

The Grove Arcade in Downtown Asheville  
Tourism Product Development Fund Grant Recipient



# Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority 2012-13 Annual Plan

Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau | Asheville, North Carolina

[ExploreAsheville.com](http://ExploreAsheville.com) | [AshevilleCVB.com](http://AshevilleCVB.com) | [BCTDA.org](http://BCTDA.org)

[ExploreAsheville.com](http://ExploreAsheville.com) Arena at the U.S. Cellular Center Asheville  
Tourism Product Development Fund Grant Recipient



**ASHEVILLE**  
any way you like it®

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## The Asheville Area Brand Promise

We guarantee you a life enriching experience each and every time you visit Asheville. It's personal, personal to you. And it is personal to us. We live this same genuine experience and want to share it with you. We empower you to discover a collection of experiences that is as unique and varied as each individual who visits and allow you to do so in a warm, embracing and creative environment.

## Find Us!

ExploreAsheville.com  
 AshevilleCVB.com  
 BCTDA.org  
 AshevilleVisitorGuide.com  
 MyWeddingInAsheville.com  
 MotorToAsheville.com

## Like Us!

Facebook.com/Asheville  
 Facebook.com/Foodtopian.Society  
 Facebook.com/AshevilleMotorcoachGroupTours

## Follow Us!

Twitter.com/VisitAsheville  
 Twitter.com/Foodtopia  
 Twitter.com/AshevilleDeals

## Watch Us!

YouTube.com/ExploreAsheville

## Read Our Blogs!

blog.ExploreAsheville.com  
 AshevilleWeddingCrashers.blogspot.com

## Pin With Us!

Pinterest.com/VisitAsheville  
 Pinterest.com/Foodtopia

## Link In With Us!

Asheville Area Tourism Industry

# Message to the Tourism Industry

## From the BCTDA Chairman & CVB Executive Director

Asheville's star continues to rise with more travelers discovering what those of us who live here already know. Earlier this year, Asheville was named as one of *TripAdvisor's* "Top Destinations on the Rise," and the site's users voted Asheville a "Top Ten Destination for Food and Wine." Then, there's the Beer City USA title — four years running!

These notable national designations are the result of significant partnerships, a dedicated hospitality industry, entrepreneurial spirit and a long-term investment in a tourism promotions program designed to grow a distinctive destination unlike any other.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Asheville's innovative dedicated room tax that has helped Buncombe County rank fifth for visitor spending in North Carolina. The tourism industry and lodging community has been lauded for its strategic investment, but we are not a community that rests on its laurels.

Instead, you'll find that the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) and Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) remain dedicated to continuous improvement. Inspired innovation with a focus on return on investment will remain the foundation of our efforts to elevate the growth trajectory, expand markets, and increase visitor spending to improve tax revenues and create jobs for the Asheville area community.

Tourism is critical to the economic health of the region. With an estimated output of more than \$2 billion and spending that supports 26,000 jobs, tourism contributes substantially to the economic vitality of our community. The state tourism office reported that visitor spending in Buncombe County totaled \$783 million in 2011, an increase of 7.4 percent. The Tourism Product Development Fund — just a seed of an idea to generate new product 15 years ago — is now in full bloom. Fourteen projects have received more than \$13.5 million, benefiting residents and visitors through new products including the John B. Lewis Soccer Complex and Pack Square Park.

The CVB achieved several milestone accomplishments in the past year, including:

- ▶ The sales team distributed a record-breaking 439 group business leads and serviced 434 groups.
- ▶ The newly redesigned ExploreAsheville.com attracted more than 2.6 million website visits.
- ▶ The Asheville Visitor Center assisted a record-breaking 199,132 guests.
- ▶ The marketing team generated 200,000+ views on the Explore Asheville YouTube channel for videos including "Mountain Video Time Lapse" and "The Hunger Games Behind-The-Scenes."

Community efforts to showcase the area's connection with *The Hunger Games* also paid big dividends. Editorial placements resulting from the movie are valued at nearly \$1 million to date.

Team Asheville also scored big with the Southern Conference (SoCon) Basketball Tournament, the result of years of work by the CVB, Asheville-Buncombe Regional Sports Commission, City of Asheville, Buncombe County, UNC Asheville and numerous volunteers. SoCon reported attendance of 41,120, generating 3,886 room nights from teams and staff and an injection of \$4.5 million into the community during March. And, the collaboration posted another significant win, landing the USA Cycling National Cyclo-cross Championships for January 2016. The \$3.7 million event is expected to generate 2,500 room nights.

The BCTDA and the CVB are anticipating strong growth in 2012-2013, establishing a budget based on a 9 percent increase in room revenue. These additional dollars are being invested in advertising, extending our reach to 15 million households.

Your input and comments during the budget process are reflected in the strategies and tactics outlined on the following pages. We invite you to continue the dialogue with us throughout the year.

We look forward to working together to continue to develop a destination known for its unscripted and vibrant experiences, enriching culture, inspired culinary scene and a local, authentic rhythm and style — the very foundation of our quality of life.



Ronald E. Morin, Chairman  
 Buncombe County Tourism  
 Development Authority  
 Vice President & General Manager  
 The Grove Park Inn  
[rmorin@GroveParkInn.com](mailto:rmorin@GroveParkInn.com)



Stephanie Pace Brown  
 Senior Vice President &  
 Executive Director  
 Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
[sbrown@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:sbrown@ExploreAsheville.com)

# What is the BCTDA?



2012-13 BCTDA board members (L-R): Asheville City Councilman Gordon Smith, John Ellis, Paula Wilber, Chairman Ron Morin, Vice Chairman Bob Patel, Steve Frabitore, Ron Storto, Doug Bowman and Buncombe County Commissioner K. Ray Bailey.

## 2012-13 Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Ron Morin, Chairman</b><br/>The Grove Park Inn<br/>rmorin@GroveParkInn.com<br/>County Appointment – Lodging 101+ Rooms</p> <p><b>Bob Patel, Vice Chairman</b><br/>Bhuna Corporation/Quality Inn &amp; Suites<br/>bpatel@HolidayInnBiltmore.com<br/>City Appointment – Lodging 101+ Rooms</p> <p><b>Doug Bowman</b><br/>The Red Rocker Inn<br/>info@RedRockerInn.com<br/>County Appointment – Lodging &lt;101 Rooms</p> <p><b>John Ellis</b><br/>Diana Wortham Theatre<br/>jellis@DWTTheatre.com<br/>City Appointment – Tourism Related</p> <p><b>Steve Frabitore</b><br/>Tupelo Honey Café<br/>steve@TupeloHoneyCafe.com<br/>County Appointment – Tourism Related</p> | <p><b>Ron Storto</b><br/>Biltmore Farms, Inc.<br/>rstorto@BiltmoreFarms.com<br/>City Appointment – Lodging &lt;101 Rooms</p> <p><b>Paula Wilber</b><br/>Biltmore<br/>pwilber@Biltmore.com<br/>Chamber Appointment – Tourism Related</p> <p><b>Buncombe County Commissioner K. Ray Bailey</b><br/>ray.bailey@BuncombeCounty.org<br/>Buncombe County Commission<br/>Ex-Officio Member</p> <p><b>Asheville City Councilman Gordon Smith</b><br/>gordonsmith@AVLCouncil.com<br/>Asheville City Council Ex-Officio Member</p> <p><i>Board members may serve up to two consecutive three-year terms.</i></p> |
|---|--|

## The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority

The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is a quasi-governmental entity created by the room tax legislation first passed in 1983. The BCTDA oversees tourism marketing, sales and product development efforts and the expenditure of the county's four percent occupancy tax revenues.

The board is comprised of nine members:

- Two owners/operators of lodging properties with more than 100 rooms (appointed by Asheville City Council and Buncombe County Commissioners)
- Two owners/operators of lodging properties with 100 rooms or fewer (appointed by Asheville City Council and Buncombe County Commissioners)
- Three owners/operators of tourism-oriented businesses who do not own or operate taxable accommodations (appointed by Asheville City Council, Buncombe County Commissioners and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce)
- Two ex-officio/non-voting members (one member each from Asheville City Council and Buncombe County Commission)

## Marketing Asheville

In 1983, hoteliers in this community created a plan to tax themselves and earmark the proceeds for tourism marketing. The enacted legislation authorized a two percent room occupancy tax (and an additional one percent increase implemented in 1985) on lodging properties with five or more units. It created a Tourism Development Authority as the entity responsible for administering proceeds of the tax to "further the development of travel, tourism and conventions in the county through state, national and international advertising and promotion." The legislation also allows the BCTDA to "contract with any person, firm or agency to advise and assist it in the promotion of travel, tourism and conventions."

To implement the marketing plan, the BCTDA contracted with the Convention & Visitors Bureau of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, which was already promoting tourism in the Asheville area. Within 20 years of the legislation, the annual economic output of tourism grew 400 percent in Buncombe County and now totals more than \$2 billion. More than 3 million leisure visitors stay overnight in our community, attracted by the enriching experiences they find here.

