light dinner at Madison Chop House Grill (\$28).

Arising early the next morning, Pierre and Gabrielle head north to Watkinsville. First stop Eagle Tavern Welcome Center to gather information on the wonderful artists and potters in the area. They also pick up a piece of local pottery for Pierre's mother (\$35). Then it's on to Athens where they understand their first stop must be at the Athens Welcome Center to board the Classic City Tours bus (\$30). After a wonderful tour of historic Athens, they discover a local hotspot farm255 (\$18) for lunch before getting back on the road to continue their journey through Georgia!

6 Presidential Pathways

From the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter the Presidential Pathways region has a rich history. Here is the story of three different families who journeyed through the region and how much economic impact they had on our communities.

The Finchers enjoy the outdoors and wanted to share some educational experiences with their children. They started their day with a rim walk at Providence Canyon, followed by a horseback ride at Roosevelt State Park and finished off the day canoeing down the Flint River and pitching a



Providence Canyon State Park, Presidential Pathways



Historic Heartland

tent for the night at Sprewell Bluff State Park. **The Finchers spent nearly \$400 in the region between preparing for the day's events and their activities.**

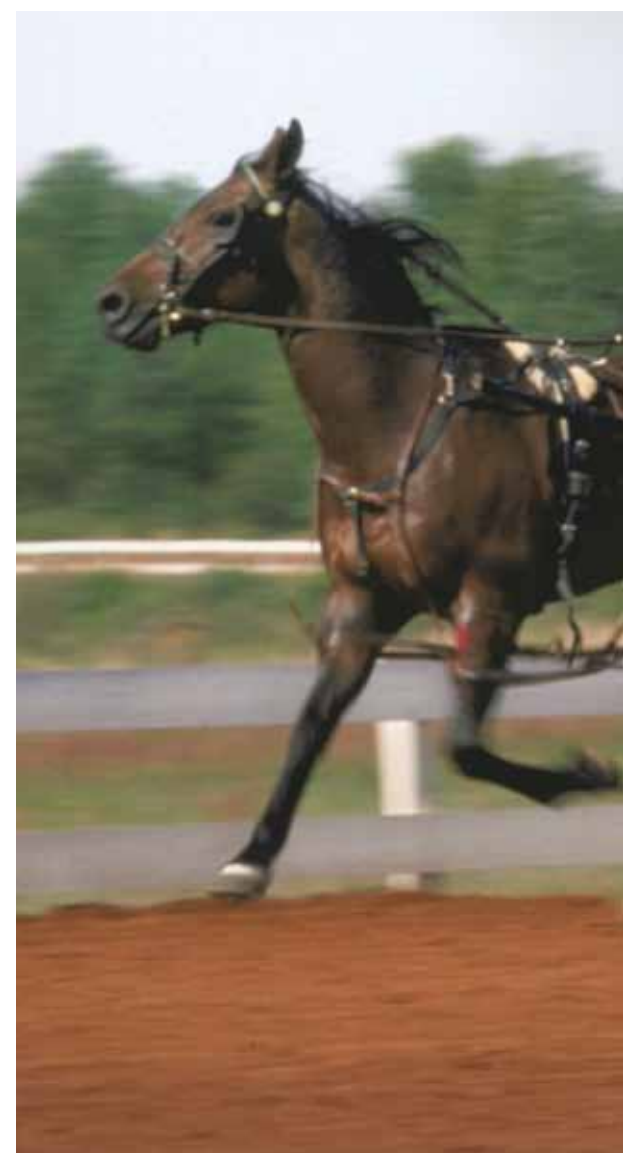
The Martins had plans to holiday at Callaway Gardens and visit the neighboring towns. They enjoyed a father-son round of golf and lunch at the Gardens Restaurant. Mother and daughter spent their time checking out the near-by Cotton Pickin' Fair and lunching in downtown Pine Mountain. Other weekend activities included spa treatments and matching golf apparel. **The Martin's weekend excursion totaled nearly \$1,000.**

Retirees **Cal and Camille Cunningham** are traveling through Georgia. They started their journey at the Little White House, broke for lunch in Uptown Columbus, and spent the afternoon at the new National Infantry Museum. After checking in at an historic district B&B, they spent the evening at the Springer Opera House. On the second day of their journey, Cal and Camille traveled US Highway 27 to Lumpkin for a tour of Historic Westville and then on

to Americus for the afternoon to see the Habitat for Humanity headquarters, check-in at the Windsor and enjoy the Rylander Theater. They **spent \$625 on attractions and lodging...**no telling how much they spent on gas and gifts for the grandchildren!

To learn more about the Presidential Pathways region we encourage you to visit www.Presidentialpathways.com. We're certain you will find something special to do.

