

# **Tourism 101**

## **Packet**

By: Savannah Greer

# Table of Contents

Section I: State Tourism

Section II: Social Media

Section III: Grant Information

Section IV: International Tourism

# I. State Tourism

## Sweet Home Alabama

- THE ALABAMA TOURISM DEPARTMENT is ready to work with travel industry professionals to help make it as easy as possible to plan an Alabama vacation for your clients.
- ALABAMA GROUP TRAVEL PLANNER, offering suggested itineraries, Hub and Spoke and themed tours along with hotel and attraction information.
- SPORTS MARKETING COORDINATOR, assisting event organizers with locating facilities to host major events.
- REUNION SERVICES, filled with ideas and how-to solutions specifically designed to make planning your next reunion go smoothly.
- Opportunities regarding FAM TOURS for domestic and international tour operators and travel agents.
- DESTINATION TOURISM PROMOTION, charter travel and suggested itinerary planning.
- ALABAMA CALENDAR OF EVENTS, published annually, providing descriptions, contacts and times of events.
- DIGITAL IMAGES of attractions and events. Available upon request for reproduction or visual presentations.
- PRESS KITS and trip arrangements for journalists.
- Colorful series of state TRAVEL POSTERS.

# Sweet Home Alabama: How to Work with Alabama Tourism

A guide for the travel industry on services offered by the Alabama Tourism Department.



**Robert Bentley**  
Governor



**Lee Sentell**  
Director

## What can the Alabama Tourism Department do for you?

**How to Work With Alabama Tourism** is a handy reference guide that has been compiled to answer most of your questions about the valuable services offered by this state agency. The personnel in ATD's Montgomery office and the eight official Welcome Centers around the state are your tourism partners.

**How to Work With Alabama Tourism** will acquaint you with the work they do. You will also find contact information for each of these staff members in the back of this guide. Please feel free to take advantage of ATD's services.

We are eager to work with you in every way possible to attract more visitors to your community and our state.

# Sweet Home Alabama

## ALABAMA TOURISM DEPARTMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1) When was ATD created?** The agency which now goes by the name of the Alabama Tourism Department was created in October 1951 by legislative act as the Bureau of Publicity & Information. The name was amended and changed in May 1984 to Bureau of Tourism & Travel and changed again in 2010 to the present name.

**2) What is the purpose of ATD?** ATD, as mandated by the Legislature, is entitled with "exclusive power and authority to plan and conduct all state programs of information and publicity designed to attract tourists to the state of Alabama." Its purpose is to promote travel to and through Alabama. It does this both nationally and internationally.

**3) How is ATD funded?** ATD is funded by one-fourth of the 4 percent state lodgings tax collected by all hotels, motels, campgrounds and other accommodations. Alabama's funding ranks 10th among the 12 Southern states.

**4) How does ATD impact tourism?** ATD helps ensure that Alabama's economy gains maximum benefits from tourism. More than 25 million travelers spent \$12.6 billion in the state in 2015, supporting the jobs of 175,650 Alabamians.

**5) What is 1-800-Alabama?** ATD operates the 1-800-Alabama nationwide toll free and (334) 242-4169 telephone system for Alabama tourism information. Calls are answered five days a week by travel counselors who are knowledgeable about Alabama's tourism product and the state travel industry. The travel counselors handle incoming calls, and mail. They also offer travel counseling for tourists and potential tourists, assist students doing Alabama research projects and process e-mail requests. **Hours of operation are:**

**Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. CST**

**6) What is [www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel)?** ATD maintains a website at [www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel). It contains comprehensive travel information and links to local tourism sites. For details on being included, contact Dawn Chandler at (334) 242-4415 or [Dawn.Chandler@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Dawn.Chandler@tourism.alabama.gov).

**7) Where does ATD advertise Alabama?** ATD's advertising efforts are targeted toward the Southeast, since 85 percent of tourists come from within a 500-mile radius of Alabama. Ads are placed in both print and broadcast media. State law prohibits ATD from placing advertisements within Alabama. For more information, contact ATD's advertising agency Intermark Group, Account Director: Bill Dinan (205) 776-2233; [Bill.Dinan@intermarkgroup.com](mailto:Bill.Dinan@intermarkgroup.com)

**8) What are Welcome Centers and where are they located?** The eight official Alabama Welcome Centers are located at key entry points into the state (see listing following Section 21 in this guide). They give over six million travelers their first impressions of Alabama. A Welcome Center is an outlet for tourist information. ATD employs Welcome Center personnel to greet tourists and promote the state's events, attractions, historic sites, lodgings and much more. The Alabama Department of Transportation maintains the grounds and structures. For more information on various programs and how to get involved with Welcome

Center promotions, contact: Debbie Wilson (334) 353-4516 or [debbie.wilson@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:debbie.wilson@tourism.alabama.gov)

### 9) What are Rest Areas and where are they located?

Rest Areas are strategically located within the interior of the state along major highways. They provide a place for travelers to take a break while enroute to their destination, and are not staffed by ATD employees. They come under the authority of the Alabama Department of Transportation. (View locations online: [www.alitsweb2.dot.state.al.us/its/Default.aspx](http://www.alitsweb2.dot.state.al.us/its/Default.aspx))

### 10) How can my brochures be distributed in the Welcome Centers?

Every brochure is approved by the ATD Brochure Committee and must adhere to the following guidelines:

#### BROCHURE APPROVAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

1a. Must be related to the travel industry in Alabama only. Must be open to the general public. International directories will not be accepted. Two national hotel/motel directories are accepted per Welcome Center (maintained under the counter, for reference only – not for distribution to the public).

2a. Must not be commercial sales real estate, timeshare and/or membership-only or land developments. Only rental properties in travel-related areas handled by real estate agencies, etc. are acceptable.

3a. Brochures containing advertising will be accepted only when all advertising is directly related to the promotion of tourism in Alabama.

4a. All brochures and/or rack cards – i.e., hotels, motels, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, attractions and events with quoted rates, dollars off, percentatge off, and/or free coupons – must have expiration date printed on them. Open-ended rates, i.e., “\$29.95 and up,” are accepted only with an expiration date.