## Managing the Destination

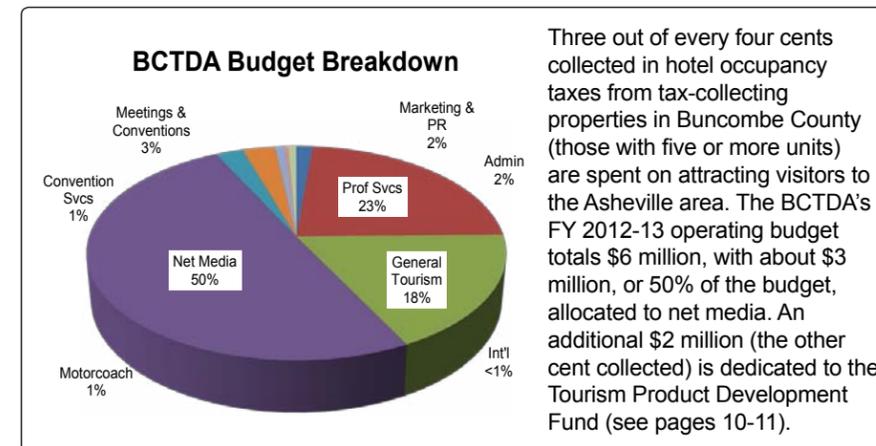
A critical shift occurred in 2001 when the industry went back to state legislators with a bill designed to create an innovative funding process for tourism product development. The NC General Assembly passed the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) bill which increased the room tax by one percent for a total room occupancy tax of four percent.

The bill dedicates proceeds from the one percent increase to help with capital expenditures for new tourism products that will generate substantial new room nights in Buncombe County. In addition to attracting visitors to the destination, the BCTDA has become managers of the destination, ensuring its viability and sustainability.

More information on the TPDF and its impact on the community can be found on pages 10-11.



Ron Morin, 2011-13 BCTDA Chairman, addresses the crowd gathered to learn more about the three projects awarded dollars during the 2012 Tourism Product Development Fund cycle. The press conference took place at the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce on March 7, 2012.



## BCTDA Mission Statement

To be a leader in the economic development of Buncombe County by attracting and servicing visitors, generating income, jobs and tax revenues which make the community a better place to live and visit.

## BCTDA Vision Statement

Asheville/Buncombe County will retain its unique, authentic and environmental charm while welcoming global visitors searching for personal enrichment and memorable experiences.

## 2012-13 BCTDA Meetings

BCTDA board meetings are held on the fourth or last Wednesday of the month at 9 a.m. at the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce (with the exception of the March strategic planning retreat and board meeting).

All meetings are open to the public.

- July 25, 2012
- August 22, 2012
- September 26, 2012
- October 31, 2012
- November 28, 2012
- December 19, 2012
- January 23, 2013
- February 27, 2013
- March 21-22, 2013
- April 24, 2013
- May 22, 2013
- June 26, 2013

*Need more info?*

Check out [BCTDA.org](http://BCTDA.org) or contact Jonna Reiff at [jreiff@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:jreiff@ExploreAsheville.com).

# 2011-12 Highlights & Happenings

## Top Media Placements



Good Morning America named Asheville as one of the “Most Beautiful Places in America,” saying:

*“Asheville features a funky and eclectic downtown...a large culinary scene and one of the most spectacular estates ever constructed in this country.”*

TripAdvisor.com’s  Traveler’s Choice Awards ranked Asheville among the Top 10 Food & Wine Destinations in the U.S.:

*“If you’re into eating locally and supporting sustainable agriculture, go to Asheville — and eat, eat, eat.”*



Southern Living magazine put the spotlight on Asheville in the October 2011 issue:

*“With the resurgence of its Art Deco-peppered downtown, Asheville has evolved into a synapse of professionals and college students, families and artists, musicians and gastronomes.”*

Love for Asheville was at the center of two features on FoxNews.com—one extolling the area beer scene and the other highlighting the area’s funkier aspects:



*“It’s quirky. It’s one of those “keep so-and-so weird” kinds of places... But Asheville’s doing more than daring to be different.”*



Asheville came out on top of About.com’s 2012 Readers’ Choice Awards, winning the competition for Most Romantic Place in the U.S. or Canada.



In cooperation with the N.C. State tourism office, Asheville hosted writers for a Hunger Games-themed press trip. They ate where the stars ate, learned how to survive with a Nantahala Outdoor Center survival course and visited filming locations in DuPont State Forest. The CVB produced a Hunger Games behind-the-scenes video and coordinated a sweepstakes with US Weekly magazine.

In May, Asheville tied with Grand Rapids, Mich. to share the title of BeerCity USA 2012. This marks the fourth straight year Asheville has received this designation, having also tied with Portland, Ore., in 2009 and winning the title outright in 2010 and 2011. The title awarded in the Examiner.com online poll has been instrumental in attracting nationally recognized breweries to the area: New Belgium Brewing will build its East Coast expansion brewery in the River Arts District, and Sierra Nevada will build in Mills River.

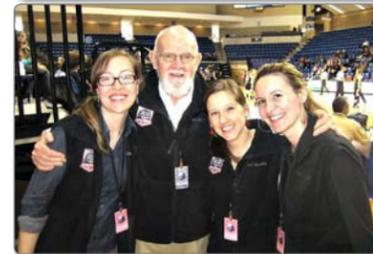


Nine AAA Alabama offices attended an Asheville Destination FAM where they enjoyed many Asheville attractions including a day at Biltmore.

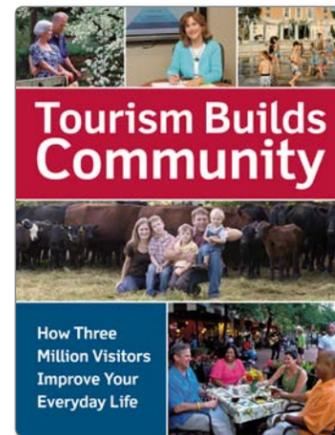
Seventeen AAA South travel counselors representing six offices in the Atlanta area mingled and learned about local industry attractions and accommodations at the mini-trade show event held in the Asheville Visitor Center.



Twenty-five industry partners joined CVB staff for the annual end-of-year committee celebration and service project. Partnering with Asheville GreenWorks, the group completed a street beautification project in a well-traveled section of downtown Asheville.



Nikki Rogan (City of Asheville), Mike Burke, Lauren Harris and Helena Smuckler volunteered at the Kimmel Arena during the SoCon Basketball Tournament in March 2012. The combined attendance for men’s and women’s games totaled 41,120, making it the second-highest attended SoCon tournament since the Greenville, S.C., tournament in 2000.



This Tourism Builds Community report, highlighting the economic impact of tourism on residents and businesses, was sent to 32,000 households in Buncombe County and will be distributed throughout the year to community leaders. To read the report and hear personal stories from community members affected by a thriving tourism industry, go to BCTDA.org.



In November 2011, the CVB launched a brand new version of ExploreAsheville.com, featuring intuitive navigation, enhanced partner listings and a vibrant new design. More than 2.6 million people visited ExploreAsheville.com this year for information about travel planning, events and local offerings.



The Marketing & PR team showed off the area’s spring beauty with a time lapse video highlighting scenic Asheville-area locations. The video garnered 30,000 views, bringing the total YouTube video views for this year to 213,000.



The Group Sales & Services team hosted more than 70 wedding industry partners at an event presented by Biltmore Catering. Attendees enjoyed networking with fellow wedding industry members and learned how their clients can benefit from the CVB’s complimentary wedding services.



The Asheville Visitor Center welcomed a record 199,132 visitors in FY 2011-12, and 1,012 hotel room nights were booked by the concierge.



The Asheville CVB and local tourism partners attended the annual NC state media event in New York as part of the winter media tour.

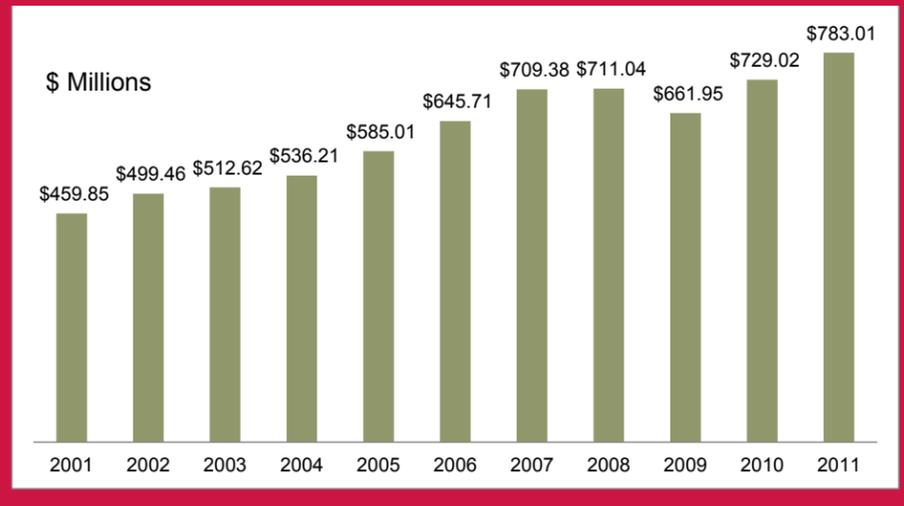


The Group Sales & Services team created a video and several collateral pieces to promote meetings in Asheville to various local and national client groups. The International Association of Administrative Professionals and Meeting Matchmaker pieces, in particular, are new outreach efforts intended to generate leads through a referral program.

