

## **Atlanta, Nashville and New Orleans Announce 2002 Global Showcase**

ATLANTA (November 15, 2001) – The Convention and Visitors Bureaus in Atlanta, Nashville and New Orleans, in partnership with Delta Air Lines, are proud to announce plans for the Rhythms of the South Global Showcase, a travel trade show that will promote the entire Southern region as an international tourism destination.

Starting in October 2002, Global Showcase will take place every other year in Atlanta. The show will bring approximately 200 international tour operators and media from around the world to the city for a two-day trade show to promote the South. The trade show exhibitors will include Southern destinations as well as hotels, attractions, transportation and any other tourism-related companies that serve the international market in eight states within the region – Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The cost for an exhibit in the Global Showcase will be less than \$1,000 for suppliers.

As a partner, Delta Air Lines will promote the show worldwide using their international sales team and provide flights for the tour operators and media. “This program is a perfect fit for Delta,” said Paul G. Matsen, Delta’s Senior Vice President - International & Alliances. “Delta currently has 42 international flights into Atlanta and has more reach within the Southeastern United States than any other airline. The Southeastern U.S. is filled with a unique culture and heritage that is bursting with international business and leisure travel opportunities.”

As an international gateway city with airline service from virtually every major business centers in the world with non-stop flights to Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport, Atlanta will host the tradeshow portion of the showcase. Nashville, New Orleans and other cities and states throughout the South will offer attendees two day pre- and post-tours to their destinations.

“Atlanta enjoys the role of ‘gateway,’ but we are only part of the destination product,” said Bill Howard, vice president of marketing, communications and tourism at the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB). “The product is the region, and the cities within the region that benefit from the global strength of Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport.”

Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport’s international traffic continues to grow at double the rate of domestic traffic, and over the last five years, the percentage of international traffic bound for Georgia and the Southeast has grown from less than 10 percent to 40 percent. This trend is being fueled by the dramatic growth of international airline service between Atlanta and Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, South Africa and Asia.

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According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, overseas travelers visit an average of two states and spend an average of (1.6) nights in a destination and 15.6 nights total in the U.S. Currently, Atlanta is the third largest gateway to Europe, behind New York's John F. Kennedy and Newark airports. For Latin America and the Caribbean, Atlanta is the fastest growing gateway to the U.S.

"The Global Showcase emerged from an ongoing partnership between Atlanta, Nashville and New Orleans in a three-city tourism package called Rhythms of the South," said Butch Spyridon, executive vice president of the Nashville CVB. "Through the Rhythms of the South program, we have learned that we can have a lot of success in the international market by packaging the region. Each state, city and small town has something unique to offer under the umbrella of a Southern experience that cannot be found anywhere else in the world."

"The Rhythms of the South Global Showcase is a show unlike any other in the world," said Kim Priez, vice president of tourism for the New Orleans Metropolitan CVB. "In most of the international travel trade shows, a single city can get lost when competing against hundreds of other destinations. Our show showcases the South to an international audience in a very cost efficient way."

Liz Doyle, president of the Lizmore Group, has been contracted to be the executive director of the Global Showcase and will be responsible for advance planning, staffing, printing, on-site management, budget and marketing and public relations in the eight Southern states. Doyle has more than 15 years experience in the travel and tourism industry including working with Travel South USA, the country's largest regional tourism tradeshow for the domestic travel market.

"I look forward to the chance to be a part of a new and innovative project with such energetic partners - Atlanta, Nashville and New Orleans," said Doyle. "We plan to build the best ways to bring new ideas, enhanced product and that famous Southern hospitality to tour operators from all across Delta's international system. It's going to be a challenge, particularly in the current climate, but we already have a big advantage – a great product and the best people to host international visitors."

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