

SUCCESS STORY

ALABAMA MOUNTAIN LAKES TOURIST ASSOCIATION

The Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association's (AMLA) goal is to promote and expand the tourism and travel industry in the 16 northern-most counties of the State of Alabama. AMLA is accomplishing this through a groundbreaking, three-prong marketing program: Themed Trails, Partnerships, and Cross-Selling.

The AMLA region encompasses a large, diverse area of Alabama. The themed-trails concept has proven to be extremely successful in marketing to the traveling public. Trails developed by AMLA include: The North Alabama Wine Trail, the North Alabama Craft Beer Trail, Waterfalls of North Alabama, the North Alabama Barbecue Trail, the North Alabama Birding Trail, the Alabama Bass Trail, the North Alabama Geocaching Passport, The Civil War in North Alabama, and the new North Alabama Train Depots Trail, and North Alabama Scenic Motorcycle Routes.

Through an innovative partnership between AMLA and the Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council new visitor opportunities have successfully been expanded in the North Alabama region. The recently formed Stewardship Council is composed of a prominent list of tourism and travel professionals in seven states who are volunteering their efforts towards the visionary goal of economic development through GeoTourism for all of the Tennessee River Valley.

Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. With the Tennessee River running the width of North Alabama, the Geotourism project

plays a significant role in promoting tourism to off the beaten path communities. The primary marketing program of the Stewardship Council is the National Geographic Geotourism Interactive Mapguides website: (www.tennesseevalleygeotourism.org)

All of the listings on this site have been nominated by those who know the region best – local residents – and offer visitors one of a kind, fun, and interesting experiences. To date, there are more than 500 listings have been nominated for the site.

Partnership is the glue that binds AMLA's three-pronged marketing program, and the third prong, Cross-selling, is what holds it all together. By pairing the Wine and Beer Trails with the Barbecue Trail, and the Waterfalls tour with the Birding Trail, AMLA packages communities as a travel destination.

Cross-selling also supports AMLA's efforts to expand promotions into new markets, such as tapping into the Phil Waldrep Ministries Women of Joy Conferences held through out the county to promote our Hallelujah Trail of Historic Churches.



IMPACT STATEMENT

The development of these tourism programs has provided an opportunity for North Alabama to showcase its travel destinations on a national scale and has resulted in an increase in visitors to the region, which in turn expanded employment for local residents, and a tourism economic impact of more than \$2.6 billion annually.

The innovative "Trails" focused tourism development program by AMLA is having a tremendous positive economic impact on North Alabama. The 16 county region reached a record high in 2017 with visitors spending more than \$2.6 billion. In a study by the Alabama Travel Department, North Alabama reported a 7% growth in tourism and travel in 2017 with \$2,696,922,502 in total visitor expenditures, as compared to \$2,513,601,257 in 2016.

Travel-related earnings for North Alabama grew 4.4% from \$807,438,394 in 2016 up to \$842,586,614 in 2017. Travel-related employment also expanded by 5% with 33,116 area residents being employed in the industry (direct and indirect) in 2017, up from 31,554 in 2016.

