



REGIONAL TOURISM REPRESENTATIVE REPORT April 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.
- Northeast Georgia tourism partners are hosting an **SATW Fam** April 5-8. GDEcD would like to thank all those who are helping to host these writers.
- **ARTICLES (Let me know if you would like a copy):**
 - All in the Facebook family: older generations join social networks

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

- **Press Releases:**
 - **Georgia's Civil War Heritage;** *Discover the state's Civil War battlefields, driving trails, and history museums* Sent out 3/6/09
- **PeachBytes** (Georgia Tourism Industry Newsletter): A monthly update to Georgia's tourism industry. Go to <http://web.georgia.org/core/item/page.aspx?s=244185.0.26.3011> to view past newsletters or to sign up.

Georgia Explorer: The following was sent out to members of Georgia Explorers:

Dear Georgia Explorers,

We want to thank everyone for their great posts and feedback on the group. In response to research, comments and Facebook changes, we've decided to brand the Georgia Explorers group as an industry resource for the entire Georgia tourism industry.

The latest trip ideas, special offers, events and travel news can still be found on the **Explore Georgia** Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Explore-Georgia/36470358490>) – we encourage everyone to become a fan of the page and check it out, as it is updated regularly.

We envision the Georgia Explorers group being an online community of Georgia's travel industry partners, where ideas, questions, suggestions and updates can all be shared. It can also be a forum for collaboration, support and creative dialogue between players in Georgia's second-largest industry.

Thank you for your continued support and suggestions. Please post ideas or things you would like to see added so we can make this group as useful as possible.

- **Media Leads:**
 - Apryl Chapman Thomas via TravMedia.com is looking for leads and news releases on both family-friendly hotels and attractions that offer affordable family fun. She writes for a variety of blogs, websites and publications. Respond directly to Apryl. Her email is apryl@aprylchapmanthomas.com.
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- **News:** In March, our Marketing and Tourism teams were honored with **FIRST PLACE** at the 2009 American Marketing Association's AMY awards for our department's Tourism Web Site, ExploreGeorgia. This is a huge accomplishment for our department – we competed with hundreds of other websites including many major consumer brands from the private sector.

GEORGIA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER & REGIONAL VIC PROGRAMS

- Contact me if you would like a copy of the **Georgia Visitor Information Centers Activity and Inventory Monthly Report.**

- **Georgia on My Mind Days – Go to www.MarketGeorgia.org for a list.**
 - The Plains Visitor Center would like to invite you to come set up a booth and promote your attraction at our GEORGIA ON MY MIND DAY on May 9th 2009. We will be hosting our 12th annual Leroy Young Fishing Tournament where over 500 are in attendance. The Tournament is for kids age 1– 15 that are accompanied by an adult.

Channel 55 out of Cordele will interview each booth while filming the event, along with WDEC Radio Station out of Americus will be broadcasting live. What a great opportunity for you to promote your attraction at one single event in more ways than one. The event will start at 9am and goes until 1pm.

Please call and reserve your space by April 15th. Chairs and tables are not provided, so each attraction must bring their own. Tents are allowed. Electricity is limited. For more information call Penny Smith or Linda Harty at 229-824-7477.

SALES & MARKETING PROGRAM

- **Group Travel Leader Leads** – If you are on my Group Leads list, you have already gotten these, but if you are not and would like a copy, let me know. Also, let me know if you want to be added to this list.
- Leads from our group tour advertising in **Group Travel Planet**. I sent this out to my Group Leads List. If you have not already gotten these and would like a copy, let me know.

TOURISM FOUNDATION & RESEARCH

- **Grant Programs**
- **Techno Tourism Conference**

PUBLICATIONS & WEBSITES PROGRAM

- 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.
- 2009 Georgia Travel Guide is available for distribution. For a copy, go to www.ExploreGeorgia.org and order one, call 1-800 VISIT Georgia, go to a State VIC or go to a Regional VIC. You might even find them at your local Chamber of Commerce or CVB.