5a. All brochures should contain proper English usage, and be concise and to-the-point with a good selling message. Brochures must have complete address and telephone number. It is strongly recommended that any important selling message that draws attention to the brochure be printed on the upper half of the front of the brochure, as this will ensure easy visibility when displayed in brochure racks.

6a. Brochures must fit easily into display rack. Standard rack size is 4” x 9”. To prevent brochures from curling over in racks, it is recommended that brochures be printed on 110 lb. stock paper. Due to limited space at the Welcome Centers, if a brochure does not meet the standard rack size, it may not be immediately visible or it may not be possible to display it to the public.

7a. Brochures must be received for approval at least 30 days prior to distribution. Special events brochures must be received for approval at least three months in advance, if possible. Allow seven working days for Brochure Committee approval.

8a. Prior to printing and to ensure that a brochure meets all guidelines, the Brochure Committee will accept fax copies, drafts, and photocopies for prior approval – provided all written copy is complete (fax # 334-242-4554)

9a. For approval consideration for Welcome Center distribution, a copy of the brochure should be sent to: Alabama Tourism Department, Attn: Debbie Wilson, P.O. Box 4927, Montgomery, AL 36103-4927 or email proofs to [Debbie.Wilson@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Debbie.Wilson@tourism.alabama.gov)

10a. Matching Grants brochures are pre-approved through the director’s office and do not have to go through the Brochure Committee. However, these brochures must be submitted to the committee for record keeping purposes. For Matching Grants guidelines and application forms, see Section 13.

11a. A letter of approval/disapproval will be mailed to the person submitting the brochure. To obtain additional information or if there are questions contact [Debbie.Wilson@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Debbie.Wilson@tourism.alabama.gov), (334) 353-4516.

12a. An initial shipment of 2,000 brochures (after approval) is required to establish distribution to the Welcome Centers. For inventory purposes, all brochures are required to be shipped directly to the main office: Alabama Tourism Department, Attn: Mail Division, 401 Adams Ave., Ste 126, Montgomery, AL 36104, (334) 242-4489, [shipping@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:shipping@tourism.alabama.gov).

Brochures will be distributed after the inventory process is completed. During the busy travel season the eight Welcome Centers may quickly deplete the initial supply of 2,000 brochures. A postcard will be sent to the brochure’s contact person when it is time to replenish ATD’s supply of the brochure.

13a. All brochures must be approved for Welcome Center distribution prior to consideration for Rest Area distribution. Information and instructions for Rest Area distribution is available through ATD or the Alabama Department of Transportation.

**11) How can I acquire ATD brochures for display?** If you desire to display brochures that are published by ATD, you may call and inquire about availability. Requests for literature not published by ATD should be made directly to the attraction/event/lodging of a city. Contact Mail Division, (334) 242-4489, [shipping@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:shipping@tourism.alabama.gov).

**12) Who designs and creates Alabama’s official travel brochures?** Except for the Alabama Vacation Guide and selected projects handled independently, all official Alabama travel literature is designed and laid out in the art department of ATD’s Publications Division. To discuss reprints, updates, deletions or other creative suggestions regarding ATD’s travel publications, contact Tommy Cauthen, [Tommy.Cauthen@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Tommy.Cauthen@tourism.alabama.gov) or Rick Harmon, (334) 242-0583, [Rick.Harmon@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Rick.Harmon@tourism.alabama.gov).

**13) What is a Matching Grant and how do I qualify?** The Matching Grants program provides assistance on a 50/50 matching basis to non-profit Alabama tourism organizations promoting travel and vacation business in Alabama. Those approved may be considered for

ual basis. Funds may be used for brochures, tourism promotion websites, and dia advertising. No organization, or any of its subdivisions or affiliated groups, for more than one matching grant. Each non-profit organization will be required exempt identification number or its tax exemption letter from the Internal . For details, contact Leigh Cross at (334) 242-4416, Leigh.Cross@tourism.

**Involved in weather emergencies?** For information relating to hotel room ers, road closures, etc. during weather and other emergency situations, contact ) 353-4541, Pam.Smith@tourism.alabama.gov. or Jo Jo Terry, (334) 353-4716, sm.alabama.gov

**Official Alabama Vacation Guide and how do I obtain an ad, listing, event?** The official Alabama Vacation Guide is published by ATD and given 300,000 (check with Tommy about this number...how many do you print each annually. It contains comprehensive information about the state's attractions, arks, campgrounds, outdoor recreation, outfitters and golf courses and also lar of events section. The calendar provides descriptions, contacts and times ents. Events information must be submitted online at <http://partners.alabama.gov> or an account and then you will be able to submit event listings to the calendar. ation for when to submit information, contact Pam Smith to be added to the e to meet the annual submission deadline may result in your information not t the printed publication. Annual and special events will be posted on the ATD ated regularly. For more details, contact Pam Smith, (334) 353-4541, Pam.alabama.gov.

**Tourism Tuesdays Newsletter?** Tourism Tuesdays is an electronic TD, its activities and other industry news. It is distributed weekly via email. en in-house, but the editor welcomes news releases on new openings, major er newsworthy events within Alabama's tourism infrastructure. Contact Peggy 242-4545 or Peggy.Collins@tourism.alabama.gov.

**ATD work with travel writers?** ATD provides support to travel writers ducing stories that feature Alabama as a travel destination. Assistance is given ess kits, press trips, photography, story ideas and itinerary suggestions. For more : ATD's online media room at [www.tourism.alabama.gov](http://www.tourism.alabama.gov) or contact Brian Jones 55, Brian.Jones@tourism.alabama.gov.

**ATD assist the group travel, sports or reunion markets?**  
**Guide** — suggested tours specially geared to needs of tour groups.  
**ing** — provides contacts and information on sports facilities and venues for

**eting** — provides contacts and information on meeting facilities and venues its.  
mily reunion, military, class reunion information.

