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Duane Parrish

Director

You can enjoy your South Carolina spring or summer this year by visiting parks and becoming an [Ultimate Outsider](#). Simply visit all 47 state parks plus all eight National Park Service properties, get your official park guide stamped at each location, and you will join the ranks of the top park visitors in the state.

While the program is fun and successful, it has a greater mission, and that's to help people develop a deep appreciation for South Carolina's natural and cultural heritage. Because of the preservation efforts of the state and national park systems, we can experience history from the state's settlement (at Charles Towne Landing) to the Civil War (Fort Sumter National Monument) and to

Statewide Hotel RevPAR - Solid growth in occupancy and average daily room rates continues to grow South Carolina's RevPAR. In just the second month of the year, RevPAR is 11.3% greater than this time last year.

Admissions Tax - Admissions tax collections for February are slightly up over last year. Year to date, however, Admissions tax collections are slightly lower.

State Parks Revenue - Good weather in February led to a great revenue month for state parks. Park admission and retail sales are both ahead of sales in February

the turn-of-the-century New Deal era (CCC museum at Lake Greenwood State Park.) We can visit natural wonders ranging from a barrier island (Hunting Island State Park) and a rare Carolina Bay (Woods Bay State Park,) to a pristine old growth forest (Congaree National Park) and deep Blue Ridge mountain wilderness (Caesars Head and Jones Gap state parks.)

These sites of historic and natural significance shaped South Carolina into a destination renowned for its beauty and history. I encourage every member of the industry to become Ultimate Outsiders and re-discover South Carolina!

Reminder!

Deadline for TAG
Reimbursements is
June 15

The deadline for reimbursements under the Tourism Advertising Grant program for the current fiscal year is Wednesday, June 15. All recipients should submit the required copies of invoices, cancelled checks and proof of performance to SCPRT by the deadline in order to receive the reimbursement outlined in their grant award. For questions, contact Jenny Waller at jwaller@scprt.com or 803-734-0450.

2015. Camping continues to lag after damage from October flood.

Deplanements

Most airports across South Carolina report double-digit growth in deplanements for February compared to last year, and contribute to a statewide increase of 15.1% YTD.

Occupancy Forecast

Tourism Investment

Aiken to invest \$57 Million in New Sports Park

Rendering courtesy of the city of Aiken

Local media have reported that the city of Aiken is expected to invest \$57 million in a proposed Northside Park that will feature sports fields and recreational amenities. Plans call for the park to be developed on 112 acres off U.S. 1 near Shaws Creek in Aiken, and offer a 4,000-seat football stadium with track and artificial turf-surface football field, a recreation center, six multi-purpose soccer/football fields, tennis courts, a playground, an amphitheater and more than two miles of walking trails. The new park would be developed in multiple phases.

Tourism Industry Invited to Celebrate National Tourism Week at Welcome Centers

Tourism representatives from Lancaster County participated in Grits Stop during National Tourism Week at the I-77 Welcome Center at Fort Mill.

South Carolina's tourism industry has a unique opportunity to be upfront and engaged with travelers during National Tourism Week events held at welcome centers May 2-6. The centers invite destinations, attractions and accommodations to set up and show off their best for the volume of visitors who stop daily.

Sponsored by the U.S. Travel Association, National Tourism Week was established by Congress in 1983 to raise awareness about the broad variety of travel options in the nation and the significant impact tourism makes on the economy.

South Carolina's welcome centers join the effort with craft demonstrations, refreshments and travel information provided by the industry. Some centers offer events daily, others only certain days of the week during National Tourism Week.

Welcome centers are still accepting participants. All tourism industry members who would like to be involved in National Tourism Week events at South Carolina welcome centers can send an email to WelcomeCenters@scprt.com.

Atlanta Media Event Helped Journalists Discover South Carolina's Appeal

SCPRT's Public Relations Manager, Kim Jamieson, greets Katherine Ames with Phase 3 PR firm and Gina Christman from Atlanta Homes and Lifestyle magazine.

For the second media event of the year, South Carolina's public relations team hosted a grand affair at The Estate in Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood. Even though it was a stormy evening, South Carolina shone brightly! Tourism partners from across the state gathered to mix and mingle with Atlanta based journalists, bloggers and social media influencers to discuss the new and notable happenings taking place in their regions. Some of the outlets in attendance included Atlanta Journal Constitution, CNN, Atlanta Magazine, The Weather Channel and USA Today.

From the new restaurants and breweries opening in beautiful Greenville and the latest developments and additions at the Riverbanks Zoo in Columbia, to the upcoming celebration of sweet tea in Summerville, the approaching surfboard season in Myrtle Beach and the numerous warm weather festivals taking place in Beaufort, there was such much to discuss and share.

During the event, guests had the opportunity to 'satisfy their thirst' at an interactive 10 - minute tasting session presented by South Carolina partners, Palmetto Moonshine and Sallie's Greatest Syrups. Launched in February of this year, the South Carolina Satisfy Your Thirst tour (#SatisfyYourThirstSC) focuses on liquid locations - both alcoholic and non-alcoholic - across the state, highlighting not only delicious spirits and sips, but the makers behind these artful crafts.