MEDIA REQUESTS, GRANTS, WORKSHOPS, ETC

GRANTS & AWARDS

PRESERVE AMERICA GRANTS



Applications for Georgia's community landmarks now available

The purpose of the sub-grant program is to assist Georgia's cities and towns in promoting their community landmarks through heritage tourism.

Community landmarks are the significant places that people associate with their town and its history. They could include historic courthouses, city halls, theatres, libraries, schools, cemeteries, hotels, churches, battlefields, parks and gardens, museums, commercial and residential historic districts,

lighthouses, coastal fortifications, and archaeological sites. \$80,000 in matching (50%/50%) funds is available.

Eligible projects will fall under the following categories: research and documentation; interpretation and education; planning; marketing; or training. The program does not include brick and mortar projects. Only communities that have been designated Preserve America communities or communities that are Certified Local Governments and have applied to become Preserve America communities are eligible to apply for the grant program. To find out more about becoming a Preserve America community, please go to www.preserveamerica.gov.

This sub-grant program is part of a larger Preserve America grant awarded to HPD in late fall 2008.

Applications have been mailed to Preserve America communities and also are available on HPD's website at www.gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=460. The application deadline postmark date is June 15, 2009.

For more information or to receive a sub-grant application in the mail, please contact Carole Moore, HPD Grants Coordinator, at 404-463-8434 or e-mail carole.moore@dnr.state.ga.us.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

ARTICLES & INFORMATION: Contact me if you would like a copy...

- Destination Marketing in the age of Web 2.0 and beyond.
- 25 Ways to Use Twitter
- Branding And ROI: A Symbiotic Relationship
- Email Campaign Expert Shares Effective Marketing Strategies

U.S. TRAVEL OUTLOOK EXAMINES CURRENT INDUSTRY TRENDS

The U.S. Travel Association provides a mixed-bag view of industry trends in its April U.S. Travel Outlook. While the economy continues to face uncertainties, recent data suggests that the rate of decline may begin to temper in the second quarter with a turnaround by the end of the year. In February, both new and existing home sales were up, and consumer confidence has increased slightly. The U.S. Travel Outlook also suggests that the fiscal stimulus in the second quarter will help both consumers' confidence and willingness to spend.

Lodging Industry

Smith Travel Research (STR) notes that in February the U.S. hotel industry posted declines in three key measurements. Nationally, occupancy was down 10.1 percent (*in North Carolina occupancy was down 11.2 percent*); average daily rate fell 7.8 percent (*in North Carolina ADR decreased only 2.7 percent*); and revenue per available room lost 17.1 percent (*down 13.5 percent in North Carolina*). STR remains hopeful that, with the appearance that Washington officials are revising their views on travel, the hotel industry may be ready to show more positive numbers in the 3rd quarter. A year-to-date analysis is available at www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research.

There are varying views on the state of the lodging industry from other research firms. PKF Hospitality Research is not as optimistic as STR, noting that the decline will last longer than previously expected, while Tourism Economics suggests that travel demand will continue to decline over the next quarter, but stabilize after that.

International Travel

While inbound international travel during the first 3 quarters of 2008 helped offset weakened domestic tourism demand, fourth quarter arrivals were down 6 percent. According to Tourism Economics, the prospects for international visitation have again decreased significantly in recent weeks.

Meetings & Incentive Travel

With the great focus in recent months on the crisis in the meetings and incentive segment of the tourism industry, the U.S. Travel Association and several other organizations are currently working on major research to quantify the benefits of this important segment. One recent survey found that while 51 percent of respondents reported that their companies have reduced business travel, a majority believe that companies that increase travel budgets during economic distress actually are better prepared to build market share in the long run (<http://www.ustravel.org/pressmedia/pressrec.asp?Item=953>).

The aggressive campaign for the support of meetings and incentive travel, as well as the more positive view from Washington officials, are producing optimistic results. Therefore, the U.S. Travel Association has no immediate plans to downgrade its current forecast (found at http://www.ustravel.org/researchpubs/travel_forecasts_us.html). For more information from the April edition of the US Travel Outlook, visit <http://www.ustravel.org/resources/Outlook/09/April.htm>.

