

TravelTalk

July - August 2019 Newsletter

Inside:

Red River Balloon Rally
Returns, July 12-13 page 3

Exclusive Restaurant Deals
for Conventioneers page 3

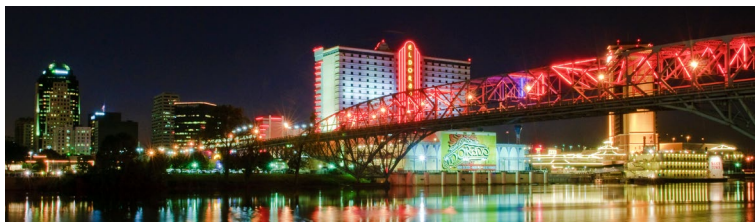
SBCTB Offers Free Google
Verification for Partners page 3

New Tourism Reports Reveal Shreveport-Bossier Ranks Among the Top Destinations in Louisiana

According to several new studies and reports, Louisiana's tourism and hospitality industry continues to experience steady growth, with Shreveport-Bossier ranking among the top destinations in the state.

A new study conducted by travel data firm DK Shifflet found that Louisiana welcomed 51.3 million visitors in 2018. This figure represents a nine percent year-over-year increase since 2017. Approximately 9.3 million of the visitors counted by DK Shifflet in 2018 were visiting the region designated as "Sportman's Paradise," which includes Shreveport-Bossier, Ruston and Monroe-West Monroe.

In 2018, visitors to Louisiana spent an estimated \$18.8 billion in the state, contributing \$1.9 billion to state and local tax coffers. The UNO Hospitality Research Center's May 2019 report entitled *Tourism Spending in Louisiana Parishes* found that the Shreveport-Bossier metropolitan statistical area ranked third overall among Louisiana destinations for tourist spending in 2018, with approximately \$1 billion



The Shreveport-Bossier metropolitan statistical area ranked third overall among Louisiana destinations for tourist spending in 2018, with approximately \$1 billion of visitor spending taking place within the Shreveport-Bossier MSA.

of visitor spending taking place within the Shreveport-Bossier MSA. Shreveport-Bossier experienced a seven percent year-over-year increase in visitor spending in 2018, while other large markets like Baton Rouge and Lake Charles experienced year-over-year decreases of two percent and one percent, respectively.

According to the UNO Hospitality Research Center's report, visitors spent \$360 million in Bossier Parish in 2018, a year-over-year increase of 10% since 2017. Caddo Parish saw a five percent increase, with \$401.7 million in visitor spending.

There was also a significant year-over-year increase in hotel occupancy rates in Shreveport-Bossier, as reported in the *STR Destination*

Report published by Smith Travel Research, Inc. Average hotel occupancy for Shreveport-Bossier was 63.9% in 2018, up from 59.7% in 2017 and 56.8% in 2016. Hotel occupancy in Shreveport-Bossier peaked in May of 2018 at 71.1% and the lowest hotel occupancy for 2018 was in January at 52.9%.

The UNO Hospitality Research Center's report found that approximately 11,000 people are employed by the hospitality industry in Caddo and Bossier parishes, a number that has increased by 6% in Caddo Parish and 10% in Bossier Parish since the end of 2017.

To learn more about tourism in Shreveport-Bossier, visit www.Shreveport-Bossier.org/Research.

Dates to Remember:

Hospitality Breakfast

- 7/3** 8 a.m.
Ernest's Orleans Restaurant
- 8/7** 8 a.m.
Hilton Hotel Shreveport

Hotel and Lodging Association Meeting

- 7/11** 12 p.m.
Remington Suite Hotel and Spa
- 8/8** 12 p.m.
Boomtown Casino and Hotel

For more Hotel and Lodging Association information, contact Joanna Folse-Alexander at joannafolse@yahoo.com.

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Blog: www.20x49.com
Events: www.SBFunGuide.com

SEE IT. BET IT. TASTE IT.

