



www.exploreasheville.com

**Media Contact: Maria Tambellini**  
Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau  
828.258.6138  
[mtambellini@exploreasheville.com](mailto:mtambellini@exploreasheville.com)

**TOURISM OFFICIALS ANTICIPATE STRONG SPRING & SUMMER TRAVEL SEASON**

*~ Recent trend lines, expanded advertising markets and national projections signal increase ~*

**ASHEVILLE, NC** (April 17, 2014) – The seasonal surge in spring visitation is expected to surpass last year and lead to record lodging demand and the highest spring occupancy since the recession.

Hotel sales and occupancy have steadily trended upward since 2008-2009 when the recession left its mark on tourism nationally as well as in Buncombe County. Total occupancy in Buncombe County continues to grow with 2014 expected to top the record high of 66.8 percent set in 2007, Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) Executive Director Stephanie Brown said. "We expect spring occupancy to grow at 4.4 percent over the previous year," she added, pointing to the strong gains in March as one of the indicators.

March occupancy reached 62.9 percent compared to 60.7 percent in 2013. Weekend occupancy for the month was 81.6 percent, up from 77.3 percent in March 2013. "Weekend business continues to be very strong for Asheville, and room occupancy through April and beyond on Fridays and Saturday is expected to exceed 90 percent," Brown said.

Brown credits a number of variables for fueling increased demand for spring, including an enhanced paid advertising effort that will be seen by a target audience of more than 130 million. The Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau dedicated a record amount – more than \$3.2 million – to advertise the destination during the 2013-2014 fiscal year with approximately half of that dedicated to spring advertising. The CVB launched its TV campaign in March, adding Charleston and Columbia to its core markets of Atlanta, Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro and Winston-Salem. This summer, three additional markets – Knoxville, Tennessee and Nashville – will also be added to the broadcast mix with the aim of reaching beyond the Southeast.

The advertising program is further complemented by proactive media relations efforts which have successfully secured significant recent national coverage, including "Best Spring Trips in 2014" in National Geographic, "Five Free Artsy Things to Do in Artsy Asheville" from the Associated Press, "Six Small Cities with Big Food Scenes" in USA Today, "Spirited Away" in Outside magazine and an article showcasing West Asheville in the New York Times.

Hotel demand, particularly mid-week business, has climbed, in part by growth in group and meeting business. Meetings and groups booked by the Asheville CVB alone resulted in a 23 percent increase in group room nights in March over last year and a 38 percent increase in April. Those figures do not account for additional group business booked directly by individual hotels.

– MORE –

U  
S  
D  
A  
I  
C  
M  
I  
I

The recent rise in consumer confidence released by the Conference Board late March shows renewed optimism by consumers which is often tied to increases in travel spending. Several national travel surveys also point to growing travel demand.

Travel Trends for the Asheville Area:

- March occupancy was 62.9 percent up from 60.7 percent in March 2013 and slightly higher than the average North Carolina occupancy rate of 62.3 percent. Weekend occupancy was 81.6 percent, up from 77.3 percent the previous year and greatly surpassing the North Carolina weekend occupancy average of 69.8 percent.
- Spring occupancy in 2013 was 71.9 percent. With expected growth of 4.4 percent, spring occupancy is projected to be 75 percent in 2014. Total annual occupancy is expected to top the record high of 66.8 percent established in 2007.
- Weekend occupancy during spring 2013 was 89.4 percent. With continued growth, 2014 spring weekend occupancy will average 93.3 percent.
- Hotel demand (the number of rooms sold) during spring 2013 totaled 477,354; an increase of 7 percent over 2012.
- Hotel demand has increased 5.6 percent in the past 12 months. At the current growth rate, demand will top 500,000 rooms this spring.

**National Projections:** *The most recent rise in surveys of traveler sentiment and intentions suggest the U.S. travel industry can expect an increase in demand during the forthcoming spring/summer travel season, according to hotelmarketing.com.*

- The latest travelhorizons™ survey of 1,900 active travelers conducted by MMGY Global shows more than six in ten U.S. adults (64 percent) expect to take at least one leisure trip between now and August 2014 – surpassing the highest percentage previously recorded in the survey. This increase suggests the U.S. travel industry can expect an increase in demand during the forthcoming spring/summer travel season.
- TravelPulse.com reports more buoyant advance bookings with travel agents for spring and summer.
- A leading airline industry association forecasts that air travel will rise to its highest level in six years during March and April, citing rising U.S. household net worth, an improving economy and the affordability of air travel.
- Consumer confidence jumped in March to its highest level since January 2008, according to the Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index.

**Background**

Buncombe County welcomes more than 9 million visitors each year with more than 3.1 million of those guests staying overnight. Visitors spent \$1.5 billion, generating \$2.3 billion in economic impact and supporting nearly 23,000 jobs. Tourism saves each household in Buncombe County \$1,251 each year by generating \$58.6 million in state and local taxes. The Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing organization for the Asheville area. The ACVB is an agent of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, the entity that oversees the use of occupancy tax revenues paid by lodging guests who overnight in Buncombe County.