**Marketing Calendar**— consumer and trade show information.  
es missions in which Alabama tourism professionals meet one-on-one with itors and travel agents.

-Provides listing of Alabama motorcoach companies and tour operators.  
-Provides details on familiarization tours for domestic and foreign tour operators and travel agents.  
-Offers tour development assistance — including itinerary and trip planning suggestions; information on routes and attractions; travel times; and local tourism contacts.  
For more details regarding group travel services, contact Grey Brennan, (334) 242-4459, Grey.Brennan@tourism.alabama.gov or Rosemary Judkins, (334) 242-4493, Rosemary.Judkins@tourism.alabama.gov.

**20) What are the four ATD Regions?** ATD has divided the state into four regions, assigning one staff person as Regional Director for each region. This provides personal, one-on-one access to the ATD for tourism professionals throughout Alabama. The Regional Director in each area regularly conducts "ATD & You" seminars; contact the appropriate representative for scheduled dates.

#### North Alabama

**Debbie Wilson** • (334) 353-4516 • [Debbie.Wilson@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Debbie.Wilson@tourism.alabama.gov)

Counties: Blount, Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, Winston

#### Central Alabama

**Grey Brennan** • (334) 242-4459 • [Grey.Brennan@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Grey.Brennan@tourism.alabama.gov)

Counties: Bibb, Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, Chambers, Chilton, Coosa, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Jefferson, Lamar, Perry, Pickens, Randolph, St. Clair, Shelby, Sumter, Talladega, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa, Walker

#### South Alabama

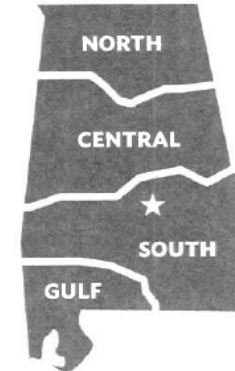
**Rick Harmon** • (334) 242-0583 • [Rick.Harmon@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:Rick.Harmon@tourism.alabama.gov)

Counties: Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Coffee, Conecuh, Covington, Crenshaw, Dale, Dallas, Elmore, Escambia, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Russell, Washington, Wilcox

#### Gulf Coast

**Jo Jo Terry** • (334) 353-4716 • [JoJo.Terry@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:JoJo.Terry@tourism.alabama.gov)

Counties: Baldwin, Mobile

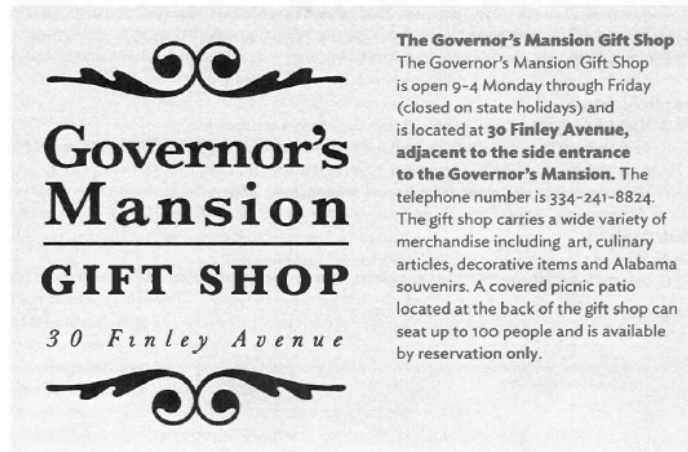


**21) What are some other ways ATD promotes tourism?**

- Provides statistics on the economic impact of travel activity in Alabama.
- Plans and organizes special year-long themed marketing campaigns:

2007–“The Year of Alabama Arts”  
2008–“The Year of Alabama Sports”  
2009–“The Year of Alabama History”  
2010–“The Year of Small Towns and Downtowns”  
2011–“The Year of Alabama Music”  
2012–“The Year of Alabama Food,” “Alabama Road Trips”  
2013–“The Year of Alabama Food,” “Alabama Road Trips”  
2014–“The Year of Alabama Parks,” “Alabama Road Trips”  
2015–“The Year of Alabama BBQ,” “Alabama Road Trips”  
2016–“The Year of Alabama Makers,” “Alabama Road Trips”

- Distributes free tourism brochures, maps and posters.
- Writes and distributes travel-related articles, news releases and press kits.
- Organizes press trips and familiarization tours.
- Creates and distributes digital images of Alabama travel destinations.
- Offers video footage of travel scenes around the state, without narration.
- Represents Alabama at consumer travel shows.
- Sponsors the Alabama Tourism Awards.
- Coordinates the statewide “April Walking Tours” program.
- Social Media Platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest.



**Governor's  
Mansion  
GIFT SHOP**  
*30 Finley Avenue*

**The Governor's Mansion Gift Shop**  
The Governor's Mansion Gift Shop is open 9-4 Monday through Friday (closed on state holidays) and is located at **30 Finley Avenue, adjacent to the side entrance to the Governor's Mansion.** The telephone number is 334-241-8824. The gift shop carries a wide variety of merchandise including art, culinary articles, decorative items and Alabama souvenirs. A covered picnic patio located at the back of the gift shop can seat up to 100 people and is available by reservation only.

**22) How does ATD pursue the global travel market?**

Alabama welcomes tourists from all countries and markets including the key tourism countries of Canada, England and Germany. These three markets represent over 50% of all international visitors signing the registration logs at Alabama Welcome Centers. The Alabama Tourism Department assists with familiarization tours for foreign journalists and tour operators. For a list of international consumer and trade shows at which Alabama is to be promoted, contact Grey Brennan at (334) 242-4459 or grey.brennan@tourism.alabama.gov

**ALABAMA TOURISM DEPARTMENT IN-MARKET UK REPRESENTATIVE**

**UK / Ireland:** Venessa Alexander/ Della Tully, Global Travel Marketing  
Link House, 140 Broadway, Tolworth, Surrey, KT6 7JE, United Kingdom  
44 (0) 208 339 6122, venessa@globaltravelmarketing.org  
or della@globaltravelmarketing.org

