



Two Powerhouse Regional Organizations Announce New Cooperative Initiatives

Southeast Tourism Society and Travel South USA make plans to transition Domestic Showcase in 2021 and enhance educational programming

Atlanta – February 24, 2019 – Southeast Tourism Society (STS) is excited to announce it has formalized an agreement with Travel South USA (TSUSA) to transition TSUSA's Domestic Showcase to STS in 2021.

Discussions to explore opportunities for cooperative initiatives between the two organizations began in October 2018. As a result of these discussions, a proposal to transfer production rights and assets of Domestic Showcase was developed and negotiated. The agreement was unanimously approved by both the Travel South USA Board of Directors and Southeast Tourism Society Board in February 2019. A formal signing ceremony will take place in March 2019 at the STS Connections conference in Daytona Beach, Florida.

“Combining the marketplace of Domestic Showcase with the educational opportunities of STS will offer attendees enhanced value and create a stronger foundation for networking, education, and advocacy efforts in the Southern USA,” said Liz Bittner, President & CEO of Travel South USA.

“We see this transition as a natural evolution for the domestic group tour segment of the industry,” said Bittner. “We believe it is in the best interest of the industry to build a bigger and better networking platform with educational opportunities, and a re-engineered Domestic Showcase in 2021 can offer this. Moving Domestic Showcase to a membership organization with a stellar reputation for year-round networking and education is the right thing at the right time.

Monica Smith, President & CEO of Southeast Tourism Society agreed. “We are excited for the opportunity to enhance Domestic Showcase offerings in 2021 and provide additional education components for its participants. Providing industry specific, southern-based, affordable networking and educational opportunities is vital to professional development in our industry, especially for the many new professionals joining the sales and marketing teams in our CVBs and attractions. We believe adding this event to our roster will create new synergies to complement our other programs: STS Connections, STS Marketing College®, Top 20 Festivals and Events recognitions, and our Escape to the Southeast publication.”

As part of the agreement, STS staff will shadow TSUSA in the planning and production of the 2020 Domestic Showcase, to be held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Following this event, TSUSA will transfer all production rights, responsibilities and assets for Domestic Showcase to STS. In addition, the state travel offices have agreed to provide additional funding to STS to ensure the event's continued success.

Domestic Showcase, currently in its 38th year, is a regional, appointment-style marketplace event for qualified group tour operators and credentialed journalists to meet with southern-based destinations and attractions to promote travel to the region. The event's program consists of three days of intensive business appointments, a media marketplace, professionally produced events, and networking opportunities, as well as pre and post FAM tour opportunities for journalists and tour operators in the host

state and across the region.

The 2019 Domestic Showcase, held in Myrtle Beach, SC, is expected to generate an estimated 21,000 business meetings among its approximately 700 attendees. According to the American Bus Association Foundation, group travel accounts for approximately 43.9 million visitors and generates \$15.3 billion in total economic impact annually in the 12-state Travel South region.

Southeast Tourism Society will soon release the 2021-2023 Request for Proposal to solicit bids for Domestic Showcase. Bids will be due May 31, 2019.

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About Southeast Tourism Society – Headquartered in Roswell, Georgia, STS is an association that works to unite all segments of the travel and tourism industry through its four pillars of education, advocacy, recognition, and networking. Established in 1983, STS is an engaged network of 900+ members from twelve states: [Alabama](#), [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Kentucky](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#), [North Carolina](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), [Virginia](#), and [West Virginia](#). For more information, visit SoutheastTourism.org

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About Travel South USA - Travel South USA is America's oldest and largest regional travel promotion organization, formed in 1965. The long-standing regional collaboration of the state tourism offices of [Alabama](#), [Arkansas](#), [Georgia](#), [Kentucky](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#), [Missouri](#), [North Carolina](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), [Virginia](#), and [West Virginia](#) provide a foundation to positively position tourism as a vital and dynamic element in the region's economic development. Tourism ranks throughout the region as one of the top three industries, behind manufacturing and agriculture, and is responsible for \$133 billion in spending by visitors, generating 1.4 million direct jobs, \$30 billion in worker paychecks, and almost \$16 billion in state and local taxes. Visit TravelSouthUSA.com for consumer information and travel industry information, TravelSouthUSA.org.

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