www.Shreveport-Bossier.org

>>> Your Bureau at Work

- Saturdays Through 8/25** **Shreveport Farmers' Market**
Festival Plaza
- Saturdays Through 11/30** **Bossier City Farmers' Market**
Pierre Bossier Mall
- 7/3** **Bret Michaels**
DiamondJacks Casino and Hotel
- 7/4** **KTBS-3 2019 Freedom Fest Finale**
Festival Plaza
- 7/4** **VIP Fireworks Viewing and Pig Roast**
Shreveport Aquarium
- 7/6** **Ron White**
Horseshoe Casino and Hotel Riverdome
- 7/10** **Glow Greenwood**
Boothill Speedway
- 7/11** **Alabama's 50th Anniversary Tour**
Centurylink Center
- Thursdays 7/11-25** **Jam on the Red**
Shreveport Aquarium
- Thurs.-Sun. 7/11-28** **Mama Mia!**
Shreveport Little Theatre
- 7/12-13** **Red River Balloon Rally**
Louisiana State University Shreveport
- 7/13** **The Oak Ridge Boys and The Gatlin Brothers**
Horseshoe Casino and Hotel Riverdome
- 7/14** **Backstage Music Tour**
Shreveport Municipal Auditorium
- 7/27** **Shirley Caesar**
Shreveport Municipal Auditorium
- 7/30 & 8/27** **East Bank Market**
East Bank District and Plaza
- 8/2** **Bring It! Live: the Dance Battle Tour**
Shreveport Municipal Auditorium
- 8/3** **Second Annual Ratchet City Fest**
101 Travis St., Shreveport
- 8/16-18** **Geek'd Con**
Shreveport Convention Center
- 8/17** **Aaron Lewis, State I'm In Tour**
Horseshoe Casino and Hotel Riverdome
- 8/24** **Chris Stapleton**
CenturyLink Center

Submit your events to www.SBFunGuide.com, an online community events calendar, for future promotions.

The Communications Department's new social media broadcast room successfully hosted four 20x49 Live Facebook livestreams in May 2019. The broadcast room allows a host and guest to discuss attractions or upcoming events while broadcasting live to various social media channels, with the ability to insert b-roll clips, graphics, titles, and more.



Kelly Wells



Sheila Norman



Nick Kopka



Que'brelyn Douglas



Aly Velasquez



Pat Gill

destination marketing, customer relationship management, and travel and tech trends.

Kelly Wells, vice president of sports, **Sheila Norman**, sports administrator, **Nick Kopka**, logistics manager, and **Que'brelyn Douglas**, sports sales manager, attended the National Association of Sports Commissions Event Symposium in Knoxville, Tenn., May 6-9. The conference features education sessions, networking opportunities and business development appointments. During the conference, Douglas met with 30 clients and received several leads.

Aly Velasquez, marketing associate, attended Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College in Dahlonega, Ga., May 12-17. The three-year program is designed to teach marketing techniques about all facets of the hospitality industry.

Pat Gill, internet and systems manager, attended Simpleview Summit in Phoenix, Ariz., May 20-22. Simpleview Summit is an annual conference for destination marketing organizations that provides training, guidance and inspiration from industry experts in destination marketing, customer relationship management, and travel and tech trends.



Erica Telsee

Erica Telsee, group sales manager, went on sales calls in Orlando, Fla., May 2-13. She met with receptive tour operators, wholesalers and bed banks with the goal of increasing international visitation to Shreveport-Bossier. Telsee also went on sales calls in Dallas, Texas, June 10-13, where she met with several group tour operators.



Brandy Evans

Brandy Evans, vice president of communications, and several industry partners hosted the Shreveport-Bossier Mardi Gras Block Party, May 23, in conjunction with *Plano Magazine* in Plano, Texas. Local hotel partners Jennifer Boone and Poppy Szekeres attended the event, as well as present and former Krewe of Highland royalty Jada Durden and Karen LeBeau. The promotion generated one convention lead, more than 100 prize sign-ups and promoted Shreveport-Bossier to nearly 200 people. Local band Alter Ego capped the evening off.



Stacy Brown

Stacy Brown, president, and **Erica Telsee**, group sales manager, attended IPW in Anaheim, Calif., June 1-5. The conference, hosted by the U.S. Travel Association, is the leading international inbound travel trade show, driving \$4.7 billion in future travel to the United States. Brown and Telsee partnered with Louisiana Office of Tourism and other Louisiana convention and tourist bureaus to promote Louisiana and Shreveport-Bossier.



Chris Jay

Chris Jay, social media and public relations manager, hosted editorial staff from magazines including *Louisiana Cookin'*, *Charm East Texas*, and *Louisiana Life* for a culinary media familiarization tour of Shreveport-Bossier, June 6-9. Sites and events visited included Shreveport Farmers' Market, Blueberry Hill, Southern University Shreveport Foundation's Gentlemen's Cooking Classic, and more.

CenterPoint Energy Red River Balloon Rally Returns, July 12-13

The Shreveport-Bossier Sports Commission is proud to host the CenterPoint Energy Red River Balloon Rally Presented by the Louisiana Office of Tourism, July 12-13, on the campus of Louisiana State University Shreveport. This annual festival coincides with the U.S. Southeast Regional Hot Air Balloon Championship, which will close competition on Sunday, July 14.