# Visitor Profiles & Target Audiences

## Visitor Spending in Buncombe County

Source: Prepared for the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development by the U.S. Travel Association



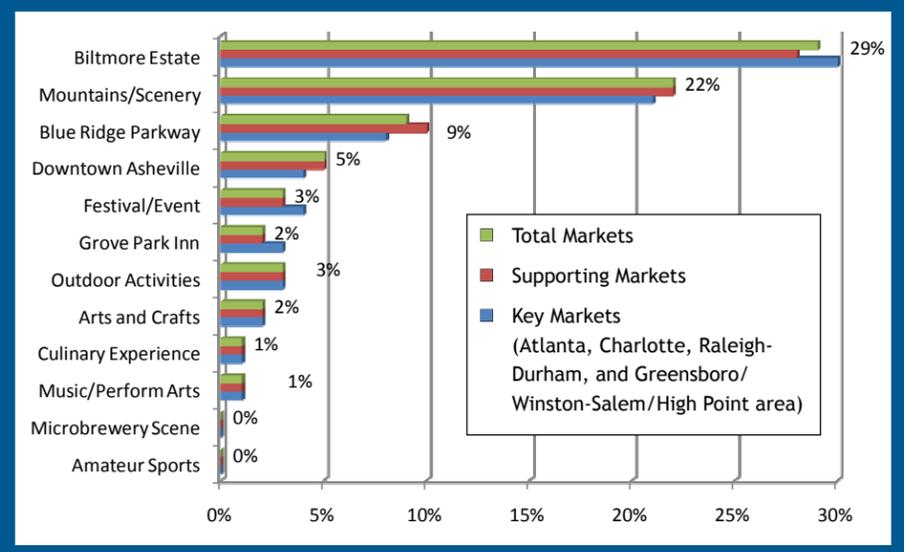
## Economic Impact

- The Asheville area attracts 3.13 million overnight leisure visitors annually.
- More than 26,000 jobs are supported through the hospitality industry in Buncombe County.
- The economic output of tourism is now \$2.12 billion annually.

Sources: D.K. Shifflet, Economic Development Research

## Primary Reasons for Visiting Asheville

Source: 2010 TNS Segmentation Study



## Visitor Profile

Demographics of visitors coming to the Asheville area based on a 2006-2007 intercept study:

- Age: 50s
- HH income: approximately \$100,000
- No children in the home (empty nesters)
- More than half employed full-time, more than one-third retired
- Married and traveling as a couple
- Has Internet access
- Average Party Size: 2.6 people
- Average Length of Stay: 2.8 days
- Average Spend: \$171.45 per person, per day

## Top Inquiry States

Top 10 states requesting *Official Asheville Travel Guides* through the Asheville CVB:

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. North Carolina | 6. Virginia     |
| 2. Florida        | 7. New York     |
| 3. Georgia        | 8. Pennsylvania |
| 4. South Carolina | 9. Texas        |
| 5. Ohio           | 10. Tennessee   |

## Top Feeder Markets

Top points of origin (DMAs) of Asheville visitors based on a series of intercept studies conducted in the summer and fall of 2006 and spring 2007:

1. Charlotte
2. Raleigh
3. Atlanta
4. Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville
5. Greensboro
6. Orlando tied w/ Tampa-St. Petersburg
7. New York
8. Boston
9. Detroit
10. Knoxville tied w/Nashville
11. Jacksonville

# Industry Snapshot

## Last Year by the Numbers

Note that some numbers are provided on a fiscal year (FY) basis of July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012, while others are based on a 2011 calendar year.

- **Hotel Sales** in FY 2011-12 totaled \$185,091,932, an increase of 9.2% over FY 2010-11, with all 12 months showing increases.
- **Revenue Per Available Room** (RevPAR) was \$70.78 in FY 2011-12, an increase of 9.7% over FY 2010-11.
- **Hotel Occupancy** increased 3.1% in calendar year 2011 and is up 3.7% calendar YTD 2012 (January-June).
- **Average Daily Rate** (ADR) increased 3.7% in calendar year 2011 and is up 6.0% calendar YTD 2012 (January-June).
- **Asheville Visitor Center patronage** totaled 199,132 in FY 2011-12, an increase of 1.8% over FY 2010-11.
- **User sessions on ExploreAsheville.com** totaled 2,621,237 in FY 2011-12, an increase of 16.9% over FY 2010-11.
- **Room Nights Generated** in FY 2011-12 totaled 40,805, an increase of 1.7% over FY 2010-11.
- The **Total Room Count** of tax collecting properties in Buncombe County (those with five or more units and excluding vacation rental properties) is 7,060 as of June 2012.

Hotel sales figures are received from the Buncombe County Finance Department. Hotel occupancy and ADR figures are received from Smith Travel Research (STR) and may vary due to the timing of reports submitted by STR's participating properties (updated August 2012). RevPAR is calculated by CVB staff.

Updated tourism statistics are compiled into monthly visitor indexes and posted on AshevilleCVB.com.

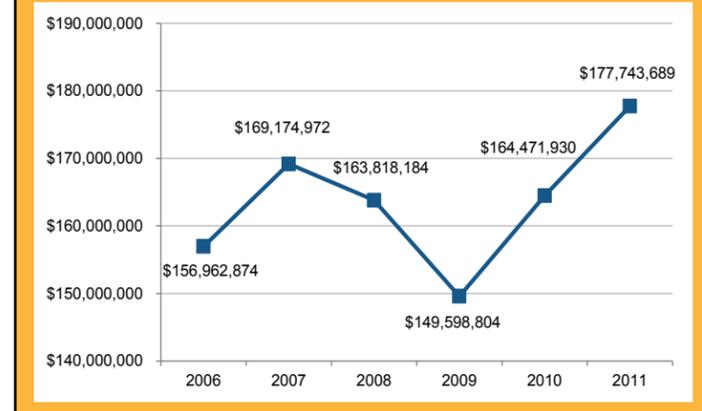
## Asheville Hotel Occupancy by Month

Source: Smith Travel Research

January	37%
February	47%
March	59%
April	65%
May	68%
June	77%
<b>July</b>	<b>79%</b>
August	70%
September	67%
<b>October</b>	<b>79%</b>
November	63%
December	57%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64%</b>

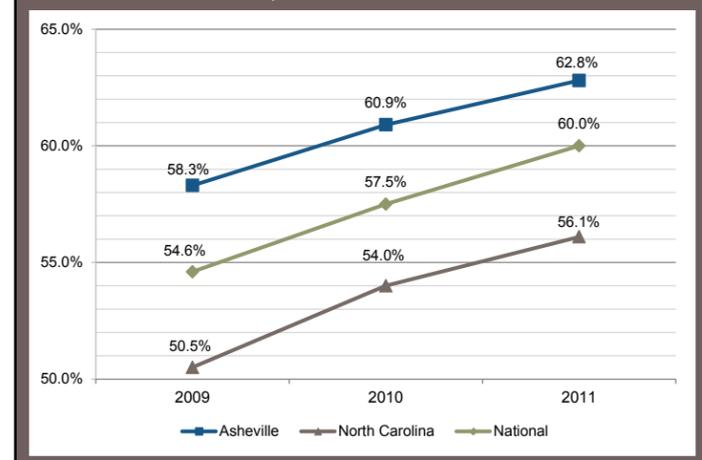
## Buncombe County Hotel Sales

Calendar Year | Source: Buncombe County Finance



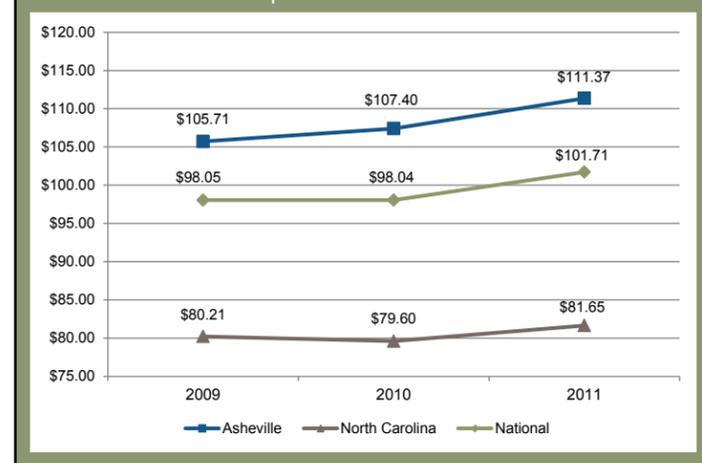
## Hotel Occupancy

Calendar Year | Source: Smith Travel Research



## Hotel Average Daily Rate

Calendar Year | Source: Smith Travel Research



# Tourism Product Development Fund

## What is the TPDF?

In 2001, the Buncombe County hotel occupancy tax increased from three percent to four percent and established the Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF) and the oversight committee structure. The additional one cent tax on each dollar spent on lodging averages approximately \$1.8 million in room tax revenue annually, which is dedicated to financial assistance for major tourism projects that will substantially increase patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County, generating additional economic impact for the area.

## Planning for Development

Through dialogue with its partners and constituent groups throughout the community, the BCTDA continues to work toward a sustainable, vibrant destination that will generate revenue for all sectors of the community.

The TPDF committee, a nine-member committee appointed by the BCTDA, is responsible for managing the fund, reviewing applications and making funding recommendations to the BCTDA. Applications for the next funding cycle review will be due on Monday, January 28, 2013. A copy of the TPDF application, public information meeting dates and more information about funding criteria can be found in the Product Development section of AshevilleCVB.com.



Projects are reviewed at the initial meeting of the TPDF committee for each funding cycle. If a project is determined to meet the legislated mandate of creating significant new and incremental room nights in Buncombe County, it may move on to the next phase in the application process.

## Funding Process & Criteria

All projects must demonstrate feasibility and go through the formal funding process, which includes completion of the application, applicant interviews and possibly a site visit. As guided in the enabling legislation, requested funds must be used for capital costs (i.e., bricks and mortar) only. The TPDF committee may award funds to qualified non-profit and for-profit businesses as grants, guaranteed loans or pledges of debt service.

By law, any funded project must demonstrate that it will generate additional lodging room nights in Buncombe County.

## Thinking about applying for TPDF funds?

Join committee members, past award winners and CVB staff at the

## TPDF Public Information Forum

to learn about funding criteria and the application process.