Lawrence Bennett Harness Horse Racing Facility, Magnolia Midlands





7 Magnolia Midlands

The 23 counties of Georgia's Magnolia Midlands are filled with natural and historic attractions to fit the tastes of every visitor! Tourists can see Mother Nature in full bloom at Metter's Guido Gardens, enjoy fishing at its finest on the banks of the Altamaha River in Baxley, or visit the world record largemouth bass at Jacksonville's Montgomery Lake. Accommodations at the many quaint hotels, motels, and B&Bs in the region average less than \$100 a night.

Many Magnolia Midlands visitors choose our region to experience nature at her most grand. They enjoy standing in awe in front of Coffee County's Broxton Rocks, fishing in Jesup's famous Catfish Tournament, or hunting at Bullard Creek Wildlife Management Area in Hazlehurst. Individuals looking for family fun enjoy visiting the Annual Sweet Potato Parade in Ocilla, cheering the horses on at Hawkinsville's Lawrence Bennett Harness Horse Racing Facility, and enjoying blueberry pancakes at Alma's Blueberry Festival. Most attractions in the Magnolia Midlands charge less than \$10 per visitor, making it a great place to get a "bang for your buck."

Foodies are in luck in the Magnolia Midlands. Some of the world's best produce can be purchased at the road-side stands in Tattnall County or at Dublin's downtown Farmer's Market. Families can even pick their own berries at Eastman's Tom Sawyer Farm. Fruitcake fans will enjoy visiting the home of the famous Claxton Fruitcake or sipping wine straight from the vine at Statesboro's Meinhardt Vineyards and Sylvania's Shannon Vineyards.

The economic impact of a day traveler in rural South Georgia is more than \$50 day, or \$150 for an overnight guest. Tourism has an estimated economic impact of more than \$800 million annually in the Magnolia Midlands region.

8 NE Georgia Mountains

Visitors to the Northeast Georgia Mountains find themselves coming back often for new adventures. We wanted to find out what economic impact they had on our region so we followed a couple of travelers for a few of days to see how they spent their time and money. During their 2-day, 2-night trip Mark and Beverly spent \$1040.

Mark and Beverly are active empty-nesters who enjoy the outdoors and the arts. Their most recent trip to Northeast Georgia was a long weekend getaway. They headed up GA 400, Georgia's Hospitality Highway, stopped at the North Georgia Premium Outlets and did a little shopping at the Bose and Oakley stores (\$350) then headed to Dahlonega for an overnight stay, dinner and a performance at the Holly Theater (\$200). After a Smith House breakfast, they visited several wineries in the area and bought a few bottles to enjoy when they got home (\$125). On their way to Helen, they stopped at the new Babyland General Hospital and bought some clothes and other items for their granddaughter (\$65). They toured downtown Helen before heading to Sautee to spend the night (\$100). Once they finished their breakfast at Unicoi State Park, they hiked up to Anna Ruby Falls and did a little mountain biking with Woody (\$75).

On their way home, they bought gas and then stopped by Jaemor Farms for some fresh fruits, vegetables, fried pies and peach ice cream (\$35). They ended their weekend with a romantic dinner at Scott's on the Square in Gainesville (\$90).

9 Plantation Trace

Get off the highway and into the countryside, where the land spreads out and the roads roll into small towns, each of which offers its own unique charms and intriguing history. We followed Kate and Matt, a retired couple from Indiana making their way back north for the summer. They spent three days and three nights in Plantation Trace and spent \$671 during their time here.

Kate and Matt started their journey with a night in Valdosta (\$84). The next morning, they headed to Wild Adventures (\$90) where they spent the morning experiencing the thrill of the rides at the region's only theme park. From there, they went to Thomasville where they had lunch downtown at Jonah's Fish and Grits (\$20) before taking the grounds and house tour at Pebble Hill Plantation (\$30). Then, they headed to Sweet Grass Dairy to see goats being milked and cheese being made (\$10). They also bought some cheese while they were there (\$16.50). After filling up their tank with gas (\$40), Kate and Matt headed to Colquitt to stay the night at the Tarrer Inn (\$84), eat a true Southern meal (\$25) and experience Swamp Gravy (\$44).

The next morning, Matt and Kate visited Albany's wild animal zoo, the Parks at Chehaw (\$16.50), had lunch at Hubbles (\$18) and then visited the Flint RiverQuarium (\$18). From there, they made their way to Tifton for their last night's stay in the region (\$75). In the morning, they visited the Agrirama (\$14), where they toured and purchased some jams and jelly from the Country Store (\$18). After lunch at the Pit Stop BBQ (\$25), they made their way to Fitzgerald to visit the Blue and Grey Museum (\$3) before once again getting gas (\$40) and then heading home. They were both so excited about their experiences in Southwest Georgia, and didn't have time to do it all! There's so much more for them to see and do, so they'll have to make a return trip to Plantation Trace.

Content provided by Regional Travel Associations.