LEISURE TRAVEL NEWS

Join the CVB for a FREE international travel workshop: Thursday, April 16 from 9 a.m. – 12 noon at the Foundry Park Inn & Spa. Stake your claim on visitors from the United Kingdom! Our region of Georgia continues to see growth of the international leisure travel market, despite the decline of other tourism segments around the state. Three representatives from the U.K will offer insight on how to grow the Foreign Independent Travel (FIT) trade in our region, including market news and tips, Georgia Tourism overseas sales and promotional efforts, hotel contracting practices for travel agents and wholesale operators, and general guidelines and pointers for welcoming the international traveller. Featured speakers:

- Peter Hannaford, GA Tourism Representative for the United Kingdom and Ireland
- Gary Orr, Head of Purchasing for Virgin Holidays
- Jimmy Jillebo from Delta U.K., Leisure Sales Manager

Plan to participate - RSVP to Amy Clark (aclark@VisitAthensGA.com) to claim your spot!

HPD TO HOLD HISTORY AND HERITAGE TOURISM CONFERENCE

The Historic Preservation Division is pleased to announce that the conference "History and Heritage Tourism: Discovering Georgia's Community Landmarks" will be held on March 25-26, 2010, at the historic Warm Springs Institute in Warm Springs. Conference cosponsors include the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Community Affairs, The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Development Center. Some of the featured sites will include the Warm Springs pools, Warm Springs, and the Little White House. The conference is partially funded through a Preserve America grant awarded to HPD. Mark your calendars! More updates will be forthcoming! Please contact Conference Coordinator Carole Moore at carole.moore@dnr.state.ga.us or at 404-463-8434 for more information.

INDUSTRY TRENDS/NEWS

NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK MODIFICATION ANNOUNCED

The [U.S. Travel Association](#) (formerly TIA) has modified the name of its 9-day nationwide industry emphasis to National Travel and Tourism Week. The modification was made to broadly signal that travel for leisure and business alike bears greatly upon the American economic landscape. National Travel and Tourism Week is May 9 – 17, 2009.

PRESERVE OUR STATE PARKS



The system of 63 Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites ranks among the top three in the nation. Millions of visitors each year rely on our parks to provide amazing vacation opportunities and outstanding educational experiences. To check out the challenges facing the park system and ideas on how you can help visit the website, PreserveOurStateParks.org.

MEETINGS MEAN BUSINESS

Athens CVB director Chuck Jones and other CVB staff members participated in an emergency industry-wide conference call on March 4 to discuss what our industry is doing to combat ongoing media stories and comments by lawmakers which vilify corporate meetings and events as wasteful, rather than a cost-effective way to grow business. Of course, such meetings also sustain a travel industry that employs 7.7 million workers nationwide, including 2,440 in Athens. If businesses and associations are forced into canceling meetings and conventions for fear of negative publicity, it is the front-line hospitality workers who will suffer, along with destinations like Athens who stand to lose a significant portion of the \$200 million in annual spending by visitors.

Announcements during the call included: the U.S. Travel Association and other hospitality associations have launched a new comprehensive "Meetings Mean Business" campaign to ensure that media and policymakers understand the importance of meetings, events, and incentive travel and the affect irresponsible grandstanding has on jobs, as well as local economies. Included in the campaign is a new website, MeetingsMeanBusiness.com, which is a comprehensive resource we encourage you to use in helping tell our story as part of a united front by national and local hospitality entities. Ads are appearing in *USA Today*, *Politico*, *Congress Daily* and several news websites, including the Drudge Report.

To hear a playback of the March 4 conference call: Dial-in: 866-551-4520/Reference number: 244408#. Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association remarks, "We're at a critical time that has implications for our industry's future. I hope you'll take the time to listen to the call and get involved in the campaign."

EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT OFFICIALLY INTRODUCED IN CONGRESS

The Employee Free Choice Act, nicknamed the "card check" bill, was officially introduced in Congress last week. The proposed bill would make it easier for workers to unionize, and that has galvanized fervent opposition from business groups. Bills were introduced in both the House and Senate. Currently, if 30 percent of a company's workers sign a card supporting a union, the National Labor Relations Board sets up a company-wide vote on whether to unionize. The vote is held within 90 days, giving employers that don't want a union time to meet with employees and argue against making such a move. Under the proposed legislation, if half of a company's workers sign those cards, the union is automatically formed without a full company-wide vote. Some businesses are concerned workers will be pressured to sign the cards. To find out more, visit http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2009/03/09/daily47.html?ana=e_du_pap.

U.S. TRAVELER SENTIMENT INDEX RISES ON AFFORDABILITY

According to the February travelhorizons survey, the U.S. Traveler Sentiment Index rose to 90.2 in February 2009 from 78.2 in October 2008 due to an increase in the perceived "affordability of travel." The spike in the perceived affordability of travel appears to be a direct result of many travel suppliers' recent efforts to stimulate short-term demand through the aggressive promotion of discounted fares and rates. The Traveler Sentiment Index is a derivative of six variables measured in a quarterly survey: interest in travel; availability of time to travel; availability of money to travel; perceived affordability of travel; quality of travel services; and safety. All six measures increased from levels observed in October 2008, the most recent survey flight. Four measures displayed double digit increases: interest in travel (up 10.3 percent); availability of time to travel (up 12 percent); quality of travel services (up 14.1 percent); and perceived affordability of travel (up 97.2 percent). For more information, visit www.ypartnership.com or www.ustravel.org.

CITIES GREET MEETING PLANNERS WITH OPEN ARMS

It's a buyer's market for meeting planners, as hotels and cities of all sizes compete for an ever-shrinking pie of conventions and business meetings. Having them at five-star resorts during recessionary times has garnered headlines, but times are rough even for workaday conventions, as sluggish attendance is triggering cancellations. As planners look to trade down, some mid-price hotel chains and second-tier convention cities are marketing themselves as affordable alternatives, even as their more upscale competitors court customers with deep discounts unseen in years. To find out more, visit http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2009-04-13-meeting-budget-planning_N.htm.

BLOGGERS ARE CHANGING THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

A recent CNN article stated that bloggers are changing the travel industry. And the travel industry isn't just hip to blogging. In many cases, it takes blogs more seriously than the mainstream media. Other travelers – particularly those booking their hotels online – feel that blogs are more believable than what they read in a newspaper or watch on TV. The article included examples of how a traveler's blog has changed their traveling experience but, in several cases, changed company policy. To find out more, visit <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TRAVEL/traveltips/03/23/blogging.travel.complaints/index.html>.

THIS PLACE MATTERS!

The National Trust for Historic Preservation invites you to tell us about a place that matters to you through our *This Places Matters* campaign. The campaign helps people call attention to special places in their community before they are endangered -- the small, famous and infamous, and even some relatively obscure, that collectively represent the nation's cultural consciousness.

Simply visit www.PreservationNation.org/thisplacematters to download a *This Place Matters* sign, take a picture or make a video at the place that matters to you and post it to our slide show. Don't have a picture? Plant your flag on our *This Place Matters* Google map.

So celebrate a place you love, sound an alarm about a place that is threatened or just start a conversation about places that matter.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY WOOS THOSE WITH PLENTY OF LEISURE TIME: Furloughed & Laid-Off Workers

Victims of the economy are being offered discounts on airfare, lodging, cruises and ski-lift tickets. Tourism merchants say the bargains won't end their industry's skid, "but it's a very nice step."

Pink slip travelers, furlough tourists, or jobless vacationers? Call them what you may, they are a surprising new target for travel bargains aimed at the unemployed, the furloughed and jittery workers fearful of being laid off. Discounts are nothing new during tough economic times, but airlines, hotels, resorts and other tourism merchants are going a step further, exploring a market long considered a tough one to crack. Several businesses are reporting a positive response to the travel deals. To find out more, visit <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-tourism3-2009apr03,0,6308665.story>.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

Governor Perdue Signs Off On 17 Key Projects. In late February, Governor Sonny Perdue gave his approval for 17 strategic projects submitted on the 2009 Appalachian Regional Commission Priority List. These projects will leverage millions in local, federal and private funds to implement various infrastructure, energy, healthcare and tourism-related initiatives. Project application review was done by a review committee comprised of DCA, ARC State Office and Governor's Office staff.

