

NEWS RELEASE
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Suffolk Announces Annual Tourism Economic Figures

SUFFOLK, VA: The Suffolk Economic Development and Tourism Department announced today that in 2007 tourism generated \$50.9 million in visitor spending, supported 542 jobs and generated \$1.6 million in local taxes to support the community. The figures represent an 8.7% increase over 2006 and point to the importance of tourism to the local economy.

Virginia continues to rank as one of the nation's premiere tourism destinations and it follows that tourism remains a major contributor to the revenues of the Commonwealth and its localities. The annual economic impact of tourism was compiled by the Travel Industry of America for the Virginia Tourism Corporation and indicates just how vital tourism is to Virginia's economy.

"Suffolk's 'historically hip' spirit salutes four centuries of our rich heritage through historic homes, neighborhoods, churches, trails, festivals and events," said Mayor Linda Johnson. "And with assistance from a newly appointed Tourism Advisory Committee, economic benefit from the travel and tourism will continue to enhance our local economy."

On a statewide level, the economic impact data shows that in 2007 visitors spent \$18.7 billion in Virginia, an increase of 5.8% from 2006 and ahead of the national domestic travel increase of 4.7%. Tourism also

supported 210,000 Virginia jobs. If domestic tourism were its own industry it would be the sixth largest employer in Virginia.

“Tourism has such a positive financial impact on Virginia as a whole and on local areas as well,” said Alisa Bailey, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. “You can see how so many of our localities depend on tourism to bring in money and sustain jobs that otherwise would not exist.”

The Virginia Tourism Corporation recently unveiled its new ***Virginia is for Lovers – Live Passionately*** marketing campaign at its annual statewide tourism conference. The campaign showcases real Virginians who travelers can meet when they visit Virginia localities. VTC will provide localities with marketing support to connect with the campaign and market their local tourism assets to a national audience.

Virginia tourism generated \$1.2 billion in state and local tax revenue for Virginia’s communities in 2007. The state tax revenue derived from tourism is enough to pay the salaries and benefits of 11,500 new state police officers or educate 78,000 Virginia students. The 2007 total of all local taxes generated by tourism in Virginia was \$529.2 million, enough to pay the salaries of 12,000 elementary school teachers and staff.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation maintains data on tourism revenue and employment information for state and local levels. Visit www.vatc.org/research for details. For information on planning a trip in Virginia visit www.Virginia.org or call 1-800-932-5627 for a free Virginia Travel Guide.

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