Up to 30 of the best hot air balloon pilots in the country will fly over Shreveport-Bossier during the U.S. Southeast Regional Hot Air Balloon Championship, July 12-14. The competition can be seen throughout the skies of Caddo and Bossier parishes each morning beginning at 6:45 a.m.



The annual festival will feature a balloon glow, fireworks, live music, tethered balloon rides, and more at Louisiana State University Shreveport.

The balloons can also be seen in the mornings at Louisiana State University Shreveport for an assigned competition target attempt.

The CenterPoint Energy Red

River Balloon Rally Presented by the Louisiana Office of Tourism will take place at Louisiana State University Shreveport, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., July 12-13. The festival will feature live music, tethered balloon

rides, children's play area, and food vendors, as well as nightly balloon glows and fireworks.

The public will also have the opportunity to view the hot air balloons at Glow Greenwood at Boothill Speedway in Greenwood, 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., on Wednesday, July 10.

Admission to the festival is \$12 for adults, \$10 for ages 6-17, \$10 for military members and free for ages 5 and younger. Pre-sale tickets cost \$10 for ages 6 and older and are available for purchase at participating Super 1 Foods and Brookshire's stores. For a complete schedule of Red River Balloon Rally events and to purchase tickets online, visit www.redriverballoonrally.com.

Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Shreveport Restaurants Offer Conventioneers Restaurant Discounts



View a full list of specials at www.downtownshreveport.com/conventionspecials.

Downtown Development Authority and seven local downtown Shreveport restaurants have launched an initiative to provide discounts and special offers to conventioneers meeting in Shreveport-Bossier. The new program can be used as a sales tool by the sales teams at hotels, meeting venues, and the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau.

"Downtown Shreveport is thrilled to work with the tourist bureau on welcoming visitors to our area," said Liz Swaine, executive director of the Downtown Development Authority. "This initiative encourages people

to sample local dining options and have a wonderful trip."

Conventioneers can redeem special offers by presenting a convention badge, name tags or host hotel room keys at participating restaurants. Participating restaurants include Abby Singer's Bistro, Fat Calf Boucherie, Fully Stacked Bar & Grill, Noble Savage Tavern, The Missing Link, Parish Taceaux, and Retro 521 Downtown Café. A full list of participating restaurants and their special offers can be viewed at www.downtownshreveport.com/conventionspecials and Shreveport-Bossier.org/Meetings.

Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau Offers Google My Business Verification to All Partners



The Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau partnered with Louisiana Office of Tourism and Miles Partnership to offer free on-site instant verification services for Shreveport-Bossier tourism-related businesses and attractions.

"Claiming your business listing on Google allows you to connect with customers through Google Search and Google Maps," said Stacy Brown, president of the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau. "We encourage all of our partners to verify their Google listing to improve the online experiences

of visitors and locals who are searching for things to do in Shreveport-Bossier."

To participate in instant verification, business representatives will need to know the login to the Google account for their business and provide two documents that include the business name, address, and category (if possible) such as a utility bill(s), tax letter(s) or business registration certificate(s).

To request Google My Business verification assistance, contact Pat Gill, internet and systems manager for the Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau, at pgill@sbctb.org. Google My Business Verification is also available at monthly Hospitality Breakfasts. To sign up for verification services, please indicate that you would like to request services when you RSVP.



Industry Briefs:

In April 2019, renovations began on the historic Arlington Hotel, which was built in 1913 and is located in downtown Shreveport at the corner of Louisiana Avenue and Cotton Street. In addition, the new owners, Larsen Family LP, plan to build a distillery called Every Man a King Distilling, a French restaurant called The Revenir and a courtyard next to the hotel. The distillery will be the first to be established in northwest Louisiana. The target completion date for construction is January 2020.

Three new food trucks opened in Spring 2019 in the Shreveport-Bossier market. May the Cheese Be With You, which opened in April 2019, serves Star Wars-themed grilled cheese sandwiches. Sal's



Co-owners Debbie Williamson and Donna Higgins posing with their food truck, May the Cheese Be With You, which serves Star Wars-themed grilled cheese sandwiches.

Emergency Pizza Services food truck opened in May 2019. Sal Marciano, the owner, previously served his pizza at The Sandbar in downtown Shreveport. In addition, Marilyn's Place has a new catering truck that now equips the popular local Cajun-inspired restaurant to serve 500-1,000 people at events.

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