Tuesday, September 18, 2012 | 2 to 4 p.m.

Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce  
36 Montford Avenue | Asheville, NC

The deadline to submit applications for the next TPDF funding cycle is Monday, January 28, 2013, at 4 p.m.

Additional core criteria include more expansive economic impacts and returns as well as destination brand alignment. If a project meets the core criteria, additional criteria principles are assessed.

The BCTDA approves final funding following recommendations from the TPDF committee. Funded projects are required to provide annual updates to the BCTDA on visitation numbers, marketing plans and other impact data.

## Core Funding Criteria:

- Return on investment (ROI) and economic impact
- New room nights and revenue generated in Buncombe County
- Ability to measure out-of-market visitation and collect economic impact data
- Asheville destination brand alignment
- If applicable, number of new local jobs created based specifically on new employment for the proposed project

## Additional Criteria:

- Community value
- Environmental sustainability
- Feasibility
- Time line of project completion
- Current financial status
- Financial resources, partnership funding structure, project costs
- Ability of project to leverage additional development for the community

## Learn More about the TPDF!

AshevilleCVB.com/product-development  
Cate Marvill | 828.210.2724  
cmarvill@ExploreAsheville.com

## Tourism Product Development Fund Projects

Since its inception, 14 projects have received funding through the TPDF. With more than \$13.5 million awarded to these area projects, the BCTDA has become one of the largest granting organizations in Western North Carolina. The BCTDA continues to shape the destination of tomorrow by being a catalyst for smart growth and development today. These projects that benefit the residents and visitors of Buncombe County demonstrate that *tourism truly does build community*.

Project Funded	Total Amount Awarded	Funding Cycle(s)
John B. Lewis Soccer Complex at Azalea Park	\$1,300,000	2002, 2004, 2009
The Grove Arcade	\$500,000	2002
Bonsai Garden at The NC Arboretum	\$750,000	2003
Asheville Visitor Center	\$750,000	2003
Pack Square Park	\$2,500,000	2004, 2007, 2009
Asheville Art Museum	\$1,500,000	2007, 2009
Western North Carolina Veterans' Memorial	\$67,000	2007
Buncombe County Civil War Trails	\$16,500	2007
Asheville Area Wayfinding Program	\$1,800,000	2007, 2010
The Orange Peel	\$300,000	2009
U.S. Cellular Center Asheville	\$3,375,000	2010, 2012
Smoky Mountain Adventure Center	\$100,000	2010
Navitat Canopy Adventures	\$500,000	2012
Montford Park Players	\$125,000	2012



The John B. Lewis Soccer Complex has received three TPDF grants totaling \$1.3 million to install four premier fields and evening lighting. The complex hosts out-of-market tournaments year-round and 10,000 residents enjoy playing on the fields weekly.



TPDF funds served as a catalyst for raising capital dollars and support to renovate and improve the U.S. Cellular Center Asheville. A total of \$3.375 million was awarded in 2010 and 2012, bringing the Southern Conference Basketball Tournament back to Asheville and attracting new entertainment aimed at driving overnight visitation.



Actors and supporters congratulate John Russell with Montford Park Players at the TPDF press conference held on March 7, 2012. With funding from a \$125,000 TPDF grant, Montford Park Players will soon welcome patrons with a new guest center and renovated seating.



“The Tourism Product Development Fund grant will enable The Montford Park Players to realize our vision of providing a first-class outdoor theatrical experience for our guests, visitors and residents alike. Over the last 40 years, The Montford Park Players have developed a stellar reputation for producing quality Shakespearean theatre, and the long-needed upgrades, made possible by the generous investment of the BCTDA, will enhance the comfort and overall experience for our growing audience.”

—John Russell  
Managing Director  
Montford Park Players

“The renovations made possible by the TPDF grants totaling \$3.375 million have made a world of difference in our ability to attract new and exciting events to the U.S. Cellular Center Asheville and ExploreAsheville.com Arena. We hear from patrons from across the United States about how much they enjoy the building and the improvements that we have been able to make.”

—Sam Powers, Director, City of Asheville Economic Development & U.S. Cellular Center Asheville



# Marketing & PR Department

The department oversees the relationship with the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority's (BCTDA) traditional and digital advertising agencies as well as its Web vendor; works with national and regional media outlets to generate substantial editorial and broadcast coverage; executes viral and social media efforts; conducts ongoing research and statistical examination of the industry; maintains ExploreAsheville.com, AshevilleCVB.com and BCTDA.org; and proactively manages and markets the Asheville area brand. Educating the community and serving as liaison to partners is of prime importance as part of the ongoing effort to develop the area as a sustainable destination. Staff also assists in fostering new product by overseeing the tourism product development funding process.

This fiscal year, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is investing \$3 million—50 percent of its budget—in net advertising, which translates into significant increases in both TV and digital reach. Several non-traditional media tactics along with a robust public relations and social media effort will round out the integrated marketing plan this year.

Telling the Asheville story through a series of new videos and content will be at the heart of the strategies and tactics. Collectively, the ad agencies and Asheville CVB staff are basing its efforts on the idea of "Planned Serendipity," or the idea of potential visitors encountering or stumbling upon Asheville area destination information in a way that seems natural, but was actually intentional.

1. **2.6 million** visits to ExploreAsheville.com, which was redesigned and launched in November 2011.
2. **100+** editorial placements earned through leverage of buzz surrounding *The Hunger Games*.
3. **23,000** new Facebook fans, more than doubling the previous number and representing a significant increase in social engagement.
4. Reached **11 million** households in traditional advertising.

**FY 11/12**  
by the  
**Numbers**



Dodie Stephens and Cat Kessler staff one of three CVB tables at a recent quarterly Chamber Orientation & Open House to educate members about the BCTDA's program of work and encourage participation on CVB committees.



**Marla Tambellini**  
Assistant Vice President  
Deputy Executive Director  
828.258.6138  
[mtambellini@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:mtambellini@ExploreAsheville.com)

- BCTDA marketing efforts and strategy
- Marketing team leader



**Dodie Stephens**  
Senior Communications Manager  
828.257.4959  
[dstephens@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:dstephens@ExploreAsheville.com)

- Media relations/PR efforts
- Messaging strategies for media and social tactics



**Cate Marvill**  
Senior Project Manager  
828.210.2724  
[cmarvill@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:cmarvill@ExploreAsheville.com)

- Staff liaison to TPDF committee
- Official Asheville Travel Guide
- Local awareness programs/community relations



**Derek Misler**  
Web Manager  
828.232.2243  
[dmisler@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:dmisler@ExploreAsheville.com)

- ExploreAsheville.com management and listings
- Digital design and programming



**Del Holston**  
Online Relations Manager  
828.258.6125  
[dholston@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:dholston@ExploreAsheville.com)

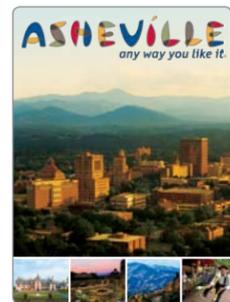
- Social media efforts
- Blogger relations



**Cat Kessler**  
Marketing & PR Assistant  
828.258.6135  
[ckessler@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:ckessler@ExploreAsheville.com)

- Journalist visits/PR efforts
- Photography/Video library
- Administrative projects

To Be Announced: Digital Analyst



300,000 copies of the 2012 Official Asheville Travel Guide will be distributed as the primary fulfillment piece for the Asheville CVB.

# Advertising

## Strategies & Tactics

The 2012-13 advertising plan revolves around creating an invitation for travelers living within driving distance of Asheville to come visit and experience all that Asheville has to offer. The invitation to travelers will be made through an integrated digital and traditional campaign that leverages the key traffic drivers for Asheville as a reason to visit.

### Target media campaigns to key markets to accommodate travelers' preference for destinations closer to home:

- Focus on four key markets within driving distance of the Asheville area:
  1. Charlotte
  2. Atlanta
  3. Greensboro
  4. Raleigh
- Use cost-effective outlets that cover wider geographies and extend geographic reach.

### Target media campaigns to key audiences based on the primary travelers, as identified through market research:

- Focus on core target audience, defined as women ages 35-64, with a household income of \$100K+. This core audience has been identified as the primary traveler, or the travel decision maker for couples and families traveling to the Asheville area.
- Target all audiences who fit the psychographic profile of a Traveler, defined as: *People to whom travel is essential, who view travel as an investment in their development, who look to travel as more about enrichment than entertainment, who have a fearless curiosity about new experiences.*

### Schedule traditional and digital media efforts during time periods when they have the best chance of influencing travel plans:

- Execute efforts during the early spring travel planning season, which is when many travelers are making their plans for late spring/summer travel.
- Execute efforts during the late summer/early fall to encourage shoulder season visitation and plant the idea for fall weekend getaways.
- Leverage digital media retargeting efforts and search engine keyword marketing to provide support throughout the year, bridging these two primary media windows.

### Advertising Agency Contacts

For traditional media inquiries (print/TV/radio), contact:

Luckie & Company | Whitney Massey  
205.877.9772 | [whitney.massey@luckie.com](mailto:whitney.massey@luckie.com)

For interactive and web-based inquiries, contact:

Nurun | Dena Martin | 404.591.1639 | [dena.martin@nurun.com](mailto:dena.martin@nurun.com)

### Plan and execute three primary consumer campaigns:

- **Asheville's Calling** – The primary campaign for this fiscal year focuses on extending an invitation to travelers to visit Asheville, and in particular, highlights how the Asheville experience can provide a refuge from the humdrum experiences of day-to-day life.
- **Winter Campaign** – This campaign will focus on encouraging travel to Asheville for a romantic getaway during the off-peak, late winter season.
- **Foodtopian Society Campaign** – This campaign is a continuation of the existing Foodtopian effort, and will continue to highlight the culinary culture of Asheville, inviting travelers for whom good food is a travel consideration. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to place Asheville in the top tier of U.S. destinations for culinary travelers. FY 2012-13 will include new creative production and tactics to reinvigorate this campaign.

