



TOURISM WORKS!

==== A COMPILATION OF ====

COMMUNITY-LEVEL
SUCCESS STORIES

PRODUCED BY THE SOUTHEAST TOURISM SOCIETY



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Paducah, Kentucky**
- 4. Lake Charles, SW Louisiana**
- 5. Alabama Mountain Lakes**
- 6. Desert View Watchtower, Grand Canyon National Park**
- 7. Pigeon Forge, Tennessee**
- 8. Macon-Bibb County, Georgia**
- 9. Fayetteville, Arkansas**
- 10. NativeAmerica.travel**
- 11. Greater Gadsden, Alabama**
- 12. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina**
- 13. DeKalb, Georgia**
- 14. Virginia Beach, Virginia**
- 15. Cabell-Huntington, West Virginia**
- 16. Montgomery, Alabama**
- 17. Dothan Area, Alabama**
- 18. Key Economic Indicators of Travel and Tourism by Congressional District**
- 38. About Southeast Tourism Society**

DOCUMENTING SUCCESS

INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism sector is an economic powerhouse, injecting more than \$947 billion in direct traveler spending into the U.S. economy, employing more than 8 million Americans and generating \$147.9 billion in tax revenues in 2015. Those are impressive numbers but it doesn't tell the whole story of tourism's impact. At the community level, tourism is a vital tool for economic development, job creation, and community building. Each of these snapshots of impact adds up to a big picture of economic vitality and exceptional travel experiences.

Tourism Works! is an effort to document and compile the diverse stories of success that tourism is driving in communities large and small across the country. These stories showcase the many ways that tourism development fosters collaborations across geography, government agencies, and the non-profit and private sectors to advance creative ways to promote local sites and destinations and increase visitor traffic.

These stories present a mosaic of tourism that is as diverse and distinctive as America itself. Leveraging the building blocks of tourism: historic preservation; natural resources and the great outdoors; recreation; events, festivals, and attractions; and cultural heritage, communities develop their unique assets into a compelling civic narrative and a menu of visitor experiences. In sharing their success stories, these communities are sharing the process all communities navigate to build an effective tourism program.

To put these success stories into context and to demonstrate that tourism touches nearly every community, a breakdown of travel and tourism's economic impact by congressional district is included in this publication. The combination of success narratives and focused economic data adds up to a powerful argument for continued investments in the government programs that fuel travel and tourism as a critical economic engine for communities.

Bill Hardman
President & CEO
Southeast Tourism Society

SUCCESS STORY PADUCAH, KENTUCKY



The United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated Paducah, Kentucky the world's seventh City of Crafts & Folk Art in November 2013.

Paducah's UNESCO designation was the culmination of a five-year process led by the Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) for sustainable tourism development based on the destination's cultural attributes. The designation positions the city as a world leader in creative industry and tourism with authority to share its cultural assets and create partnerships on a global scale.

The anchor that qualified Paducah for the designation is its long-lasting tradition and ability to connect cultures in the fine craft of quilting, as home to the National Quilt Museum and American Quilter's Society (AQS). Though fabric and craft-related industries provide a favorable

impact on the local economy year-round, Paducah has built an entire economic sector around artists, craft persons, performing artists, writers and the culture they create.

Since receiving the designation, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network has generated a new platform to work toward Paducah CVB's mission of creating new economic opportunities through destination marketing, management and tourism development. The CVB translates the creative tourism value of the designation to put the city on the map through destination branding in order to raise its profile globally.

These efforts foster sustainability for the community through quality culture and jobs that position the city not only as a great place to visit but also a great place to live. Culture and creativity are continually integrated into local development strategies and plans including the expansion of

Paducah School of Art & Design's campus; Paducah Economic Development's launch of Forward Paducah, a city-wide strategic vision and plan that incorporates arts and tourism as economic drivers; and the McCracken County Schools earning grant funding to pioneer statewide global competency programs.

Launched in 2004, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network aims to strengthen cooperation with and among cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of sustainable development with regards to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. The Network is now comprised of 116 member cities in 54 countries worldwide, including fellow U.S. cities Santa Fe (Crafts & Folk Art), Iowa City (Literature), Austin (Media Arts), Detroit (Design) and Tucson (Gastronomy).



