

VISITNC - NewsLink for April 1, 2009

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1. GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN BECOMES STATE'S NEWEST PARK

Gov. Beverly Perdue has signed legislation that allows Grandfather Mountain to become North Carolina's newest state park. Perdue's signature on Tuesday (yesterday) finalized an agreement to create Grandfather Mountain State Park and protect its nearly 2,500 undeveloped acres. The heirs of company founder Hugh Morton will continue operating the Grandfather Mountain tourist attraction, including its nature center and "mile-high" swinging bridge. The state also will gain a conservation easement on 749 acres of the property. The state parks system is coordinating an interim management plan with the Morton family for the backcountry property and its 12 miles of trails. The property lies in Watauga, Avery and Caldwell counties, and contains the headwaters of both the Watauga and Linville rivers. To find out more, visit <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/story/1465925.html> and <http://www.governor.state.nc.us/NewsItems/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?newsItemID=250>.

2. MINGES ELECTED TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

Lynn Minges was elected to the Executive Committee of the U.S. Travel Association Board of Directors during its quarterly board meeting in Washington, D.C., last week. The national board helps to shape policy issues that affect the nation's \$780 billion travel and tourism industry and serves all facets of the industry. Other meeting highlights included briefings from the CEO Roundtable, which was attended by 12 industry CEOs and included a briefing on a recent White House meeting with President Obama;

approval of the launch of Meetings Mean Business, a major national campaign to push back against attacks on the meetings and events industry; and plans for achieving passage of the Travel Promotion Act in Congress.

3. “FACES OF TRAVEL” CONTEST LAUNCHED

Meetings Mean Business is a campaign working to protect the millions of American jobs that depend on business travel and events. It recently launched the new initiative “Faces of Travel,” which seeks entries from people who work in the tourism industry, telling the world how the nationwide downturn in legitimate travel is hurting them personally. Entries would be an original, brief (45-60 second) video telling why business travel is important to that person and why they should be the Face of Travel. The deadline for submissions is **April 24**. Videos will be screened and then made public on a live YouTube channel created for the contest. To find out more, including rules and suggestions, visit <http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/facesoftravel>.

4. MINGES AND TAYLOR SPEAK AT NCVRMA CONFERENCE

Lynn Minges was the keynote speaker at the 1st Annual N.C. Vacation Rental Managers Association (NCVRMA) Conference, held in Charlotte March 30-31. Minges discussed the state of the tourism industry in North Carolina to over 60 conference attendees. The Division’s Director of Research Marlise Taylor was on a panel about industry data collection, and also provided attendees an overview of the Division’s research program. Other sessions included state insurance issues, a legislative update and vendor showcase. The NCVRMA was formed to promote the vacation rental business in the state to the public as well as to professionals employed in the travel and related businesses. The organization educates its members in professional and efficient operations and engages in activities which support such operations as well as the good of the industry. To find out more about the NCVRMA, visit <http://www.ncvrma.com/>.

5. N.C. COMMERCE ATTENDS INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL FAIR IN CHINA

Last week, William Chu, who heads the N.C. Dept. of Commerce’s International Trade Division in Hong Kong, attended the Guangzhou International Travel Fair in Guangzhou, China, to market travel to North Carolina. The show is one of the most important significant annual international travel fairs in the Asian-Pacific Region for its extensive influence upon the tourism industry. To find out more about the Guangzhou International Travel Fair, visit <http://www.gitf.com.cn/index.php?scriptlet=CMS/Start&id=914&language=en>.

As a result of the U.S.-China Tourism Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) that was signed in December 2007, China's travel and tourism industry has been experiencing an upward growth trajectory. Moreover, the number of tourist groups to the United States has dramatically increased since the implementation started in June. It is estimated that China's travel industry will continue to grow at an annual rate of over 10 percent in the next ten years. The Guangzhou International Travel Fair, the first of its kind in China, has been successfully held for 17 years and has become one of the largest events in China.

6. GREEN TRAVEL TIPS HELP PRESERVE SCENIC BEAUTY OF NORTH CAROLINA

The Division teamed with Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University to offer “green travel tips.” Suggestions include staying on designated trails and roads to help prevent erosion and keep sensitive plants and ecosystems from being trampled; support local artists and craftsmen by buying locally made handicrafts and products; and, since there is a lot of North Carolina that can be seen with non-motorized transportation only, try it, which helps reduce air and noise pollution. To find out more, visit <http://www.newsobserver.com/105/story/1460671.html>.

7. TRAXLER LOSES CANCER FIGHT

Mary Margaret Traxler, founder and one-time publisher of TRIP Magazine, passed away last week in Charlotte after a courageous battle with lung cancer. Memorial services were held for Traxler on Tuesday (yesterday). To find out more, including memorial scholarships information, visit <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/charlotte/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=125510595>.

8. GREENING N.C. TRAVEL: OYSTER SHELL RECYCLING

Although it's now at the end of oyster season, many of this year's shucked oysters will live on to help produce more oysters for North Carolina. The North Carolina Oyster Shell Recycling program (www.ncdmf.net/shellfish/recycle1.htm) collects oyster shells from events and businesses and places them back in the coastal water. The most productive place to grow oysters is on other oyster shells. By using used oyster shells to build oyster reefs, it helps create the ideal oyster home. Over 50 restaurants from across the state participate in the program, diverting what would normally be thrown away to help keep the coast's water cleaner and producing more oysters. For information on participating in the program, contact Sabrina Varnam of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries at (252) 726-7021 or via Sabrina.Varnam@ncmail.net. For more information on sustainable tourism, contact Alex Naar at (919) 715-3782 or via naara@ecu.edu.