## Spring Tourism Fast Facts April – June

### Data from Smith Travel Research:

March posted strong occupancy leading into the Spring season. Total occupancy was 62.9% (up from 60.7% March 2013/compared to NC at 62.3%) and weekend occupancy was 81.6% (up from 77.3% March 2013/compared to NC at 69.8).

Spring occupancy in 2013 was 71.9%. With expected growth of 4.4%, Spring occupancy is projected to be 75.1% in 2014. Total annual occupancy is expected to top the record high of 66.8% established in 2007.

Weekend occupancy during Spring 2013 was 89.4%. With continued growth, 2014 Spring weekend occupancy will average 93.3%.

Hotel demand (the number of rooms sold) during Spring 2013 totaled 477,354; an increase of 7% over 2012.

Hotel demand has increased 5.6% in the past 12 months. At the current growth rate, demand will top 500,000 rooms this Spring.

### Data from Longwoods, International “Travel USA” Study:

Spring visits account for 27% of annual overnight visitation (29% July through September, 27% October through December, and 17% January through March).

Spring visitors choose a variety of lodging options

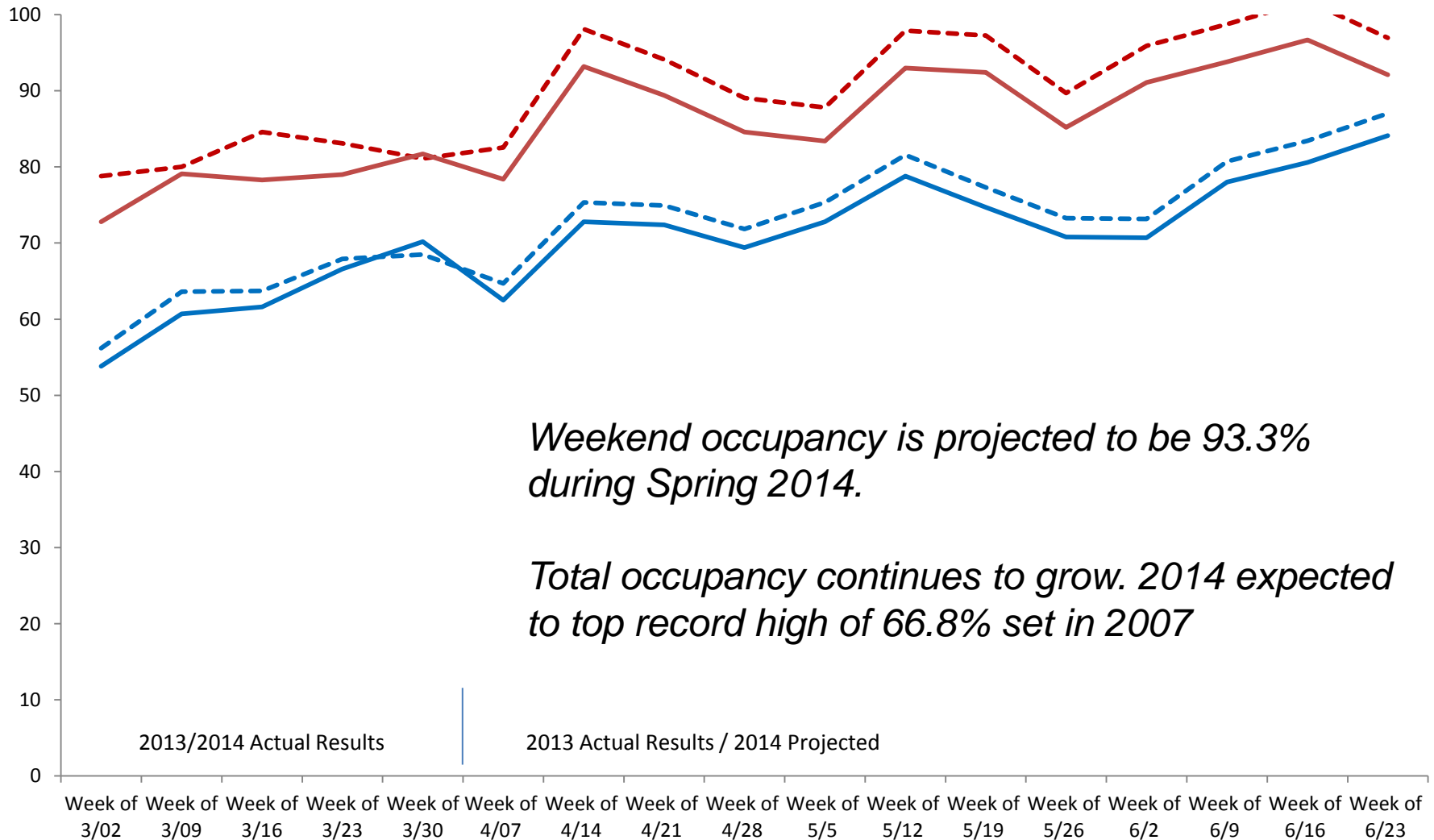
- 60% of Spring visitors will stay in a hotel or motel
- 23% will stay in unpaid accommodations owned by friends or relatives
- 10% stay at a B&B/ Country Inn/Lodge
- 7% rent a cottage or cabin
- 4% will stay at a campground
- 3% will rent a private home/condo/apartment
- 2% stay in a second home

Many Spring trips that include a stay in Asheville, also include visiting a beach (8%). Top activities are visiting a National Park (34%), visiting a Landmark/Historic Site (30%), and Hiking/Backpacking (23%).

