

In this week's NewsLink...

October 28, 2009

1. **DIVISION: ALL AREAS OF N.C. ARE ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS**
2. **AT MARKETING OUTLOOK FORUM: A REBOUND IN TRAVEL**
3. **U.S., CHINESE OFFICIALS MEET ON TOURISM IN ORLANDO**
4. **LODGING INDICATOR TREND REPORT**
5. **DIVISION SEEKING INFO FOR THEMATIC TRAILS**
6. **OPRAH, SOUTHERN LIVING AND NY TIMES CO-OPS AVAILABLE**
7. **UNC-CH GRADS MAKING MARKS IN HOLLYWOOD**
8. **FIRST GENTLEMAN EAVES LAUNCHES "CELEBRATE NORTH CAROLINA" INITIATIVE**
9. **AGREEMENT PROTECTS 1,500 ACRES IN MCDOWELL COUNTY**
10. **N.C. CIVIL WAR TOURISM COUNCIL GRANT APPLICATIONS**
11. **N.C. AIRPORT & AIRLINE NEWS**
12. **ATLANTIC INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY RECOGNIZED BY U.S. HOUSE**
13. **GASOLINE PRICES JUMP IN PAST MONTH, PARTLY ON WEAKER DOLLAR**
14. **NATIONAL BRIEFING FROM U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION**
15. **N.C. GREEN TRAVEL: HAVING TROUBLE MAKING GREEN TRAVEL PLANS**
16. **SURVEYS, INDUSTRY, MARKETING & TRAVEL TRENDS**
17. **OUR STATE SPOTLIGHTS N.C.'S FAVORITE FOODS**
18. **"NORTH CAROLINA WEEKEND"**
19. **UPCOMING INDUSTRY MEETINGS**

1. DIVISION: ALL AREAS OF N.C. ARE ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS

The Division is working closely with travel industry partners this week to get out the message that all areas of the state are accessible for color-watching trips, as multiple state agencies work to mitigate the fallout from a rockslide Sunday that resulted in a detour along I-40 near the North Carolina-Tennessee border. The Division's message is clear. "Our wonderful mountain towns in Western North Carolina are still easily accessible from a variety of routes for visitors seeking a colorful fall experience," said Assistant Secretary Lynn Minges.

Gov. Bev Perdue, Commerce Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll, Transportation Secretary Gene Conti and other officials toured the site of the rockslide today (Wednesday). They received a briefing on the situation and met with local and regional officials. The governor has signed an emergency declaration that will allow the state to seek federal funding to clear debris from the slide. "I want to reopen I-40 as quickly as possible with public safety our first goal," Perdue said. "Western North Carolina is open for business and the leaf season is spectacular. So use our alternate routes during your visit and enjoy all western North Carolina has to offer."

The Division helped coordinate the visit to the site.

As the N.C. Dept. of Transportation (DOT) works to clear debris and repair the roadway, the Division is working to let potential visitors know that fall color is peaking and that all areas of the state are accessible to visitors. Many other state agencies are involved also, including Crime Control and Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management and the Highway Patrol.

The Division has issued news releases to in-state media and targeted out-of-state media. The release is posted on the VisitNC.com [media room](#). The Division also publishes up-to-the minute fall color reports including those from Dr. Howard Neufeld, of Appalachian State University, and Dick Thomas, executive director of the Piedmont Environmental Center, on VisitNC.com, Twitter @VisitNC and on facebook.com/northcarolina.

The Division is also considering using other marketing strategies, such as cooperative advertising, to deliver the message that the mountains are open for business.

[VisitNC.com](#) has an advisory header linking to DOT's detours, so visitors can access the latest road information. VisitNC.com also lists [scenic drives](#).

[SYNC](#) ran the Division's news release to inform the state's business leaders of the Division's initiatives.

A special Newslink on Monday outlined detours and mentioned how the I-40 Welcome Center staff is helping by offering the Division's Travel Guides and state maps to alternate distribution points. In addition, they are working at the I-26 West Welcome Center to assist with the additional traffic there during the fall color season. For more information about the I-40 West Welcome Center, [click here](#) or contact Manager Tina Best at (828) 627-6206 or via tbest@nccommerce.com.