### Continue two niche campaigns:

- Destination weddings campaign
- Group Sales "Great Place to Visit/Great Place to Meet" campaign





# Public Relations

## Strategies & Tactics

Continue a proactive media outreach program to generate earned media with an emphasis on relationship-building and targeting to ensure the brand message is conveyed in editorial, broadcast and online placements:

- Create customized pitches aimed at journalists, bloggers, cable network producers and online editors. Identify and respond to pitch opportunities generated through outside sources.
- Cultivate new and existing media relationships through meaningful one-on-one connections including media tours, targeted pitches, networking events and site visit facilitation.
- Encourage journalists on assignment to expand and infuse stories with brand messages as well as seasonal and niche story ideas. Promote inclusion of call-to-action, conversion-oriented elements including online resources, campaign-specific URLs, travel packages and events.
- Continue to leverage and optimize multimedia news releases as a proactive tool for inspiring media coverage. Develop tracking methodology to better assess reach and pick-up.
- Leverage popular fall foliage season to generate maximum media exposure.
- Identify packages, programs or innovative ideas for creating buzz through integrated marketing efforts.
- Broaden use of social media as an integrated tool for media outreach, relationship development and targeted pitching.
- Integrate targeted keywords into traditional and online PR efforts to align with SEO efforts.

Target emerging and existing niche markets, especially culinary, budget, the arts and international travel, while maintaining emphasis on primary travel motivators (i.e. the mountains, Biltmore):

- Leverage media industry trends (i.e. the freelance writer boom) and the growing international/UK travel marketplace as opportunities for coverage and relationship-building.
- Expand opportunities with niche media, especially culinary, through dynamic, character-focused content.
- Update and develop media materials and pitch ideas for specific content areas to generate media placements.

Educate the region about the benefits of tourism to maintain support of marketing efforts:

- Continue to tell the story of the local value of tourism through awareness campaigns and media relations that include: continued media outreach surrounding National Tourism Week, cultivation of local media relationships and continued development of AshevilleCVB.com to ensure communication.

## 2012-13 Objective

Generate at least 290 significant media placements.

- Utilize BCTDA.org as a forum for background and positioning statements on key issues.
- Continue to develop the PR/Marketing committee as a forum to educate, update and share key messages with tourism partners and fellow communicators.

Complement sales efforts through media relations:

- Target trade publications for possible editorial.
- Maintain focus for general coverage on key markets also targeted by the CVB's sales team.
- Respond to media leads from select trade publications seeking input and story ideas.
- Build relationships with trade magazine editors during media trips.

Measure the effectiveness of existing and new projects:

- Continue to track effectiveness of media relations efforts and examine the value of specific projects by utilizing a clip service, tracking contacts, fulfilling email requests and assessing online and broadcast placements.
- Identify and evaluate emerging tools to measure the value and reach of online media relations efforts and social media placements.
- Use Google Analytics to monitor effectiveness of driving traffic to the website through public relations campaigns and adjust tactics accordingly.



In April 2012, the Asheville CVB and the NC state tourism office hosted CBS This Morning and correspondent Lee Woodruff for a story showcasing American moonshine. Troy Ball of Troy & Sons Distillery was interviewed for the segment, which was viewed by more than 2.5 million people nationwide.

# Research

## Strategies & Tactics

Effectively market the Asheville area, understanding the visitor through research:

- Provide updated visitor profile data for the Asheville area.
- Use insights gained from updated segmentation study to better understand visitors' and potential visitors' propensity for travel to the area, primary drivers and affinity for the destination.
- Incorporate insights gained from Web analysis and online data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the travelers' desires and needs as they search for destination information.
- Use research as part of the creative messaging process to ensure wide appeal to targeted audience.
- Use Internet research shareware on an as-needed basis to conduct input research utilizing the e-newsletter database.

Follow an integrated research approach to ensure information-driven decision making on marketing, advertising and sales messages, as well as destination management issues:

- Contract with Smith Travel Research for weekly geographical reports for evaluation of group and event impact on hotel compression within the Asheville area.
- Provide research updates to staff and tourism community through the AshevilleCVB.com website.
- Stay abreast of cultural and industry trends.
- Evaluate measurement of all marketing efforts, including social media.

Calculate economic impact in order to measure the contributions of the tourism industry:

- Contract with Smith Travel Research for historical overview of hotel statistics including occupancy, average daily rate (ADR) and competitive standing.
- Maintain relationships with county officials who assist in providing key tax data that is used in various tourism economic impact reports.
- Use Internet research shareware to survey industry partners and community on an as-needed basis.

Utilize public and private research resources and partnerships to maximize resources:

- Partner with regional organizations to expand knowledge of the Asheville visitor (i.e., shared zip code research from Biltmore and research information through the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development).

## Asheville Ranked & Rated

Each year, Asheville ranks among top cities nationwide in polls and media roundups.

Here are some of the ways Asheville stacks up:

- *Good Morning America* featured Asheville as one of the **Most Beautiful Places in America**, and the destination came in third in a national poll.
- The international travel website *TripAdvisor.com* named Asheville one of its **15 Destinations on the Rise**.
- Asheville also came in at #10 in *TripAdvisor.com*'s Travelers Choice Awards for **top food and wine destinations in the U.S.**



- *Outside* magazine and *American Rivers* named Asheville among **America's Best River Towns**.
- Asheville maintained its **Beer City USA** title, tying with Grand Rapids, Mich., in the fourth year of an online poll posted on *Examiner.com*.
- *Fodors.com* included Asheville in its list of **"21 Places We're Going in 2011."**
- *Yoga Journal* named Asheville as one of **"10 Fantastically Yoga-Friendly Towns"** in its August 2011 issue, citing the city's 12 yoga studios and wealth of alternative healing practitioners.
- Popular Asheville hotels, including The Grove Park Inn, Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville and Inn on Biltmore, consistently rank **among the world's top accommodations** in publications such as *Travel + Leisure* and *Condé Nast Traveler*.
- *US News & World Report* has deemed Asheville one of **"America's Best Affordable Places to Retire."**
- *Livability.com* lists Asheville as one of their **"10 Most Surprisingly Vibrant Food Cities."**
- *DogFriendly.com* included Asheville in its list **"Top 10 Dog-Friendly Resort Regions."**



# Online Relations & Social Outreach

## Strategies & Tactics

Use key social media tools to drive awareness and create engagement with traveling consumers:

- Use various social media channels and tools to complement specific promotions, increase organic traffic, perpetuate destination awareness and expand the reach of our marketing message.
- Utilize Facebook to keep Asheville top-of-mind for online fans; extend our reach with sharable content; engage fans and ultimately drive traffic to ExploreAsheville.com.
- Create Facebook-only promotions via Offerpop to execute special giveaways designed to increase our fan base and incentivize followers to share our marketing messages.
- Manage and monitor conversations about Asheville and proactively seek ways to engage with travelers and potential travelers in the Twitter community.
- Build the Asheville area's presence in other key social channels such as YouTube, Google+ and Pinterest.
- Collaborate with other key partners online to complement and extend tourism messages in social spheres.
- Cross-pollinate social channels to maximize engagement.
- Evaluate other emerging social tools and technologies to further expand Asheville's presence.



The BCTDA's online media strategy was responsible for increasing Asheville's Facebook "Likes" more than 159% in FY 2011-12.

Measure the effectiveness of specific social campaigns and refine strategies as indicated:

- Use Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Hootsuite, Tube Mogul and other tools to measure social buzz and insights that can be integrated into a digital dashboard.
- Use insights to further develop campaigns or create new actionable items to help advance business objective.
- Refer fans and users of social media sites to key landing pages on ExploreAsheville.com to gauge effectiveness of campaigns.

## 2012-13 Objective

Increase the number of Facebook "likes" to 75,000 and generate 225,000 YouTube video views.

- Measure viral impact of shared content to help drive strategy for future efforts.

Build relationships with influential bloggers that result in publicity for Asheville:

- Build brand ambassadors by interacting with bloggers visiting Asheville either on assignment or for blogger conferences and events.
- Create a database that ranks blogger influence and reach using resource tools such as Alexa, Klout, QuantCast and Technorati.
- Utilize an existing base of local bloggers to help promote Asheville's messaging out of market.
- Organize blogger luncheons to coincide with our drive market media missions.

Use the Asheville Travel Blog (a top feeder of new visitors to ExploreAsheville.com) to increase website visits and search engine optimization:

- Improve the aesthetics of the Asheville Travel Blog to align with the new ExploreAsheville.com and provide an enhanced user experience.
- Post four stories each week to provide a consistent, relevant and authoritative voice for the Asheville area brand.
- Link back to various pages on ExploreAsheville.com multiple times within the blog post to encourage website visitation.
- Promote area partner news, events and deals that add value to blog readers.
- Distribute blog posts via social media tools for further engagement and greater visitation to ExploreAsheville.com.



The CVB's marketing team promoted the release of the buzzed-about Hunger Games film and posted a video of red carpet interviews from the local premier.

