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**Subject:** December 2018 News and Economic Indicators of Tourism in South Carolina

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## 2018 -- On the Record

Duane Parrish  
*Director, SC  
Department of  
Parks, Recreation &  
Tourism*

In 2018, SCPRT weathered storms and leadership changes, but still made meaningful accomplishments that put the agency on track for more success.

In January, SCPRT and the Department of Agriculture began working with an all-female Chef Ambassadors class that not only professionally promoted South Carolina's culinary appeal to millions of consumers,

## Snapshot

of tourism indicators

Statewide Hotel  
RevPAR \$58.27

Nov. 2018

0.5%

YTD

1.8%

RevPAR - Statewide RevPAR for November was \$58.27, up 0.5% for the month and up 1.8% for the year.

Accommodations  
Tax  
\$34,847,285

Accommodations Tax collections reflecting September 2018 business (October returns) totaled \$5.3 million, down -5.8% from September 2017. Year-to-date, collections are \$34.8 million, up 2.4% over this same time period in FY 2017-18.

Admissions Tax  
\$18,635,846

Admissions Tax collections reflecting October 2018 business (November returns) were \$3.6 million, up 5.9% over October 2017. Year-to-date collections are \$18.6 million, up 6.1% over the same period in 2017-18.

RevPAR YTD is calculated on the calendar year. YTD figures for Accommodations Tax Collections, Admissions Tax Collections and State Parks Revenue are calculated on the state fiscal year.

## State Parks Revenue

but also, almost immediately, generated a national feature story in Rachael Ray magazine.

Also in January, the Halloween movie sequel directed by David Gordon Green began filming in Charleston. When it was released in October, it became a blockbuster and helped present South Carolina as a great place for film production.

For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018, the Park Service reported its highest revenue in its history at more than \$30 million. Covering more than 98 percent of its operating costs, state parks are coming closer to its goal of self-sufficiency.

In July, the Park Service launched a new reservation system to provide quality customer service, bringing the call center in-house. The new system also helps us meet basic business standards by reporting revenue on an accrual basis.

In October, the agency and key industry partners announced that British Airways will launch direct service between London Heathrow and Charleston International airports, the first overseas non-stop commercial flight for South Carolina. The potential for international tourism growth just got bigger.

In November, the State Park Service tested public access to St. Phillips Island, the formerly Ted Turner-owned, nearly pristine property near Hunting Island State Park. The tour helped us determine how we'll open St. Phillips for tours in 2019.

While the agency checked

- Camping
- Cabins
- Admissions
- Retail Sales
- Miscellaneous

State Park revenue for November was \$2.1 million, marking the first time revenue exceeded \$2 million in the month of November. It was also the first time in several years that no parks were closed because of damages from a natural disaster. Black Friday deals also contributed to this record level of revenue.

## Deplanements

Major airports in South Carolina all report increases in deplanements in October 2018. Overall deplanements in South Carolina are up 11.2% year-to-date.

Major Airports	Oct 2018	Oct 2018 vs Oct 2017 % Change	YTD 2018 (Jan-Oct)	YTD % Change
Charleston	204,550	13.2%	1,865,560	12.6%
Columbia	58,904	10.0%	497,363	8.8%
Greenville/ Spartanburg	115,079	7.0%	945,916	8.3%
Hilton Head	4,672	91.7%	32,809	25.7%
Myrtle Beach	109,478	1.7%	1,141,440	12.0%
Total	492,683	9.0%	4,483,088	11.2%
Savannah/ Hilton Head	127,119	9.8%	1,184,730	13.2%
Charlotte, NC	2,040,884	1.8%	19,423,823	1.0%

off several accomplishments, the industry as a whole is performing at record levels. All indicators are up, which suggests our impact on South Carolina's economy will exceed \$21.2 billion when calculations are complete. I'm looking forward to reporting that growth to you at the Governor's Conference on Tourism and Travel in February, and to planning for more successful years in tourism.

## Parrish Re-appointed as SCPRT Director

In early **December**, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster announced that Duane Parrish will continue to serve as the director of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism (SCPRT.) The agency's Chief of Staff, Amy Duffy, also will remain in her position.