2. AT MARKETING OUTLOOK FORUM: A REBOUND IN TRAVEL

Assistant Secretary Lynn Minges and a delegation from North Carolina joined nearly 500 tourism officials from across the country at the U.S. Travel Association's Marketing Outlook Forum in Little Rock, Ark. this week. Among the N.C. delegation were Scott Gilmore of LKM, Mike Applegate of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, Peggy Dalman of the Biltmore Co., Mary Jaeger-Gale of Chimney Rock Park, Cathy Robbins

of Tweetsie Railroad, Marla Tambellini of the Asheville CVB, Mary Jane Ferguson of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian, Judy Randall of Randall Travel Marketing and Berkeley Young of Young Strategies.

At the forum, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce projected that international travel to the U.S. will regain its footing by 2010. This year – 2009 – is the first forecast year of decline since 2003. Reflecting the current global economic environment, international travel is forecast to decline by 8 percent in 2009. But a 3 percent rebound is projected for the U.S. by the end of 2010, followed by 5 percent annual increases through 2013. In 2009, 22 of the top 25 arrival markets will post declines.

The top two markets generating visitors to the U.S. – Canada and Mexico – are forecast to grow by 13 percent and 5 percent, respectively, from 2008 to 2013. The Division maintains an office in Canada and aggressively markets North Carolina to Canadian visitors. Visitors from Europe are projected to realize very small growth for the next three years. The Division also maintains offices in London and Munich, targeting European travelers. Asia is projected to post 4 percent to 7 percent increases in visitors over the next several years. U.S. and Chinese tourism officials, including Minges, met for the third time in two years last week to explore opportunities for growing travel between the U.S. and China (see next story). To learn more about international visitation and visitor spending in the United States, access the 2008 data tables, and to read additional analyses of these data, [click here](#).

3. U.S., CHINESE OFFICIALS MEET ON TOURISM IN ORLANDO

U.S. and Chinese tourism officials met for the third time in two years last week to explore opportunities for growing travel between the United States and China. Tourism officials from 30 Chinese provinces and 23 U.S. states attended the two-day summit, including Chairman of the China National Tourism Administration Shao Qiwei, U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Roger Dow, and Assistant Secretary Lynn Minges.

During the summit, leading tourism officials from both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding as part of an ongoing initiative to build strategic cooperation in tourism. The first summit, held in October 2007, served as the catalyst for the first official Chinese tour group visit to the United States the following June. Representatives of the two countries' travel industries also discussed current issues in the travel sector that affect both countries, from the H1N1 flu to the Shanghai World Expo 2010, and examined travel trends in the U.S.-China market.

China added the United States as an approved destination in December 2007 and recently expanded international marketing for Chinese group leisure travel from six provinces to 21, more than tripling access to the United States by its citizens and opening up an entirely new travel market with the potential for millions of new visitors to experience America. China currently has a middle class of more than 300 million people who are able to travel to the United States, and it is the fastest growing outbound travel market in the world. Nearly 500,000 citizens of mainland China

traveled to the United States in 2008. China is the only inbound travel market projected to see double-digit, year-over-year growth in inbound tourism over the next four years. Visitors from China tend to come frequently and spend an average of 23 nights when they travel to the United States. They are also the highest spending of any other inbound international group, averaging \$7,200 per person, per trip.

4. LODGING INDICATOR TREND REPORT

Occupancy in North Carolina through September is down 10.6 percent, according to recent lodging data from Smith Travel Research. Nationwide, year-to-date occupancy is down 9.9 percent and in the South Atlantic states, occupancy is down 8.0 percent.

Average daily rates (ADR) in North Carolina are down 5.5 percent year-to-date, and revenue per available room (RevPAR) in North Carolina has dropped 15.5 percent from \$49.45 to \$41.79 year-to-date. Room rates are down 9.1 percent nationally and down 7.3 percent in the South Atlantic states.

Although the data show some improvements in a handful of cities, industry experts say the hotel industry will not begin to rebound until 2011 or 2012. Still, the numbers represent the first sign of improvements in more than a year.

The complete North Carolina report is available at www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research. For more information, contact Marlise Taylor at (919) 733-7278 or via mtaylor@nccommerce.com.