IMPACT STATEMENT

The UNESCO designation is stimulating visitor response and driving sustainable development that will preserve the local culture.

- Tourism continues to grow in Paducah with direct expenditures rising from \$203.9 million in 2013 to \$211.6 million in 2014 and \$223.6 million in 2015, increases of 3.8 and 5.4 percent respectively.
- International connections and visitation have also increased with the National Quilt Museum welcoming visitors from 49 countries in 2015, up from 38 represented in 2014.
- AQS reported QuiltWeek - Paducah's regional economic impact exceeding \$25 million, success that led to the addition of a second international QuiltWeek event beginning in 2017.
- The campus of Paducah School of Art & Design grew with a \$10 million expansion of visual arts education facilities.
- Major media outlets around the world have profiled Paducah's creative economy including National Geographic listing Paducah fifth on its list of the "Traveler 50: World's Smartest Cities."

SUCCESS STORY LAKE CHARLES, SW LOUISIANA



For so many of us, seeing is believing, and that is also true for inspiring visitation to a destination. The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau has embarked on a path to share the hidden gems and unique stories of the area through an active blog, several apps, new videos and massive efforts in public relations. In fact, the CVB hosted the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association in 2013, Travel Media Showcase in 2014 as well as the Society of American Travel Writers during Mardi Gras of 2016. The public relations efforts have paid off in more and more media professionals being made aware of the experiences awaiting in Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana.

This, coupled with a ramped up production in new photography and video content, has been the perfect marriage along with growth in the area and a brand new casino resort, Golden Nugget Lake Charles opening in December of 2014 next

door to L'Auberge Casino Resort, both boasting spa facilities, restaurants, retail outlets, lazy rivers and golf courses on property. This adds to the casino destination including the Isle of Capri Casino Hotel and Delta Downs Racetrack Casino & Hotel, complete with award winning chefs and top entertainment.

The CVB launched the first ever commissioned song, "My Southwest Louisiana Home" to accompany a sweeping video that instantly garnered 130,593 total views with an estimated number of minutes watched at 141,090, combining the totals of exposure on YouTube, Facebook in 2015. In 2016, the bureau released a Cajun Fusion Cooking video that combined all the best chefs and interesting Cajun-fusion food with locals having a fais-do-do at the end, enjoying the tasty cuisine. This video has gained nearly 65,000 views on Facebook and YouTube combined to date and has gained wide traction also being used in

marketing efforts promoting travel to foodies.

From concept to creation, the CVB staff worked alongside experts in the field of the outdoors to create Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point, an attraction that has hands-on exhibits to interpret the wonders of Louisiana's landscape, wildlife, Cajun/Creole cooking and Cajun/Zydeco music. Adventure Point celebrated its 1 year anniversary in 2016.

These projects layered on top of one another paint a vivid picture of Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana, enticing more visitation and more media coverage, and there is even more to come!

*The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB is proud to be the 2015 Best Tourism Office by the Southeast Tourism Society and winner of the Best in Class award for the travel/tourism category from the Interactive Media Awards.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Tourism added \$404.04 million to the economy of Calcasieu Parish through travel expenditures, and the CVB directly booked over 64,442 group room nights. Bureau staff also interacted with 38,985 visitors at the Visitor Information Center. Public relations efforts, netted more than \$6.5 million worth of free media exposure for Southwest Louisiana in more than 1,500 articles. Festivals such as Mardi Gras and the Contraband Days Louisiana Pirate Festival generate millions of dollars in travel expenditures.

Culinary tourism is on the rise with new craft breweries popping up in Southwest Louisiana, the popularity of the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail, Bayou Rum Distillery and innovative Cajun-Fusion cooking by award-winning, local chefs. According to a study published by the U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research in 2014, six of the top 10 happiest cities in America were found in Louisiana. Southwest Louisiana is the Youth Sports Capital of Louisiana, hosting major athletic events at facilities with top-notch management for excellent results. This is accomplished in part through grant opportunities to entice groups to the area. Similar grants are available for cultural events. The CVB's reinvestment in the community brings about growth and new opportunities for the future.



LAKE CHARLES
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

