



DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

*William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue, 25th Floor
Nashville, TN 37243
(615) 741-2159
(800) 836-6200*

www.tnvacation.com

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 \$14.2 billion-a-year tourism industry draws more than 50 million visitors annually and is one of the largest industries in the state. 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.

The tourism department held the inaugural Great Smoky Mountains Sustainable Tourism Summit in Knoxville. This unprecedented event delivered two power-packed days of extensive insight regarding historic, cultural and environmental sustainability and successfully brought together more than 500 community leaders and tourism professionals for "green" discussions. Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that sustains the environment, historical and cultural heritage of a region, while simultaneously sustaining the economic growth of that region.

In January 2008, TDTD launched the Tennessee Civil War Trails, a new statewide program made possible through a \$537,420 federal enhancement matching grant awarded by the Tennessee Department of Transportation. TDOT awarded a second grant in the amount of \$543,480 for continued expansion of the Tennessee Civil War Trails program.

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.

Commissioner's Office

The Commissioner's Office provides direction for all department operations. Reporting directly to the commissioner are the Administrative Services, Marketing and Community and Industry Relations divisions. In addition, the department's legislative liaison and staff supporting new program development such as the sustainable tourism program and the Civil War Trails program report to the commissioner.

Services

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

- On the heels of the unparalleled success of the "Tennessee Roadtrip" television campaign featuring Dolly Parton riding alongside Elvis in a digital scene recreation, TDTD launched the "My Tennessee Story" campaign featuring Keith Urban, Michael McDonald, Martina McBride and Kix Brooks.
- Online marketing continues to increase, as major partnerships with Scripps Network's GAC and Food Network and TripAdvisor help support TDTD initiatives including culinary tourism, music and history. Online display advertising will deliver more than 60 million ad impressions with 46 percent added-value media. E-mail programs will deliver 48 campaigns and more than 11 million e-mails.
- Continued 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.
- Continued the highly-regarded Tennessee Sampler, held in Chicago in 2008 and Washington D.C., in 2009 to showcase Tennessee to AAA offices, travel agents, media outlets and other travel organizations. The 2009 event helped launch the 75th Anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and featured Tennessee legend Dolly Parton.
- Continued 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 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.
- Continued a Web-marketing plan that included advertising on travel, niche and daily newspaper 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 Web site, 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, including the rapidly expanding online travel 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 Official Tennessee Highway Map, plus editorial and content direction for the Official Tennessee Vacation Guide with a 550,000 printing and Web site availability.
- Provision of an online clipping service to industry partners with up-to-date assessment of media coverage and public relations accomplishments.
- Creation of innovative press kits which utilize CD, DVD and jump drive format that can be updated easily.

Tnvacation.com. Re-launched as a newly designed tnvacation.com in July 2005, this award-winning site was given a major re-design in 2008. New initiatives include the launch of Web 2.0 design, a new video itinerary with Dolly Parton as the hostess and more than 50 videos featured, a multi-media section with more than 30 videos from across the state, electronic vacation guides representing nine sub-regions providing targeted and convenient information for visitors, and a Girlfriend Getaway section complete with "wowget" and package links to Convention and Visitor Bureaus.

- More than 4.5 million unique visitors have visited the Web site from January 2008 – February 2009.
- Features navigational categories which highlight Tennessee's primary tourism assets, including Music & Arts, History & Heritage, Sports & Recreation, Attractions, Agritourism, Nature and Outdoors, Shopping, Seasonal Splendor and Preplanned Trips.
- For travel professionals, tnvacation.com features mini-sites including Group Travel, Student Tours, Sports & Athletic Events and Industry & Conventions.
- 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.

- Addition of German translation of the main sections to the site.
- Launched a "Careers in Tourism" micro site to highlight the Education Initiative launched by tourism's Community and Industry Relations Division.