A Letter from TDAG and GACVB



TOURISM: PART OF THE SOLUTION

Tourism annually generates more than \$20.8 billion in direct expenditures, which support 241,500 jobs and contribute \$1.557 billion to state and local tax revenue in direct revenues. Total economic impact including direct, indirect and induced was \$34.8 billion according to a comprehensive study conducted by the Research Department of the U.S. Travel Association for the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDECd).

From 1998 to 2007, Georgia has experienced a 52.9% increase in tourist expenditures from \$13.6 to \$20.8 billion. (GDECd - Report on Georgia) "Tourism is an economic engine that Georgia can count on," said Lisa Smith, President of the Georgia

HOTEL TAX

In 1977, the Atlanta hoteliers asked the General Assembly to enact an excise tax on hotel rooms to fund the tourism marketing efforts of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau and to allow other local governments to create similar marketing efforts. Due to a lack of education and enforcement, these tax dollars have often not been allocated to appropriate tourism promotion efforts.

TDAG supports the development of a uniform and unambiguous hotel/motel tax code to ensure appropriate funding of tourism promotion in local communities which provides for a stronger grandfather clause and further clarification of what is destination marketing.

FAMILIES FOR A REAL SUMMER

The Georgia Department of Education has determined that K-12 public schools in Georgia could improve student test score reporting by voluntarily beginning their academic year no sooner than the third week of August. A survey also found the vast majority of Georgians would prefer the academic year to begin no sooner than the third week of August. In addition, the benefits to Georgia taxpayers, governments and businesses include:

- a boost to Georgia's economy. A 2007 study found the economy in Kentucky suffered a significant loss in tourism revenue due to early August public school start dates
- reduced school operating costs since air conditioning expenses are the year's second-highest during the month of August, and 65% higher than September
- reduced school and workforce absenteeism, as demonstrated in Texas in 2002 - a 60% reduction in school absenteeism when the calendar start date moved from early August to the third week of August.

"Tourism is an economic engine that Georgia can count on."

Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus. "Our diverse landscape, recreational, cultural, heritage and artistic offerings provide an abundance of activities for travelers to indulge their travel time and dollars."

At this very moment our competing states are giving our key customers many good reasons to travel to Florida or South Carolina instead of Georgia. It costs five times more to get a new customer than to keep one, it makes sense to protect our key customers. On top of that battle, we have to constantly fight for new customers against our aggressive competitors. Our brand and market presence determine how we will be perceived, ranked and chosen in the market. How often and effectively we present a better image will determine our market presence, and our success.

Georgia ad recallers are twice as likely to go to Georgia than non-recallers. However, the Southeastern states that directly compete with Georgia invest 40% to 400% more in state funded advertising and promotion than Georgia. We are in danger of losing market share and sales tax revenues to other states.

We thank you, the leaders of our state who have recognized the contribution of travel and tourism to the state, and today tourism leaders from across the state are at the Capitol to showcase our tourism assets and thank elected officials for their support of the tourism industry. However, much remains to be done in order to preserve this vital revenue stream to the state and enhance our position within the Southeast, the U.S. and the World in order to bring more investment and visitors to Georgia.

With that in mind, the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau (GACVB) and the Tourism Development Alliance of Georgia (TDAG) are asking state legislators to address three key issues in 2010:



TOURISM MARKETING

Tourism is the most important industry in Georgia, and the state has the number 8 tourism economy in the country, with a total annual impact of \$34 billion. Yet every Southeastern state that directly competes with Georgia invests 40% to 400% more than Georgia in state-funded advertising and promotion. Many states are also making significant new investments in these areas that will likely result in a relative loss of tourism revenue, tax revenue and/or market share for Georgia. However, studies project that an additional \$12 million investment in Georgia tourism could generate up to \$1 billion in additional revenue for Georgia to maintain and grow the state's competitive position.

TDAG supports an increase in state funding, from \$3 million to \$15 million, to advertise market and promote Georgia as a tourist destination.

TDAG supports the creation and funding of a cabinet-level position in state government dedicated to the marketing and development of Georgia tourism.

TDAG supports efforts to encourage a coordinated statewide public school start date.

"At this critical juncture in our state's economic history, tourism should be viewed by the General Assembly, the Governor's office and the residents of this great State as a key component of our economic development and long-term revenue generation strategy," says Sean McGinnis, Chairman of the Tourism Development Alliance of Georgia. He further states, "Our enlightened General Assembly is recognizing the impressive tourism marketing return on investment and is encouraged to protect funding at the local level for tourism promotion and to fund the state's tourism marketing budget at a level that will make Georgia more competitive with its neighboring states' spending, thus increasing tax revenues for our state and tax savings for all Georgians."



Sean McGinnis



Lisa Smith

Provided by Sean McGinnis, Chairman of the Tourism Development Alliance of Georgia and Lisa Smith, President of the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus.