

VISITNC - NewsLink for June 10, 2009

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1. U.S. TRAVEL OUTLOOK EXAMINES CURRENT INDUSTRY TRENDS

Though too soon to declare an economic recovery, positive indicators are fueling confidence with regards to recent industry trends. In its June U.S. Travel Outlook, the U.S. Travel Association notes that, with gasoline prices being down significantly from last July and housing demand beginning to show signs of stabilization, consumers in May displayed the highest consumer confidence in eight months (May – 54.9, up from 40.8 in April). Most economists warn that there are likely another six months of economic instability, but many suggest that a restrained recovery will begin to be felt by the fourth quarter.

Lodging Industry

Though consumer confidence had positive growth in May, Smith Travel Research (STR) noted that the U.S. hotel industry posted declines in three key measurements in April (the last month for which there is summary data). For the month, occupancy was down 11.1 percent (*in North Carolina occupancy was down 12.6 percent*); average daily rate fell 9.4 percent (*in North Carolina ADR decreased 8.1 percent*); and revenue per available room lost 19.5 percent (*down 19.7 percent in North Carolina*). Weekday

business travel remains the weakest segment and luxury hotels are the hardest hit as a result of the backlash against corporate meetings and incentive travel.

New Forecasts

The U.S. Travel Association forecast of a weak but stable summer travel season is supported by new research from the organization. Americans are expected to take an estimated 322 million leisure trips during the summer months and, while a decrease of about 2 percent from 2008, the leisure portion of the industry is considered resilient in the current climate. Consumers are expected to spend approximately seven nights away from home and spend more than \$900 during that time. An estimated 54 percent of Americans are planning to take at least one leisure trip this summer with plans to shop for value pricing wherever possible. Americans also plan to take more daytrips than in past years.

For more information from the June edition of the U.S. Travel Outlook, visit www.ustravel.org/resources/Outlook/09/June.htm.

2. CBO REPORTS TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT WOULD REDUCE FEDERAL DEFICIT

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reports that the Travel Promotion Act will reduce the U.S. federal budget deficit by \$425 million over the next 10 years, and the full Senate is expected to consider the bill possibly as soon as today (Wednesday). Recently approved by the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, the Travel Promotion Act would establish a public-private partnership to promote the United States as a premier international travel destination and communicate U.S. security and entry policies. The legislation specifies that travel promotion would be paid for by private sector contributions and a \$10 fee on foreign travelers from countries that do not pay \$131 for a visa to enter the United States. Similar legislation passed the U.S. House of Representatives in 2008, but did not receive a vote before the Senate adjourned.

“This bill will reduce the deficit and increase jobs,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “The Travel Promotion Act will generate \$4 billion in new stimulus each year, 40,000 new U.S. jobs in the first year, and \$425 million in deficit reduction over 10 years -- at no cost to U.S. taxpayers. This is the type of stimulus Americans are looking for.” For more information on the Travel Promotion Act, visit http://poweroftravel.org/statistics/keyissues_intl_tpa.htm.

3. DEADLINE FOR 2010 NC TRAVEL GUIDE UPDATES NEXT WEDNESDAY

The Division of Tourism will soon pull information for the 2010 North Carolina Travel Guide from the VisitNC.com database (a.k.a. Extranet); the deadline is **June 17** for updating attractions and accommodations listings.

Now is the best time for all attractions and accommodations to visit VisitNC.com to view their property's listing and to verify that their information listed is correct. If your listing needs to be updated, contact your local Extranet county contact; a county-by-county

listing of Extranet contacts may be found by clicking on Extranet Contacts at www.nccommerce.com/en/TourismServices/ContactUs/#Resource6.

This year, accommodations and attractions are encouraged to include toll-free numbers; the toll-free number, if available, will be used as the phone number for accommodations. "Icon amenities" for accommodations will be Indoor Pool, Outdoor Pool, Internet Access, Complimentary Breakfast, Exercise Room, Restaurant On-Site and Pets Allowed. Unless an accommodations property has these amenities marked on their property listing, the information will not be available in the Travel Guide via the icons.

If you have any questions regarding the 2010 Travel Guide, contact Kathy Prickett at (919) 733-8302 or via kprickett@nccommerce.com.

4. DIVISION LEADS U.K. FAM TO GREAT SMOKIES

The Division hosted a group of travel writers from the United Kingdom, June 3-9, to showcase western North Carolina and also to promote the 75th Anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The group visited attractions in Swain, Graham, Jackson, Haywood and Buncombe counties. Publications represented included the Scottish Sun, First News, Scottish Sunday Express, Bournemouth Daily Echo and the Daily Mirror. A similar trip to the Smokies with German travel writers last fall has already generated several stories that have reached an audience of more than 21 million and had an advertising value of nearly \$160,000.

5. DIVISION'S CANADIAN OFFICE HOSTS A WEBINAR FOR TRAVEL AGENTS

The Division's representatives in Canada, Melaine Communications Group, hosted a 30-minute webinar on May 28 to a group of 24 travel agents across Canada. The presentation included the sell features on the entire state from the Mountains to the Coast. It also included information on a new Canadian tour operator program – Simply Escape, which is featuring four new North Carolina programs: Charlotte weekend getaway, Outer Banks vacation getaway, Asheville weekend getaway and Blue Ridge Parkway vacation. They received very positive feedback from the agents and have scheduled ongoing webinars throughout the year. For more information on the Division's international marketing efforts, contact Heidi Walters at (919) 715-6702 or via hwalters@nccommerce.com.

6. STATE GAMES OF N.C. IN CHARLOTTE – JUNE 19-28

The 23rd Annual State Games of North Carolina will be held in Charlotte June 19-28. More than 700 teams and over 14,000 athletes from across North and South Carolina are expected to participate in this year's event. The Games are the largest multi-sport festival in North Carolina and Charlotte's largest 2009 summer event. There will be more sports and athletes attending than at the most recent Olympic Games. North Carolina has one of the oldest, largest and most successful State Games programs in the United States. The Games will have an expected economic impact of over \$3 million to the local area. Often referred to as North Carolina's Olympic Games, alumni include Josh Hamilton (Texas Rangers), Chris Paul (New Orleans Hornets), Wendy Palmer (Seattle

Storm), Julius Peppers (Carolina Panthers), Jerry Stackhouse (Dallas Mavericks) and David Fox (1996 U.S. Olympian). The Opening Ceremonies for the State Games will be held June 19 at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte. For more information, contact Frank Jernigan at (919) 733-7413 or via fjernigan@nccommerce.com.

7. N.C. FLAG DEBUTS ON LeMANS CAR

June 13-14 marks the debut of the Creation LeMans Racing Team's entry in the 24-hour car race in LeMans, France. The racing team recently established its U.S. base of operations in Winston-Salem. The cockpit of the car is flanked by two North Carolina flags. The concept shows the two flags as if they have attached themselves to the North Carolina-based car, with the car now pulling them along through the wind. The N.C. flag design is meant to demonstrate that Creation has embraced – and been embraced by – North Carolina. Per Creation, LeMans is watched by more than 250 million TV viewers worldwide with 30 million alone in the U.S.; 300,000 race fans attend trackside. To find out more, visit www.creationsport.net/news/index.cfm?newsID=225.

8. STS TOP 20 EVENTS FOR JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH DEADLINE JULY 10

The deadline for nominating events to the Southeast Tourism Society (STS) for their Top 20 Events for January, February, March 2010 is **July 10**. Requirements include the event must have an attendance of at least 1,000 and be in its third year of existence; plus there is a \$10.00 entry fee required per event. Top 20 Events strongly encourages entrants to support their nomination by providing supporting material such as photos, posters, brochures, press releases, news clippings and/or volunteer programs. To find out more, visit www.southeasttourism.org/top20/.

