

Global Meetings Industry Day: Richmond Region Tourism Emphasizes the Importance of Return of Face-to-Face Meetings for Economy

RICHMOND, Va. (April 5, 2022) – The number of meetings and conventions taking place in the Richmond region this year is up 20% compared to 2021 but considerably lower than pre-pandemic benchmarks, according to booking data from Richmond Region Tourism.

The region's tourism marketer expects to welcome 52 group meetings worth an estimated \$33.9 million in economic impact during 2022.

Richmond Region Tourism helped bring 131 meetings and conventions to the region worth an estimated \$57 million in 2019.

Richmond Region Tourism is sharing the data ahead of Global Meetings Industry Day on April 7, a day of advocacy to highlight the importance of in-person meetings for local economies and communities.

"All of our hospitality partners have worked collaboratively and extremely hard to safely welcome meetings and conventions back to the region over the past year, and we're seeing progress" said Jerrine Lee, Vice President of Sales at Richmond Region Tourism. "Increasing business event travel is critically important to restoring the overall economy. Not only do large in-person events build connections, but they also drive significant economic value."

A Tourism Economics analysis says the U.S. saw a decline of \$211 billion in business travel spending in the U.S. – \$97 billion of which was due to the decline in meetings, conventions and trade shows. The steep decline in business travel led to the loss of more than 1.4 million direct travel jobs and wiped out \$29 billion in travel generated taxes in the U.S.

According to the U.S. Travel Association, domestic leisure travel is nearly recovered to 2019 levels, but business travel remained at less than half of 2019 levels in 2021.

Hotel occupancy, an important indicator of the health of the local tourism industry, has exceeded 2019 benchmarks in the region for a majority of the last seven months, propelled by sports tourism, friends and family visits and leisure travel.

Increasing business travel in the region is key to the local economy's recovery, according to Richmond Region Tourism leaders.

Richmond Region Tourism provides a variety of free services to meeting and event organizers, including meeting venue and hotel search assistance, arranging familiarization tours and site inspections, assisting with planning and itineraries, on-site conference services and more.

Throughout the year, the organization focuses on a robust business development program that includes tradeshow, marketing and public relations strategies to recruit meetings and conventions. Community member referrals and connections are also an important component for Richmond Region Tourism's event recruitment.

"You can partner with Richmond Region Tourism to invite groups you're involved with like association meetings, sporting events and family reunions. The service is free and helps our economy by bringing new visitors to the region," added Lee.

For more information, visit MeetRichmondVA.com.

About Richmond Region Tourism

Richmond Region Tourism is a private, not-for-profit dedicated to promoting the Region to meeting, convention and sports event planners, tour operators and leisure travelers. The organization represents the cities of Richmond and Colonial Heights, the town of Ashland and four counties: Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico and New Kent. Richmond Region Tourism operates Visitor Centers at the Robinson House at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Richmond International Airport.

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