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**News from Georgia Tourism:**

- **The 2009- 2010 Co-Op Marketing Program deadline will be extended until July 31, 2009.** Budgets are not set in stone until the legislative session convenes- which is not slated to be in late June due to the stimulus package and what money it may bring to the State of Georgia. Therefore the deadline for applications has been extended to give you all time to prepare your application once the final budget is announced.
- **GA Made GA Grown Products Web Registry** - The web registry is available for the Creative Economies businesses to register for free. Go to [www.gamadegagrown.org](http://www.gamadegagrown.org) and enter your information and please encourage others that you know to register as well. To learn more about the Creative Economies initiative can be found at [www.georgia.org/foundation](http://www.georgia.org/foundation) Website sponsorships are still available and if you are interested contact Gilda Watters at [gwatters@georgia.org](mailto:gwatters@georgia.org)
- **Save the Date for the 2009 Techno Tourism Conference** – The Techno Tourism Conference has been moved to the Chattahoochee Technical College in Marietta. The dates remain April 20 and 21. Hotel recommendations will follow shortly. Because the grant process is on hold, the requirement for attendance in order to receive funding is waived. However, the sessions will be filled with knowledge that can help to move Georgia tourism forward. The conference will focus on social networking tools, campaigns and demonstrations showcasing applications on a PC.
- **The [www.ExploreGeorgia.org](http://www.ExploreGeorgia.org) photo contest kicked off January 1<sup>st</sup>!** The contest is open to only U.S. citizens and must be at least 18 years old. Once photos are submitted, the GDEcD will have full usage rights of photographs. There will be one winner each month through October 2009 and winners will be chosen by an internal judging panel. Each winner will receive a new GPS system and will be featured in the 2010 Georgia Travel Guide. This is a contest that can excite everyone including those visiting the state!
- **GDEcD's Monthly Research Newsletter** is available at [www.marketgeorgia.org](http://www.marketgeorgia.org) in the industry research section. The report features a variety of Georgia and national travel indicators. In addition, the tourism division recently acquired the contents of **Georgia Tech's Tourism Research Library**. The books and journals are currently being organized and sorted by our research team. The files will be available at no cost to industry partners through your regional tourism representative.
- **The Georgia Visitor Center on I-20** in Augusta has a free marketing opportunity for all hotels/motels and B&B's. Promote your accommodations on any Friday from 2:00pm-4:00pm at the Georgia Visitor Center on I-20 in Augusta. This is a free opportunity- all you have to do is call the Visitor Center at 706.737.1447 or email them at [Augusta@georgia.org](mailto:Augusta@georgia.org)
- I sent out the **Regional VIC Renewal** information to the current RVIC's. Tiffany Marlin from the Atlanta office of GDEcD included the renewal application, a copy of the criteria,

a training verification sheet, a visitation log for 2008, and a visitation log for 2009. If you are interested in any of this, you can also find PDF versions of these documents on [www.marketgeorgia.org](http://www.marketgeorgia.org)

- **MAKE YOUR EXPLOREGEORGIA.ORG LISTING STAND OUT**

This month, we've changed the way that search results are displayed on **ExploreGeorgia.org**. Starting January 30, we're now taking into account listing quality when ranking search results. This new "**Most Relevant**" search ranking provides site visitors with a great user experience, and it also lets you have some control in how highly your listing ranks in search results! We've provided some tips for making your **ExploreGeorgia.org** listing stand out: Taking these simple steps will help your listing get more exposure and marketing to the more than 40,000 people that visit **exploregeorgia.org** each month.

**Upload a Logo/Default Photo:** There's nothing more important to the quality of your listing than having your logo (or a small photo) uploaded to represent your listing. These images appear on the search result page and help site visitors identify your listing and entice them to learn more.

**Upload More Photos:** Now that we've updated the photo gallery page for your listings, it's more important than ever to upload photos of your listing. The more photos you upload, the more opportunities you have to market your attraction/lodging to site visitors.

**Have a Great Summary and Description:** Your summary gives visitors a quick snapshot of your listing, and should be written to make you stand out in the crowd. You only have 300 characters, so make your words count. Point out a couple of exciting features of your listing. The description is your chance to really market your listing. Take this chance to tell visitors about all of the great features that make your attraction or lodging unique!

- **Vacation/Overnight Packages** – The Tourism Division is collecting lodging and attractions packages to use in promoting Georgia. I have pulled a few packages from your websites but if you have any packages please make sure that I have them- you can send to me at [jbuttrum@georgia.org](mailto:jbuttrum@georgia.org) Packages need to include lodging and at least one attraction (meals optional.)

