



REGIONAL TOURISM REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

January-February 2009

GEORGIA TOURISM DIVISION UPDATE

REGIONAL TOURISM REP PROGRAM

- **Current & Previous Monthly Reports:** You can read previous reports by going to www.marketgeorgia.org and clicking on Monthly Regional Reports and clicking on Northeast Georgia Mountains.
- **Farmer's Markets:** I'm working on updating a list of Farmer's Markets in the region. I'll be happy to send you my list to see if there are any missing.
- **Conference and Meeting Facilities:** I'm working on creating a comprehensive list on this topic. If you would like to send me info on your conference or meeting facility, please send it in the following format:
 - **Name of Facility**
 - **Address**
 - **Phone Number**
 - **Contact & Email Address**
 - **Website**
 - **Short paragraph description of conference & meeting facilities**

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

- **GDEcd Press Releases** (These are statewide tourism press releases sent to the media in hopes of generating stories)
 - **Georgia's Unique Driving Trails** reveal rich heritage and boundless adventure
 - **Georgia's Romantic Getaways** *Intimate hidden gems scattered all over the state*
 - **State launches ground-breaking economic development platform for creative industry**
 - **Georgia's Spring Flings** *Spring break ideas for families*
- **PeachBytes** (Georgia Tourism Industry Newsletter): A monthly update to Georgia's tourism industry. To view past newsletters or to sign up, go to <http://web.georgia.org/core/item/page.aspx?s=244185.0.26.3011>
- **Facebook – Georgia Explorer:** We have launched our foray into social media with Georgia Explorers, a Facebook group dedicated to promoting Georgia tourism. The Georgia Explorers group gives us a forum for promoting Georgia while providing visitors, our friends and acquaintances with useful, interesting content – where to go and when, special offers, reviews, upcoming events, interesting stories about Georgia tourism, pictures, videos, etc... Keeping this content fresh and useful to group members is what will keep them coming back to visit the site, and that is what will make Georgia Explorers a practical tool for our division. Fresh, useful content is also what will drive the growth of the group. You must have a Facebook account to join and use Georgia Explorers. Let me know if you need instructions which will walk you through the basic steps of setting up a Facebook account, how to join Georgia Explorers and navigating around its different options and offerings. Mark, our trusty intern, has nearly tripled the number of members on Georgia Explorers since he began this project several months ago. Mark is constantly updating the

content and images in an effort to keep our members engaged. Mark even created a Georgia quiz to encourage interaction among the group!

- **Media Lead:** Linda Erbele is now writing a blog called www.TheAtlantaTraveler.com. Recently she wrote about the www.GAMadeGAGrownProducts.org website www.theatlantatraveler.com/treasures-along-georgias-backroads/. Please send any tourism news her way email@lindaerbele.com. Any publicity you can get my site would be great. www.theAtlantaTraveler.com & www.LindaErbele.com.

GEORGIA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER & REGIONAL VIC PROGRAMS

- **Georgia On My Mind Days**
 - **Columbus VIC:** Join us for our annual **"GEORGIA ON MY MIND DAY" FRIDAY MARCH 27, 2009 from 11AM-3PM**. The Georgia Visitor Center in Columbus will host our annual event in spring 2009. We're looking forward to an earlier date to encourage plans for spring break, weekend getaways and summer vacations! **SAVE THE DATE!** Plan to attend then let us know for media coverage. Please remember to bring your own tent, table, tablecloth and chairs. Thanks for attending previous GOMM days and we're looking forward to another great GOMM day in early 2009! Georgia Visitor Center, I-185 and Exit 12, 1751 Williams Rd. Columbus, GA 31904. Rita, Peggy & Karen Phone 706-649-7455 rhughes@georgia.org Columbus@georgia.org
 - **Valdosta VIC:** Food, Fun and Georgia On My Mind! Please Join Us For Georgia On My Mind Day At The Georgia Visitor Center I-75 In Lake Park, Georgia April 3rd, 2009 From 10:00 A.M. Until 2:00 P.M. (Or Stay As Long As You Like!). This is a great opportunity to showcase your Georgia attraction, hotel or event. We will not be able to provide tents this year so if you have a tent you may want to bring it. All vendors will be set up outside. You will need to provide your own table for this event. If you plan to attend Georgia On My Mind Day, please Contact: Cathy Sasnett at the Georgia Visitors Center, Lake Park: Phone: 229-559-5828. Email: Csasnett@Georgia.org.
 - **Lavonia VIC:** FUN, FOOD AND GEORGIA ON MY MIND! Please join us for Georgia on My Mind Day at the Georgia Visitor Information Center, I-85 South, Lavonia on May 22, 2009 from 8:30am to 5:30pm. This is a great opportunity to showcase you Georgia attraction, Hotel or Event. You will need to provide your own table and no selling is allowed. If you can join us please contact: Shirley Crawford Georgia Visitors Information Center Phone: (706) 356-4019 Email: scrawford@georgia.org
- **GTG Delivery to Regional VICs:** As of Saturday, January 31st, delivery's of our Georgia Travel Guide were made to all the Regional VICs who had made a request. Plans are to delivery the GTGs once a quarter to the RVICs. Tiffany Marlin or Penny will email each RVIC an order form at the beginning of each quarter. Please keep in mind that you will need to order enough to last you from one quarter to the next.