**ALABAMA TOURISM PARTNERSHIP IN-MARKET GERMANY REPRESENTATIVE**

**Germany:** Janin Nachtweh, Texttransfer Communications  
Am Weidendamm 1A, 10117 Berlin, Germany  
+49 (30) 7262-5190, janin.nachtweh@taxtransfer.de

**TRAVEL SOUTH / ALABAMA SHARED IN-MARKET REPRESENTATIVES**

**Australia:** Geoffrey Hutton/Jane Hutton/Lucy Rowe, Kent Marketing  
1 Barr Street, Balmain, NSW, 2041, Australia  
+61 2 9438 3077, ghutton@kentmarketing.com.au

**Benelux Countries:** Marjolein Fraanje/Hanny Fluit, Target Travel Marketing  
Hof ter Weydeweg 10-b, 3451 St T Vieuven, The Netherlands  
+31 30 6911654, marketing@targettravel.nl

**Brazil:** Jose Madeira/Patricia Bartels, Tourism Brazil  
Al, Lorena, 800, CJ. 1803 - Jardins, CEP 01424-001, Sao Paula/SP, Brazil  
+55 11 3051.9080, jose.madeira@businessbrazil.us, patricia.bartels@businessbrazil.us

**France:** Marina Dupuy Wedd/Coline Chazaux, Express Conseil  
5bis. Rue du Louvre, 75001, Paris, France  
+33 (0) 1 44 77 88 00, marina@ecltd.com, marketing@ecltd.com

**Italy:** Olga Mazzoni, Thema Nuovi Mondi sri  
Via C. Pisacane 26 - 20129 Milano, Italy  
+39 0233105841, travelsouthusa@themasrl.it



# How To Use the Alabama Tourism Partner Portal

The official travel website of Alabama aims to provide useful and accurate information to visitors. As a tourism partner, you can use the site and other Alabama Tourism publications to promote your business. Create an account to add and update your location information and list your upcoming events.

This quick guide will walk you through setting up and managing your tourism partner portal account.

## Create an Account

Visit [partners.alabama.travel](http://partners.alabama.travel) and click "Sign Up" to create a new account. You must provide your name, telephone number and email address. You will receive an email with instructions to activate your account.

Once your account is activated, you must join or add an organization. Organizations are groups of members approved to manage the location and event listings for specific Alabama Tourism partners.

You can access your tourism partner portal account at [partners.alabama.travel](http://partners.alabama.travel). Click "Sign in" to access an existing account.

Sign in with your email address. Once signed in, you can edit or update your information by choosing "Account Settings" from the drop-down in the upper right corner of the page.



## Need assistance?

If you need assistance, please contact us at [info@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:info@tourism.alabama.gov).

## Forgot your password?

If you forget your password, click on the "Forgot your password?" link on the tourism partner sign-in page.

For more information about the Alabama Tourism Partner Portal, contact:

**Alabama Tourism Department**  
P.O. Box 4927  
Montgomery, AL 36103-4927  
401 Adams Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104

800-ALABAMA (800-252-2262)  
334-242-4169  
[info@tourism.alabama.gov](mailto:info@tourism.alabama.gov)

## Add a Location

You can manage location listings for your business by clicking "Locations" in the navigation bar at the top of the page. You can search for an existing location and claim it, or add a new location. Do not add duplicate locations.

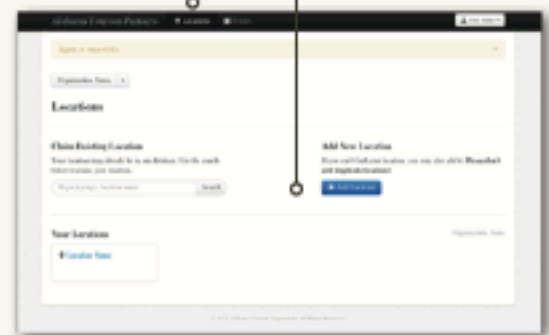
1. Choose a location type that best fits your business:

- **Accommodation:** Bed and Breakfast, Campground, Hotel, Hunting Lodge, Vacation Rental
- **Attraction:** Amusement Park, Botanical Gardens, Golf Course, Historic Site, Indoor Recreation Site, Museum, National Park, Outdoor Recreation Site, Science Center, Sports Arena, State Park, Zoological Park, Other Park
- **Food Service:** Bakery, Coffee Shop, Deli, Dessert Shop, Food Truck, Restaurant
- **Shop or Service:** Antiques, Boat Charter, Bookstore, Boutique, Collectibles, Farm, Guided Tours and Rides, Home and Garden, Outdoor, Outfitter and Rental, Secondhand, Specialty Food, Wine
- **Shopping Destination:** Farmers Market, Flea Market, Outlet Mall, Shopping Center, Shopping District, Shopping Mall
- **Venue:** Amphitheater, Arena, Cafe, Cinema, Coffeehouse, Concert Hall, Conference Center, Exhibition Hall, Fair Grounds, Golf Course Venue, Music Hall, Nightclub, Racetrack, Restaurant Venue, Sports Field, Stadium, Theater

2. Enter your official name, address, website, phone number and more. Asterisks indicate required fields.

3. When you are happy with your listing, click the blue "Send Request" button at the bottom of the page. Your entry will be sent to an administrator for approval. You can edit your information later.

4. Preview your listing by clicking the direct link that appears below the location name.



### Helpful Hints

- Provide as much information as possible and make sure the information you enter is accurate and kept up to date. Customers appreciate having current information at their fingertips.
- The "Summary" is a 25- to 40-word overview of your location that may appear in search results and serve as a visitor's first impression of your business.
- The "Description" is a longer, 50- to 130-word paragraph that includes specific details such as unique features of your location.
- Use complete sentences when filling out the Summary and Description fields.
- Do not repeat information covered in other form fields, such as the website or hours of operation.

## Add an Event

You can add and manage your business's event listings by clicking "Events" in the navigation bar at the top of the page. You can search for an existing event and claim it, or add a new event. Do not add duplicate events.

1. Enter the official name of the event, start and end dates, location, ticket information and more. Asterisks indicate required fields.

