

## VISION PLAN FOR VIRGINIA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY



JANUARY 2002

## LONG-TERM GOALS

### VIRGINIA

- The fastest growing tourism destination in the U.S.

### VIRGINIA

- Recognized by Virginia's political and economic power structure as an essential and major component of the state's economy; less reliant on tax dollars for funding support

### VIRGINIA – A TOURISM INDUSTRY LEADER:

- In Internet usage to promote tourism
- In innovative and creative advertising and marketing programs
- In brokering Virginia travel packages

### VIRGINIA – NUMBER ONE:

- In the hospitality industry
- In festivals and events
- In eco-tourism in the U.S.
- In automobile racing, horses, boating, and athletics
- In historical travel in the U.S.
- In African-American heritage in the U.S.
- In world-class golf

### VIRGINIA – ONE OF THE TOP FIVE:

- States as a tourist destination
- Locations for film production in the U.S.
- Ports for cruise lines on the U.S. East Coast
- Destinations for meeting and convention

### VIRGINIA – A MODEL FOR:

- Cooperation among tourism-related organizations
- Cooperation among expanding attractions, existing attractions and newly secured attractions
- Strengthening existing and creating new domestic and international marketing alliances with the private sector

Dear Tourism Industry Partner:

As the third largest retail industry in the state – bringing \$13.1 billion to Virginia and employing more than 207,000 citizens – the tourism industry plays a critical role to the economy of the Commonwealth. Virginians realized this impact firsthand in the wake of the events of September 11 with an overall decline in leisure travel worldwide. Never has there been a more important time to invest in promoting our state's bountiful and diverse tourism resources.

Prior to the events of September 11, Virginia Tourism Corporation Board of Directors spent more than a year researching and developing strategies for long-range, visionary planning to increase tourism to Virginia significantly from 2002 through the year 2012.

Together as an industry we all have a vested interest in increasing tourism in Virginia. This collaborative long-range plan provides the industry with greater resources to influence a broader range of consumers to select Virginia as their vacation destination. Virginia's tourism industry has come together to share vision, resources and professional experience in order to reach new strides in tourism growth for the Commonwealth.

To begin the *Vision Plan* process, the Virginia Tourism Corporation Board of Directors developed a list of suggested long-range goals with far-reaching impact. The Board set a goal of an annual growth rate of 8.35 percent in order to increase visitor spending to rank number seven in the nation by 2007 and number five by 2012.

The goals in the sidebar were selected based on the theory that setting high goals stimulates and accelerates progress. Objectives and strategies within the *Vision Plan for Virginia's Tourism Industry* support achieving these goals.

The *Vision Plan* highlights how dedicated funding, smart marketing, effective use of technology, a better trained workforce, improved infrastructure and well-supported tourism products will significantly increase visitor spending throughout the Commonwealth. In order to achieve the goals outlined in the *Vision Plan*, the state needs to be more aggressive in tourism product development. New product can increase the number of visitors to the state and impact visitor spending. For example, a statewide golf trail and expanded African-American heritage tour can generate additional visitors. Likewise, attracting major events such as the Jamestown 2007 Commemoration can increase the number of visitors and traveler spending in the Commonwealth.

This document is meant to serve as a thought-provoking first step in engaging those dedicated to achieving a ten-year growth plan for Virginia tourism. This process was an opportunity for tourism industry professionals to add big picture ideas, addressing long-term specific needs and goals based on their areas of expertise and the products they represent. This is not a plan solely for the Virginia Tourism Corporation to implement, but rather a statement for the entire tourism industry to stand behind. Industry support and input is critical to this continuing process and will shape the substance of its long-term success.

Thank you to the Virginia Tourism Corporation Board of Directors for their leadership and vision and to the VTC for their hard work on this project. Special thanks also to the hundreds of industry partners who over the past few months have participated in surveys and numerous public hearings to help define the strategic direction in which our state will move over the coming years. The following document is a compilation of and credit to the industry's vision and enthusiasm, making Virginia one of the premier tourist destinations in the country.

Sincerely,



Calvin D. Jamison, Ed.D.  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Virginia Tourism Corporation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOURISM HAS BECOME a powerful economic force for many states, regions and cities. Travel and tourism has consistently been among the top three retail industries in the U.S. – generating more than \$580 billion in 2000. One outgrowth of the rise of travel and tourism in economic importance is that the industry has become very competitive. Competition to claim a larger portion of the tourism market has grown tremendously over the past several years. States, regions and cities have recognized the direct correlation between a strong tourism industry and economic growth. Therefore, many of these entities are significantly increasing the resources available to grow and strengthen their travel and tourism efforts.