9. GREENING N.C. TRAVEL: FINDING MORE INFORMATION

With rising energy costs, increasing regulation and studies showing growing numbers of green-minded travelers, most tourism businesses are starting to take a hard look at what they can do to reduce their environmental impact. But for many tourism businesses, going green can be foreign territory. Although it is important to remember that sustainability is a direction rather than a destination, there are a number of free manuals that provide basic yet in-depth information on going green. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada offers "Green Your Business: Toolkit for Tourism Operators" (www.tiac-aitc.ca/english/menu_featuredpublications.asp). The Rainforest Alliance has its "Guide for Sustainable Tourism Best Practices" (www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism.cfm?id=guide). And the Center for Sustainable Tourism at East Carolina University, in partnership with Sustainable Travel International, has a series of Renewable Energy in Tourism Best Practice Manuals (www.research2.ecu.edu/renewabletourism/practices.html). For sustainable tourism practice checklists, visit www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/sustainabletourism/Business-Resources-Checklists.cfm. For more information on sustainability in the tourism industry contact Alex Naar at (919) 715-3782 or via naara@ecu.edu.

10. BON APPETIT INCLUDES THE PIT AMONG TOP 10 NEW BBQ RESTAURANTS

In its July issue, Bon Appetit magazine features the Top 10 New BBQ Restaurants – and includes The Pit in Raleigh. The article says pitmaster Ed Mitchell starts with whole free-range North Carolina-raised pigs, pit-cooks them overnight using charcoal and wood, then chops up the meat and adds a splash of spicy vinegar sauce to finish. The result is barbecue nirvana. To view the complete list, visit www.bonappetit.com/magazine/2009/07/best_new_barbecue_restaurants.

11. BIG ROCK BLUE MARLIN TOURNAMENT AMONG USA TODAY'S 10 GREAT

The Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament in Morehead City was among USA Today's "10 Great Places to Compete Hook, Line and Sink." There are several big-money ocean fishing tournaments on the East Coast, but this event is one of the most notable. And for those who don't fish, they can still watch the boats come in with their fish to be weighed. To find out more, visit www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/10great/2009-06-04-fishing-tournaments_N.htm.

12. CLT SITES AMONG USA TODAY READERS' PICKS

In the recent USA Today article "Readers' Picks: Best Airport Restaurants, Shops and Services," Charlotte-Douglas International Airport (CLT) is mentioned by the paper's Road Warriors panel for three restaurants – Salsarita's, Phillips Famous Seafood and Yadkin Valley Wine Bar – and two shops – Erwin Pearl and The NASCAR Shop. USA Today surveyed the panel – nearly 1,500 frequent fliers who voluntarily provide travel information – to identify their favorite restaurants, shops and hotels. The survey found that some fliers are so fond of a shop, restaurant or service that they look forward to visiting certain airports or make flight connections through them. To find out more, visit www.usatoday.com/travel/flights/2009-06-08-restaurants-favorites-airports_N.htm.

13. AJC FEATURES MOUNTAIN INNS AND OUTER BANKS

In a recent Sunday Travel section article, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC) highlighted mountain inns in North Carolina. Come spring (or any time of year), heading to the mountains of North Carolina provides a high-elevation getaway from "Flatlanta." The bar is raised even higher when the trip includes a stay at a unique mountain inn. Mountain inns have a long tradition in North Carolina, where hospitality starts at the welcome mat. Balsam Mountain Inn (Balsam), Bob Timberlake Inn at Chetola Resort (Blowing Rock), High Hampton Inn (Cashiers) and Old Edwards Inn (Highlands) all provide elevating experiences. To find out more, visit www.ajc.com/travel/content/travel/southeast/nc_stories/2009/05/31/mountain_inns_nc.html.

