



DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

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Susan Whitaker, Commissioner

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development has emerged as a national leader among state tourism organizations. Since the department was formed in 1976, its advertising and promotional campaigns have produced steady economic growth for the tourism industry in all areas of the state. The department's high profile and tactical marketing tools are seen by millions of potential Tennessee visitors through print and electronic media worldwide.

Tennessee's \$11.475 billion-a-year tourism industry draws more than 43.64 million visitors annually and has become a major economic factor for a majority of Tennessee's 95 counties. Tourism is the largest nonagricultural industry in the state, employing more than 175,000 people.

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development will play a key role in the governor's economic development initiative. The department partners with the departments of Economic and Community Development and Agriculture to implement aggressive and integrated marketing efforts that bring new opportunities for business development to the state. Also, the department is part of the governor's new Jobs Cabinet exploring how key agencies can better focus on job creation.

The department also reaches into the international travel market with numerous initiatives. It maintains offices in Great Britain and Germany providing a constant presence overseas.

History

State government's role in tourism has come a long way since its beginning in 1936 as a small division of information under the Department of Conservation. In 1972, the Tourism Division was placed under the newly formed Department of Economic and Community Development. The Tennessee Department of Tourism was made the first Cabinet-level department of tourism in the United States in 1976.

Services

Sales and Marketing Division — This division is responsible for departmental marketing and advertising programs that include:

- Launched the state's new advertising and branding campaign in April 2004: Tennessee – The Stage Is Set for You! The campaign features entertainment legends and Tennessee natives Dolly Parton and Isaac Hayes in television and radio commercials as well as print advertisements.
- Developing and instituting targeted paid advertising programs using nationally placed television spots and print ads in publications, such as *Southern Living* and *Family Circle*. Some of these advertising initiatives are funded on a cooperative basis with the Tennessee tourism industry.

- Using strategic tourism promotion to boost the economic impact of travel in Tennessee and increase the awareness of, and interest in, Tennessee's diverse tourism opportunities.
- Attending major travel and tourism trade shows that provide Tennessee the opportunity to promote its products, communicate the department's sales strategies to the travel industry, and create partnerships that can lead to new or strengthened sales opportunities.
- Developing marketing programs with organizations such as the National Tour Association and the American Bus Association to increase business from tour operators, travel agents, AAA clubs, and other professional travel planners.
- Partnering in promotional efforts with local and national travel associations and other state agencies to maximize opportunities to present a positive image to potential visitors.
- Coordinating international efforts including overseas offices and providing leadership to the Tennessee travel industry.
- Implementing an aggressive and integrated marketing approach with the communications staff to enhance all niche markets including Agritourism, Heritage and Cultural tourism, Civil War history, Outdoor Recreation, and Events and Festivals across the state as well as new tourism products.

Communications Division — This division works closely with the Sales and Marketing divisions to increase awareness of the Tennessee vacation product through consumer and trade media outlets. Other media and public relations responsibilities for the department include:

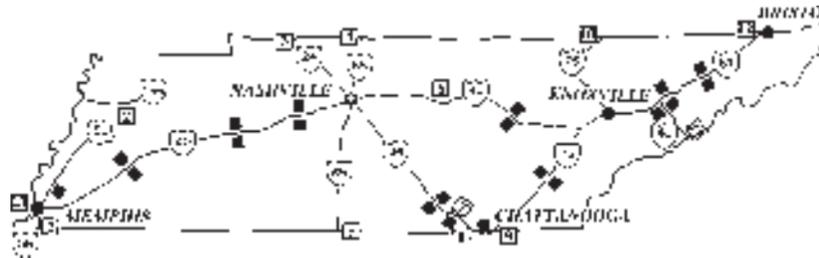
- Launched the department's state-of-the-art Tennessee Tourism News Bureau (www.tenntravelnews.com), which uses technology and media relations to connect news organizations with Tennessee tourism news sources across the state.
- Identifying tourism-related stories and bringing them to the attention of media editors, reporters, freelance writers, and other association writers throughout the country and around the world. The division achieves this by regularly distributing ready-to-publish, mass-distributed press releases and by organizing and/or hosting broad "familiarization tours" involving groups of specialized travel journalists.
- Producing all of the department's popular publications, including the annual events brochure, the four seasonal events brochures, the Official Tennessee Highway Map, plus editorial and content direction for the Tennessee Vacation Guide.
- Providing support for all tourism organizations at the local level by assisting with distribution of their own tourism stories and press releases. The division provides graphic design and layout assistance for brochures, plus a photo archive for publications.

Information and Support Services Division — This division focuses on maintaining up-to-date information technologies and prompt response to inquiries while maintaining a high standard of customer service to potential visitors. The division also provides technical direction and support for the department's information technology-related activities and broad infrastructure support including:

- Call center contract management and information specialists to answer phone inquiries.
- Web development and support to provide a resourceful and innovative Web site.
- Fine-tuned research information and data that supports niche-marketing efforts.
- Trip planning and consumer publication fulfillment and department reception.

Welcome Centers Division — The division operates thirteen Welcome Centers located on interstate highway entrances to Tennessee. Welcome Centers act as a contact point for travelers entering Tennessee from any direction and distribute information on the state's attractions, accommodations, and other travel-related facilities. Available at each of the Welcome Centers is a toll-free telephone for travelers to make reservations at hotels, motels, campgrounds, and state parks. The centers are staffed and open 24 hours a day throughout the year. The centers are located on: I-81 at Bristol; I-75 at Jellico and East Ridge; I-24 at Tiftonia, Nickajack and Clarksville; I-65 at Ardmore and Mitchellville; I-55 at Memphis; I-155 at Dyersburg; I-40 in Cocke County; I-40 at Memphis; and I-40 at Smith County.

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| 1. Memphis | 5. Ardmore | 8. Tiftonia | 11. Hartford |
| 2. Dyersburg | 6. Smith County | 9. Chattanooga | 12. Bristol |
| 3. Clarksville | 7. Nickajack | 10. Jellico | 13. Memphis |
| 4. Mitchellville | | | |



- Welcome Centers operated by the Department of Tourist Development
 ● Rest Areas with restroom facilities operated by the Department of Transportation

Commissioner Susan Whitaker

Tennessee Department of Tourist Development

Susan Whitaker, a veteran tourism marketing industry executive, served as vice-president of marketing for Dollywood, Tennessee's most visited tourist attraction, from 1997 to January 2003. Under Whitaker's leadership, the Pigeon Forge theme park developed by entertainer Dolly Parton grew to attract 2.3 million visitors annually and emerged as a strong anchor for Tennessee's tourism economy. Before joining Dollywood, Whitaker worked from 1993 to 1997 as director of marketing and advertising for the Silver Dollar City/Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation (HFEC) properties in Branson, Missouri. In 2000, she was appointed to serve on the Presidents Team, developing strategic plans for all nine properties of the HFEC, of which Dollywood is included. From 1985 to 1993, she headed up broadcast fund-raising efforts for CBN, the nonprofit Christian broadcasting company founded by Pat Robertson and based in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Whitaker is a Chicago native and a descendent of Tennessee's first governor, John Sevier. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Whitaker also serves on several boards including the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute, Travel South USA, and Southeast Tourism Society, the latter two based in Atlanta, Georgia. She is also a member of the governor's Jobs Cabinet, the Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee and the Smoky Mountains Park Commission. Married to Ken Whitaker, she has two grown sons, Josh and Jeff.