Journalists Caroline Eubanks who pens Caroline in the City blog; Leslie Peterson with USA Today / 365 Atlanta and Phebe Wahl of Modern Luxury discover more about South Carolina's liquid assets.

On the culinary side of the event, a few of the South Carolina Chef Ambassadors, Chef Orchid Paulmeier of Hilton Head's One Hot Mama's and Chef Forrest Parker of Mt. Pleasant's Old Village Post House, served a plethora of palate pleasing offerings including salt and pepper shrimp with candied crystal hot sauce, GI Joe breakfast with SC wild sausage and garlic fried Carolina Plantation rice with a sunny side up Manchester Farms quail egg.

At the end of the evening, a number of partners mentioned having discussed media interested in visiting their regions. To date, four stories and three media visits have run and taken place because of this media mission. What a success!

Stay tuned for more information on a report from the next media mission in New York City!

Cinemax's "Outcast," Filmed in York and Chester counties, to Premiere June 3

South Carolina's piedmont region provided the backdrop for the fictional town of Rome, WV, in a new series from Robert Kirkman, creator of "The Walking Dead."

Based on a comic by the same name and starring Patrick Fugit ("Gone Girl"), "Outcast" follows the story of Kyle Barnes, a young man who has been plagued by demonic possession his entire life. Horribly abused by his deranged mother as a child, Kyle stopped his wife Allison from hurting their daughter Amber three years ago -- and after taking all the blame for himself, he's been a social outcast. Kyle has spent the last five months living in his old home, but he's been existing more like a possum than a human being. After assisting Reverend Anderson (Philip Glenister, "Life on Mars"), in the exorcism of 8-year-old Joshua Austin, Kyle finally realizes what he's denied all his life: the three separate instances of child abuse were in fact supernatural in their essence, and Kyle is, for reasons unknown to him, a demon magnet.

The pilot shot in December of 2014. The show was ordered to series (10 episodes) in February of 2015, and production for season one began in July, wrapping in December, 2015. The series will begin airing on Cinemax on June 3, 2016.

The total spend in South Carolina for filming the series was more than \$11.6 million. The production booked more than 4,400 hotel room nights and employed 246 South Carolinians.

BBQ Map and State Park Guide Win State Awards

The official South Carolina BBQ Trail Map and the new Rivers Bridge State Historic Site Visitors Guide were listed as notable state documents last month by the South Carolina State Library. The publications were chosen as among the strongest and most informative documents released by state agencies in 2015. A panel of librarians and state employees made selections based on designs, writing styles and breadth of information.

"South Carolina state documents provide a wealth of information and statistics, and share a broad range of knowledge about our state," said State Library Acting Director Leesa Aiken, at an awards ceremony last month. "I am pleased that we are able to publicly recognize these important publications and websites as notable documents and it is my hope that all South Carolina state agencies continue to produce high quality documents such as these."

Rivers Bridge's visitors guide was authored by SCPRT regional historian Dan

Bell. It tells the story of the Civil War battle fought along the Salkehatchie River in February 1865 during the march of General Sherman's Union Army through the state. It also outlines the subsequent commemorations of the battle and its Confederate dead, which led to the site's preservation as a state park.

The BBQ trail map was a production of the Tourism Sales and Marketing team during South Carolina's recent DiSCover campaign highlighting barbecue.

Stephens Wins Volvo Car Open; Grace Wins RBC Heritage

While the world watched, two of the nation's best sporting events were held in South Carolina in April, both delivering exciting matchups and surprising finishes.

In Charleston, Sloane Stephens, the Volvo Car Open's tournament seventh seed and World #25 in WTA singles rankings, defeated Elena Vesnina in a tough matchup. It was Stephens' third title of the year and only the fourth of her professional career.

The following week on Hilton Head Island, Branden Grace won the RBC Heritage golf tournament, finishing 5-under 66 to overtake Luke Donald. Although he has an accomplished career overseas, this was Grace's first win on the PGA Tour.

Both tournaments capture an international audience. The Volvo Car Open is seen by more than 10 million viewers in 165 countries while the RBC Heritage is broadcast in more than 900 million households in 220 countries.

Welcome Center Construction On Schedule

Piping for the plumbing and electrical systems are installed for the new welcome center at Fort Mill on I-77.

Total rebuilds of the welcome centers on I-77 at Fort Mill and I-95 in Hardeeville remain on schedule and should be complete by early fall and late fall respectively.

The concrete foundation was poured at Fort Mill this winter, and piping for the plumbing and electrical systems installed. Once the slab is poured, the building will start to take shape.

Heavy rains and the removal of unstable soil delayed foundation work at Hardeeville. It will be mid-May before contractors can install the plumbing and electrical systems. The project remains on schedule, however, for a late fall opening.

The projects are phase one of a new initiative at SCPRT to reshape South Carolina's nine welcome centers -- or "front porches" -- into updated, more traveler-friendly centers of hospitality.

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