5. DIVISION SEEKING INFO FOR THEMATIC TRAILS

Tourism Development Officers are seeking information regarding thematic trails across all regions of North Carolina such as American Indian, African-American and historic churches. As they survey assets, they would like to include as much information as possible. Suggestions for additional trail systems in the respective regions are welcome as well. To submit suggestions or sites to be included in the trails inventory, contact:

American Indian assets -- Julie Thomas, (252) 508-5261 or jthomas@nccommerce.com

African-American assets – Frankie McWhorter, (828) 447-4379 or fmcwhorter@nccommerce.com

Historic churches assets – Kaye Myers, (828) 458-5757 or kmyers@nccommerce.com

6. OPRAH, SOUTHERN LIVING AND NY TIMES CO-OPS AVAILABLE

Space for the Spring 2010 Cooperative print ads program is filling up fast with only a few spots still available in Oprah, Southern Living and The New York Times. Act now to secure your space. Oprah has a circulation of over 650,000 and the cost is \$1,800 per partner. Southern Living has a circulation of over 1.2 million with a cost of \$3,750 per partner. The New York Times has a circulation of over 1.4 million with a cost of \$3,000 per partner. Space will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like to partner with the Division and be part of this strong lead generating program, contact Tammy Kazmierczak of LKM at (704) 364-8969 or via tkaz@lkmideas.com.

7. UNC-CH GRADS MAKING MARKS IN HOLLYWOOD

In the Sunday edition of The News & Observer, David Menconi wrote of the “Carolina Movie Mafia,” which consists of a dozen or so UNC-Chapel Hill alumni who are now out in Los Angeles doing behind-the-camera work in film and television on several high-profile projects. Whether directing, editing or writing, these UNC grads are making a mark and still staying in touch with each other. To find out more, visit <http://www.newsobserver.com/entertainment/story/155323.html>.

8. FIRST GENTLEMAN EAVES LAUNCHES “CELEBRATE NORTH CAROLINA” INITIATIVE

First Gentleman Bob Eaves, in partnership with the Office of the Governor and the N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources, has launched a new initiative – Celebrate North Carolina – to focus on the people, culture and rich resources of the state. For each season of the year, Celebrate North Carolina will explore one of the many gifts the state has to offer through public events, education and opportunities to engage and learn. To find out more, [click here](#). To find out more about Celebrate North Carolina, including events and links to further resources, visit www.celebrate.nc.gov.

9. AGREEMENT PROTECTS 1,500 ACRES IN MCDOWELL COUNTY

A vast tract of land, 1,488 acres, owned by CSX Corp. in McDowell County, has been permanently placed off limits to development or logging, through a deal brokered by the Conservation Trust of North Carolina (CTNC). The tract includes land along a four-mile stretch on the Blue Ridge Parkway. It also includes 1.5 miles of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. The state of North Carolina completed the agreement on Sept. 4. CSX will continue to own the land, operate the rail line and pay relevant property taxes. CTNC will manage the easement and monitor the property annually under an agreement with the N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources. To find out more, visit <http://www2.mcdowellnews.com/content/2009/oct/26/261852/deal-protects-land-mcdowell-development/> and <http://www.wral.com/news/state/story/6282929>.

10. N.C. CIVIL WAR TOURISM COUNCIL GRANT APPLICATIONS

The N.C. Civil War Tourism Council is now offering grants to assist North Carolina communities and organizations. Grants will be based on the Council’s core mission of preserving North Carolina’s Civil War heritage, by educating the public of the state’s economic, cultural and social experiences during the War Between the States, and by encouraging visitation to the state’s Civil War era sites and museums. The Council has budgeted \$4,000 for the calendar year 2010 for grants. Applications must be postmarked no later than **Nov. 25**. Faxed applications will not be accepted. For more information, including grant guidelines and applications, visit http://www.nccivilwar.com/grants_programs.asp.

11. N.C. AIRPORT & AIRLINE NEWS

Southwest Adding RDU-St. Louis Flight -- Southwest Airlines announced last week it plans to start daily nonstop service between Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) and St. Louis in May 2010. The announcement comes a month after American Airlines announced that it would end its flight between RDU and St. Louis by April 2010.

http://triangle.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2009/10/19/daily43.html?ed=2009-10-21&ana=e_du_pap.

US Airways Cutting 1,000 Jobs, Reducing Flying -- US Airways said on Wednesday (today) it will cut some 1,000 jobs next year, shift nearly all of its flying to its three hubs, which includes Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, and Washington, D.C., and suspend several international routes. US Airways said the job cuts will happen in the first half 2010 and will include 600 passenger and ramp service workers, 200 pilots and about 150 flight attendants. To find out more, visit http://news14.com/charlotte-news-104-content/top_stories/616808/us-airways-cutting-1-000-jobs--reducing-flying.

12. ATLANTIC INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY RECOGNIZED BY U.S. HOUSE

Earlier this month, the U.S. House of Representatives recognized, in House Resolution 465, the importance of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway to recreational, commercial and military vessels and to the history and quality of life of the citizens of the United States. In addition, the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association received special recognition on its 10th anniversary. Also part of the resolution was the House's recognition of the Dismal Swamp Canal as the oldest operating artificial waterway in the United States. The Canal is on the National Register of Historical Places, registered as an engineering landmark in 1988, and included in the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program. To read the resolution, [click here](#).