### **Regional News:**

- **The Classic South Travel Association's** May meeting will be held in Lincolnton on May 26, 2009. Katie Baasen from the GDEcD will be our guest speaker and will talk about the Georgia Group Tour Marketing Program and representatives from Gainesville will also be at the meeting to give us information about the 2009 Georgia Governor's Conference on Tourism.
- A nine page article featuring several **Augusta restaurants will appear in the March/April issue of *Cooking with Paula Deen Magazine***. The article is the result of a media trip coordinated a year ago by the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB). The issue will be on newsstands March 3rd.
- **Waynesboro** has recently been designated as a Georgia Main Street City by the Ga. Department of Community Affairs! Congratulations to everyone in Waynesboro!
- **The Outdoor Channel recently visited Flat Creek Lodge in Swainsboro** and taped an outdoor show that was aired during early February on Outfitters TV – bringing Swainsboro into living rooms across the country, and bringing the country into Flat Creek Lodge – virtually.
- The American Automobile Association (AAA) has once again awarded **The Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation its prestigious symbol of excellence, the Five Diamond, for 2009.**

- Whether they are local residents or visitors from afar, tourists in McDuffie County now have access to a tour guide 24 hours, seven days a week. **The Thomson-McDuffie Convention and Visitors Bureau just released three audio driving tours** of the county that can be accessed and heard by cell phone, downloaded onto an iPod or mp3 player, or listened to on the internet. Go to [www.exploremcduffiecounty.com](http://www.exploremcduffiecounty.com) for more information.

### **Grant Opportunities:**

- **USDA and Museum Funding** - Funding is available through USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities Program if the museum is located in a rural area and owned by a non-profit or public body. Grant funds are only available for the purchase of equipment. Loan funds are at very good terms, currently around 4.75% for a maximum of 40 years, for the purchase of real estate, construction, renovation, higher cost equipment, etc. Go to [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/) for more information.
- The grant information for historic cemetery preservation is now posted on [www.MarketGeorgia.org](http://www.MarketGeorgia.org) under "grants". Several of you attended the Historic Cemeteries Conference that was held in Washington a few months ago where they mentioned this grant and if you have a historic cemetery in your community you might be interested in looking at the grant and applying.

### **Mark Your Calendars:**

<b>Mar 15-22, 2009</b>	<b>Ag Week at the GA Visitor Information Centers</b>
<b>March 24, 2009</b>	<b>Classic South Travel Association Meeting- Waynesboro</b>
<b>April 10, 2009</b>	<b>STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for Oct.- Dec. 2009. Go to:<a href="http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html">http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html</a>.</b>
<b>Apr 20-21, 2009</b>	<b>Techno Tourism Conference, Athens</b>
<b>May 26, 2009</b>	<b>Classic South Travel Association Meeting- Lincolnton</b>
<b>July 26-31, 2009</b>	<b>STS Marketing College- Dahlonaga-North Georgia College</b>
<b>Aug 31–Sept 2, 2009</b>	<b>Georgia Governor's Conference on Tourism- Lake Lanier Islands</b>

### **2009 Georgia On My Mind Days at the State Visitor Centers:**

<b>March 27<sup>th</sup> – Columbus-</b>	<b><a href="mailto:Columbus@georgia.org">Columbus@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Valdosta-</b>	<b><a href="mailto:Valdosta@georgia.org">Valdosta@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>April 16<sup>th</sup> – Sylvania</b>	<b><a href="mailto:Sylvania@georgia.org">Sylvania@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>May 9<sup>th</sup> – Plains</b>	<b><a href="mailto:plains@georgia.org">plains@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>May 15<sup>th</sup> – Kingsland</b>	<b><a href="mailto:kingsland@georgia.org">kingsland@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Lavonia</b>	<b><a href="mailto:lavonia@georgia.org">lavonia@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>May 29<sup>th</sup> – Savannah</b>	<b><a href="mailto:savannah@georgia.org">savannah@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>June 5<sup>th</sup> – Tallapoosa</b>	<b><a href="mailto:Tallapoosa@georgia.org">Tallapoosa@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>June 19<sup>th</sup> – Ringgold</b>	<b><a href="mailto:ringgold@georgia.org">ringgold@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>July 17<sup>th</sup> – Augusta</b>	<b><a href="mailto:augusta@georgia.org">augusta@georgia.org</a></b>
<b>July 31<sup>st</sup> – West Point</b>	<b><a href="mailto:westpoint@georgia.org">westpoint@georgia.org</a></b>