It is because of the growth of tourism as an economic generator that the Virginia Tourism Corporation Board of Directors along with the Virginia tourism industry initiated the development of the *Vision Plan for Virginia's Tourism Industry*. The purpose of this *Vision Plan* is to accelerate the growth of tourism in the Commonwealth. The Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) and the Virginia tourism industry have developed a goal, objectives and strategies to elevate Virginia's tourism industry to unprecedented levels of success. The *Vision Plan* is the basis for a detailed strategic plan that will outline specific tactics.

The tourism industry and VTC present the following conclusions:

### GOAL

- To increase tourism market share and annual visitor spending in Virginia.

### OBJECTIVES

- Increase visitor volume, length-of-stay and spending in Virginia.
- Increase tourism funding annually, including identification of new sources, to advance tourism marketing and development.

### STRATEGIES

1. Strengthen the Virginia brand.
2. Develop and execute collaborative statewide marketing programs.
3. Educate elected officials and key opinion leaders on the economic importance of tourism and encourage investment in the industry.
4. Advance the use of technology in marketing and tourism products.
5. Expand hospitality workforce training.
6. Improve infrastructure that supports tourism.
7. Support existing tourism product of all sizes, including high revenue generating destinations, and support the development of new tourism product.

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**In 2000, travel ranked as the third largest retail industry in Virginia, behind food stores and automobile dealerships.**

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*“Now more than ever, Virginia's hospitality, travel and tourism industry is being recognized as an important factor in the economic health of the Commonwealth and for maintaining growth that continues to attract more visitors to Virginia, creating even more tourism dollars and related jobs.”*

*Ashton D. Mitchell, III  
Executive Vice President, Virginia  
Hospitality and Travel Association*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“The Vision Plan is fundamentally sound and actionable; inclusive, comprehensive, border to border, a realistic playbook that equips Virginia for 21st century competition.”*

*James M. Wordsworth  
Vice Chairman  
Virginia Tourism Corporation  
Board of Directors*

8. Promote Virginia’s existing and expanding meeting and convention facilities.
9. Market Virginia’s tourism assets to the film and video industry through the Virginia Film Office.

For the *Vision Plan* to be successful, it will be necessary for VTC and the tourism industry to review the plan during the Virginia Governor’s Conference on Travel and Tourism. Each strategy will be reviewed regularly by a subcommittee of industry experts and associated tactics will be assigned and performance measurements set.

Virginia abounds with rich natural, cultural and historic resources and world renowned attractions. To maximize visitation to these assets and to reach the tourism industry’s goal, the *Vision Plan* calls for increased marketing and advertising resources, an enhanced statewide infrastructure, and a well-trained hospitality workforce. Most importantly, success depends on the cooperative efforts of Virginia’s tourism industry, working together and speaking with a strong, unified voice.

## TOURISM – A COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

THE TOURISM LANDSCAPE has become increasingly competitive as states and destinations worldwide have focused attention on generating significant business receipts, jobs and tax revenues that the travel industry yields. While Virginia traveler spending has grown consistently over the past 10 years, it has not been enough to impact the state's national ranking. Virginia remains at number 10 in traveler spending, a position it has held since 1993.

Other top states in traveler spending enjoy an advantage over Virginia. California, Florida and Nevada are home to cities having much greater tourism budgets than their home states. For example, Los Angeles and San Francisco combined have a budget of more than \$40 million which is three times greater than the state of California's budget. In Nevada, the city of Las Vegas alone has a tourism budget in excess of \$165 million, more than 18 times greater than the state's tourism budget.

Once an innovative initiative, Virginia's Cooperative Marketing Fund Program is becoming less competitive. For example, West Virginia's grants increased from \$1.2 million in 1996 to \$10.6 million in 2001. Virginia's respective growth was from \$3 million to \$5.5 million. In 2002, qualified grant requests for tourism projects and partnerships to VTC exceeded available funds by more than two to one.

To attain the national rank of fifth in domestic traveler spending, there must be a commitment on the part of the tourism industry to increase marketing and advertising budgets through innovative funding strategies. The VTC and the tourism industry will work together to identify alternative sources of tourism marketing funding.