In the same Sunday Travel section, the AJC also featured a "Weekend in N.C.'s Outer Banks." The article offered suggestions on where to stay and dine and what to do in Hatteras, Ocracoke and Duck. To find out more, visit www.ajc.com/services/content/printedition/2009/05/31/weekend0531.html?cxntlid=inform_artr.

14. N.C. AIRPORT & AIRLINE NEWS

Flying? Don't Book Under a Nickname – The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is getting ready to take over responsibility from the airlines for checking passengers' names against terrorist watch lists, and is advising travelers to start booking airline tickets using their full name as it appears on their driver's license or passport. Later this summer, the agency will also begin requiring airlines to ask passengers for their birth date and gender during the ticketing process, information the carriers will then transfer to the T.S.A. The goal is to help make the watch list matching process more accurate. To find out more, visit http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/09/business/09security.html?_r=1&ref=travel.

United Ups Airport Baggage Fee, Matches US Airways -- United Airlines is adding an extra \$5 charge for travelers who pay their baggage fee at the airport instead of online. The move matches a change announced by US Airways last month. Travelers have generally paid \$15 to check their first bag on United and \$25 for the second bag. But for tickets bought for travel beginning today (Wednesday), they'll add \$5 more to settle those charges at the airport rather than on United's website. To find out more, visit http://www.usatoday.com/travel/flights/2009-05-15-united-baggage-fee_N.htm.

Your Cash No Longer Good on American Airlines – Credit cards will soon be the only payment accepted on many American Airlines flights for passengers who buy food, beverages, headsets and other items. Beginning Monday, the airline said it will not accept cash on flights within the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii and Canada. To find out more, visit http://www.usatoday.com/travel/flights/2009-05-28-american-credit-only_N.htm.

15. SURVEY: TOUGH TIMES STILL AHEAD FOR MANY MEETINGS

Meeting planners this year and next are facing meetings cancellations, budget cuts, sloping attendance and a negative net impact on destinations and host hotels, according to a survey of 516 meeting planners released by Ypartnership in conjunction with the Professional Convention Management Association and American Express. According to the survey results, about 40 percent of meeting planner respondents said they plan to postpone, cancel or rebook a meeting this year or next, largely due to the economy. Of the respondents, 44 percent said they are planning fewer offsite meetings this year and next, compared with last year, and about 47 percent said the number of meetings would remain flat in 2009 and 2010. To find out more, visit www.btonline.com/businesstravelnews/headlines/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003981469.

16. MEDIA LEADS

Meeting-Related News from Second-Tier and Smaller Cities – Small Market Meetings seeks meeting-related news from second-tier and smaller cities concerning new or renovated hotels, convention facilities, marketing programs aimed at meetings, transportation improvements or other meeting-related changes. Send information for the August issue to editor Vickie Mitchell at vmitchell@smallmarketmeetings.com. Deadline: **June 17.**

Top Golf Resorts – Small Market Meetings will profile top golf resorts in its August issue. Editor Vickie Mitchell is interested in receiving information from resorts that have received national recognition for their golf courses, have overnight accommodations and significant (10,000 square feet or more) meeting space and regularly work with meeting planners to incorporate golf into meetings in some fashion. Of particular interest are golf resorts that have added new features such as new meeting space, new accommodations, new golf offerings or other amenities. Contact Mitchell at vmitchell@smallmarketmeetings.com. Deadline: **June 30**.

17. “NORTH CAROLINA WEEKEND”

For the week of June 11 on UNC-TV's “North Carolina Weekend,” join in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Did you know you can take your bike and take Amtrak, too? Discover the wonders of the universe at Cline Observatory in Jamestown. Learn more about the waters of the Outer Banks at the N.C. Aquarium on Roanoke Island. And the “House Special” samples the fare at Bella Napoli in Welcome. *(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 & EVENTS

July 16 – NCBTA Bi-Monthly Meeting, Asheville

July 23-24 – MPI-CC Meeting, Greensboro

July 30 – N.C. Grape & Wine Council Meeting, Winston-Salem

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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.