13.. GASOLINE PRICES JUMP IN PAST MONTH, PARTLY ON WEAKER DOLLAR

Gasoline prices have risen 16 cents a gallon in the past month and will go a bit higher before leveling off, oil and gas analysts say. The national average price for a gallon of regular gasoline was \$2.67 Tuesday vs. \$2.69 a year ago, auto club AAA says. Expectations of a global economic recovery have helped drive the increase. The weak dollar is another big factor. To find out more, visit http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2009-10-26-gas-prices_N.htm.

14. NATIONAL BRIEFING FROM U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

H1N1 Flu – Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan all testified before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs last week regarding the national response to H1N1 Flu. Senators on the committee expressed great concern on the slow pace of making H1N1 Flu vaccine available to states. Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) asked Secretary Napolitano if there is additional health screening of arriving international travelers, and she replied that since the novel virus is so widely present throughout the world, more invasive screening techniques of those visitors are not necessary at this time since it would provide little or no benefit.

CEO Roundtable – Last week, two dozen travel industry CEOs met with top Administration officials and Congressional leaders to discuss a range of industry concerns – legitimacy of business meetings, events and incentive travel; making credit available for travel-related small businesses; final passage of the Travel Promotion Act;

expansion of the Visa Waiver Program; continuing to improve the international traveler entry experience; and travel industry involvement in pandemic preparedness.

Climate Change – Today (Wednesday), the National Parks subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources holds a hearing on current and expected impacts of climate change on units of the National Park System.

15. N.C. GREEN TRAVEL: HAVING TROUBLE MAKING GREEN TRAVEL PLANS

According to a report by PhoCusWright (www.phocuswright.com) only 8 percent of travelers know where to find a green hotel, although the same report stated that 44 percent of travelers consider the environmental practices of destinations important when planning a trip. A number of travel Web sites and guides are seeking to fill that gap, such as AAA's eco program (www.aaa.biz/Approved/eco.html), and Travelocity.com's green directory (http://leisure.travelocity.com/Promotions/0,,TRAVELOCITY%7C5019%7Cmkt_main,00.html). New Web sites are popping-up to fill the void as well, such as www.istaygreen.org. Even the EPA is getting involved (www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=PARTNER_LIST.showPartnerResults&partner_type_id=CIO&s_code=ALL). And there are a number of programs here in North Carolina, such as GoGreenPlus.org, SustainableSandhills.org, and GreenBusinessPlan.com. For more information on how your tourism business can help fill the gap, contact Tom Rhodes at tom.rhodes@ncdenr.gov, or Alex Naar at (252) 737-1346 or via anaar@nccommerce.com.

16. SURVEYS, INDUSTRY, MARKETING & TRAVEL TRENDS

Study: U.S. Cultural and Heritage Travel Popular – A recent study reveals that 78 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling, translating to 118.3 million adults each year. With cultural and heritage travelers spending an average of \$994 per trip, they contribute more than \$192 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The study is the first to segment cultural and/or heritage travelers, showing the diverse groups that exist within this broader category of traveler. The segmentation analysis uncovered five different types of cultural and heritage travelers: Passionate, Well-rounded, Aspirational, Self-Guided, and Keeping it Light. Three segments – Passionate, Well-rounded, and Self-guided – were more serious about their travels and said that cultural and heritage activities had a greater impact on their destination choice. Together, these three segments represent 40 percent of all leisure travelers and contribute nearly \$124 billion to the U.S. economy. The study was conducted by Mandala Research for the U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism (USCHT) Marketing Council, in conjunction with the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. To find out more about the study and about cultural heritage tourism, visit <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org>.

Paying Closer Attention to Expense Accounts – In his “On the Road” column for The New York Times, Joe Sharkey tells of Vince Vitti, a stickler about expense accounts and author of “Travology: Managing Travel Thru the Great Recession.” You should get to know him, Sharkey writes — or, at least, learn more about his thinking. As business

travel slowly comes back, expense accounts are being more carefully scrutinized. To find out more, visit

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/business/27road.html?ref=business>.