ASSATEAGUE LIGHTHOUSE

**More than \$150 million is spent by visitors to Virginia's Eastern Shore.**

### Top Ten States in Visitor Spending

1. California
2. Florida
3. Texas
4. New York
5. Illinois
6. Nevada
7. New Jersey
8. Pennsylvania
9. Georgia
10. Virginia

## TOURISM – A COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE



VIRGINIA BEACH

The Tidewater region brings in over \$2.4 billion in traveler spending.

In Virginia, statewide funding for marketing is low when compared to states like Florida where the city of Orlando alone has an advertising budget of \$34 million.

### TRAVELER SPENDING: GETTING TO #5 BY 2012

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT with an annual increase of 8.35 percent in traveler spending, Virginia can move from number ten to number five by 2012.

Year	Virginia Traveler Spending (in billions)	Rank	Percent Market Share	Number of Visitors (in millions)	State Taxes (in millions)	Local Taxes (in millions)
2000	\$13.1	10	2.85	28.0	\$642	\$423
2001	\$13.5	10	2.85	28.0	\$663	\$437
2002	\$14.0	10	2.85	28.0	\$685	\$451
2003	\$15.1	10	2.99	29.4	\$742	\$489
2004	\$16.4	8	3.14	30.8	\$804	\$529
2005	\$17.8	7	3.29	32.4	\$871	\$574
2006	\$19.3	7	3.46	34.0	\$944	\$621
2007	\$20.9	7	3.63	35.6	\$1,023	\$673
2008	\$22.6	7	3.81	37.4	\$1,108	\$730
2009	\$24.5	7	4.00	39.2	\$1,200	\$790
2010	\$26.6	6	4.19	41.2	\$1,301	\$856
2011	\$28.8	6	4.40	43.2	\$1,409	\$928
2012	\$31.2	5	4.62	45.3	\$1,527	\$1,006

This estimate assumes that Virginia's traveler spending increases by 8.35% annually starting in 2003, while all other states increase at the current rate of inflation (est. 3.25%). This is 5.10% above the rate of inflation.

## TOURISM – VIRGINIA'S ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

TOURISM IS VITAL TO Virginia's economy. In 2000, travel ranked as the third largest retail industry in Virginia, behind food stores and automobile dealerships. With more than 207,000 Virginians working in tourism-related jobs, the industry was the third largest employer behind business services and health services. Virginia's tourism industry paid \$4 billion in payroll. One in 17 Virginians is directly employed in the travel industry.

Travelers to Virginia spent a record-breaking \$13.1 billion in 2000, 63 percent greater than a decade earlier. Eighty percent of these travelers were "out-of-state" visitors, meaning new revenue for the Commonwealth. Overseas traveler spending for the combined Virginia and Washington, D.C. area, topped \$1.63 billion in 2000. Canadian traveler spending in the area generated an additional \$173 million.

In 2000, the travel industry generated an estimated \$642 million in state sales taxes and \$423 million in local sales taxes. On an average day in Virginia, tourism generates \$35.6 million in spending from lodging, meals, gasoline, shopping and other services.

Dollars spent in tourism marketing should be recognized as an investment, rather than an expense. Tourism yields a \$7 return on investment in state and local tax revenue for each advertising dollar spent. Taxes generated from tourism provide the state with an economic return within the same fiscal year.

As the objectives of this *Vision Plan* are achieved, spending, tax revenue and payroll will increase significantly and positively impact the Commonwealth.



MOUNT VERNON

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**Travelers spend more than \$5.7 billion in Northern Virginia.**

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*"Tourism to Virginia is a significant revenue generator and provides job opportunities for state citizens. It is vital to the economy of the Commonwealth. We must continue to improve our tourism marketing programs, nationally and internationally, to increase visitor spending annually."*

*Diane Howard  
President  
Virginia Association of Convention and  
Visitors Bureaus*

## VIRGINIA'S TOURISM ASSETS



SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

Virginia's Shenandoah Valley brings in over \$1.2 billion in traveler spending.