2. You can choose up to two categories for your event:

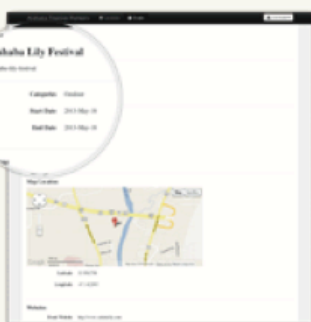
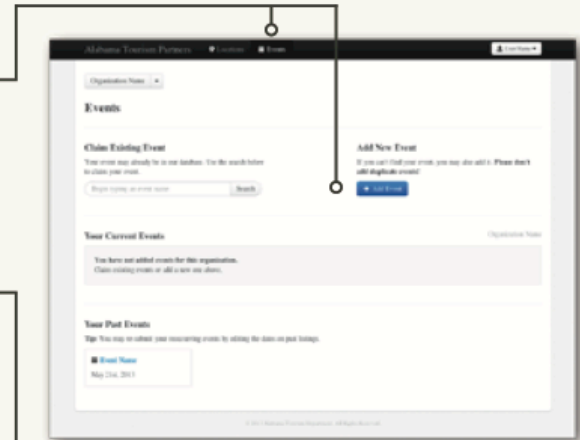
- Arts and Culture: Art shows, performances, recitals, films, readings
- BBQ: festivals, other barbecue themed events
- Business and Networking: Industry meetings, conferences, professional events
- Civic and Local: Service projects, speaking events
- Collectibles and Special Interest: Shows, expos, conventions
- Cultural Festival: Hispanic heritage celebrations, Oktoberfest
- Community Festival: Founders' day celebrations, town festivals
- Education: Classes, workshops, seminars
- Entertainment and Night Life: Movies, traveling shows, concerts, downtown events
- Food and Drink: Food festivals, wine tastings, community dinners
- Garden: festivals, events, dinners, workshops
- History and Heritage: Reenactments, exhibits, walking tours, lectures
- Holiday and Seasonal: Holiday markets, light displays, fireworks shows
- Music Festival: Blues festivals, multi-stage events
- Outdoor: Hikes, nature tours, group rafting
- Shopping: Antiques shows, markets
- Sports and Recreation: Golf tournaments, 5Ks, baseball games

3. You can upload up to six images for your event (only jpg, jpeg, gif and png, image files please):

4. You can include a video by entering the YouTube link:

5. When you are happy with your listing, click the blue "Send Request" button at the bottom of the page. Your entry will be sent to an administrator for approval. You can edit your information later.

6. Preview your listing by clicking the direct link that appears below the event name.



## Helpful Hints

- When entering recurring events such as a summer film series or Saturday cooking demonstrations, enter each individual event as its own listing. Do the same if an event spans multiple days with breaks in between. For instance, a play that runs Thursday through Sunday over a four-week period would have four event entries.
- The "Summary" is a 25- to 40-word overview of your event that may appear in search results and serve as a visitor's first impression of your event.
- The "Description" is a longer, 50- to 130-word paragraph that includes specific details such as unique features of your event.
- Use complete sentences when filling out the Summary and Description fields.
- Do not repeat information covered in other form fields, such as the event website or address.
- Do include specific information such as start and end times.
- Provide as much information as possible and make sure the information you enter is accurate.

# II. Social Media

# *Time to Get Social: The How-To Guide for Social Media Marketing*

## 1. Know Your Market – U.S. Travel Facts and Statistics

- Fewer adults are traveling with children.
- Driving vs. Flying
  - Nearly 8 in 10 (79%) leisure trips were by car compared to less than half (48%) of business trips.
- Leisure travelers are older than business travelers.
- Traveling households earn more than non-traveling households.
- Trip planning sources have shifted over the last several years, with social media and mobile devices being used more often.
- Leisure Travel:
  - Direct spending by domestic and international travelers totaled \$644.9 billion in 2014.
  - More than 3 out of 4 domestic trips taken are for leisure purposes (78%).
  - U.S. residents logged 1.7 billion personal trips in 2014.
  - Top leisure travel activities for U.S. domestic travelers: (1) visiting relatives, (2) shopping, (3) visiting friends, (4) fine dining and (5) beaches.
- Business Travel:
  - Direct spending by domestic and international travelers, including expenditures on meetings, events and incentive programs (ME&I), totaled \$283 billion in 2014.
  - ME&I travel accounted for \$114.2 billion of all business travel spending.
  - U.S. residents logged 452 million personal trips for business purposes in 2014, with 36.7% for meetings and events.

- Your Market is Mobile
  - 74% and rising: represents a significant market share of the U.S. buying population
  - 87% of those with incomes over \$75K have a smartphone.
  - 70% of mobile searches result in action within an hour.
  - For the first time ever, over 50% of travel-related searches take place on mobile devices; more people are consuming travel content from mobile devices than from desktop computers.
  - In 2016, more than 50% of online travel-related search will come from mobile devices.
  - 56% of leisure travelers cite “recommendations from others” as the most common resource for researching leisure trips.
  - 92% of consumers trust recommendations from friends and family over other forms of advertising.
    - The meaning of “friends” has now widened with social media. Marketers must heavily weight the new power of recommendations from friends and family within the context of our interconnected world.
  - Timely Tips:
    - A balanced social plan includes: an understanding of your markets and how they interact online.
    - Authentic experiences: Give them something to talk about. American Leisure Travelers want local, authentic and memorable experiences and products that are unique from what they can get at home. They also want to share about it on social media with their friends.