Duane Parrish's worldwide marketing and branding campaigns have taken South Carolina's tourism industry to levels of growth and success never before achieved," said Gov. McMaster. "His leadership has transformed our state park system into the jewel of the Southeast. And with the acquisition of St. Phillips Island, generations of South Carolinians and her visitors will have open access to one of the nation's last undeveloped pristine barrier islands."

During Director Parrish's time at SCPRT, the tourism industry's economic impact in South Carolina has grown to more than \$21 billion, which represents a 41.3 percent increase since 2010.

"It is a privilege to continue to serve as director of SCPRT under Governor McMaster during his first full term," said Director Parrish. "Within the past year, we have already realized significant achievements for the state, including the successful recruitment of the state's first non-stop international flight to the UK and the acquisition of St. Phillips Island for South Carolina State Parks. I look forward to working with Governor McMaster to build on these successes for the benefit of our state's tourism industry."

Making South Carolina's state parks system self-sufficient has been among Director Parrish's top priorities. In FY 11, state parks generated 82.9 percent of its operating costs. This year, that number grew to 98.6 percent and state parks generated more than \$30 million in revenue.

Additionally, since 2010, domestic visitor spending has increased 41.2 percent from \$9.7 billion to \$13.7 billion in 2017.

Director Parrish serves on the Executive Board for Travel South USA and is currently serving as Chairman of the National Council of State Tourism Directors.

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## Educational Tours Scheduled for Governor's Conference

**Tours** on tap for the Governor's Conference on Tourism & Travel will highlight exciting experiences found in the capital city, and help delegates discover unique marketing practices. Each tour will begin about 1:15 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 19. Buses will depart from and return to the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

Experience #1 -- Crafted Columbia / Brewery Tour -- As a mash up of a capital city and a college town, Columbia has become an epicenter for chefs, artists, craftspeople and craft beer of all stripes. Firmly rooted in a homegrown spirit, each Columbia brewery has its own character and its own way to make a good brew. Four shuttles will rotate among four breweries. Come together at a final stop to end the tour.

Experience #2 -- Riverbanks Zoo Zipline Tour -- Riverbanks Zoo has amped up the cuteness factor with baby gorillas, lions and a baby giraffe born in 2018. In addition to a tour, participants will experience pure exhilaration with "Zip the Zoo," a zipline extending over the treetops and the Saluda River. To comply with safety guidelines, zipline participants must be between 70 and 250 lbs. Please read full zipline guidelines and helpful hints prior to registration. Waivers will be provided upon arrival.

Experience #3 -- Big Business in the Capital City Tour -- Learn the ins and outs of big business in Columbia. Tour the Amazon Fulfillment Center followed by a tour of Nephron Pharmaceuticals and enjoy a reception hosted by the Columbia region's own Lou Kennedy.

Experience #4 -- Columbia Then and Now Tour -- Join Historic Columbia for an overview of recent projects and see magnificent restoration firsthand. The Historic House & Garden Tour will be followed by a stroll on Main Street showcasing some of Columbia's newest additions, followed by a reception at Lula Drake Wine Parlor's event space -- the Pastor's Study.

These tours are available on a first-come, first-served basis and fill up quickly. To register for the conference and sign up for the tours, click [here](#). For more information on the conference, visit [SCGovCon.com](http://SCGovCon.com).

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## State Parks Start the New Year with First Day Hikes

**More** than 30 state parks in South Carolina will offer ranger-guided hikes, walks and special events on Tuesday, Jan. 1, to help launch the new year. The First Day Hikes are mostly walks along beaches and lakes, in forests or on historic trails, to help visitors learn more about the cultural and natural heritage of South Carolina.

A few parks also will offer special events. There are 5K runs planned at Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site and Devils Fork State Park, a horse ride is scheduled at Lee State Park, and a cold "plunge" into Lake Jocassee is scheduled at Devils Fork.

Park visitors who participate in First Day Hikes are encouraged to share their experiences through comments and photo posts on social media with the hashtags **#FirstDayHikes** and **#SCStateParks**. Each participant will receive an official 2019 "I Hiked It!" sticker and one lucky winner from each event will get a park passport.

For a complete list of parks hosting hikes and events, click **here** . Additional information about state parks can be found at **SouthCarolinaParks.com**.

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