*“Where would Virginia be without the tourism industry? With its extraordinarily diverse array of attractions and natural amenities from the mountains to the shore, and with the richest history of any state in the nation, Virginia truly has it all! As one of the largest and most reliable generators of funds to both localities and to the Commonwealth, tourism deserves the same kind of respect that is normally reserved for more traditional industries.”*

*Sergei Troubetzkoy, CTP  
Director  
Staunton Convention & Visitors Bureau*

VISITORS ENJOY VIRGINIA’S rich, natural, cultural and historic resources, as well as world-renowned attractions. With magnificent mountains and beaches, scenic state and national parks, museums, historic attractions, resorts, heritage trails, theme parks, championship golf courses, and meeting and convention facilities – Virginia offers an exciting travel experience with year-round appeal.

Some of America’s most beloved sites are in Virginia, including Mount Vernon, Monticello, Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown, Chesapeake Bay, Chincoteague, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive, Cumberland Gap and Shenandoah National Park. Outdoor resources lend themselves to popular activities such as hiking, boating, fishing, skiing, snowboarding, canoeing and camping.

Virginia is home to many festivals, museums and memorials. Towns and cities are filled with fun, interesting and educational attractions. These places of interest are linked by beautiful scenic highways and byways.

Virginia is accessible. The state is located within a 750-mile radius of 60 percent of the U.S. population and 30 percent of Canada’s population. Washington Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan National Airport, both located in Virginia, are major gateways for domestic and international visitors. The state’s proximity to major population centers along the East Coast, five major interstate highways and nine regional airports make it a logical destination for domestic and international travelers. Improvements to Virginia’s travel infrastructure including the development of a new high speed rail system will result in improved accessibility to Virginia’s assets.

## VIRGINIA'S TOURISM ASSETS

In order to reach Virginia's tourism growth potential, more must be done to collectively and collaboratively promote regions, themes and attractions. Currently, Virginia boasts a strong foundation of tourism product that includes:

Agricultural Attractions	Hunting
Amateur Sporting Events	Museums
Arts and Crafts Festivals	Motorcycle Touring
Auto Racing	Music and Music Heritage Festivals
Beaches	National Parks & Forests
Bed and Breakfasts	Natural Attractions
Birding	Nightlife
Boating	Outdoor Activities and Events
Camping	Professional Sporting Events
Collegiate Sporting Events	Running Events
Conventions and Meetings	Rural Tourism
Cultural Attractions and Events	Sailing
Cycling Events	Scenic Byways
Driving Tours	Shopping
Eco-Tourism	Skiing
Environmental Attractions	Snowboarding
Festivals	Snowmobiling
Fishing	Spas and Resorts
Garden Tours	State Parks & Forests
Golf	Technical Attractions
Heritage Attractions	Tennis
Heritage Trails	Theatre and Live Performances
Hiking	Theme Parks
Historic Attractions	Water Parks and Attractions
History Trails	Whitewater Attractions
Horseback Riding	Wineries



MONTICELLO

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Travelers spend over \$2.3 billion  
in Virginia's Central Region.

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## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS



SHOT TOWER

**More than \$426 million is spent by travelers to Virginia's Southwest Blue Ridge Region.**

*“Substantial increases in tourism are essential to the growth and vitality of Virginia’s economy.”*

*John Shaffer  
Director of Marketing and Sales  
Luray Caverns*

ECONOMICALLY, THE COMMONWEALTH is reliant upon the tourism industry to provide high quality visitor attractions that generate critical traveler spending. Virginia’s tourism industry has come together with a common voice to develop a shared vision that will ultimately allow the state to reach new heights in tourism growth.

Increasing tourism market share and annual traveler spending is the goal of the *Vision Plan*. Its objectives support increasing visitor volume, length-of-stay and spending while increasing support for funding for tourism, including identification of new sources of funding, to advance marketing and development. The strategies for reaching the goal and objectives are listed below.

### STRATEGIES

1. Strengthen the Virginia brand.
2. Develop and execute collaborative statewide marketing programs.
3. Educate elected officials and key opinion leaders on the economic importance of tourism and encourage investment in the industry.
4. Advance the use of technology in marketing and tourism products.
5. Expand hospitality workforce training.
6. Improve infrastructure that supports tourism.
7. Support existing tourism product of all sizes, including high revenue generating destinations, and support the development of new tourism product.
8. Promote Virginia’s existing and expanding meeting and convention facilities.
9. Market Virginia’s tourism assets to the film and video industry through the Virginia Film Office.