## 2. User-Generated Content

- **USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)** is any form of media uploaded by everyday people, usually via social media. It's the content your customers are posting and seeing everyday. But it also refers to a style of content you can create. Something that feels authentic and personal, like a real person's behind it, because there is.
- Travelers are already taking photos of their favorite destinations and posting them on social media. Now, let's get busy with encouraging current customers to post content so you can use it to gain new customers! And through it they can interact with you.
- **LET IT BE KNOWN.** Use in-store displays, handouts or menus to encourage customers to tag your business in their posts. Tell them how to connect with you on your social media profiles using your usernames and hashtags.
- **INCENTIVIZE YOUR AUDIENCE.** Design promotional incentives for your customers to share content about their experiences with your establishment. Consider providing discounts to people who are interactive with your social media accounts.
- **LISTEN AND REPUBLISH.** Monitor social feeds for fans who are talking or creating content about your business. Acknowledge and engage in those conversations. If it is good, share or republish it on your own feed.
- **START SMALL.** When someone posts about you on social media, no matter how small, always, **ALWAYS** respond. This is how you build engagement and loyal fans.



### 3. Hashtags

- FACT: A recent search of Instagram hashtags revealed more than 4 million images tagged with #waterfall, more than 11 million tagged with #mountains and more than 9 million tagged with #festivals.
- Hashtags are one of the most effective tactics for spreading your messages and connecting with others on social media.
- Hashtags make users feel connected to each other and your business by identifying unified topics.
- Any brand can create its own hashtags. Hashtags are a great way to generate buzz around a marketing campaign.

### 4. Make It Visual

- In a world where we are overwhelmed with information, images are the new social currency – and attention is the new commodity. Our brains process visuals 60,000 times faster than text.
  - People are 44% more likely to engage with content that includes pictures.
- Bottom line, it's an increasingly visual game and you must play accordingly to succeed.
- Now everyone is a storyteller – that means you and your customer. The Holy Grail for a marketer is an emotional relationship with your customer.
- With social media this is very attainable. Images speak the language of emotion.
- On TripAdvisor, photos impact accommodation bookings even more than reviews.
  - Properties with at least one photo have +225% more likelihood of booking inquiry.

- Properties with more than 100 photos have +238% more likelihood of booking inquiry.

## 5. Know Yourself

- A destination's brand is the sum of all the stories their visitors hear about it. With this in mind, it's important to 1) give visitors something great to talk about, and 2) a reason to say it.
- After all, remarkable experiences ignite remarkable storytelling.
- Based on proven principles of effective place branding, a unified community identity is essential for establishing a well-known destination image.

## 6. Instagram

- The number one photo streaming mobile app, allowing users to post their daily life experiences and interests from their mobile devices.
- Over 200 million active monthly users share over 60 million photos daily that generate 1.6 billion "likes".
- Instagram builds valuable connections, loyalty and trust with your customers. It's your visual story. Users go there to be entertained.
- The purpose of this platform is to provide a behind-the-scenes look into your company or destination culture. It's an opportunity to showcase your business personality, your human side, what makes you "you" or what makes you tick.
- People are interested in relationships with other real people, not with businesses.

## 7. Facebook

- Over 968 million daily active Facebook users
- Travel is the most shared topic category on Facebook. As travel brands, you sell experiences and memories so you have a better chance to stand out from all the rest by using photos and videos that get user engagement.
- Business Pages must “Pay to Play” which means less exposure unless you adapt.
- Facebook has reduced the number of text only status updates from Business Pages that appear in the news feeds.
- The more interaction posts receive, the more exposure Facebook gives. Increased customer engagement shows Facebook that your page updates are interesting to your fans and Facebook, in turn, making your updates appear more frequently in their news feeds.
- Instructions:
  - Pay up. Boosting posts, advertising a page and creating offers are all paid options that can bring your eyeballs and interaction with a fairly small investment.
  - Motivate interaction. Facebook is about people interacting with other people. Remember, “word of mouth” is now the primary way to expand your reach.
  - Be real. People come to Facebook to be entertained and interact with real people. Being “salesy” doesn’t work. Show your human side.
  - Get visual. Create a social media blackboard by regularly posting photos and graphics about your items, your staff and your customers enjoying themselves and your business.
  - Get exclusive. Tell customers to watch your Facebook page for on-line only deals.

- Offer incentives. Encourage customers to post about their experience on Facebook. “Show us on your mobile at checkout that you raved about us on Facebook and receive 10% off.”
- Do your homework. 85% of people who like a brand on Facebook are past and present customers. Take advantage of this opportunity to ask for feedback, customer preferences and improve products and services.
- Let no comment go unnoticed. You MUST engage with users in the comments and reposts no matter how small. 42% of consumers active on social networks expect an answer within the hour!

## 8. Location-Based Mobile Search

- 28% of adults have used location-based services to get recommendations such as the best-rated nearby café or directions from their current location.
- Customers and travelers now rely on their mobile devices as a vital source of location-relevant information upon which they make an increasingly number of decisions on how to spend their time and money.
- When deciding where to go, your customers are using platforms such as Google My Business (formerly Google Places), TripAdvisor, FourSquare or Yelp.
- 40% of mobile web searches are for local businesses.
- 74% of adult smartphone owners ages 18 and older say that they use their phone to get directions or other information based on their current location. Which means if they can’t find you with their phone, they won’t become your customers.

- Instructions:
  - Be on the list. Make sure your business is listed on all the key networks where your travelers are most active.
  - At the very least create a “Google My Business” Profile. It will improve your presence on Google and make you show up on Google Maps. Go here to get started: [www.google.com/business](http://www.google.com/business).
  - Keep it updated. Keep your online profile accurate by ensuring that your street addresses, phone numbers and other relevant information is correct.

## 9. On-Line Reviews

- TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google Reviews, FourSquare, and Urbanspoon – these are just a few examples of travel-related sites where customer reviews are crucial and prevalent.
- We don’t trust brands. We trust people.
- Word of mouth now plays out publicly and reviews are everywhere.
- Reviews have an increasingly important role in the decision-making process, arguably more so than online travel agencies or even friends and relatives.
- A great destination brand is built through the stories people tell each other. And social media has only accelerated that process. Getting more of the right stories told is your great opportunity.
- Particularly for accommodations, management responses to customer reviews on these sites directly correlate to higher traveler engagement and overall customer ratings.
- TripAdvisor receives 190 million reviews, with over 280 million unique visitors on its website per month.