Travelhorizons Survey Predicts Swine Flu Could Hit Travel Hard – The October 2009 travelhorizons survey, co-authored by Ypartnership and the U.S. Travel Association, reports that swine flu could have a significant impact on travel. The U.S. Centers For Disease Control and Prevention is reporting the H1N1 virus is now "widespread" in 46 of 50 states. Numerous schools have been closed and public events canceled as a result. Among respondents who intend to take a leisure trip during the next six months (from now through the end of April 2010), over one third would be "very/extremely likely" to alter their travel plans should their intended destination experience a widespread outbreak of the H1N1 virus. When asked how they would change their travel plans, nearly half (45 percent) said they would postpone their trip until the outbreak subsided, one-third stated they would visit a different destination, and three out of 10 (31 percent) said they would cancel their trip. To find out more, visit <http://www.travelpulse.com/Resources/Editorial.aspx?n=62640>.

Facebook Becoming Big Friend Of Small Businesses -- Firms are building fan bases on Facebook, the social networking Web site, and using it to connect with customers. Charles Nelson, president of Sprinkles Cupcakes, the Beverly Hills baker to the stars, doesn't have a Facebook profile. Nelson, who works seven days a week, has no time for chatting online with Facebook friends. But Nelson is logged on to Facebook all the time. That's because more than 70,000 people have declared themselves fans of Sprinkles' Facebook page. Each day on the Web site, Sprinkles announces a secret word, such as "ganache" or "bunny," and the first 25 or 50 people to show up at any of its five stores and whisper that word get a free cupcake. Facebook is not just for friends anymore. The free social networking site -- blocked in many workplaces as a potential time-waster -- is increasingly becoming an inexpensive marketing tool for small businesses. To find out more, visit http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-facebook-smallbiz27-2009oct27_0,7371262.story.

NBTA Report Predicts Increase in U.S. Business Travel – The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) has released its 2010 U.S. Business Travel Buyers' Cost Forecast. The average hotel rate this year is forecast to be \$136 and the NBTA projects that will continue to drop by 2 to 8 percent next year. Air travel will stay roughly the same for 2010, ranging from 2 percent below to 3 percent above this year's fares and car rental rates will dip slightly, by 1 percent to 3 percent. With air travel and car rental costs expected to remain nearly flat and hotel rates expected to decline, businesses expect to travel more. That growth in travel is expected to lead to increases in travel expenditures. To find out more, visit <http://www.travelpulse.com/Resources/Editorial.aspx?n=62463>.

Business Travelers Take to Their Bikes -- Experts say is a growing number of business travelers bicycle while on assignment. Hotels often offer bicycle rentals and some business travelers are even bringing along their own bike. Many American cities

have created bike paths and lanes, improved markings on streets and installed bicycle traffic lights. Reasons for biking popularity include health, lack of good public transportation, cost savings to the company due to not renting a car thus eliminating gas prices, and bypassing rush hour traffic. To find out more, visit <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/business/20bicycles.html?ref=travel>.

17. OUR STATE SPOTLIGHTS N.C.'S FAVORITE FOODS

The cover story for the November issue of Our State magazine features “Our Favorite Foods – What to eat and where to find it in North Carolina.” Besides fried chicken, biscuits and banana pudding classics, there are also such articles as an ethnic barbeque tour in Charlotte, a vegan Thanksgiving feast in the Piedmont, and Ocracoke’s famous figs. The magazine hits newsstands on Nov. 3. To find out more about Our State, visit <http://www.ourstate.com>.

18. “NORTH CAROLINA WEEKEND”

For the week of Oct. 29 on UNC-TV's “North Carolina Weekend,” enjoy the arts around Marshall. Test your skateboarding or skating skills at the Extreme Park in Greenville. Take in the great outdoors at Pilot Mountain State Park in Pinnacle. Step back to another era at the Carolina Renaissance Festival in Huntersville. And the “House Special” samples the fare at Rodi in Gastonia. (*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>.

19. UPCOMING INDUSTRY MEETINGS & EVENTS

Oct. 29 – N.C. Wine & Grape Council, Raleigh

Nov. 12-13 – NCTIA Annual Tourism Leadership Conference, Greensboro

Nov. 13 – Piedmont Triad Host Group Meeting, Greensboro

Nov. 19-20 – MPI-CC Meeting, Raleigh

Dec. 8 – N.C. Film Council, Raleigh

Dec. 15 – N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, Raleigh

SHARE THE “NEWSLINK”

Want to share the “NewsLink” with a friend or colleague? Sign them up now at <http://www.nccommerce.com/tourism/newsletter/>. Should you have difficulty signing up for “NewsLink,” contact Publications Director Kathy Prickett at (919) 733-8302 or via kprickett@nccommerce.com.

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.