



Tourism

Yes, on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Increasing Tourism with Travel South

In an effort to increase tourism in the South, including the Mississippi Gulf Coast, over 600 journalists, tourism directors, travel buyers and destination representatives met in Biloxi on March 1-5 for the 26th Annual Travel South Showcase.

The Travel South Showcase gave buyers and sellers the opportunity to see just how far the area has come in its recovery efforts since Hurricane Katrina. 275 representatives from various travel destinations and attractions from the South met with travel buyers with the hope of stirring up the Southern tourism industry. "Tourism is leading the way for recovery here on the Gulf Coast," Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Director Craig Ray told reporters.

Many of the participants who came to the Travel South Showcase spent the first two days as tourists themselves. On Saturday, they participated in a variety of activities, including deep-sea fishing, golf and shopping at the outlet malls. Later, they headed to the Hard Rock Casino for an evening of great food and music. Sunday night included a Southern-style Fun Fest hosted by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau.

On Monday and Tuesday, travel suppliers from 12 Southern states met with travel buyers from around the country in order to showcase the many tourism opportunities available. Some suppliers estimated that the buyers had the potential to send thousands of visitors to the Coast. Also of importance will be the stories that the journalists take back to their respective news outlets. "It's really the stories that are written that get people to take another look at you," said Susan Whitaker, this year's chairman of the board for Travel South.

According to the Sun Herald, the directors from the 12 states that are part of Travel South said several travel trends are emerging this year, including: authentic experiences for travelers, girlfriend trips, African-American heritage, sustainable travel and green lodging, an opportunity to attract European travelers because of the weak dollar, food and wine tours, gamblers staying longer and spending more, and trails that link music, golf, and historic attractions.



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