- 77% of users will seek reviews about accommodation, 50% about restaurants and 44% about attractions.
- 53% of TripAdvisor users won't book a hotel that has no reviews.
- ON-LINE REVIEWS INSTRUCTIONS:
  - CLAIM IT. Claiming an account will allow for a brand to respond to user reviews, to update information and upload photos and videos.
  - MOTIVATE. Give them something worth talking about and that will motivate them to share.
  - ENCOURAGE. Ensure your satisfied clients are writing rave reviews. Offer a discount if they shared about you online. Follow up with an email with a direct link or easy way to post a review or share their experience.
  - CURATE. When people do share reviews and stories, you must find them and take advantage of the information.
  - RESPOND. Good or Bad- provide a response.
  - PUT IT TO USE. Hidden within all those customer comments are words and phrases that can be used as the written content on your website. Using your customer's exact words can help persuade prospects to sign up for your newsletter, book a room or hire your service.

## 10. Pinterest

- Pinterest is a virtual bulletin board of images (think: digital scrapbooking). Users share visual images from around the web by "pinning" them onto a series of their own virtual boards. Pinterest refers users to the source of the images, which is

hopefully your website! Get discovered by millions of people looking for things to plan, buy and do!

- A pin is an image added to Pinterest. You add images from a website using the “Pin It” button, or you can upload an image from your computer or phone. Pins from the “Pin It” button automatically link back to the website. For uploaded images you must add the link.
- Already third most popular social network and currently the fastest growing one.
  - Most popular category is Travel
  - 80% of pins are actually re-pins
  - Web referrals from Pinterest are huge – more influential than Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn combined! It’s also great for improving your website’s SEO (Search Engine Optimization).
  - 80% of users are female. High percentage of users are affluent: over 28% over \$100K.
  - 75% of daily traffic comes from mobile
  - Shoppers referred by Pinterest are 10% more likely to make a purchase than those from other social networks.
- Instructions:
  - Set up compelling, inspirational, very specific boards by topic. Optimize the description of each board; include meaningful keywords, other usernames and hashtags.
  - Spend time looking around for ideas and business inspiration.
  - Set up a business page, not a personal account. This helps you receive better traffic to your website, plus it provides analytics, which allows you to embed a

“Follow” button, a “Pin” link and Profile and Board widgets to your website for users to pin your material and connect with you more easily.

- Use built-in analytics. With Pinterest Analytics, see what people like from your profile, what they save from your website and how much traffic you get by adding the “Pin It” button. Get new data about your audience too, including their gender, location, etc. Tailor your pins based on this.
- Use place pins. Place pins are of primary importance to tourism businesses because they include extra details like the address, phone number and location on a map so users can pull up useful information for planning a trip or while on the go.
- Pins are about the destinations, not the company.

## 11. Twitter

- Twitter’s Mission: to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers.
  - 271 million monthly active users
  - 500 million tweets are sent per day
  - 78% of Twitter active users are on mobile devices
- What is a tweet?
  - An expression of a moment or idea. It can contain text, photos and videos. Millions of tweets are shared in real time, every day.
  - The best tweets share meaningful moments – big and small. If you think it’s interesting, chances are your followers will too.



- Instructions:
  - Reply by commenting on a tweet to join a conversation.
  - Retweet by sharing a tweet with your followers and add your own thoughts.
  - Favorite a tweet to let the author know you like it.
  - Hashtag your tweet to link with an ongoing conversation.

## 12. Manage Your Media

- Utilize dashboards to manage multiple accounts, across various social networks. The most popular is Hootsuite, but there are others as well.
- Listen in. Online Listening is a way of monitoring the web and social networks in real-time for keywords and/or hashtags of your choice to locate conversations you should join and influential people you should engage. (SocialMention, TweetDeck, Buffer)
- Facts:
  - Buffer helps you schedule and optimize your social posts as well as provides an ongoing education about social media and content marketing.
  - SocialMention is a real time media-monitoring application where you can analyze your on-line content and stay on top of who is mentioning you and in what context. This is helpful so that you'll never miss an opportunity to respond to a customer and show that you care.
  - TweetDeck lets you monitor important hashtags, effectively follow the list of influencers, get notified of your domain's mentions and of course have more

flexibility with your notifications. TweetDeck is Twitter exclusive.

- Other useful free tools: Topsy, Google News and Google Alerts
- Instructions:
  - The most convenient way to stay on top of relevant hashtags is to designate easily accessible columns within your dashboard. In most of the tools about you can establish columns by social network, search term, Twitter list, hashtag or user-account and get constant notifications on any updates.
  - Consider adding a column for your own business hashtag, which you are hopefully promoting, and check it whenever you have a moment. Add further columns as they become relevant, for example, when you launch a hashtag marketing campaigns or social media contest.
  - In today's world of instant access to customers, never miss an opportunity to react to something mentioned about you online. Show that you are a real person and that you care about your customers and your brand.

# **III. Grant Information**

# 2016

## ALABAMA TOURISM DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES FOR MATCHING GRANTS

The Alabama Tourism Department (ATD) will continue its Matching Grants Program in 2016. The Matching Grants Program provides assistance to nonprofit Alabama organizations promoting travel and vacation business to Alabama on a reimbursement 50/50 matching basis. Organizations approved for Matching Grants may be considered for grants for an amount up to \$2,500 for festivals and/or events and up to \$5,000 for attractions.

### I. APPLYING FOR FUNDS

Requests for 2015 Matching Grants funds must be made on an official form available from the Alabama Tourism Department. No organization, nor any of its subdivisions or affiliated groups, will be approved for more than one Matching Grant. Each nonprofit organization will be required to submit its tax-exempt identification number or its tax exemption letter from the Internal Revenue Service. Each applicant must be located in an area that collects lodging taxes and applies a portion of the funds toward local tourism development.

### II. DEADLINES

There is no deadline to submit applications for attractions/CVB/chamber brochures other than when organizations produce a special event/festival brochure.

