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**From:** South Carolina Tourism Today  
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July 28, 2016

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## State Parks Record Revenue

### Duane Parrish

Director, SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

Though this issue's metrics focus on May 2016 business, special attention must be given to a recently released state parks revenue report which shows that FY 2015-16 was yet another record-breaking year for the South Carolina State Park Service.

The *FY 2015-16 SC State Parks Revenue Summary* reports that park revenue for this period rose 4.26 percent over FY 2014-15 to \$28.1 million. That's a \$1.1 million increase, of which the largest component, park admissions, increased 10 percent to \$500,000. This is particularly impressive given the setbacks suffered by state parks during floods in October and again in January which forced lengthy closures at the campgrounds, waterfronts and picnic areas of many

**Statewide RevPAR** -- RevPAR is steady for the month of May. Overall, RevPAR continues to outperform last year's business.

**Admissions Tax** -- Admissions Tax collections for May are down compared to May 2015, but is relatively flat YTD.

**State Parks Revenue** -- May was the highest revenue generating month for state parks in the 2015-16 fiscal year at this point. Admission continues to be the category with the largest growth.

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## Deplanements

While most major airports in South Carolina reported increases in deplanements for the month of May, Charleston International Airport leads with double-digit growth. YTD, deplanements are up almost 10%.

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## Occupancy Forecast

STR, Inc., predicts slight growth in occupancy at the end of the summer, and relatively steady business at the beginning of the fall.

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## Tourism Investment

Artists' rendering of new Residence Inn Westgate in Spartanburg

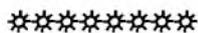
Two new hotels by Pinnacle Hospitality, LLC, are under development in Spartanburg at the new WestGate Town Center located just off I-26. The investment to build the Residence Inn Westgate and the Hilton Garden Inn is valued at \$32 million and could generate 80 new permanent jobs in Spartanburg when the properties are complete next year.

The new Residence Inn will have 104 brand signature rooms, each including a standard full kitchen. Hilton Garden Inn, a brand known for its upper scale accommodations, will be a 116-room hotel.

popular parks.

Mirroring growth in the rest of the South Carolina tourism industry which has benefited from lower gas prices, an improving economy and increasing consumer confidence, these new records in State Parks revenue could only have been achieved with the innovation and commitment of the State Park Service. This includes an operations team that embraces more efficient business practices and a marketing team that continues to leverage consumer expectations and demands. Another major factor was an investment in the systems and facilities that make a state park experience outstanding now and in the future.

This combination has been working for state parks for several years now, and we hope to continue improving.



## Reminders!

### Advertise in the DISCOVER Guide

SCPRT is currently accepting advertising for the 2017 DISCOVER Guide. Rate card and specifications can be found at this [link](#). Space is limited and is available on a first-come first-served basis. The deadline to reserve your space is Friday, Sept. 23.

### Save the Date!

The annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and Travel will be held **Feb. 20-22, 2017** at the [Spartanburg Marriott](#). The Governor's Conference is the largest annual gathering of tourism industry professionals in the state and provides a business setting for educational sessions and networking. Registration should begin in November and will be available at [www](#).

The two new developments, along with the Summit Pointe Conference & Events Center, restaurants and retail stores, will further extend the shopping, accommodations and entertainment options around WestGate Mall.

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## Come Support South Carolina Chefs!

### Tickets available for special South Carolina dinner at James Beard House in New York

**SC Chef Ambassadors Ramone Dickerson, Teryi Youngblood, Orchid Paulmeier and Forrest Parker will prepare meals at the James Beard House next month.**

Earlier this year, the 2016 South Carolina Chef Ambassadors were invited to be the featured chefs for a dinner at the prestigious James Beard House in New York City! The chefs - Chef Ramone Dickerson of Columbia, Chef Teryi Youngblood of Greenville, Chef Orchid Paulmeier of Hilton Head Island and Chef Forrest Parker of Mt. Pleasant - will collaborate on a joint menu highlighting some of the state's indigenous crops, produces, products and grains in a four-course meal presentation on **Tuesday, August 23**. Some of the dishes the chefs will prepare include Sheepshead Pillard, Dry Aged Duck, MiBex Oxtail Desibradas and an Iron Skillet Lamb Chop, all of which will be paired with various Southern culinary influences like Sea Island Red Peas, Bradford Watermelons, Titan Farms Peaches, Carolina Gold Rice and Adluh flour and grits.

There are still a few tickets available to attend this dinner and can be purchased by calling the James Beard House at 212-627-2308, or visiting [JamesBeard.org](#) online. Thinking of a unique way to host guests? This dinner would provide the perfect opportunity for one-on-one entertaining of media, meeting planners and tour operators, and tables are still available. We couldn't be more proud for these four chefs to share their culinary talents on such a stage and provide guests with a taste of why South Carolina Is Just Right.

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## Pack-A-Park Truck Helped Collect Food for Food Banks

**A visitor at Kings Mountain State Park helps pack the park truck with food.**

State parks across South Carolina invited campers and visitors to donate enough canned goods and non-perishables to pack the beds of pickup trucks this month. Pack-A-Park-Truck events were a special promotion for the Park Service's "Hunger Takes No Vacation" food drive, a 5-month-long campaign with the SC Food Bank Association to help address hunger.

Last year, the food drive collected 6,712 pounds of goods, or enough to serve 1,220 South Carolinians for a day. The most requested items were canned vegetables, canned meats, dry goods, peanut butter, beans, toiletries, diapers, detergents and plastic bags.

The food drive in state parks will continue until Nov. 30. Collection bins can be found at the ranger station, park office, campground or other designated spots on state parks.

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## Welcome Center Construction Updates

### **Insulation covers the new Fort Mill Welcome Center building.**

The South Carolina welcome center on I-77 south in Fort Mill is on schedule for a mid-Fall opening. In July, truckloads of insulation and sheetrock began arriving and the new facility took on a lovely shade of pink! A grand opening is currently being planned and will likely be announced in August's edition of *Tourism Today*.

The center on I-95 north in Hardeeville also remains on schedule, with steel framing going up in July. SCPRT expects an early winter opening.

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