

# **VISITNC - NewsLink** for Jan. 9, 2008

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## **1. RECORD TRAFFIC FOR VISITNC.COM IN 2007**

In December, the site traffic for VisitNC.com registered 503,487 visits, ending the year with a grand total of 6,831,356 visits! Exceeding 2006 traffic by 2 million user sessions, VisitNC.com continues to gain market share in the travel category, providing consumers with the most accurate and relevant content to help plan their North Carolina vacation. For more information on any of the Division's online programs, contact Jennifer Jenkins at (704) 364-8969 for via [jjenkins@lkmideas.com](mailto:jjenkins@lkmideas.com), or go to [www.visitnc.com](http://www.visitnc.com).

## **2. WINE PROMOTION PAYING OFF FOR NORTH CAROLINA**

The Division's efforts to promote the wine and grape industry in North Carolina are paying off. In its January issue, "N.C. Magazine" profiled wine tourism in North Carolina in the article "Wine Tourism Comes of Age." The N.C. Wine & Grape Council joined the N.C. Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development in 2005, and the Division wasted no time in promoting the wine industry to potential tourists. TIA sponsored a study that revealed the Division has been doing a great job. From being a virtual nonstarter in wine tourism a decade ago, North Carolina ranked third in the nation as a destination for wine-related travel among savvy leisure travelers. TIA honored the Division with its 2007 Mercury Award for Niche Advertising for its successful promotion of the state's wine tourism. The Division developed press materials, organized media visits and offered wine tasting to members of the national food and travel press. These efforts resulted in coverage in numerous national publications including "USA Today," "The Wall Street Journal" and "The New York Times." An estimated 800,000 tourists visit North Carolina

wineries each year. According to the N.C. Dept. of Commerce, the wine industry as a whole had a total economic impact of \$813 million in 2005, the last year the figures were available. The article also stated that future promotion efforts by the tourism division will focus on raising the appreciation of North Carolina wine inside as well as outside the state. To find out more, visit <http://www.ncchamber.net/mx/hm.asp?id=home>.

### **3. N.C. TRAVEL'S TOP ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM 2007 FEATURED**

"North Carolina" magazine, in its January issue, featured the North Carolina's travel industry's top accomplishments for 2007. In the mountains, news included Chimney Rock joining the state park system, the Go Blue Ridge Card attraction pass, Blowing Rock's Mitford Days, the Museum of the Cherokee Indian's "Emissaries of Peace" exhibit that was featured at the Smithsonian's National Museum of History in Washington, D.C., and the return of Ghost Town in the Sky. In the piedmont, the U.S. National Whitewater Center and the Billy Graham Library opened. Carowinds came under new ownership. The Umstead Hotel and Spa established new standards of luxury. Pinehurst Resort celebrated the 100th anniversary of Pinehurst No. 2 and readers of "Travel + Leisure" named Pinehurst the Best Golf Resort in the country. On the coast, Ocracoke garnered national and international attention when its beach was named Best Beach in the U.S. by Dr. Beach. Wilmington's annual Invitation of the Pirates, part of the Riverfest festival, gained further recognition. In addition, Wilmington hosted the inaugural Student Film Festival. To find out more, visit [www.ncchamber.net](http://www.ncchamber.net).

### **4. 2008 TRAVEL GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE**

The "2008 Official North Carolina Travel Guide" is now available online at VisitNC.com. This digital version offers added value as viewers can click on a property's advertisement, specifically the Web address, and their Web site will open in a new window. In addition, there are now 24 videos on the site ranging from brief "experience" videos of about one minute in length to narrated "discovery" videos up to and over five minutes. There were more than 100,000 video viewings since they were initially posted on the launch page with the average viewing time per viewer being three and a half minutes. Also, viewers can now e-mail videos to their friends. To view the "2008 Official North Carolina Travel Guide" online, visit [www.VisitNC.com](http://www.VisitNC.com).

