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Virginia Connects the Green Dots for Eco-Conscious Travelers with New Web Site

-VirginiaGreenTravel.org makes green travel convenient for travelers passionate about the environment-

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www.VirginiaGreenTravel.org

RICHMOND, Va. – Virginia’s state tourism office today launched VirginiaGreenTravel.org, a new Web site dedicated to environmentally friendly travel in Virginia. The new travel site supports *Virginia Green*, a partnership between the Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that promotes environmentally friendly practices in Virginia’s tourism industry.

VirginiaGreenTravel.org will serve as a gateway to the state’s certified green tourism businesses including more than 140 lodging facilities as well as restaurants, attractions and more. The new site also has convenient links to Virginia state parks, outdoor adventure programs, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, eco-friendly events and travel tips. Virginia debuted the site in advance of Earth Day at the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Center in Virginia Beach, a local leader in the state’s *Virginia Green* program.

“Virginia Green is a new and important focus for our tourism industry, as we work to educate ourselves and improve upon how we treat the natural habitat that helps make Virginia a top travel destination,” said Alisa Bailey, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. “It’s smart business sense for Virginia and will help preserve and protect our natural heritage for future generations of citizens and tourists.”

“Virginia Green is a unique voluntary program that has great potential to benefit Virginia’s environment,” said David Paylor, Director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. “Participating businesses reduce their environmental impacts and help increase awareness about environmental issues. We all are consumers in the tourism industry, and Virginia Green gives us the opportunity to make decisions based on our concern for the environment.”

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) manages *Virginia Green*. The program awards Virginia Green Certification to tourism-related business such as hotels, restaurants and attractions taking voluntary actions to reduce harmful impacts on the environment. Certified businesses commit to waste-reducing activities such as recycling, optional linen service, water and energy conservation, green cleaning, purchasing environmentally friendly products and other steps that help reduce harmful environmental effects.



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Virginia Green launched in pilot phase in 2006, with DEQ working with the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association to educate businesses such as hotels, inns and B&Bs about the benefits of green practices. Since that time the program has grown to 140 lodging facilities, 23 restaurants, 20 conference centers, two convention centers and six attractions, including the Virginia Aquarium, making it the first Virginia Green attraction in the Hampton Roads region and one of only six in the state.

DEQ plans to expand *Virginia Green* to include wineries, golf courses and Virginia's welcome centers and rest areas. Virginia's two new welcome centers, in Fredericksburg and Clear Brook, are LEED certified.

Tourism is a \$17.7 billion industry in Virginia, generating \$1.2 billion in state and local taxes and providing 208,000 jobs across the state. In addition to having a positive effect on the environment, Virginia Green certified businesses enjoy significant cost savings from their efforts, especially due to recycling and conservation. Studies have shown that facilities may see a 30 to 50 percent reduction in fees associated with energy, water and trash removal.

Visit www.VirginiaGreenTravel.org to connect with green certified travel destinations in Virginia. For specific information about how to become a Virginia Green certified tourism business, go to www.deq.virginia.gov/p2/virginiagreen. For more travel information about Virginia, go to www.Virginia.org or call 1-800-VISITVA to request a Live Passionately – Virginia is for Lovers travel guide.

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