When you get the form, please fill it out and email it back to Penny. If you do not need to order we still need for you to send the order form back marked NONE. **PLEASE, don't forget to put your Centers name in the space that is provided on the order form.** If you have any questions please contact Penny Smith at 229-824-7477 and pesmith@georgia.org.

SALES & MARKETING PROGRAM

- **Group Travel Leader Leads** – I've sent these out to folks on my Group Leads list. If you would like a copy, just let me know.
- You can now find monthly reports from GDEcD's international representatives in the **UK** and **Germany** on www.MarketGeorgia.org in the monthly regional reports section.
- The 2009 **Tennessee Motorcoach Operators Association** Convention and Marketplace will be held in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee at the Music Road Hotel and Convention Center February 1-5, 2009. GDEcD will attend this meeting and take business appointments with TN tour operators and charter bus services.

TOURISM FOUNDATION & RESEARCH

- More than 800 Georgia-based artisans, theaters, crafters, agritourism venues, festival planners and others are registered on www.gamadegagrown.org. The **Creative Economies** website was created to market and promote **Georgia Made Georgia Grown Products** connecting buyers and sellers, corporations and corporate suppliers, locals and visitors to Georgia's creative small businesses. Visit www.gamadegagrown.org to find one-of-a-kind gifts that are **Georgia Made Georgia Grown**. **Techno-Tourism Conference**: Please advise your regions that due to budget constraints, the Techno Tourism Conference has been moved to 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.
- **TIA Report 2007 E.I. Report** – AVERAGE \$78 **Leisure** travelers spend per day vs. Business is \$175
 - Leisure overnight - broken down into **domestic** overnight - \$109 TIA Economic 2007 E.I. Report
 - Leisure day – broken down into **Domestic day trippers** -\$50 TIA Economic 2007 E.I. Report
 - Motorcoach overnight - **ABA - American Bus Association - average 1 night stay equals \$12,000**
Individual overnight expenditures range from \$108.33; \$162; \$183; \$149
Motorcoach day – day expenditures range from \$65.70; \$63.31; \$62; \$74.34
 - Meetings/Conventions – day TIA Report puts average business trip spending at \$493 but this report is from 2004.. if you look at the business traveler vs. Leisure traveler- 2007 EI Report Business travelers average \$175 per day in spending
 - Sports – overnight \$213 Atlanta Sports Council
 - Sports – day \$154 Atlanta Sports Council
 - Weddings – average wedding in 2008 had 175 wedding guests (wedding report.com) I would use average overnight \$109 expenditures times the average
 - Reunions – \$219 – Alpharetta CVB
 - Trade show – Do not think this is broken out from Conventions
 - Trade show – day
- **Grant Programs**
 - Grant Applicants and Potential Recipients: Regrettably, The Tourism Division must inform you that our TPD 2009 grant money has been suspended in the proposed budget that has been sent to the Legislature. The final outcome will not be known until after the General Assembly session is over. However, due to significant reductions in incoming State revenue, the outlook is not favorable. You will find a copy of the notification letter to be mailed to each of our applicants attached to this email. Hopefully, sometime in the future the funding for our TPD grants will be restored. The proposed 2010 budget does not include funding for our matching TPD grants. However, because we don't know what the final budget situation might be with the new fiscal year there is the slight possibility of some funding set aside. I know it is disappointing to all of you who applied because we had so many worthy projects, however, we will make every effort to assist with technical assistance where possible.
- **GDEcD's Monthly Research Newsletter** is available at 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. More information will be available shortly.

PUBLICATIONS & WEBSITES PROGRAM

- www.ExploreGeorgia.org
 - Make sure you are updating your information on the state's official tourism website. If you need assistance with how to register or navigate the partner admin pages, please contact me.