Two Tourism related projects:

Northeast Georgia History Center – Gainesville. \$40,000 Develop NE GA History Center as regional facility for preserving and exhibiting artifacts

Georgia Mountains RDC Regional Historic Buildings - \$15,000 Region wide assessment of historic buildings suitable for tourism and asset based

MARKETING & ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK

NTTW will be celebrated May 9th - 17th. The theme is "Discover Great American Traditions". Below is a toolkit of resources to help communities plan local events and activities, including details on U.S. Travel Rally Day and special promotional opportunities offered by DiscoverAmerica.com and AOL® Travel in conjunction with National Travel and Tourism Week. You can also find information online at <http://www.ustravel.org/pressmedia/TWFA/toolkit.html>.

TWITTER TALK

Destinations and travel marketers are using Twitter in all kinds of creative ways. Tweets are being circulated about things to do, hot vacation deals, upcoming events and more. Some are [launching enticing challenges](#) intended to draw attention and gain followers. In fact, a couple of ARES Affiliates recently engaged in a show down social media style with one letting off a tweetbomb so compelling it took the underdog from 1,700 to 3,000 followers in a matter of hours. Follow these folks to see how a few of our partners are using Twitter to market travel in their areas: [Chicago](#) - [Portland](#) - [Jacksonville](#) [Baltimore](#) - [Carlsbad](#)

BROWNS GUIDE

Historic Worley Bed & Breakfast (Northeast Mountains Travel Region)

Lady Jane Cruises (Georgia Coast Travel Region)

Restaurant Finder (All Travel Regions)...

...were recently featured on the BROWN'S GUIDES HOME PAGE.

Internet users searching for *Georgia Restaurants*, *Georgia Lodging Accommodations*, *Georgia Tours* and *Georgia Family Vacations* find Brown's Guides on page 1 or 2 of Google and six other major search engines. And as a result of an aggressive SEO program, those positions are improving weekly. Try it yourself. There are over 250 key words and phrases that if typed into Google give you Brown's Guides on page 1.

If you are a travel and recreation resources, contact Fred Brown to find out how to get profiled on Brown's Guides FREE. www.brownsguides.com. fred@brownsguides.com or 678-576-4996
P.O. Box 2749, Peachtree City, GA 30269

P.S. Follow BG on **Twitter** or join Fred on **Facebook** and **Facebook Pages** to see how Brown's Guides is promoting Georgia's travel and recreation resources every day to a growing social network of Followers, Friends and Fans.

NOTE FROM BLUE RIDGE COUNTRY MAGAZINE

We're gearing up for our July/August Blue Issue and this is a call for events - if you haven't already sent us your summer calendar, please do so by April 20. Events can be submitted by e mail to cmodisett@leisurepublishing.com or through our website at www.blueridgecountry.com/coe/index.cfm.

High-resolution photos will also be considered - they can be e mailed to cmodisett@leisurepublishing.com.

In other news, our May/June issue just came back from the printer, with some great stories, including Blue Ridge NASCAR and trips to Hendersonville, N.C. and Virginia's Shenandoah Valley (for a preview of the cover, check out our Facebook page below).

Contact: Cara Ellen Modisett, Editor, Blue Ridge Country magazine phone 540.989.6138 & fax 540-989-7603

<http://twitter.com/BRCmagazine> & <http://twitter.com/BRCeditor>
www.facebook.com/pages/Blue-Ridge-Country/19087383530

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.)

- 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 be in Marietta at Chattahoochee Technical College . The conference will focus on social networking tools, campaigns and demonstrations showcasing applications on a PC. More information will be available soon. www.georgia.org/Techno+Tourism.htm
- May** **Group Travel Boot Camp** in Macon (Details on www.MarketGeorgia.org)
- May 22** **Georgia On My Mind Days at the Lavonia VIC 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

- 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

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