# Web Development & Design

## Strategies & Tactics

Maintain expanded and upgraded version of ExploreAsheville.com:

- Effectively use and promote new dynamic widgets to encourage more user interface and engagement in the site.
- Continue to promote new and improved partner interface and educate partners on information upload opportunities and reports.
- Monitor traffic to the site and use Google Analytics to further tweak and develop content so as to increase page views, extend time on site, gauge interaction and decrease bounce rate.

Maintain and develop key content areas on the site:

- Refresh home page content and imagery seasonally.
- Update web pages to complement seasonal promotions, in particular the fall foliage season, as well as specific marketing promotions.
- Evaluate options that could lead to more robust calendar of events listings.
- Maintain and update partner database.

Leverage targeted email newsletters and viral marketing opportunities:

- Explore opportunities to increase e-newsletter subscriber database and open and click-through rates.
- Experiment with development of niche content for e-newsletters aimed at segmented audiences.
- Maintain a year-round effort to promote package deals and opportunities through the website.

Maximize traffic to the website through online efforts including search engine optimization and links strategy that complement other marketing efforts aimed at driving Web traffic:

- Employ search optimization tactics and findings from Google Analytics, as well as Google AdWords, in developing new content pages, seasonal updates and microsites. Continue to monitor organic search engine placement and maintain positioning.
- Incorporate keyword strategy in all messaging to assist in driving traffic to websites.
- Seek link opportunities on large external sites that could enhance ExploreAsheville.com in search engine standings.

## 2012-13 Objective

Increase traffic to ExploreAsheville.com to more than 3 million annual site visits.

Develop a robust metrics and analysis plan to effectively evaluate marketing efforts and create actionable insights that drive future programs and projects, ensuring the strongest return on investment:

- Use data from the digital dashboard and monthly digital index to inform efforts and campaigns throughout the year.
- Expand use of current analytic tools and evaluate additional needs and resources that will yield critical metrics.

Utilize the Web to increase communication with industry partners and provide general tourism business information:

- Expand partner resources and data available on AshevilleCVB.com.
- Further develop BCTDA.org for information about the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, its efforts and local impact and evaluate ways that it can be more fully integrated into communication and education efforts locally.

Expand and maintain Asheville brand across all channels:

- Update design of blog, newsletters, digital advertisements, social media channels and printed collateral.
- Evaluate logo usage and establish guidelines for expanded needs.



# Visitor Services Department

Often the first stop for travelers, the Asheville Visitor Center offers a wide array of services to approximately 200,000 visitors welcomed throughout the year. Knowledgeable volunteers staff the Asheville Visitor Center and Downtown Pack Square Pavilion information desks to offer insider advice and ensure that each visitor begins living the brand as soon as he or she walks through the door.

For guests looking for tasty restaurants, comfortable rooms and exhilarating attractions, trained volunteers and an on-site concierge serve as primary touch points. A light-board allows for visual representation of accommodations, tours, attractions and restaurants in the area. Phones are also available to encourage visitors to call immediately to directly book reservations.

Sponsorship opportunities for Chamber members are located throughout the Asheville Visitor Center to ensure that member businesses are prominently showcased to our visitors.

The Montford Tailgate Market is located in the Chamber parking lot every Wednesday, from 2–6 p.m. May through November, for guests to enjoy local produce, crafts, music and more.

Travelers in downtown now have the opportunity to gather Asheville area information at the new Pack Square Park Pavilion, where they will be greeted by trained, knowledgeable volunteers.

Visitor services staff also offer the option of chatting with a live person from ExploreAsheville.com. This enables potential visitors to plan a visit, ask questions and begin the first steps of their Asheville experience.

## Chamber Concierge Services

The Chamber's concierge services program, managed by Elaine Rich, provides visitors with convenient trip planning and personalized service. Chamber member accommodations are welcome to register for the program. All Chamber member properties are visited by the concierge, regardless of whether or not they choose to participate, to ensure accurate promotion of the properties' amenities and offerings.

The concierge works to personalize each guest's experience by ensuring that accommodation recommendations match the style and preference desired. Extended vacations lasting as long as two weeks have been booked through the program.

**2012-13 Objective**  
Increase walk-in, phone and email room night bookings by 10%.



**Tom Roberson**  
Director of Visitor Services  
828.258.6103  
[troberson@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:troberson@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Manages the Asheville Visitor Center  
• Coordinates/trains volunteers  
• Delivers on Brand Promise



**Mary Ramsey**  
Retail Manager  
828.210.2721 office  
828.210.2726 The Asheville Shop  
[mramsey@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:mramsey@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Manages The Asheville Shop and online store  
• Local product merchandising



**Charlie Reed**  
Information Specialist  
828.258.6109  
[creed@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:creed@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Responds to visitor inquiries  
• ExploreAsheville.com live chat  
• Relocation services



**Elaine Rich**  
Concierge  
828.210.2720  
[erich@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:erich@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Books hotel rooms for visitors  
• Vacation planning/reservations  
• Manages "Deal of the Day" program

## The Asheville Shop

The Asheville Shop is the only gift shop that sells merchandise sporting the Chamber logo and the Asheville destination brand logo. It's also home to a wide assortment of items authentic to the Western North Carolina region including pottery, food items, soaps, jewelry, music and traditional souvenir items. Tickets for many Asheville attractions and tours are also sold through the Asheville Shop. New in 2012-13, the Asheville Shop has items for sale through ExploreAsheville.com. The online store brings Asheville brand memorabilia right to your fingertips.

## Strategies & Tactics

Continually improve the types of services offered to Asheville Visitor Center guests:

- Manage all visitor-related activities in the Asheville Visitor Center including the accommodations concierge service, relocation services and retail sales.
- Provide trained, knowledgeable volunteers and staff to relay information to visitors.
- Distribute relocation information to those who are considering moving to the area.

Utilize Asheville Visitor Center services to increase the length of stay of visitors in the Asheville area:

- Utilize the concierge service to promote longer overnight stays in Asheville.
- Create awareness of the Asheville area brand and improve the Asheville experience for visitors.
- Use the @AshevilleDeals Twitter account to spread news of the availability of deals in the Asheville area.
- Develop the volunteer program with training sessions, FAM trips and appreciation receptions.
- Increase involvement in community issues that ultimately affect visitors by participating in community forums.
- Provide enhanced Asheville destination branded logo items for the Asheville Shop.

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**Numbers**

1. A record **199,132** people came to the Visitor Center.
2. The concierge booked **1,012** rooms and provided **6,813** accommodation referrals through email, phone and walk-ins.
3. **15** new volunteers were trained to help staff the visitor information desk at the Pack Square Park Pavilion.



The Asheville Shop now has an online store, and items can be shipped to visitors before or after their visits.



Two trolley tour companies give visitors a narrated overview of the city with on/off options to explore various locations through the area. Asheville Historic Trolley Tours (white) and GrayLine Trolley Tours (red) have ticket stations in the Asheville Visitor Center and operate seven days a week, excluding winter and major holidays.



Nearly 200,000 people enter the visitor center every year to get maps, brochures and insider information on Asheville area accommodations, dining, attractions, outdoor activities, shopping and more.



The Concierge Service provides our guests the convenience of booking their accommodations and attractions from the visitor center.



More than 75 volunteers staff the information desks at the Asheville Visitor Center and Pack Square Park, providing quality information to visitors.



Partnerships with Biltmore, Asheville Historic Trolley Tours, GrayLine Trolley Tours and Moving Sidewalk (Segway) Tours enable our visitors to purchase tickets hassle-free in the visitor center while picking up free regional and state maps, Official Asheville Travel Guides and brochures.



The Asheville Shop is a treasure trove of locally made items and Asheville memorabilia and is open seven days a week excluding major holidays.

# Group Sales & Services Department

The CVB's mission through the group sales and services department is to increase revenues for Asheville's hospitality industry and, subsequently, tax dollars to the area through booking meetings, conventions, sporting events and motorcoach groups. While the sales and services team has two unique functions, these functions are connected. The sales team attracts planners and buyers to the area using a variety of methods including direct sales efforts, sales trips, site inspections, industry trade shows and various targeted marketing. Enhancing the planners' and participants' experience through exceptional customer service and knowledge of local resources is the responsibility of the services department.

An aggressive program of work in the 2012-13 fiscal year will focus on bringing more qualified group leads and buyers to Asheville. Some key initiatives to achieve this are: the development of the Mid-Atlantic and Washington, D.C. markets, expanded motorcoach initiatives, the hosting of concept events in key markets to meeting planners and the active pursuit of the sports market. Strategic partnerships will be paramount as we introduce the new *Meet Local* program and encourage community partners to help market Asheville to the organizations they are members of.

As we move forward the team is united in its efforts to connect groups to the dynamic Asheville brand, while at the same time bringing unexpected levels of enthusiasm and service to our clients and strategic partners.

At April's Group Business Development Team (GBDT) meeting, the Group Sales department featured six nationally accredited speakers, all based in Asheville.



In November 2011, Asheville hosted, along with Visit Charlotte, five motorcoach tour operators for holiday experiences to build out group tour itineraries.



**Dianna Pierce**  
Assistant Vice President & Director  
Group Sales & Services  
828.258.6108  
[dpierce@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:dpierce@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Sales team leader  
• City-wides & international independent travel



**Desiree Monstrola**  
Senior Sales Manager  
828.258.6133  
[dmonstrola@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:dmonstrola@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Sporting events  
• All markets in the Southeast and Texas



**Kinsay Sand**  
Sales Manager  
828.258.6121  
[ksand@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:ksand@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• All markets in N.C., S.C., Ga. and Tenn.



**Shawn Boone**  
Sales Manager  
828.258.6105  
[sboone@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:sboone@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• All markets in the Mid-Atlantic region and Washington, D.C.