### **5. US AIRWAYS LAUNCHING CHINA SERVICE IN 2009, INCLUDES N.C.**

US Airways will launch its first U.S.-China service in 2009. The award is the result of an agreement signed in July by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and her Chinese counterpart to open up opportunities between the two countries that will double the number of daily flights allowed between the United States and China over the next five years. The flight will originate in Charlotte and then fly between Philadelphia and Beijing. To find out more, visit <http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2007/12/31/daily10.html>.

This new flight is important to North Carolina as this will open new markets for the state. The Chinese market is important because Chinese citizens are flush with cash from their booming economy. They will find it easier to vacation in the U.S. following a long-awaited agreement that the American travel industry hopes will bring in billions of dollars. With the number of Chinese who travel outside their homeland expected to nearly triple to 100 million people by 2020, an infusion of tourists to the U.S. could help American

businesses. Chinese travelers on average spend upward of \$6,000 per visit to the U.S. – more than residents of any other nation – according to the U.S. Commerce Department's most recent calculations.

TIA worked hard to encourage an agreement with Chinese officials to facilitate more group leisure travel from China to the U.S. beginning in Spring 2008. This deal, signed in December by U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez in Beijing, will allow Chinese travel agencies to market packaged leisure tours to American destinations, and it will permit U.S. destinations to advertise directly to the Chinese public. For more information, visit <http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/pressrec.asp?Item=849>.

#### **6. COX NEWS SPREADS THE WORD ON N.C. WINES**

The article on Southern wines by John T. Edge, which initially ran in the “Atlanta Journal-Constitution” in December, was picked up by Cox News Service and distributed further. So far, the article as appeared in several newspapers including today’s (Wednesday) “The Charlotte Observer,” and previously in the “Pittsburgh Post-Gazette” and the “Memphis Commercial Appeal.”

#### **7. DIVISION CO-HOSTS SKI FAM WITH HIGH COUNTRY HOST**

The Division teamed with High Country Host to bring a domestic press group to the state Jan. 3-7. The trip highlighted North Carolina’s winter activities and skiing. The Division hosted 12 writers from newspapers, magazines and TV stations throughout the southeast. The group visited Watauga and Avery counties, including four of the state’s ski resorts. Special thanks go to the tourism organizations in those areas for assisting with the group. Publications represented on the trip included “Hemispheres” (United Airlines’ in-flight magazine), the Atlanta “Sunday Paper,” “SnowEast” magazine, “Nashville Lifestyles” magazine, “Upstate Lake Living” magazine, the “Bristol (Va.) Herald Courier,” “The Tifton (Ga.) Gazette” and WJHL-TV (Johnson City, Tenn., CBS affiliate).

#### **8. DIVISION SEEKING SPA AND PET NEWS**

The Division is seeking information on “What’s New” regarding spas in North Carolina for a Travel Trends press release. Also, information would be appreciated regarding pet spas and hotels that cater to the pets of guests’. Please send news, press releases or other information to Jennifer Francioni at [jfrancioni@nccommerce.com](mailto:jfrancioni@nccommerce.com).

#### **9. ROANOKE RAPIDS RENAMES THEATRE**

The city council in Roanoke Rapids voted this week to rename the theatre venue at Carolina Crossroads the Roanoke Rapids Theatre. The management company now in charge of the venue also got approval for a new logo. The company, UGL-Unicco, has launched a new Web site – [www.rrtheatre.com](http://www.rrtheatre.com) – and plans a new telephone number. To find out more, visit <http://www.newsobserver.com/1565/story/869313.html>.

#### **10. FAYETTEVILLE MUSEUM OF ART FEATURED IN AP & INTERNATIONAL STORY**

Associated Press had a recent article, “Town Proves Impressive Museum Buildings Not Limited To Big Cities,” that featured the Fayetteville Museum of Art as an example of a quality museum in not a big city. The article was picked up and ran in the “International Herald Tribune.” To find out more, visit

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/12/28/america/NA-FEA-A-E-ART-US-Designing-Destinations.php>.