- Website Improvements/Enhancements: Basically, instead of those listings that were last updated coming up first, the most complete ones will now come up first. So it is more important than ever that our tourism partners add better descriptive summaries, more photos, etc. Also...
 - 1) Winter Landing Page (new callout is on the home page)
 - 2) Deny Listing Ability for Reps
 - 3) Updated Travel Tips page with VICS information
 - 4) Partner admin one sheet is now on the partner admin sign in page
 - 5) Upon listing creation, users must now include the following:
 - a. Logo and/or image for search results
 - b. Summary
 - c. Description
- Make your www.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:

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!

Callaway Gardens does a great job of this:

Callaway Gardens - Enjoy this 13,000-acre award-winning resort and gardens with butterflies and raptors in flight, golf, fishing, dining, lodging, spa, trails, exhibits and workshops.

Taking these simple steps will help your listing stand out (and show up higher in search results), and that means more exposure and marketing for your listing to the more than 40,000 people that visit exploregeorgia.org each month.

- www.GAMadeGAGrownProducts.org – Make sure you submit a listing, if you meet the criteria, for this website. It is part of GDEcD's Creative Economies Initiative. Contact me if you have questions or need help.

MEDIA REQUESTS, GRANTS, WORKSHOPS, ETC

GRANTS

- Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel magazine invites you to nominate **America's Coolest Small Towns** at www.budgettravel.com/bt-srv/coolestsmalltowns/?wpisrc=newsletter. The town must have a population under 10,000 and on the upswing. Voting begins February 2. Let's get one of our wonderful small towns in Northeast Georgia nominated! Spread the word!
- The Save Our History Grant Program provides funding to history organizations that partner with schools on a local community preservation project. Since launching the Save Our History Grant

Program in 2004, History, formerly known as The History Channel, has awarded over \$1 Million Dollars in grants to organizations and schools large and small, urban, suburban and rural, in the northern, southern, eastern, western and central United States. During the 2009/2010 school year, History will again award grants of up to \$10,000 to historical organizations to fund hands-on, experiential educational projects that teach students about their local history and actively engage them in its preservation. For guidelines and criteria, important dates, and to apply, please visit <http://www.history.com/content/saveourhistory/grant-program>. Applications are due June 5, 2009. Any questions can be directed to info@saveourhistory.com.

- **Coming Soon: Cemetery Grant Program, Round 2:** Applications for Round 2 of the Historic Cemetery Heritage Tourism Grant Program, funded in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, will soon be available on HPD's Web site at <http://www.gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=426>. If you submitted an application for Round 1 and your project was not funded, please contact Carole Moore (if you have not already done so) if you wish to be considered in Round 2.

The purpose of the grant program is to assist local communities in promoting their historic cemeteries through heritage tourism. Eligible projects include research and documentation; interpretation and public information; advertising and marketing; or workshops and training. "Bricks and mortar" projects are not eligible for this program. The reimbursable grant funds are 50% state/50% local match and will be awarded on a competitive basis. The maximum grant award will be \$2,500; however, there is no minimum amount, and HPD encourages applications for small projects. We anticipate that the deadline to submit applications will be mid-March with grant awards being announced in late April/early May 2009.

Watch this newsletter for the formal announcement of this program. For more information, please call or e-mail Grants Coordinator Carole Moore at 404-463-8434 or carole.moore@dnr.state.ga.us.

- **The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) has received word that the proposed stimulus package may include funding for a matching grant program (probably 60% federal/40% recipient) for development/brick and mortar projects.** Eligible applicants would be local governments and nonprofits. All properties must be listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or be a contributing property in a National Register Historic District. Funding would come through the National Park Service to the State Historic Preservation Offices.

If this funding is received, everything will be on a fast track. The goal is to put people to work, so the intent is to have these projects underway very quickly. A possible timeline goes something like this:

- Thirty days after the bill is signed into law, the National Park Service sends funds to the states.
- HPD will then have thirty to sixty days to award projects and obligate funds.
- Grant recipients will have sixty days to start construction.

Since all of this is still a possibility and not yet a reality, there are many unanswered questions, but we have to be able to move quickly if Georgia receives an allocation. We plan to use, as closely as possible, the application and criteria already established through the Georgia Heritage Grant program. This information is on HPD's Web site at

www.gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=38. If you know of a potential project and wish to apply, please look over the application and begin formulating a proposal. We have heard that architectural plans and specs cannot be funded. We do, however, anticipate that grant amounts can exceed the \$20,000 - \$40,000 limit currently in place. (Obviously, federal requirements may mean some changes in the final application materials and process.) If funding is made available through the stimulus package, we will be calling for applications immediately.