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS

### 1. STRENGTHEN THE VIRGINIA BRAND

THE VIRGINIA BRAND is closely tied to one of the most popular and widely recognized slogans and logos ever developed – “Virginia is for Lovers.” Research completed in the fall of 2001 demonstrates that the slogan and logo – essentially the Virginia brand – carry a great deal of equity and resonate with consumers. The research also concludes that the logo needs to be “freshened” and that the meaning behind the slogan should be re-focused. Generally, consumers believe that “Virginia is for Lovers” denotes romance rather than its intended message that Virginia is for lovers of beaches, mountains, history and fun.

Supported by Virginia’s tourism industry, the VTC’s long-term advertising and brand development objectives include redefining the “Virginia is for Lovers” slogan and meaning, and refreshing the logo. Emphasizing this message along with an updated logo offers increased value to industry members who use them in their advertising and marketing programs.

Relaunching the slogan and brand requires a long-term commitment and research to determine impact and to redirect VTC’s efforts if necessary. VTC’s advertising and marketing efforts must set the tone and lay a base of preference for Virginia vacations, from which all Virginia tourism entities can claim benefits. Richmond, for example, has developed a new slogan, “Historic Richmond Region Easy to Love,” which directly ties to the “Virginia is for Lovers” slogan.

### 2. DEVELOP AND EXECUTE COLLABORATIVE STATEWIDE MARKETING PROGRAMS

THE OLD SAYING “there is strength in numbers” is never more apparent than when discussing the benefits of collaborative advertising and marketing programs. Members of Virginia’s tourism industry feel strongly that collaboration in advertising and marketing among individual members will pay large dividends.

Far greater impact will be felt when Virginia’s destination advertising and marketing collaborations create synergy among industry members. Virginia’s tourism industry must explore innovative ways to expand advertising programs and initiatives that tie together marketing efforts by region, special interest, demographics, lifestyle and special themes. Developing these collaborative efforts will allow the industry to promote Virginia and its tourism product more efficiently and cost effectively.



APPALACHIA BANJO FESTIVAL

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**Virginia's Heart of Appalachia brings in almost \$100 million in spending by visitors.**

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*“With textiles all but gone and tobacco under fire, it is time for Southside Virginia to cultivate another ‘t,’ as in tourist. Tourists bring dollars that translate into jobs and increased tax dollars, and that means a great deal to us.”*

*Frank Malone  
Executive Director  
South Hill Chamber of Commerce*

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS



CHESAPEAKE BAY

**Travelers spend over \$300 million in the Chesapeake Bay Region.**

Coordinated marketing and advertising can persuade Virginia visitors to extend their stays in the Commonwealth. An example would be a family from Pennsylvania decides to visit Colonial Williamsburg. Through collaborative marketing and advertising they learn about other nearby attractions including Busch Gardens, Virginia Beach and Richmond. In addition, they learn about car rental, hotel and restaurant discounts in each of these areas. Through cross-promotion with other destinations and attractions, this family could discover the multitude of treasures offered in other parts of Virginia. By extending their stay, the industry will generate additional revenue.

The industry has the benefit of participating in Virginia's Cooperative Marketing Fund Program. This program encourages Virginia destinations and attractions to take advantage of state funding that supplements their advertising budgets. This allows program participants to broaden their advertising reach in order to attract additional visitors to Virginia.

One industry partner commented that Virginia's Cooperative Marketing Fund Program should adopt the long-term goal of "a million per billion," meaning one million in grant dollars available for every billion dollars of traveler spending. In 2000, traveler spending was \$13.1 billion, which translates to \$13 million for the program.

Virginia enjoys close proximity to Washington, D.C., one of our country's top 10 international destinations. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Travel Industry Association of America, international visitors spend an average of 15.2 nights per trip in the U.S., while domestic visitors spend an average of 2 nights. International visitors spend approximately \$99.00 per day while domestic visitors spend about \$52.00 per day.

Virginia must continue to promote its close geographic relationship to Washington D.C. to attract these visitors to Virginia destinations. One cost efficient method is to enhance collaborative marketing opportunities to attract more of this lucrative market. By partnering with other states in our region such as North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, West Virginia, Tennessee and the District of Columbia, Virginia can further leverage marketing dollars to yield higher returns with lower costs. The partnerships should be expanded to include multi-state themes or tours such as African American heritage, country music, or the "Original Thirteen Colonies." Multi-state partnerships are a source of new funding for the advancement of tourism marketing and development.