#### Special Event/Festival Brochure Deadline

All event specific brochure projects must be for events in 2016. Brochures must be completed by November, 2016, or the grant will be withdrawn at 5:00 PM on December 1, 2016. This includes receipt of final paperwork by the Alabama Tourism Department. *(ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS)*

If you are submitting an application for an event it must be received at least three (3) months prior to the event date. See chart below.

<i>Event Date</i>	<i>Application Submission</i>
January 2016	October 2015
February 2016	November 2015
March 2016	December 2015
April 2016	January 2016
May 2016	February 2016
June 2016	March 2016
July 2016	April 2016
August 2016	May 2016

September 2016	June 2016
October 2016	July 2016
November 2016	August 2016
December 2016	September 2016

### III. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

The Alabama Tourism Department will release no grant funds until the applicant and the Alabama Tourism Department have received a fully executed agreement signed by the grantee, the Director of the Tourism Department, and the Governor of the State of Alabama. **Funds will be disbursed within six weeks after the project is completed and all supporting documented expenses have been filed with the Alabama Tourism Department.** Brochures funded with matching grant monies may not be resold and are for free distribution only.

To receive your matching grant funds, you must provide the Alabama Tourism Department with copies of paid invoices, canceled checks and one-fourth of your brochures by December 31, 2016. In-kind services may not be used by a grantee to match Alabama Tourism Department funding. You will be reimbursed at 50% of what you paid not to exceed grant amount. *(ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS)*.

### IV. USE OF FUNDS

#### A. BROCHURES--meeting the following qualifications:

- 1) Bid estimates for the actual brochure must be submitted with the application for consideration.
- 2) Brochures promoting and advertising recreational, historical or travel attractions and/or related events within the State of Alabama.
- 3) Brochures must include a contact, telephone number, fax number, electronic contact and address for lodging and tourism information.
- 4) The brochures must contain the date and quantity. For example: 05-11; 100M, as well as the Alabama logo. Camera-ready logo copy is available at the Alabama Tourism Department.
- 5) Only printed brochures, which are clearly travel and/or tourism-oriented are eligible.
- 6) In order to ensure that brochures are in full compliance with the minimum requirements of this Matching Grants Program, it is mandatory that drafts of all print material be submitted and approved by the Alabama Tourism Department office prior to printing. All editorial and commercial content must be included. Artwork, photographs, etc., should be indicated on the

layout, identified and described. See sample brochure layout at our website [www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel).

- 7) Listings in the brochure must be made available to both members and non-members of any organization applying for a grant. A reasonable fee may be charged by the grantee to a non-member for a listing.
- 8) The Alabama Tourism Department is to be given a minimum of one-fourth of the brochures for distribution.
- 9) Special event brochures should be furnished to the Alabama Tourism Department at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the event. Deliveries of brochures to the Alabama Tourism Department less than four (4) weeks prior to the event date are not assured timely distribution.
- 10) Brochures funded under this program are for free distribution and not for sale. Failure to comply may result in revocation of the grant and/or disqualification of future grant consideration.

**B. TOURISM PROMOTION WEBSITES OR FREE SMARTPHONE APPS**

- 1) Home page and/or app must include link to [www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel)

**C. ADVERTISING**

- 1) Out of state advertising only, such as billboards, print media, and television.

**V. SELECTION OF PROJECTS TO BE FUNDED**

- A. All Matching Grant applications will be reviewed by the Alabama Tourism Department's Marketing Committee. The Committee will make its recommendations for funding based upon the project's impact on tourism in Alabama. Should funds not be utilized as approved, those funds may be transferred to another applicant.
- B. The Alabama Tourism Department's Marketing Committee will make recommendations for funding of Matching Grant applications to the Governor for final approval.

Link for the matching Grant Application:

<http://tourism.alabama.gov/forms/matching-grants/>

# **IV. International Tourism**



### 2014 - 2016 MARKETING PLANS

	Australia	Bahamas	Canada	China	France	Germany	Spain	India	Italy	Japan	Malaysia	Russia	South Korea	UK	Ireland*
DiscoverAmerica Inspiration Guide 1 Page AL Info	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
DiscoverAmerica.com Alabama Enhanced Page	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
DiscoverAmerica Inspiration Guide 1 Page AL Info	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Alabama In-Language Videos	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Travel South International Webpages	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Trade & Consumer Shows	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sales Missions	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
FAMs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
In-Market Representative Firms	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

\*In-Market Rep. Duties - Della Tulley

### FAST FACTS

Western Europe is the top world region for visitor arrivals, accounting for more than half of all overseas visits to Alabama.

#### Port of Entry

Atlanta	25%
Chicago	11%
Dallas	8%
Los Angeles	8%
New York	7%

### ALABAMA'S INTERNATIONAL VISITORS MOVE AROUND

Destinations Visited  
 3.3 on average  
 27% visited one destination  
 43% visited 2-4 destinations

Average Days Stay in Alabama - 14

Overseas visitation to Alabama was up 15% for the two year period 2012 to 2014, up 7% 2013 to 2014.

16% of travelers say they combined business and leisure in their most recent trip.

67% of Chinese travellers say they bring a spouse or family member along on business trips and 59% extend business trips to include leisure time.

The key to more international business is to encourage your local hotels to contract with receptive operators and for you to market to have your city included in receptive fly-drive itineraries.

#### Receptive Operators

United States-based companies which specialize in creating, marketing, and selling United States travel products to tour companies with international inbound travelers.



### 2016 INTERNATIONAL ALABAMA TOURISM DEF



### OVERSEAS TRAVEL

Alabama attracted 103,000 visitors in 2014. Visitation increased 7% in 2014, generating 7,000 additional jobs.



VISITATION GROWTH  
**UP 7% OVERALL**

Overseas visitation to Alabama is estimated to have increased 7% in 2014 while generating 7,000 additional jobs.



LEISURE GROWTH

While leisure spending by international visitors to Alabama increased 28% in 2014, total international leisure spending increased 7%.

Total direct spending increased by 8% in 2014, with international visitor spending over \$11 million more.



Alabama Tourism Department  
[www.tourism.alabama.gov](http://www.tourism.alabama.gov)