Visitors also reported shopping as an activity (42%) and fine dining (24%).

# March Occupancy Growth Leads Strong Spring Season

Weekend 2014    Weekend 2013    Full Week 2014    Full Week 2013



*Weekend occupancy is projected to be 93.3% during Spring 2014.*

*Total occupancy continues to grow. 2014 expected to top record high of 66.8% set in 2007*

2013/2014 Actual Results

2013 Actual Results / 2014 Projected



Prepared On: 04/17/2014  
 Prepared By: Beth McKinney

### Convention Calendar March-April 2014

Account Name	Lead Name	Contract Room Block Begin	Contract Room Block End	Lead Quality	Contracted Rooms
Southern Conference	2014 Southern Conference Basketball Tournament	03/03/2014	03/10/2014	Convention Sales Lead	5400
Veterinary Cancer Society	2014 Mid Year Conference	03/08/2014	03/12/2014	Convention Sales Lead	203
The Upledger Institute, Inc.	Health Care Seminars	03/12/2014	03/15/2014	Convention Sales Lead	40
Asheville Gator Basketball Club	2014 Asheville Mountain Spring Classic - AAU Division I Basketball Tournament	03/14/2014	03/15/2014	Convention Sales Lead	425
Clayton Homes	Clayton Homes	03/17/2014	03/22/2014	Convention Sales Lead	790
Team SixOneFour	2014 Team SixOneFour Asheville Ride	03/18/2014	03/22/2014	Convention Sales Lead	25
Just Us Productions	Just Us Productions MACE Event 2014	03/20/2014	03/22/2014	Convention Sales Lead	105
Asheville High School	2014 Spring Debate Tournament	03/21/2014	03/22/2014	Convention Sales Lead	250
North Carolina Lake Management Society	2014 Southeastern Lakes Conference	03/25/2014	03/27/2014	Convention Sales Lead	118
Institute of Management Accountants - Hickory Chapter	Spring Conference	03/27/2014	03/29/2014	Convention Sales Lead	35
American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC)	2014 International Conference	03/31/2014	04/03/2014	Convention Sales Lead	164
Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries	2014 Annual Meeting	04/01/2014	04/06/2014	Convention Sales Lead	521

Ormsby/Dolian Wedding	2014 Ormsby / Dolian Wedding	04/03/2014	04/05/2014	Convention Sales Lead	76
Western North Carolina Chamber Executives	Western North Carolina Chamber Executives	04/03/2014	04/03/2014	Convention Sales Lead	10
CBL & Associates Properties, Inc.	CBL & Associates Regional Conference 2014	04/07/2014	04/08/2014	Convention Sales Lead	120
Mohorn / Kachinske Wedding	2014 Mohorn / Kachinske Wedding	04/10/2014	04/12/2014	Convention Sales Lead	77
Cadence Clogging Nationals	2014 Cadence Clogging Nationals	04/10/2014	04/12/2014	Convention Sales Lead	205
Mother Earth News Fair	Mother Earth News Fair	04/11/2014	04/13/2014	Convention Sales Lead	450
Biltmore Volleyball Academy	Biltmore Volleyball Academy 18th Annual Jr. Hi Neighbor Tournament	04/11/2014	04/12/2014	Convention Sales Lead	120
Weddings 2014	2014 Pugh / Wolff Wedding	04/11/2014	04/13/2014	Convention Sales Lead	27
Mustang Club of America	50th Anniversary Pony Drive	04/13/2014	04/16/2014	Convention Sales Lead	460
Weddings 2014	2014 Dixon / Hodges Wedding	04/17/2014	04/19/2014	Convention Sales Lead	30
National Association of State Procurement Officials	NASPO State & Local Procurement Law Institute	04/22/2014	04/24/2014	Convention Sales Lead	140
Asheville Event Company	MoogFest Festival Goers	04/23/2014	04/27/2014	Convention Sales Lead	260
Beta Sigma Phi	2014 Beta Sigma Phi - Carolinas Convention	04/24/2014	04/26/2014	Convention Sales Lead	420
Association for Research and Senior Management Training	23rd Annual Gathering	04/24/2014	04/27/2014	Convention Sales Lead	40
Crossfit Pisgah	2014 River Ruckus II	04/25/2014	04/26/2014	Convention Sales Lead	160
Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association	2014 NCYSA Kepner Cup	04/25/2014	04/26/2014	Convention Sales Lead	1350
Weddings 2014	2014 Georgion / Campbell Wedding	04/25/2014	04/26/2014	Convention Sales Lead	60

Basketball of the Carolinas	2014 Twin Cities Classic	04/25/2014	04/26/2014	Convention Sales Lead	30
-----------------------------	--------------------------	------------	------------	--------------------------	----