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS

### 3. EDUCATE ELECTED OFFICIALS AND KEY OPINION LEADERS ON THE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS of this *Vision Plan*, Virginia's tourism industry must succeed in education efforts regarding the substantial impact tourism has on Virginia's economy, employment and quality of life. Too often elected officials and decision makers fail to recognize, or take for granted, the constant cash flow of tourism dollars that fuel local economies. Therefore, support for Virginia's tourism industry should not be viewed as an expense, but as an investment that yields a high return to Virginia's economy and tax base.

Virginians realized first hand the importance of tourism in the wake of the events of September 11. The impact of the closure of Ronald Reagan National Airport and the decline of leisure and business travel dramatically illustrated the fragile balance in which Virginia's tourism exists.

Through groups like the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association (VHTA), Virginia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus (VACVB), Virginia Association of Museums, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and private sector businesses, the tourism industry must make a long term commitment to Virginians that they will communicate tourism's economic merits to elected officials and opinion leaders.

### 4. ADVANCE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN MARKETING AND TOURISM PRODUCTS.

A CRITICAL ELEMENT in the future success of reaching out to travelers worldwide and communicating Virginia's tourism benefits effectively and cost-efficiently is technology. With more than half of all Internet traffic flowing through Northern Virginia, a region that has blossomed because of a growing technology sector, the state is already well known as a technology leader. Virginia is in an ideal position to lead the country in the use of technology to promote state tourism.

With more than 60 percent of the U.S. population having Internet access, the Virginia tourism industry and VTC must be aggressive and sophisticated in packaging and promoting products on-line. Industry members throughout the state should be encouraged to enhance their Web sites to include reservation capabilities, mapping and links to better cross-market tourism activities and destinations. Technology exists that can enable potential visitors to experience virtual tours and interactive information about Virginia. It is imperative that the Virginia tourism



JAMESTOWN

*“The enhancement of technology use within Virginia’s tourism industry is one of the keys to growing this vital sector of Virginia’s economy. Travel and tourism is our nation’s third largest retail industry producing more than \$580 billion annually. The use of the Internet and other technologies is a quick and cost effective way for Virginia to capture a bigger piece of the travel and tourism pie.”*

*Cindy Brouillard  
Director  
Newport News  
Tourism Development Office*

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS



CHINCOTEAGUE

industry and VTC continue to incorporate technology into their marketing initiatives. Another exciting application is the placement of “Virtual Visitor Centers” in welcome centers and rest areas. These electronic kiosks will greatly improve cross promotion of Virginia tourism product and ultimately extend the stay of visitors or entice them to visit Virginia again.

### 5. EXPAND HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE TRAINING

PREMIER HOSPITALITY SERVICE is critical to an exceptional vacation experience. A visit to even the most exquisite world-class resort or destination can be ruined by bad service. To ensure that visitors to Virginia receive a consistently superior experience, investment in an education and training programs for Virginia’s travel and hospitality workforce must be made.

One goal of such a program would be to develop an accreditation system ensuring that all employees in Virginia’s travel and hospitality industry have a superior level of training. A well-trained workforce will greatly improve Virginia’s effectiveness in meeting its goals and objectives. As ambassadors for Virginia, well-trained industry employees will greatly impact visitors’ experience increasing the likelihood of a return visit and positive word-of-mouth advertising for Virginia.

Proper training also better educates the travel and hospitality workforce about the incredible diversity of Virginia’s tourism product which in turn increases their ability to “up-sell” vacation packages and become a better resource for Virginia visitors. Training programs will be particularly helpful to emerging tourism destinations, attractions and start-up travel businesses and organizations.

### 6. IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS TOURISM

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE strains to support the current tourism volume. Further tourism growth will be hindered unless sufficient infrastructure is in place to deliver an excellent visitor experience.

The industry will remain vocal in its support of upgrading state, local and regional visitor information centers visually and technologically. This requires stable financial support from state and local governments, regional organizations and corporate partners. The Virginia tourism industry will support the Department of Transportation’s efforts to rebuild and upgrade all 10 state welcome centers and 31 rest areas by 2007, in time for the commemoration of the founding of Jamestown.

