

For Immediate Release

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Mississippi Attracts Georgians in Volume

Tourism Blitz to target Atlanta

JACKSON, Mississippi, April 23, 2001--The Mississippi Development Authority, Division of Tourism is capitalizing on the state's proven ability to attract Georgia visitors with the launch of a week-long Mississippi Tourism Blitz beginning April 23 in Atlanta. Special activities are planned to target area residents and travel professionals.

"Since 1992, Mississippi has seen an increase of Georgia visitors by about 312 percent, and that is a significant number," said Darienne Wilson, director of the Mississippi Division of Tourism. "With that many Georgians visiting our state, we wanted to personally invite them back to Mississippi and spread the word to those who have not experienced Mississippi."

In 1992, there were approximately 164,700 Georgians traveling to Mississippi, and by 1999, that number had increased to 678,930, according to DK Shifflet research. The Mississippi Gulf Coast and the Vicksburg, Mississippi area attracted the most Georgia visitors in 1999 and 2000 based on DK Shifflet and the Mississippi Division of Tourism research.

"Mississippi is a quintessential spot for historians, art enthusiasts and culture lovers, an adventure destination for those who love the great outdoors, an oasis of indulgence for those who enjoy the leisure of destination resorts and spas, and a sanctuary for the avid golfer," said Wilson. "From the Delta to the Gulf Coast, Mississippi offers a little taste of adventure for everyone. We want our visitors to feel a sense of having found personal fulfillment in the Mississippi experience."

Mississippi is a convenient and affordable destination spot for visitors seeking a change of pace. Research conducted by the state revealed that 32 million people visited Mississippi in 1999. The study also showed an 11.1% increase in overnight stays. People are not just passing through; they are staying for the weekend.

Mississippi tourism, up nine percent in 2000, contributed more than \$6 billion to Mississippi's economy and is the second largest employer in the state's service sector.

The average travel party expenditures in Mississippi by Georgia visitors were the highest of any Southern state in 1999 and 2000. Georgia travel groups on average, spent \$934.15 in Mississippi on their most recent 1999 trip to this state, and spent \$947.25 during their most recent 2000 visit to the state. By comparison, out-of-state visitors from Florida spent on average, \$861.72 per travel group during their most recent 1999 trip, and \$884.03 during their most recent 2000 trip, based on Mississippi Division of Tourism research.

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During the Blitz over 100 tourism representatives will be visiting travel professionals to deliver a taste of Mississippi in conjunction with meetings. Local residents will be targeted through various media outlets.

In addition to the Atlanta marketing blitz, Mississippi tourism recently launched a new advertising and branding campaign, Welcome to the Weekend. The campaign targets markets within a 500-mile radius of Mississippi. It highlights the warmth and charm of Mississippi's rich cultural heritage with an innovative and dynamic spirit that interjects an emotional rhythm embracing the abundance of the state's recreational and entertainment attractions.

For more information regarding the adventures of Mississippi, visit Tourism's new, more advanced and user-friendly Web site, www.visitmississippi.org.

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