



DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

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Susan Whitaker, Commissioner

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development is to create and promote travel to and within Tennessee, to develop programs to encourage and support the growth of the state's tourism industry, to manage a system of welcome centers that provides visitors with a positive impression of Tennessee and to encourage them to extend their stay, all of which contributes to the state's economic growth, thereby enriching the quality of life for every Tennessean.

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 \$12.4 billion-a-year tourism industry draws more than 48.9 million visitors annually. Tourism is the largest nonagricultural industry in the state, employing more than 178,000 people.

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

The department reaches into the international travel market, maintaining offices in Great Britain and Germany that provide international marketing and PR for Tennessee's tourism industry.

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

Marketing Division. This division is responsible for departmental marketing, advertising, sales, communications and web site programs. Major accomplishments include the following:

- Continued aggressive follow-up to the state's 2004 power launch of the new advertising and branding campaign "Tennessee – The Stage Is Set for You!" with television and print advertising featuring entertainment legends and

Tennessee natives Dolly Parton and Isaac Hayes. Enhanced the campaign with the newest commercial featuring Dolly Parton riding alongside Elvis in a digital scene recreation from the 1967 Elvis film, *Clambake*. The commercial was announced in an international PR campaign which resulted in more than \$2 million in earned media and more than 380 million impressions.

- Developed and instituted targeted paid advertising programs using nationally placed television spots and print ads in publications, such as *Southern Living*, *Family Circle* and *The Oprah Magazine*. Some of these advertising initiatives were funded on a cooperative basis with the Tennessee tourism industry.
- Reinstated the highly-regarded Tennessee Sampler, held in Tampa, Florida to showcase Tennessee to AAA offices, travel agents, media outlets and other travel organizations, with more than 300 appointments including sales and media.
- Implemented a 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.
- Participated in major travel and tourism trade shows that provide Tennessee the opportunity to promote its tourist attractions, communicate the department's sales strategies to the travel industry, and create partnerships that lead to new or strengthened sales opportunities.
- Developed marketing programs with as travel agents, AAA clubs, and other professional travel planners, as well as organizations such as the National Tour Association and the American Bus Association to increase business from tour operators.
- Implemented an aggressive and integrated marketing plan 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.
- Developed a web-marketing plan that included advertising on travel, niche and daily news paper web sites in Tennessee's 11 feeder markets. These included RVTravel, GolfDigest.com, HistoryChannel.com, Travelocity.com and GroupTravelPlanet.com.

Communications. This area is designed to increase awareness of the Tennessee vacation product through regional, state, national and international consumer and trade media outlets. Communications activities include:

- Administration of the department's News Bureau website now a state-of-the-art Press Room on tnvacation.com, targeted to media and industry partners. The site is the conduit between Tennessee's tourism industry and regional, state and national media outlets, and functions as Tennessee Tourism's wire service.
- Distribution of tourism-related stories to 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, press releases.
- Responsibility for coordinating Travel Writer Tours, with up to four major travel writer "familiarization tours" annually, showcasing tourism destinations to groups of specialized travel journalists, achieving national media exposure.
- Production 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 Official Tennessee Vacation Guide.

- Provision of an online clipping service to industry partners with up-to-date assessment of media coverage and PR accomplishments.
- Create innovative press kits which utilize CD and DVD format that can be updated easily.

Tnvacation.com. Re-launched in July of 2005, a newly designed *tnvacation.com*. This site was awarded a 2006 Webby Award and, in many cases, has set a standard among our peers. Highlights include:

- More than 4.5 million unique visitors have visited the web site from January 1, 2006-March 31, 2007.
- Features navigational categories which highlight Tennessee's primary tourism assets, including Music & Arts, History & Heritage, Sports & Recreation, Attractions, Agritourism, Nature and Outdoors and Shopping.
- Contains vendor pages for more than 3,000 Tennessee Tourism industry partners.
- Features Seasonal mini-sites highlighting Tennessee's year-round vacation appeal.
- Features MyTnVacation personal vacation planner.
- Includes Industry Partner Page targeted to all tourism entities in the state.
- Addition of German translation of the main sections to the site.
- Launched a careers in tourism micro site.