### **11. WHEELS THROUGH TIME TO BE FEATURED NATIONALLY**

On Jan. 12, Wheels Through Time Museum curator and founder, Dale Walksler, will be taping segments for two upcoming national media outlets at the 17th Annual Las Vegas Motorcycle Auction in Las Vegas, Nev. Clear Channel Radio's "USA Biker Nation" and Speed Television's "American Thunder" called on Walksler to provide expert commentary during the world's largest motorcycle auction in Las Vegas.

### **12. SOUTHERN LIVING GOES GREEN FOR WNC IDEA HOUSE**

The 2008 Southern Living Idea House being built near Sandy Mush in Buncombe County is using "green" practices such as solar water, heat and electricity. The home's eco-friendly features will include solar thermal and photovoltaic panels, radiant heated floors, a rainwater catchment and gray water system and other features. When completed in June, the LEEDS-certified home will be "green" in five ways – site work, resources use, indoor air quality, durability and energy efficiency. Southern Living chooses three locations in the southeast each year to build Idea Houses. North Carolina locations in the past have proven popular attractions for their area during their Open House season. To find out more, visit <http://www.citizen-times.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200880103107>.

### **13. THE GREENING OF GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN**

Grandfather Mountain continues its green practices with the installation of its first bank of solar panels. Located behind the wildlife habitats in an area not visited by the public, the photovoltaic solar collectors can produce seven kilowatts of power that go directly to the power grid through TVA. Grandfather Mountain has already established recycling stations, replaced incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs, enrolled Grandfather in the High Country Biofuel Cooperative and converted the attraction's restaurant to biodegradable plates & utensils. To find out more, visit <http://www.grandfather.com/newsletter/december07/greening.php>  
<http://www.grandfather.com/newsletter/december07/greening.php>.

### **14. N.C. AIRPORT NEWS**

**RDU Starts Non-Stop Service to DEN via Southwest Airlines in May** - Southwest Airlines has announced it will begin non-stop service between Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) and Denver International Airport (DEN), beginning May 10. To find out more, visit [www.rdu.com](http://www.rdu.com).

**RDU Airport Terminal 2 Set To Open This Summer** - RDU will open the first phase of its reconstructed Terminal 2 – formerly named Terminal C – this summer. The \$570 million terminal reconstruction project will feature 32 gates and more than triple the space of the old terminal. The building is expected to be able to accommodate up to 13 million passengers a year. The second phase of the project is scheduled to open in 2010. Other features include three gates able to accommodate wide-body jets used for international flights, three ticketing islands that will feature 20 counters, 10 security checkpoint lanes, a fully automated baggage screening system, five baggage carousels and a Federal Inspection Services area for international travelers that's five times larger

than the current facility. To find out more, visit

[http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2008/01/07/story13.html?f=et184&b=1199682000^1571717&ana=e\\_vert](http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2008/01/07/story13.html?f=et184&b=1199682000^1571717&ana=e_vert).

## 15. N.C. HOTEL NEWS

The Marriott City Center Hotel is set to open in Raleigh in July. The 17-story hotel will have 400 guest rooms, a 9,000 square-foot ballroom and 15,000 square feet of meeting space, along with a coffee shop, an upscale, Tuscan-style restaurant, and an indoor pool that will overlook the nearby Progress Energy Center for the Performing Arts. To find out more, visit

[http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2008/01/07/story14.html?f=et185&b=1199682000^1571720&ana=e\\_vert](http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2008/01/07/story14.html?f=et185&b=1199682000^1571720&ana=e_vert)

The Renaissance Raleigh Hotel at North Hills, scheduled to open by October, will have 229 guest rooms and 8,000 square feet of meeting space. The full-service hotel will be a centerpiece of the North Hills mixed-use development that already features more than 20 dining options, a movie theater, a Target store and a JCPenney department store. To find out more, visit

[http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2008/01/07/story11.html?f=et185&b=1199682000%5e1571713&ana=e\\_vert](http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2008/01/07/story11.html?f=et185&b=1199682000%5e1571713&ana=e_vert).