**Heather Backer**  
Tourism Sales Manager  
828.258.6139  
[hbacker@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:hbacker@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Southeast AAA clubs & organizations  
• Domestic & international motorcoach



**Carli Adams**  
Service Manager  
828.258.6106  
[cadams@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:cadams@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Meetings & Conventions servicing  
• Wedding Guide



**Helena Smuckler**  
Sales & Service Coordinator  
828.258.6110  
[hsmuckler@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:hsmuckler@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Wedding market  
• Administrative support



**Lauren Harris**  
Administrative Assistant  
828.258.6102  
[lharris@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:lharris@ExploreAsheville.com)  
• Motorcoach & AAA servicing  
• ExploreAsheville events calendar  
• Package promotions

# Tourism, Group Tour & International

The tourism program of work stretches across multiple markets including leisure, group and international travel. Of these, motorcoach will be the largest area of focus in the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Established programs aimed at increasing overnight visitation from Southeast-based AAA clubs will continue. The department will focus on adding two additional clubs to the AAA destination training webinar program in 2012-13.

Motorcoach efforts will be enhanced with the addition of key marketplaces such as the National Tour Association and the North Carolina/Virginia Joint Motorcoach marketplace. Outreach will also include direct sales, FAMs and participation in statewide sales missions. The department is taking a lead role in coordinating the area's industry partners to take full advantage of the 2013 American Bus Association's Annual Marketplace in Charlotte, N.C. As part of this initiative the area will host a pre-convention FAM in Asheville and will also have a destination booth on the floor of the market.

Local, state and regional partnerships will be key as Asheville seeks to capture more international business for the area.

1. **234** AAA travel counselors participated in Explore Asheville! Destination Training webinars from N.C., S.C., Ga., Fla., Ohio, Tenn., Ala, W.Va. and Ky.
2. Met and interacted with **241** tour operators and travel influencers during five sales missions and trade shows.
3. **60** motorcoach groups were serviced.



## 2012-13 Tourism Objective

Expand knowledge of the Asheville area visitor experience among key Southeast leisure travel influencers.

## Tourism Promotions Strategies & Tactics

Expand knowledge of the area among Southeast AAA branch offices and call centers:

- Host a AAA South FAM targeting Nashville-based offices.
- Add two AAA clubs to the webinar training program.
- Conduct AAA Explore Asheville! Destination Training special events in key markets.
- Participate in the Blue Ridge Parkway Association's AAA FAM and AAA Carolinas Super Bowl of Knowledge.

## 2012-13 Group Tour Objective

Produce 3,200 group tour room nights, generate 125 sales leads and service 70 groups.

## Group Tour Strategies & Tactics

Expand motorcoach opportunities through new sources of business and maintain tour operator relationships:

- Participate in the N.C. Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development (NCDTFSD) sales mission to Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York.
- Attend North Carolina Motorcoach Association (NCMA) Marketplace, American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace, National Tour Association (NTA) Travel Exchange, BankTravel Conference and Travel South Showcase.
- Host an ABA post-FAM in January and a regional FAM partnering with Pigeon Forge in the Spring.

Enhance the motorcoach section of [ExploreAsheville.com](http://ExploreAsheville.com):

- Continue outreach efforts using social media, e-newsletters and video.
- Provide new itineraries to assist with creation of new group tour options.

Continue to grow motorcoach group service program:

- Develop an Asheville Visitor Center welcome program; offer complimentary Asheville amenity items.

## 2012-13 International Objective

Participate in cost-effective marketing programs to elevate the Asheville area brand with key international buyers.

## International Strategies & Tactics

Pursue new international opportunities to expand Asheville's current offerings:

- Attend TravelSouth International Showcase in Atlanta.
- Partner with TravelSouth and NCDTFSD in FAM opportunities to bring buyers to Asheville following the TravelSouth International Showcase.
- Attend International POW WOW to further build brand identity.



# Group Servicing

## 2012-13 Objective

Increase the number of groups utilizing CVB Convention Services to 400.

The convention service department is responsible for enhancing the meeting planner and attendee experience by offering exceptional customer service, knowledge of local resources and creative services that make a planner's job easier. The department acts as a marketing partner helping meeting planners to present Asheville to potential attendees and helps educate planners about the destination. With an additional focus on enhancing the Asheville experience for meeting attendees, connecting a group with the CVB service department can lead to pre- and post-event stays, return visits with family and friends and increased word-of-mouth publicity. The service department also helps to generate future sales leads and assists in marketing the Asheville area as a meeting destination.

1. **374** meeting and convention groups utilized convention services, a department record.
2. **6** new services were added to convention services offerings, including a promotional video, conference logo templates and promotional brochures and displays to help increase attendance.

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by the  
Numbers

The service department is an active listener to the needs of planners and works to continually evolve service offerings to meet industry-wide standards and help increase attendance. The department also works to meet the needs of local hotel sales managers offering assistance to their meeting planner clients.



To celebrate the Event Service Professionals Association's Second Annual National Celebrate Services Day, Carli Adams, ESPA member and the CVB's convention services manager, hosted industry partner servicing teams for lunch and for the presentation of an educational webinar. Properties represented included: Asheville Renaissance Hotel, Biltmore Farms Hotels, Biltmore Estate, Comfort Suites of Asheville, Crowne Plaza Tennis & Golf Resort and The Grove Park Inn.

The service department has the opportunity to help integrate many exceptional local resources into a meeting and to help planners create an authentic, memorable experience while making a positive impact on the local community. In the upcoming year, a primary focus will be on increasing knowledge of local services, activities and opportunities to connect groups with local resources and businesses.

## Strategies & Tactics

Increase groups serviced by 10% (to reach a new record number of 400 groups serviced):

- With this record goal and with the addition of a third sales manager, focus on streamlining service requests/processes and optimum use of time and resources.
- Continue to foster and grow relationships with hotels sales managers and convention service managers to increase the number of groups utilizing CVB services.

Prioritize service as a sales connector and lead generator, and assist in marketing efforts:

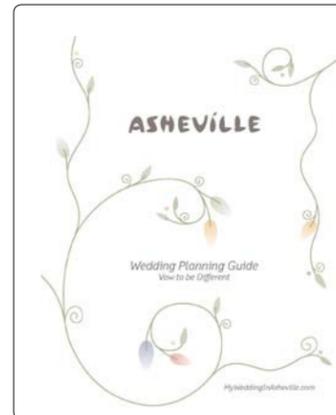
- Update post-event survey and make direct contact with planners after meetings to foster relationship and keep Asheville top of mind.
- Participate in industry discussions on LinkedIn or other online meeting resources where meeting planners are the audience.
- Market Asheville as a meeting destination to local contacts through *Meet Local* program.

Enhance meeting marketing services:

- Create an additional promotional video that will be used to encourage attendance to Asheville events.
- Add an additional online meeting marketing tool available on ExploreAsheville.com.

Local Love:

- Develop stronger partnerships with local organizations interested in offering opportunities to enhance a group's visit.
- Expand knowledge of and promote "voluntourism" opportunities for visiting groups.
- Expand activity list and suggestions to incorporate out-of-the-ordinary ideas and suggestions that showcase the uniqueness of Asheville.
- Update printed Asheville Wedding Planning Guide.



The CVB's complimentary wedding planning guide showcases Asheville as a premiere destination wedding location and lists area venues and vendors. It is available by request at MyWeddingInAsheville.com.

# Tourism Industry Partner Opportunities

## Group Business Development Team (GBDT)

Industry partners interested in learning more about the meetings market for Asheville are encouraged to attend GBDT meetings, held four times a year beginning in September. Meetings focus on the year-to-date accomplishments of the task forces and CVB project updates. Involvement can increase business contacts with meeting planners and other tourism entities.

[hsmuckler@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:hsmuckler@ExploreAsheville.com)

2012-13 GBDT Chair: Brittany Beckwith | The Grove Park Inn

## Tour & Travel Development Committee (TTDC)

TTDC meetings are held quarterly and focus on task force activities and CVB projects affecting the group tour, motorcoach and leisure markets. Meetings begin with networking and include an educational component. Anyone interested in the motorcoach or AAA auto travel markets are encouraged to attend.

[hbacker@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:hbacker@ExploreAsheville.com)

2012-13 TTDC Chair: Jeff Graack | Chimney Rock State Park

## Marketing & Public Relations Committee (M&PR)

M&PR committee meetings are attended quarterly by those who fulfill marketing and PR roles in their respective organizations. Meetings provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, networking and educational opportunities, as well as an opportunity to discuss trends and stay informed regarding the media relations activities of the CVB, including semi-annual media tours.

[ckessler@ExploreAsheville.com](mailto:ckessler@ExploreAsheville.com)

2012-13 M&PR Chair: K.C. Cronin | The Grove Park Inn

## Listings on ExploreAsheville.com

The Asheville CVB recently unveiled an updated ExploreAsheville.com, the Asheville area's official tourism website, which received more than 2.6 million hits in FY 2011-12! Please ensure your listing is accurate and up-to-date. All industry partners should have a user name and password. If not, one can be generated for you in accordance with BCTDA web policies.

## Official Asheville Travel Guide Advertising

The BCTDA publishes the *Official Asheville Travel Guide* as a planning and decision-making resource for leisure travel consumers. Any tourism-related business that meets eligibility requirements for listing inclusion on ExploreAsheville.com can purchase a display advertisement in the guide.

## Calendar of Events on ExploreAsheville.com

Have your tourism event showcased on the ExploreAsheville.com events calendar. Submissions must be open to the public, visitor-appropriate and not promote out-of-county accommodations.