Community & Industry Relations Division. This division communicates the department's policies and initiatives to the tourism industry as well as to its various stakeholders. This division is also responsible for the development of the department's education initiative to promote careers in tourism. Major accomplishments include:

- Utilization of three regional managers to provide support, resources and informational services to the industry among the three grand regions of the state.
- Developed Strategic Plan in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education for a comprehensive education initiative that includes awareness, academic support and career information for the tourism and travel industry.
- Assisted local communities in the development and promotion of tourism activities through the Department's News Bureau and other media.
- Engaged in meetings and conferences statewide to effectively market the various opportunities available, such as the attractiveness of the State of Tennessee as a tourism and/or convention destination, the accessibility to foreign markets, and the statistics of the Tennessee tourism industry.
- Participated in numerous meetings with local and state officials, chambers of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, foreign representatives, education organizations and other appropriate agencies to provide thorough information about the tourism industry.
- Coordinated the department's monthly newsletter to provide up-to-date information about activities in the tourism industry and provided issue-related information to the public and the media on an as-needed basis.

Administrative Services Division. This division has oversight responsibilities for information systems, Welcome Centers, research, legal, support services, accounting and office operations. Major accomplishments in this division include the following:

Information and Support Services. This area 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 area

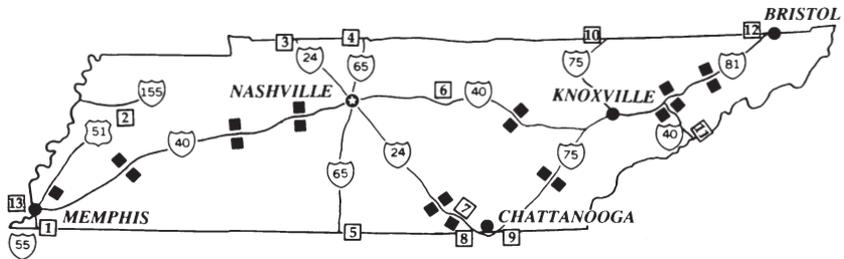
also provides technical direction and support for the department's information technology-related activities and broad infrastructure support by:

- Providing call center contract management and information specialists to answer phone requests for vacation guides.
- Continuously providing visitors with helpful and courteous telephone support staff to respond to their inquiries.
- Promptly responding to consumer and travel industry requests through the department's fulfillment services.
- Providing state-of-the-art equipment for the department's technological infrastructure, including hardware and software to implement tourism services.
- Trip planning and consumer publication fulfillment and department reception.

Research. Major reports and significant data are provided by this area to elected officials and members of the tourism industry. These reports include:

- An annual Economic Impact Report to all stakeholders of the industry.
- This area provides significant data to local chambers, tourism organizations and elected officials as well as other local governmental organizations regarding sales taxes generated from tourism.

Welcome Centers. The division operates thirteen Welcome Centers located primarily on interstate highway entrances to Tennessee. Following a year of on-going construction, the Tennessee Welcome Center along I-75 North in Chattanooga is now open for visitors. Designed as a log cabin and featuring 4,976 square feet, the facility combines the warmth of Tennessee with the modern advantage of new construction. 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, with the exception of the Memphis I-40 facility. 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 I-40 | 5. Ardmore | 8. Tiftonia | 11. Hartford |
| 2. Dyersburg | 6. Smith County | 9. Chattanooga | 12. Bristol |
| 3. Clarksville | 7. Nickajack | 10. Jellico | 13. Memphis I-55 |
| 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, was named Commissioner of Tourist Development in January 2003, by Governor Phil Bredesen and was reappointed by the Governor in January of 2007 for a second term. In this role, Whitaker is responsible for the development and implementation of statewide tourism publicity and programs designed to stimulate growth of tourism in Tennessee. She is responsible for marketing Tennessee's tourism industry domestically and internationally as well as oversight responsibilities for the state's highly rated welcome centers. Prior to her state cabinet post, Whitaker served as vice president of marketing for Dollywood, Tennessee's most visited tourist attraction. Before joining Dollywood, Whitaker worked from 1993 to 1997 as director of marketing and advertising for the Silver Dollar City/Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation properties in Branson, Missouri. In 2000, Whitaker was appointed to serve on the Corporation's President's Team, developing strategic plans for all nine properties of the corporation, including Dollywood. 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 serves on several boards including Travel Industry Association (TIA) and Travel South USA, where she serves on the executive committee. She was recently elected to the Board of Directors of TIA's National Council of State Travel Directors. She also serves on the University of Tennessee's Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Management Advisory Board. Whitaker is a member of the Governor's Jobs Cabinet, the FastTrack Jobs Advisory Panel, the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute, and the Smoky Mountains Park Commission. Throughout her career, Whitaker has received many awards and honors. She has earned the Telly and Addy Awards for her broadcast work. She was presented the Pacesetter Award from the Stennis Center for Public Service and was invited to serve as one of two Tennessee Representatives on the organization's Council of Pacesetters.