The Westin Raleigh is slated to open mid-2008, according to the Greater Raleigh CVB. The 42-story building will have 264 guest rooms, 12,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, which includes a 6,000 sq. ft. ballroom and a rooftop terrace of 10,000 additional sq. ft. for receptions, plus an upscale restaurant and luxury condominiums. To find out more, visit [http://www.visitraleigh.com/media/2billion\\_plus\\_renaissance](http://www.visitraleigh.com/media/2billion_plus_renaissance).

## 16. MARKETING & TRAVEL TRENDS

**Hip Cafes Make Way To Lobbies** - As major hotels compete to create hip scenes in their lobbies, they're adjusting menus to deliver more and better food options for guests who like to hang out there. As a result of some hotels' initiatives, travelers who like to idle, work or converse in lobbies are increasingly likely to find more finger food, appetizers and dishes that can easily be shared without making a big mess. They're often served on smaller plates. In many cases hotels are seeking a touch of the international in their lobby offerings. Among the popular items: panini, tapas, mini pot pies, individual-size pizzas, penne pasta, calamari, and small steaks. For guests, the new options can mean faster service and more snacking variety. It's also another option for those who prefer not to eat alone in the restaurant or order room service. To find out more, visit [http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2008-01-07-lobby-food\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2008-01-07-lobby-food_N.htm).

**This is Your Brain on Vacation** - Susan O'Keefe, associate editor for "National Geographic Traveler," reports in her Intelligent Traveler blog on a new trend in "brain fitness" programs for people on the go. Banking on the fact that mental fitness might be on a traveler's mind, hotels and resorts are jumping on the brain fitness bandwagon and offering guests programs to help them clear the mental cobwebs and relax while on the road. Hyatt Resorts' is offering a variety of complimentary board games from the Cranium Game Library. The Westin is starting this year its BrainBody Fitness Program,

where each guest at their 150 properties will be given a selection of simple brain exercises to do each morning, afternoon, and evening for the duration of their stay to aid in memory, focus, and performance. To find out more, visit <http://intelligenttravel.typepad.com/it/2008/01/this-is-your-br.html>.

### **17. "NORTH CAROLINA WEEKEND"**

For the week of Jan. 10 on UNC-TV's "North Carolina Weekend," step back in time during the commemoration of the anniversary of the Second Battle of Fort Fisher in Kure Beach. "After Dark" visits Circa 1922 in Wilmington. Find treasures while antiquing in Selma. Head to Sapphire and hit the slopes at Sapphire Valley Ski Area. Check-in to the Arrowhead Inn in Durham. And the "Marker Minute" visits Fort Defiance in Lenoir. *(Please note: listings are subject to change.)* Exclusively underwritten by the N.C. Division of Tourism, "North Carolina Weekend" airs Thursdays at 9:00 p.m. with repeats on Fridays and Saturdays *(please check local listings)* on UNC-TV. In addition, UNC-TV has made recent editions of "North Carolina Weekend" available online. For more information or to download a podcast, visit <http://www.unctv.org/ncweekend>.

### **18. UPCOMING INDUSTRY MEETINGS**

**Jan. 9-11** - Blue Ridge Parkway Association Winter Meeting, Mount Airy

**Jan. 10** - NCBTA Meeting, Charlotte

**Jan. 10-11** - MPI Carolinas Chapter Meeting, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

**Jan. 24-25** - NCTIA Board Meeting, Fayetteville

**Jan. 26-30** - N.C. Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace, Asheville

**Feb. 1** - N.C. Agritourism Networking Association 2nd Annual Conference, Asheboro

**Feb. 2** - FMST Annual Meeting, Greensboro

**Feb. 2-8** - ABA Marketplace, Virginia Beach, Va.

**Feb. 5** - N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, Raleigh

**Feb. 7-8** - NCACVB Meeting, Mount Airy

**Feb. 7-8** - N.C. Wine & Grape Council Retreat & Quarterly Meeting, Greensboro

### **SHARE THE "NEWSLINK"**

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### **FEEDBACK WELCOME**

The N.C. Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development is committed to serving North Carolina's tourism industry. If you have feedback regarding any of the Division's programs, let your voice be heard at [visitnc@nccommerce.com](mailto:visitnc@nccommerce.com).