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Media Only

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## Virginia Shows Off to Convention of Top Tourism Industry Buyers and Travel Media

**RICHMOND, Va.** – More than 700 tourism professionals from the United States and Canada will experience Virginia as a travel destination when Travel South USA – America’s oldest and largest regional marketing organization – brings its annual Showcase convention to the Greater Richmond Convention Center, February 18-20. Millions of potential tourism dollars from future tourists are at stake as at least 280 supplier representatives from 12 southern states vie for the attention of more than 190 buyers, including group-tour operators and travel-service providers in a swirling, four-day marketplace that determines a lot of tourism-product offered to consumers.

More than 30 travel journalists representing magazines, newspapers, radio and electronic media will also attend. The conference is a great opportunity for the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Richmond Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau and tourism partners from throughout the Commonwealth to promote the assets that make Virginia one of the top ten tourism states in the U.S. in travelers’ spending.

The importance of this opportunity to showcase Virginia to a large number of significant travel industry contacts is not lost on Virginia Tourism Corporation president and CEO Alisa Bailey. “In terms of companies that can bring the most tourism business to Virginia, these are the best of the best,” says Bailey. “The immediate economic impact of having a large convention come to Virginia is easily calculable, but there is a much more valuable long-term benefit with Travel South USA because these delegates can potentially send thousands upon thousands of visitors to Virginia every year.”

The Richmond Region will realize an immediate economic benefit from the Showcase convention of more than a half-million dollars. Long-term benefit for the entire Commonwealth will be far greater. The American Bus Association calculates the economic impact of a motor coach tour spending two nights to be \$12,199 per coach. Passengers spend an average of \$353 each on hotel, retail, attractions and dining. Motor coach operators attending Travel South USA Showcase have the potential to send hundreds of coach tours into Virginia every year.

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Though the nearly 300 destinations, attractions, lodging providers and other suppliers will be in attendance from around the South, Virginia will have the most representatives of any state at Showcase. The fact that the convention takes place in Virginia also gives buyers and media a first-hand look at sites in Richmond and throughout Virginia. The VTC is coordinating a series of guided tours for travel media as well as tour company representatives.

Canada, an important and growing tourism market for Virginia, will be a major focus for this year's Showcase. Canadian visitors increased their spending in Virginia by 17.5 percent from 2003 to 2004, and person-visits rose to 436,800. In addition to Canadian tour operators attending Showcase, 10 Canadian travel journalists will be seeking out new Virginia stories.

For information on Virginia as a consumer travel destination, visit [www.Virginia.org](http://www.Virginia.org). To learn more about Virginia Tourism Corporation and Virginia's travel industry, visit [www.VATC.org](http://www.VATC.org).

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