## Package Promotions

The CVB staff can help promote your business when you submit your complete package(s) to ExploreAsheville.com, consisting of a Buncombe County occupancy tax-collecting accommodation paired with local attractions, restaurants, services, and/or retail shops for a single advertised price.

## Wedding Vendors

Buncombe County wedding vendors may be included in the wedding section of ExploreAsheville.com and in the CVB's printed wedding guide.

## Media Tours, FAMs, Trade Shows

The CVB often teams up with partners to participate in trade shows, tours, events and site visits to promote the Asheville area to media representatives, bloggers, meeting planners, tour operators and more. Check out the calendar of events on pages 30-31 and/or contact the CVB with questions.

## Meet Local Initiative

Show off your hometown and make an impact on the local business community by helping us bring more conventions and meetings to Asheville. If you are a member of a professional association, sports league, alumni association or hobby enthusiast group that plans events, please connect us to the decision makers within your organization. We have a comprehensive view of Asheville as a meeting destination and extensive resources, and our services are FREE!

## Meeting Planner Resources

Let us know if you are a business or individual offering group tours, team building activities, event space, speakers or other services for large conference groups.

## Industry Partner Database

The Asheville CVB sends out periodic emails regarding industry updates, news, invitations, press releases and other bulletins of interest to tourism businesses. Buncombe County occupancy tax collecting properties and local tourism entities can contact us to be added to the subscriber list.

## Annual BCTDA/CVB Holiday Open House

Come eat and mingle with tourism colleagues and visitor center volunteers at this popular event, scheduled Thursday, November 29, 2012, at the Chamber, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Local tourism partners bring appetizers and desserts to this potluck evening.

## Quarterly Informal Industry Socials

Meet and mingle with other tourism industry partners and CVB staff as we gather at a local venue on a quarterly basis. No agenda, no PowerPoints, no speakers!

## BCTDA Annual Plan Presentation

The CVB team presents the BCTDA's Annual Plan to the industry each August, sharing the new fiscal year's program of work. Representatives from the BCTDA's advertising agencies are also on hand to present the planned traditional, digital, and group sales advertising plans, as well as any new creative that has been developed.

## Press Release Emails

The CVB would love to publicize your news, events and announcements—both to visitors and to the media. Please keep us up-to-date on all of your newsworthy happenings.

## Co-Op Advertising

The BCTDA offers limited cooperative advertising opportunities to Asheville area tourism entities.

## Chamber Membership

Membership with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce offers numerous opportunities to increase exposure for your business, including placing brochures in the visitor center for pick-up by nearly 200,000 annual visitors.

# 2012-13 Industry Calendar

Date	Event	Location
July 16-18, 2012	Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) Annual Convention	Seattle, WA
July 20, 2012	Combined CVB Committees' End of Year Service Project	Asheville, NC
July 25, 2012	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
July 26-27, 2012	Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC) Meeting	Asheville, NC
July 29-Aug 3, 2012	Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Marketing College	Dahlonega, GA
Aug. 11-14, 2012	American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Meeting	Dallas, TX
Aug. 21, 2012	BCTDA FY 2012-13 Annual Plan Presentation	Asheville Chamber
Aug. 21, 2012	Meet & Greet with Stephanie Brown, New CVB Executive Director	Asheville Chamber
Aug. 22, 2012	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Aug. 26-28, 2012	U.S. Travel Association's Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO)	Boston, MA
September 2012	Fall Media Tour	Atlanta & Chattanooga
Sept. 5-6, 2012	Blue Ridge Parkway Association Fall Meeting	Boone, NC
Sept. 6, 2012	Tour & Travel Development Committee (TTDC) & Group Business Development Team (GBDT) Joint Meeting	Asheville, NC
Sept. 7, 2012	NC Sports Association Quarterly Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Sept. 7-9, 2012	AAA Explore Asheville! Nashville FAM	Asheville, NC
Sept. 13-16, 2012	NC Motorcoach Association Market Place with VA Motorcoach Association	Winston Salem, NC
Sept. 18, 2012	TPDF Public Information Forum for Potential Applicants	Asheville Chamber
Sept. 19, 2012	Georgia Society of Association Executives (GSAE) September Luncheon	Atlanta, GA
Sept. 21, 2012	Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) Membership Luncheon	Durham, NC
Sept. 23-27, 2012	NC Domestic Sales Mission	PA, NJ, NY
Sept. 26, 2012	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Sept. 26-28, 2012	Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC) Tourism Leadership Conference	Raleigh, NC
October 2012	Marketing & PR Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Oct. 31, 2012	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Oct. 31-Nov. 2, 2012	Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Fall/Annual Meeting	Virginia Beach, VA
Nov. 2, 2012	Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) Luncheon	Research Triangle Park, NC
Nov. 14, 2012	Georgia Society of Association Executives (GSAE) Luncheon & Tradeshow	Atlanta, GA
Nov. 15-17, 2012	Alliance Nursing Organization Annual Meeting & Tradeshow	Nashville, TN
Nov. 16-18, 2012	AAA Carolina's Superbowl of Knowledge	Greensboro, NC
Nov. 26-29, 2012	Travel South International Showcase	Atlanta, GA
Nov. 28, 2012	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Nov. 29, 2012	Annual BCTDA/CVB Holiday Potluck Open House (4:30 to 6:30 p.m.)	Asheville Chamber
Nov. 29-Dec. 1, 2012	Travel South International Showcase FAM	Asheville, NC
December 2012	NC Sports Association Quarterly Meeting	TBA
Dec. 6, 2012	Group Business Development Team (GBDT) Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 12, 2012	Georgia Society of Association Executives (GSAE) Holiday Luncheon & Auction	Athens, GA
Dec. 13, 2012	Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) Tradeshow/Meeting	Raleigh, NC
Dec. 13, 2012	Tour & Travel Development Committee (TTDC) Meeting	Asheville, NC
Dec. 19, 2012	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
January 2013	Marketing & PR Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
January 2013	New York Media Tour	New York, NY

Date	Event	Location
Jan. 5-9, 2013	American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace 2013	Charlotte, NC
Jan. 9-10, 2013	Blue Ridge Parkway Association Winter Meeting	TBA
Jan. 10-12, 2013	American Bus Association (ABA) Post-FAM	Cherokee, Asheville & Shelby, NC
Jan. 11-13, 2013	Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) 2013 Annual Conference	Orlando, FL
Jan. 20-24, 2013	National Tour Association Travel Exchange	Orlando, FL
Jan. 23, 2013	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Jan. 28, 2013	Application Deadline for 2013 Tourism Product Development Fund Funding Cycle	Asheville Chamber
Jan. 31 - Feb. 1, 2013	Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC) Meeting	Winston Salem, NC
Feb. 1, 2013	Destination Marketing Association Int'l (DMAI) Destinations Showcase	Washington, D.C.
Feb. 5-7, 2013	Bank/Alumni Travel Conference	Virginia Beach, VA
Feb. 17-20, 2013	Travel South Showcase	Little Rock, AR
Feb. 27, 2013	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
Feb. 28, 2013	Group Business Development Team (GBDT) Meeting	Asheville, NC
Spring 2013	Joint City Tour Operator FAM with Pigeon Forge	Pigeon Forge, TN & Asheville, NC
Spring 2013	Spring Media Tour	Knoxville & Nashville, TN
March 2013	NC Sports Association Quarterly Meeting	TBA
Mar. 8-11, 2013	Southern Conference Basketball Tournament	Asheville, NC
Mar. 10-12, 2013	NC Governor's Conference on Tourism	Wilmington, NC
Mar. 14, 2013	Tour & Travel Development Committee (TTDC) Meeting	Asheville, NC
Mar. 18-20, 2013	Southeast Tourism Society (STS) Spring Meeting	TBA
Mar. 21-22, 2013	BCTDA Strategic Planning Retreat	Asheville, NC
Mar. 22, 2013	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville, NC
April 2013	Marketing & PR Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
Apr. 6-14, 2013	AAA Blue Ridge Parkway FAM	Asheville, NC
Apr. 18-19, 2013	Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC) Meeting	Wilmington, NC
Apr. 22-24, 2013	Destination Marketing Association Int'l (DMAI) CEO Forum	Asheville, NC
Apr. 24, 2013	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
May 1-2, 2013	Blue Ridge Parkway Association Annual Meeting	TBA
May 4-12, 2013	National Tourism Week	Nationwide
May 21-25, 2013	Public Relations Society of America Travel & Tourism Conference	Memphis, TN
May 22, 2013	BCTDA Meeting	Asheville Chamber
May 29-31, 2013	Georgia Society of Association Executives (GSAE) Annual Meeting	Augusta, GA
June 2013	NC Sports Association Quarterly Meeting	TBA
June 2013	Marketing & PR Committee Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 2013	Combined CVB Committees' End of Year Service Project	Asheville, NC
June 8-10, 2013	Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC) Annual Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 8-12, 2013	U.S. Travel's International PowWow	Las Vegas, NV
June 2013	Tour & Travel Development Committee (TTDC) and Group Business Development Team (GBDT) Joint Meeting	Asheville, NC
June 14-15, 2013	Southeast Tourism Society (STS) June Board Meeting	Atlanta, GA
June 26, 2013	BCTDA Public Budget Hearing & Meeting	Asheville Chamber

**Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority**  
**Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
**Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center**  
36 Montford Avenue | Asheville, NC 28801

P. 828.258.6101 | F. 828.254.6054

[ExploreAsheville.com](http://ExploreAsheville.com) | [AshevilleCVB.com](http://AshevilleCVB.com) | [BCTDA.org](http://BCTDA.org)

**ASHEVILLE**  
*any way you like it*®



The Asheville CVB is accredited by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) of the Destination Marketing Association International.