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS

Virginia's tourism industry recommends the addition of the Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation to the VTC Board of Directors. This addition would provide an official and direct channel of communication with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and other transportation agencies to encourage more familiarity with common issues. The organizations must work together to support enhancements and additions to Virginia's transportation systems, welcome centers and rest areas to meet the needs of the visitors to Virginia.

Air travel will continue to be a focus for the industry with an emphasis on the need for and continued support of price reductions and expanded regional air service to Richmond, Newport News, Norfolk, Charlottesville, Roanoke, Bristol and other localities. The industry continues to support restoration of full capacity air service at Ronald Reagan National Airport.

On the ground, the industry supports developing a high-speed rail network in Virginia; increasing existing passenger rail service and adding light rail services; improving traffic flow into eastern Virginia, specifically I-64 from Richmond to Virginia Beach; promoting use of the Monitor-Merrimac bridge tunnel; improving traffic flow on I-81 by adding a lane in each direction; finalizing improvements to I-95 and the "mixing bowl" at Springfield; improving signage on interstates, secondary roads and by-ways; implementing Tourist Oriented Direction Signing (TODS) program signage on secondary roads and by-ways; and supporting construction of I-73.

### 7. SUPPORT EXISTING TOURISM PRODUCT OF ALL SIZES, INCLUDING HIGH REVENUE GENERATING DESTINATIONS, AND SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TOURISM PRODUCT.

TO DRAMATICALLY INCREASE visitation in Virginia, the state's current inventory of tourism product must be properly supported and, where necessary, improved. Virginia's existing tourism product is a great foundation for attracting visitors. Enhancements of existing product will yield significant additional visitor spending. New product must include the encouragement of capital investment for new attractions such as theme parks, interactive museums, meeting and convention facilities and heritage trails.

The further development of sports-related events will draw visitors to Virginia and generate additional visitor spending. Examples include professional golf tournaments; professional sports teams; auto racing; professional tennis; Olympic events; extreme and adventure sports; sailing; running and cycling; and outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting and archery.



COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

*"Tourism in the Blue Ridge Highlands region supplies 6,500 jobs with a payroll of \$80 million a year. Travelers spend \$464 million in the region generating \$25 million in local tax revenue. Last year 87 new tourism businesses opened in the region. Tourism is economic development for Southwest Virginia."*

*Kitty Ward Barker  
Executive Director  
Blue Ridge Travel Association*

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS



THE HOMESTEAD

*“Richmond has taken a significant step in strengthening Virginia’s convention and meeting product with the recent expansion of the 625,000 square foot Richmond Center. This expansion will quickly have a positive impact on tourism revenue growth for Richmond and Virginia.”*

*Jack F. Berry  
President  
Richmond Metro Convention and  
Visitors Bureau*

With the addition of new attractions and events will come the need to increase lodging and other related amenities to support these new products. Approximately 49 percent of visitor spending is generated through lodging and dining.

Upcoming major events such as the Aviation World’s Fair 2003, the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Celebration, the Smithsonian Folk-Life Festival 2003 and Jamestown 2007 must be supported to ensure maximum success. Additional events will be aggressively pursued including annual international festivals, ethnic heritage festivals, children’s festivals and arts and history festivals.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation will continue to encourage, support and provide compelling data to assist localities in attracting new tourism product that they have specifically identified. VTC’s current mission is to market and advertise the Commonwealth’s tourism assets to stimulate visitation and traveler spending. With the leadership of the VTC Board of Directors Chairman, VTC will explore ways to become more actively involved in the solicitation of new tourism product, with emphasis on underdeveloped areas of the Commonwealth, including Southside and Southwest Virginia.

### **8. PROVIDE RESOURCES AND MARKETING SUPPORT TO PROMOTE VIRGINIA’S EXISTING AND EXPANDING MEETING AND CONVENTION FACILITIES**

IN 2001, MEETING and convention spending approached \$800 million in Virginia. VTC and Virginia’s tourism industry will direct resources to aggressively attract additional meetings and conventions to Virginia. Recently, Virginia’s capacity for meetings and conventions has been greatly improved with the tripling of capacity in Virginia Beach and Richmond, and will be further augmented by facilities in Wytheville and Abingdon and planned new construction in Arlington and Hampton. With this new capacity, estimates predict a doubling in meeting and convention spending to \$1.6 billion by 2012.

