

NEWS RELEASE

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Augusta Rallies in Support of Travel and Tourism Industry

Community, Business and Political Leaders Gather to Endorse Travel's Economic and Cultural Benefits During National Travel and Tourism Week

AUGUSTA, GA – The Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) invites the city to help celebrate the 36th annual National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW), which unites communities across the country to celebrate how travel matters to American jobs, economic growth and personal well-being.

The theme of this year's NTTW, "Travel Matters," highlights the innumerable ways in which travel makes up the fabric of Augusta's culture and economy. NTTW celebrates all facets of travel: the economy, new experiences, jobs, infrastructure, health benefits, hometown pride and how travel strengthens families.

"The numbers speak for themselves. Travel supports one in nine American jobs, including nearly 5,000 right here in Augusta," said Bennish Brown, President & CEO of the Augusta CVB. "This week, we are celebrating travel's powerful impact on our community. We're calling on everyone—from elected officials to all of our local friends and neighbors—to join us in saluting this important industry, and to support pro-travel legislation at the local, state and national level."

"In every pocket of America—from the largest cities to the smallest towns—travel matters," said U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Roger Dow. "I, like so many others, got my start in the travel industry, and it shaped my life in ways I could have never imagined. This National Travel and Tourism Week, we're celebrating how travel powers our economies, strengthens our communities, and changes our lives."

From Westobou Gallery to the more than 70 hotels, over 300 locally owned restaurants, to the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, travel employs a diverse workforce in Augusta:

- 4,902 jobs are supported by travel and tourism in Augusta.

- Travel and tourism generate \$14.83 million in local tax revenue for Augusta, GA, equating to tax relief over \$500/year per household.

These local figures are an important part of travel's economic importance nationwide.

- Travel is a \$2.5 trillion industry in the U.S.
- These visitors support 15.7 million American jobs—roughly 8.9 million direct travel jobs, and 6.8 million indirect jobs.
- Travel-related spending generated \$171 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue in 2018.

“I have seen firsthand how much travel matters to our community,” said Kristi Jilson, Executive Director of Westobou. “Watching new hotels and businesses open downtown is a direct result of travel's impact. I'm proud of Augusta, and eager to welcome even more visitors here to show them why we love our city so much.”

One program in place throughout the year that recognizes the faces of Augusta tourism is Masters of Hospitality, a customer service nomination program enables visitors to nominate hospitality employees at area hotels and attractions for excellence in customer service. The Augusta CVB will hold a private recognition event for the nominated staff on Wednesday, May 8 at the newly opened 2nd City Distilling Co. During the event, Mayor Pro Tem Frantom will deliver a proclamation recognizing the economic impact of tourism and note the jobs created and sustained by visitor spending.

To further celebrate the impact of travel within our local community, the Augusta CVB will be holding the official ribbon cutting and grand opening for their new experience center, Augusta & Co., on Friday, May 10, 2019 at 1010 Broad Street in downtown Augusta. The celebration will include featured local vendors such as Savannah River Brewing Co., Watanut, and the Augusta Canal Discovery Center.

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