9. FALLING WATERS AMONG FROMMERS.COM'S "CAMPING CHIC"

Falling Waters Resort in Bryson City was among Frommers.com's "Can Camping Be Chic? 5 Stylish Tent Vacations." The article noted Falling Waters is "an outdoor adventure lover's dream" with its luxurious, "Mongolian-inspired versions of tents called Yurts." To find out more, visit <http://www.frommers.com/articles/5897.html>.

10. BENTONVILLE POPULAR PODCAST ON CIVILWARTRAVELER.COM

CivilWarTraveler.com recently added a podcast about the Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site onto its Web site. In its first two weeks, the five-stop driving tour, which lasts about an hour, was downloaded 2,132 times and was the top downloaded podcast on the site. The podcast tells the story of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's attempt to slow down Union General William T. Sherman's 60,000-man Union army as it marched through North Carolina in March 1865. The Confederates set a trap for Sherman near the tiny hamlet of Bentonville, but the resulting battle on March 19-21, 1865, turned out to be a decisive Union victory. To hear the podcast, visit <http://www.civilwartraveler.com/audio/#Bentonville>.

11. DURHAM & CHAPEL HILL AMONG CNN'S GREAT COLLEGE BASKETBALL TOWNS TO VISIT

CNN, with the help of experts at the NCAA, chose a handful of basketball towns for their "Great College Basketball Towns to Visit." Their choices were filled with great fans, rich traditions and history that make these places worth a visit. Durham and Chapel Hill, jointly, were listed as #1 on the list of five towns. CNN noted, "College basketball is deeply rooted in North Carolina culture, thanks to the success of the men's teams at the University of North Carolina and Duke University. The epic rivalry between Duke's Blue Devils and North Carolina's Tar Heels draws in so many fans that some sports experts say it is partly responsible for reviving the waning college basketball viewership in the first half of this decade." To find out more, visit

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/TRAVEL/03/31/great.basketball.towns/index.html>.

12. TRAVELING THE MOUNTAINS WITH BUDGET TRAVEL

In its April issue, Budget Travel offers an article on a father-daughter trip from Asheville to Cherokee, along the Blue Ridge Parkway and surrounding area. With stops for attractions, lodging and dining, the duo visits Asheville, Black Mountain, Chimney Rock, Lake Lure, Cherokee, Boone and Blowing Rock. To find out more, visit

<http://www.budgettravel.com/bt-dyn/content/article/2009/03/06/AR2009030602954.html>.

13. MEDIA LEADS

Meeting Related News for Smaller Markets – Small Market Meetings seeks meeting-related news from second-tier and smaller cities concerning new or renovated hotels, convention facilities, new marketing programs aimed at meetings, transportation improvements or other meeting-related changes. Send information for the May issue to Editor Vickie Mitchell by e-mail at vmitchell@smallmarketmeetings.com. **Deadline: April 10.**

Spas That Give Advice – Kathy Chin Leong is writing a spa story on spas that give advice on nutrition, life coaching, hypnosis, etc., for Pulse Magazine, an international magazine for spa professionals. Qualifying sources must be members of I-SPA. PR reps, spa reps, and hotels can e-mail her directly at kchinleong@sbcglobal.net.

Deadline: April 2.

Volunteer or Learning Vacation Experiences – Editors of the Discover America Canada Canadian Traveller Column are soliciting information on volunteer or learning vacation experiences for U.S. destinations for their May 2009 column. Highlight validity dates, special discounts (specify currency) and whether the entity works with any Canadian-based tour operators to promote their offers. Submit information in a Word document or in the body of an e-mail; do not just send a link to the information. Attach a 300 dpi photo to support the release or submission. Include full contact information and Web site. Submissions should be sent to admin@seeamerica.ca. **Deadline: April 3.**

14. "NORTH CAROLINA WEEKEND"

For the week of April 2 on UNC-TV's "North Carolina Weekend," visit the Proximity Hotel in Greensboro. Enjoy a tour of Tabor City. Take in the great outdoors at the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest in Robbinville. Lift a glass at Chateau Laurinda Vineyard in Sparta. And the "House Special" samples the fare at the Liberty Family Restaurant in Lewisville. *(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>.

15. UPCOMING INDUSTRY MEETINGS

March 31-April 2 – TravelCom '09, Atlanta, Ga.

April 2-3 – DMANC Meeting, Hickory

April 4-8 – Travel South USA Showcase, Kissimmee, Fla.

April 17-19 – Cycle NC Spring Ride, Washington

April 28 – N.C. Coast Host Meeting, Smithfield

April 30 – N.C. Wine & Grape Council Quarterly Meeting, Raleigh

May 6-7 – Blue Ridge Parkway Association Annual Meeting, Sparta

May 9-17 – National Travel & Tourism Week

May 12 – N.C. Travel & Tourism Day

May 12 – N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, Raleigh

May 16-20 – International Pow Wow, Miami, Fla.

May 17-18 – MPI-CC Annual Meeting, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

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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.