In order to achieve this growth, Virginia’s tourism industry will earmark funds specifically to promote meeting and convention business in Virginia, and will bring key industry leaders together to discuss ideas to increase Virginia’s share of this lucrative segment.

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS

### 9. MARKET VIRGINIA'S TOURISM ASSETS TO THE FILM AND VIDEO INDUSTRY THROUGH THE VIRGINIA FILM OFFICE

THE VIRGINIA FILM OFFICE, as part of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, is responsible for marketing Virginia to the film and video industry. To attract motion picture production, it is imperative to convince key decision makers in the industry that it is both artistically and economically viable to film in Virginia, and that the state's wide range of ocean, mountain and rural landscapes, old and new architecture and authentic historic locations make it an exceptional choice for film production. Virginia's supportive state and local government officials, financial incentives for film making, two full-service film studios (New Millennium Studios in Petersburg and New Dominion Pictures in Suffolk) and a wide range of accommodations, restaurants and other services needed by film crews all combine to make Virginia an attractive destination for the entertainment industry.

It has been observed that a film project acts much like a super-tourist when it shoots on location. During the filming of a major motion picture it is not unusual for more than 100 crew members to come to the state for 8-12 weeks, renting hotel rooms, eating in restaurants, shopping and patronizing area attractions, making a significant impact on the local economy. Although smaller productions such as documentaries, television shows, videos or commercials typically have fewer crew members, when viewed together their impact is also significant.

A secondary benefit that a strong entertainment industry brings is the way in which film and television shows can stimulate tourism. An example from Virginia is the feature film "Dirty Dancing" filmed on location at Mountain Lake Resort. The hotel reported an immediate increase in visitation when the film was released in 1987 and still features it in its advertising. Another type of promotional opportunity arose in conjunction with the filming of the Showtime series "Lincs" at New Millennium Studios. The Virginia Tourism Corporation made use of a product placement opportunity by having a neon sign with the "Virginia is for Lovers" slogan appear in each episode.

To further the goal of increasing film and video production and positively impacting visitation to Virginia, the Virginia Film Office will aggressively use a mix of marketing, advertising and promotional strategies to showcase the state to key decision-makers from outside the state. While



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM

*"We come in, set up, spend a lot of money, clean up our mess and go away. Except for the economic impact, we have little residual effect on the community."*

*Ron Smith  
Co-executive Producer of the feature  
film "Gods and Generals" quoted in the  
Charlottesville Daily Progress*

## STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM SUCCESS



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supporting the growth and development of the state's indigenous film and video industries, the Virginia Film Office will effectively utilize financial incentives as a means of attracting production and creating opportunities to promote Virginia tourism in conjunction with specific film or television projects.

As part of this strategy to grow in-state industry, the Virginia Film Office will partner with Virginia community colleges and universities to develop workforce training and apprenticeship programs for Virginia film crews.

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**"Since 1980, the total impact of the film and video industry on Virginia's economy has exceeded \$1 billion."**

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*"Tourism in the Roanoke Valley is BIG Business! Leisure travel, conventions, sporting events and group travel combine to generate over \$350 million in visitor spending annually. This revenue directly supports 6,000 jobs with an estimated payroll of nearly \$90 million."*

*Dave Kjolhede  
Executive Director  
Roanoke Valley Convention and  
Visitors Bureau*

## VISION PLAN – NEXT STEPS

AS A LIVING DOCUMENT, the *Vision Plan for Virginia's Tourism Industry* will undergo regular evaluations to fine tune the strategies and develop tactics to reach specific goals, achieve objectives and ensure tourism growth is steady and substantial. Under the leadership of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the tourism industry will meet during the Virginia Governor's Conference on Travel and Tourism to review the *Vision Plan*, develop tactics and make any adjustments necessary to achieve the goal and objectives of this document. The VTC will use the *Vision Plan*, along with industry input, as a base for developing future strategic plans.

Each of these nine strategies will have a corresponding subcommittee of government and industry representatives to set performance measurements and to ensure progress for each specific strategy. These subcommittees will meet regularly and the VTC will communicate progress and results to the Virginia tourism industry.



ROANOKE

*"I would like to thank the Virginia Tourism Corporation Board of Directors, the dedicated staff of the Virginia Tourism Corporation and the hundreds of tourism industry professionals who have contributed to the development of this plan."*

*Calvin D. Jamison, Ed.D.  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Virginia Tourism Corporation*