Applicants for SFY 2009 Georgia Heritage Grants will be considered under the new stimulus grant pool if they wish, but they may need to update their application information.

Understand that the recommendations for these grants are in the U.S. Senate version of the stimulus bill and not in the House version. Congressional action will be required before preservation funds are included.

As we learn more, we will be updating you. Information will be posted on HPD's Web site and will be included in our e-mail newsletter, Preservation Georgia Online. If you are not a subscriber to the newsletter and wish to be, please email your name and organization affiliation to our Public Information Coordinator, Helen Talley-McRae at Helen.Talley-McRae@dnr.state.ga.us.

Please share this information with others. We are interested in getting as many applications for good, ready-to-go projects as possible.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

- **Customer Care: It's all about the Attitude! Looking for ways to improve your customers' experience with your business? The University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education has the solution!** Customers expect and respond positively to certain attitudes and approaches. Learn how to show respect, confidence and appreciation as you respond to their needs. This workshop will help you make a positive impact on your customers and bring them back to your business again and again.

Date: February 20, 2009

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Location: The University of Georgia Gwinnett Campus, 2530 Sever Road, Lawrenceville, GA

Cost: \$139/participant

To Register: www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/ppd/courses/customercare.phtml

INDUSTRY TRENDS/NEWS

- **Travel Marketing Trends** (Source: 2008 National Leisure Travel Monitor)
 - Hurry up and relax: 53% of Americans took a vacation that was less than four days in 2008. Most were weekend trips with a Saturday night stay.*
 - Going green: 41% of Americans would select an earth friendly travel product. 47% would pay more for green products, 53% would not.*
 - Wait for it: As travel consumers hold out longer for competitive deals, the average booking window continues to shrink. Industry insiders say 7 days or less, ARES stats show 3 days or less.
 - Pop-up deals: Many hoteliers are creating urgency in the buying decision by using jack-in-the-box deals that pop-up and go away overnight.
 - Use free keyword search tools to optimize your content. i.e [Wordtracker](#) and [Trellian](#).
- **Green Tourism:** A recent MSNBC.com article announced the end of green travel (view the article at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28425799>). The article argued that, in the future, sustainability will be the norm rather than the exception, and most travelers will not be willing to pay more for these services. The mixed signals regarding green preferences can make it confusing as to whether green leads to higher profits. This is why it is essential that before investing in the adoption of any sustainable practices, both the costs and benefits are evaluated. Some green practices, such as the use of post consumer recycled content paper, have a minimal cost; others, such as allowing local artists to display their work at your property, have no cost; and some, including installing aerators on faucets, start saving you money almost immediately. For a list of sustainable practices, visit www.ecu.edu/sustainabletourism/criteria.cfm. For more information on the benefits and the costs of adopting sustainable practices, contact Alex Naar at 919-715-3782 or via naara@ecu.edu.
- **DO YOU TALK BACK? SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGE THE MARKETING GAME**

Marketing has evolved rapidly over the past decade, with traditional media declining in importance as the Internet and social networking achieve meaningful scale. NGC Communications' Noah Garrett spoke with Jim Tobin of Ignite Social Media and author of a book on social media. As Tobin said, "Social media marketing is different than advertising and PR precisely because people can talk back. So, it really becomes an amplifier... If you have a product that people have some sort of affinity toward for whatever reason, you can facilitate a way for them to talk about it and can amplify their affection for it, too." To read the interview, visit http://localtechwire.com/business/local_tech_wire/opinion/blogpost/4424440/.

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

- **The Times** will publish its spring **Newcomers Guide** magazine at the end of February. Included will be stories and information to help new residents to our area get settled and find their way around. In addition, we'll include our usual calendars of cultural and recreational events in Northeast Georgia. Please provide us with information on events scheduled by your organization or community during **March through May**, plus any jpeg photos you might have that would be helpful. **Deadline to send info to Keith is February 9th** at kalbertson@gainesvilletimes.com (please include Newcomers Guide in the subject line); fax to 770-532-0457, to my attention; or by regular mail to my attention at P.O. Box 838, Gainesville, GA 30503. We look forward to hearing from you and we appreciate any suggestions you have to making our publications more useful to residents in your area. **Keith Albertson, Managing Editor**, The Times, gainesvilletimes.com, Gainesville, Ga., 770-718-3400 kalbertson@gainesvilletimes.com

GEORGIA'S CIVIL WAR HEARTLAND LEADERS TRAIL – NOTE TO MEMBERSHIP

REMINDER: Provide any calendar updates for the website. Events should be heritage-related. Please email your events to Andy Williams at awilliams@madisonga.org.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Go to www.marketgeorgia.org and click on **Travel Industry Events**. Contact me if you would like to submit a tourism industry event (meeting, conference, etc.)

