



Cultivating a New Era for South Carolina Tourism

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NEW CAROLINA™
SOUTH CAROLINA'S COUNCIL ON COMPETITIVENESS

RISING AS ONE



“Smiling Faces and Beautiful Places” is much more than just a slogan in South Carolina. For the last two decades it has been seen all over the world and, along with our extraordinary natural and people resources, has produced enviable results for our economy. But we have huge untapped tourism potential in South Carolina and this potential can literally change our collective futures.

As South Carolina’s number one industry, tourism plays a vital role in our state’s current economy. For many years, tourism has been the major driver of South Carolina’s economy and overall quality of life for the state’s residents;

yet the opportunity exists to further grow and expand the industry in order to bring more high-paying jobs, new companies and increased revenue to South Carolina.

Last year, the tourism industry contributed \$16.7 billion to the direct and indirect revenues to Gross State Product.

It employs more than 200,000 people – approximately 10 percent of South Carolina’s workforce. Already recognized as one of the top tourist destinations in the country, South Carolina attracts thousands and thousands of visitors from all around the world each year. By leveraging our state’s existing tourism resources and collaborating with both public and private entities throughout South Carolina, we can expand our current efforts in order to create a booming tourism industry that benefits all citizens. This vision will become a reality for the people and places of South Carolina – potentially doubling our current tourism industry revenues over the next five

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This vision will become a reality for the people and places of South Carolina – potentially doubling our current tourism industry revenues over the next five years and delivering \$40 billion in annual Gross State Product by the year 2020 – if we accept the challenge to grow this vital industry and increase the per capita income of all South Carolinians.

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From the mountains to the sea and everywhere in between, South Carolina has abundant resources to attract new groups of tourists whose numbers are trending upward – including those interested in culture and history, outdoor adventure and eco-tourism. **Simply put, we have the**

people, the product and the potential to become a truly competitive player in the most sustainable of economic arenas – tourism and hospitality.

Tourism and travel is now one of the world's largest industries and the world's largest service industry, growing at an average annual rate of 4.5 percent worldwide. With careful planning and forethought, South Carolina can reap the benefits of this growing industry and become a leading tourism state by capitalizing on the vast array of resources

and opportunities for development that have yet to be realized. By rethinking the way that tourism is currently dealt with in our state and creating the conditions to convert this potential into reality, we can successfully benefit the state's citizens, communities and businesses.

Fortunately, New Carolina – South Carolina's Council on Competitiveness – is driving a collaborative implementation of a new economic strategy for South Carolina, and as part of this initiative, has formed a Tourism Cluster Committee. It's led by South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Chad Prosser, and comprised of leaders in local and state government, visitors' bureaus, trade associations, and large and small businesses throughout the state. This is the first time that representatives from so many sectors of the industry have come together as a committee to begin asking questions about what South Carolina must do to increase the per capita income in the tourism industry, thereby benefiting all South Carolinians.

Last year the Tourism Cluster Committee raised more than \$300,000 and initiated the first Tourism industry study ever conducted in South Carolina. The study and corresponding Tourism Action Plan is the result of seven months of research by a team of international experts who conducted more than 400 interviews and traveled across the state to evaluate our overall approach to tourism development.

Written by Michael MacNulty of Ireland's Tourism Development International (TDI) and former head of Ireland's Tourist Bureau, the study reveals that while tourism has long been a major driver of quality of life and opportunity in South Carolina, its positive impact can be increased significantly. What's more, the study's findings conclude that the current organization of tourism, lack of planning and asset preservation, and inadequate investment pose the most significant threats to the future of tourism to and within the state.

The tourism action plan provides a number of recommendations to successfully address the state's potential challenges and opportunities within the tourism industry. The Tourism Cluster Committee supports these recommendations, which are to:

- Form a tourism confederation of private sector companies in order to work with the state in promoting the tourism industry;
- Double the current marketing budget;

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- Create a statewide Product Development Plan and invest in flagship projects in eight different areas around the state;
- Improve highway and road access to coastal areas;
- Protect South Carolina's natural, cultural and historical resources from overdevelopment;
- Increase workforce training for hospitality workers; and,
- Launch a public awareness campaign for tourism.

This year, the South Carolina Legislature embraced these recommendations and funded \$20 million for marketing the state and \$6 million for product development. The Tourism industry applauds this new support. Already, the New Carolina Tourism Cluster Committee is working on the bylaws for a Tourism Confederation, while developing new guidance for the product development funds appropriated by the Legislature, to ensure that these funds will support the Tourism Action Plan recommendations.

Representatives of New Carolina and the Tourism Cluster Committee recognize that tourism cannot succeed without public-private sector collaboration and coordination, and that South Carolinians will be unable to reap the benefits of successful tourism without proper product development, guidance, and support from the state, and from the businesses and communities located throughout South Carolina. Yet, there is confidence that the recommendations from South Carolina's tourism action plan will enable us to identify, build, grow and celebrate our state's tourism industry while bringing together the public-private entities necessary to fully realize our potential within the industry.

As an already-established - and arguably the most successful - economic cluster in South Carolina, Tourism is poised for the next step; however, to change the future of tourism in South Carolina we must first enhance

our overall view of tourism and take advantage of the opportunity to launch a new era for the industry in our state. South Carolina's tourism industry is ready to take advantage of this opportunity. And although we've only begun to scratch the surface of the tourism industry in South Carolina, the time is right for us to come together to address our current challenges and make the necessary changes in order to reap the benefits and become a truly competitive player in the international tourism industry. By taking advantage of the new energy pulsing throughout

the state and collaborating with tourism industry partners, we can ensure South Carolina is viewed as an attractive destination for national and international tourists, and substantially build a thriving tourism industry that raises the state's per capita income and benefits all the residents, communities and businesses of South Carolina.

South Carolina's Tourism Cluster Committee **Chad Prosser**, Chair, Director: *SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism* • **Paula Harper Bethea**, Director of External Relations: *McNair Law Firm* • **Andy Cajka**, President: *Southern Hospitality Group* • **Willie Calloway**, Executive Director: *SC State Museum* • **Woody Crosby**, President and CEO: *Jordan Properties/Crown Reef* • **Brad Dean**, President and CEO: *Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce* • **Mike Griffey**, Owner and Manager: *Abingdon Manor County Inn* • **Helen T. Hill**, Executive Director: *Charleston Area CVB* • **Dr. Frankie Miller**, Dean: *Trident Technical College* • **Frans N. Mustert**, President and CEO: *Patricia Grand Resort Hotel* • **Bettis Rainsford**, President: *Rainsford Development Company* • **Tom Sponseller**, President and CEO: *Hospitality Association of SC* • **Chris Stone**, President: *Greater Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau* • **Douglas P. Wendel**, Retired President and CEO: *Burroughs and Chapin* • **George Fletcher**, CEO: *New Carolina – SC's Council on Competitiveness* • **SC Department of Commerce** • **SC Chamber of Commerce**



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