Community & Industry Relations Division. This division communicates the department's policies and initiatives to the tourism industry and facilitates marketing and public relations duties and responsibilities within the three grand regions. It 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 conduct public relations and marketing functions within each region to promote tourism activities and destinations.
- Provide support, resources and informational services to the industry among the three grand regions of the state.
- Works with the Tennessee Department of Education to develop a comprehensive education initiative that includes awareness, academic support and career information about the tourism and travel industry.
- Assists local communities in the development and promotion of tourism activities through the department's News Bureau and other media.
- Engages 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.
- Participates 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.
- Creates and distributes the department's monthly e-newsletter to provide up-to-date information about activities in the tourism industry.
- Provides issue-related information to the public and the media on an as-needed basis.
- Serves as presenters to various groups including state, regional and national organizations on topics related to the tourism industry.

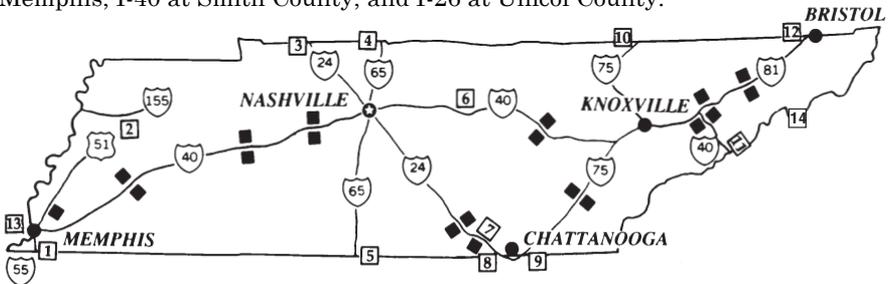
Administrative Services Division. Provides administrative support to the various divisions of the department through the following sections:

- **Financial Services.** This section provides a full range of financial management services. This section has responsibility for preparing and monitoring the department's performance-based budget, accounts payable, accounts receivable, procurement of goods and services, asset management, establishing contracts, grant management, development of the department's strategic plans, implementation of state financial policies and procedures, coordination of the department's financial integrity reporting requirements, and preparation and distribution of financial reports.
- **Human Resources.** This section manages recruitment and placement, classification/compensation, leave and attendance, interpretation and guidance regarding civil service rules and state human resource policies, benefits, training, affirmative action, performance and employee relations.
- **Legal Services.** This section provides legal advice to all department program areas, prepares department rules and regulations, provides legal advice regarding legislation, serves as the department's ethics office for interpretation and compliance with state ethics laws, serves as coordinator for contract

administration as well as coordinating the department's contract diversity reporting requirements, and provides advice on human resource grievance and disciplinary actions.

- **Information and Support Services.** This section provides technical direction and application support for the department's information technology and telecommunications activities, creation and implementation of the department's information systems plan including the installation of hardware and software, management of the department's office space and equipment requirements, mail services, trip planning and consumer information support, and management of the department's call center and fulfillment contractor.
- **Research.** This section is a support activity for Tourist Development, helping to identify, develop, maintain and disseminate complete, up-to-date tourism related research. Specific research is annually collected which details the economic impact of travel and tourism on the state of Tennessee. Additional research is collected annually, specifically information regarding the tourist visitation analysis and trends. Other activities include the e-mail distribution of tourism information to the travel industry, direct coordination with national travel research organization and the development of special research to directly support department programs.

Welcome Centers. The division operates 14 Welcome Centers located primarily on interstate highway entrances to Tennessee. Following a year of ongoing construction, the Tennessee Welcome Center along I-75 South in Campbell County at Jellico is now open for visitors. Designed as a log cabin and featuring almost 5,000 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; I-40 at Smith County, and I-26 at Unicoi County.



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|------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Memphis/I-40 | 5. Ardmore | 9. Chattanooga | 13. Memphis I-55 |
| 2. Dyersburg | 6. Smith County | 10. Jellico | 14. I-26 Unicoi County |
| 3. Clarksville | 7. Nickajack | 11. Hartford | |
| 4. Mitchellville | 8. Tiftonia | 12. Bristol | |

□ 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 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, Mo. 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 in Evanston, Ill. Whitaker serves on the Policy Council and Board of Directors for the U.S. Travel Association and on the Travel South USA executive committee. She was recently elected to the Board of Directors of U.S. Travel Association'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 and was presented the Pacesetter Award from the Stennis Center for Public Service.



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