February 16-18 Southeastern Festivals & Events Conference, Knoxville Crowne Plaza Hotel - The 6th Annual Southeast Festivals and Events Conference is just around the corner! This three-day conference includes 17 educational sessions, round table discussions and loads of networking opportunities. The conference, held at the Knoxville Crowne Plaza Hotel, is February 16 - 18, 2009.

Events large and small, CVB's & chambers, cities, associations and non-profit organizations, tourism agencies, media specialists, vendors and suppliers will all gather to share ideas and develop life-long friendships. Pre-conference functions include a dine-around networking experience, a guided tour of Knoxville and round table discussions.

Contact: **Carolyn Morris**, 770-592-7180 cmorris@wiredearth.net
www.southeastfestivals.org

March

Month long celebration along the Southern Literary Trail

Georgia authors will be featured on the Southern Literary Trail, a historic linking of Southern communities, towns and landmarks, for a monthlong festival honoring some of the South's greatest authors, scheduled for March 2009. With stops along 18 Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi towns between Savannah, GA and Natchez, MS, events will take place at various libraries, museums and courthouses throughout the month. Trail towns will present tours, plays, films, reading and discussion panels celebrating Southern literature and its hometown authors, with special emphasis on the settings that influenced their works. For information on event times and locations, visit www.southernliterarytrail.org.

March 1 & 2

Winter Chautauqua 2009, Dalton, GA – For more info and to register, go to www.WinterChautauqua.org

March 9- 11

GACVB Winter Meeting, Jekyll Island Club

Register online at www.regonline.com/gacvbwinter09. This meeting will include the course requirements for *Supervising Excellence*, the first tier of GACVB's new Leadership

Excellence Certification (LEC) program certified by the Cunningham Center for Leadership Development at Columbus State University. Designed for CEOs and Senior Staff of Georgia DMOs, the meeting agenda includes sessions on the Foundations of Leadership, Effective Communication, Supervising/Empowering, and Priority Setting/Time Management. A commitment to the three year certification process is not required to attend the Winter Meeting.

- April 9-30** **Appalachia: A History of Mountains and People**
It will be broadcasted on PBS once a week (Thursdays) for four weeks.
- April 5-8** **S.A.T.W. Central States Fam – Northeast Georgia Mountains Region**
- April 10** **STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for October, November & December 2009.** For nomination forms and more info, go to http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html.
- April 20-21** The **2009 Techno Tourism Conference** will take place at the Classic Center in Athens. The conference will focus on social networking tools, campaigns and demonstrations showcasing applications on a PC. More information will be available soon.
- June 6–13** **BRAG (Bicycle Ride Across Georgia) 2009 Early Bird Registration Open –** Route goes through Northeast Georgia **from** Hiawassee to Clarks Hill Lake. Go to www.brag.org for info and updates
- July 10** **STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for January, February & March 2010.** For nomination forms and more info, go to http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html.
- July 26-31** **STS Marketing College** will take place **Sunday, July 26 through Friday, July 31, 2009** in **Dahlonega**. It will be another intensive, fact-filled week of learning, networking and socializing at North Georgia College and State University. For more information, visit www.southeasttourism.org.
- Aug 31–Sept 2** **Georgia Governor’s Conference on Tourism**, Lake Lanier Islands Resort
- October 9** **STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for April, May & June 2010.** For nomination forms and more info, go to http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html.
- January 8, ‘10** **STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for July, August, & September 2010.** For nomination forms and more info, go to http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html.
- April 9, ‘10** **STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for October, November, & December.** For nomination forms and more info, go to http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html.
- July 16, ‘10** **STS Top 20 Events Nomination Deadline for January, February & March 2011.** For nomination forms and more info, go to http://southeasttourism.org/top_20_events.html.

Respectfully submitted by

Cheryl Smith

Regional Tourism Representative

Georgia Dept of Economic Development

Georgia Tourism Division ~ Northeast Georgia Mountains

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