

Monthly report Benelux

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Prepared by:



Bisonspoor 3002 – A701
3605 LT Maarssen, The Netherlands

P +31 30 57 70 757

W targettravel.nl

RIANNE VAN DER LINDEN, *Marketing & Account Executive*
rianne.van.der.linden@targettravel.nl

MARJOLEIN FRAANJE, *General Manager / COO*
marjolein.fraanje@targettravel.nl

About TSUSA - Global Partner Programming

We appreciate the everlasting support of Travel South USA, and through this support we continue to be top-of-mind with the beautiful Travel South region, amongst trade, media and potential travelers. We have the pleasure to already be familiar with the region for several years, and look forward to yet another year where we can focus on promoting the GPP states. We are happy and grateful that for the coming budget year we can again count on 9 states, with a small change: Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia!

We are used to multiple state marketing, and we will make sure every state will get its own fair share of attention, highlighting each unique selling points, highlights, and must-sees, together with an overall promotion of the Southern region. We will make sure you will get a good ROI on every marketing dollar spent. And the assurance you spend it in a healthy mature market, ready and eager to travel.

The overall goal is a growth in numbers of sales, exposure, and awareness of the travel possibilities to the Travel South states. Both the Dutch and the Belgian market are mature and healthy, with experienced and professional key trade and media players. We will continue to create and initiate smart marketing opportunities, resulting in a growth in visitation from the Benelux to the region and maximizing visitor spending and impact. Storytelling will play an important part in achieving our goals. Food, Music Culture, History and Outdoors are the main themes.

On a monthly basis we will be providing updates on the various marketing projects that have been approved for this fiscal year, we will provide an insight into the Benelux market and include any other information/ topics that are of relevance to the Travel South region.

Why the Benelux market?

- 81% of the Dutch population (17.9 million) and 74% of the Belgium population (11,7 million) is vacationing at least once a year.
- A steady and stable market. Small, yet big in our number of travellers to the USA. 4 out of 100 people visit the USA yearly.
- High potential for 2nd and 3rd tier destinations and potential for the shoulder season
- Both the Dutch and the Belgians receive an 8% annual extra salary called “vacation payout”
- The Dutch have at least 25 vacation days and about 10 public holidays, the Belgians have at least 20 vacation days and also 10 public holidays.
- The average time spent in the USA is: 18 days

I. Executive summary

- **Social media:** Over the past month, the Travel South region was featured in **39 social media posts**. *Amerika Only* led the engagement with 22 posts, showcasing a range of content from an authentic Route 66 restaurant in Missouri to the vibrant Beale Street in Tennessee. *VisitUSA the Netherlands* highlighted Tennessee through a post by Memphis Tourism. Meanwhile, *GoAmerika* mentioned the area 13 times, focusing on an Elvis-themed road trip through Mississippi, Tennessee, and Louisiana, along with several posts about Louisville, Kentucky. Lastly, *UStravel* shared a post about the Martin Luther King Museum in Atlanta.
- **Publications:** Over the past month, **6 online articles** have been published that mention the Travel South region. Additionally, we published **2 newsletters** highlighting all states. *Amerika Only* contributed two articles—one showcasing Missouri and New Orleans in a "Must-See in 2025" feature and another dedicated entirely to the Mardi Gras Museum in New Orleans. *TravEcademy* republished our newsletters as articles on their website, ensuring visibility for all states. *Hey!USA* highlighted Tennessee in their competition results (see details below), while *Daily Cappuccino* recognized Missouri as one of the most exciting destinations to visit in the USA.
- In the second week of January the Dutch Holiday Fair, **Vakantiebeurs**, took place. This year the fair attracted more visitors than last year, even though there were some negative messages ahead of the fair. However, afterwards the reactions were positive. This year there was again a large USA pavilion and after conversations with various exhibitors it can be stated that it is not just the well-known route through the west, but other, lesser known states showed an increased interest amongst the visitors.
- Media platform *Hey!USA* has conducted an online competition 'Best of the USA', where prizes were awarded for the best state, the best National Park, the best city etc. The Travel South region also had a prize winner: The National Civil Rights Museum in **Memphis, Tennessee** was awarded as the Best Museum by the travel trade.

International Metrics FY 24/25

| | July | Aug | Sept | Q1 TOTAL | Oct | Nov | Dec | Q2 TOTAL | Jan |
|------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------|---------|---------|--------|----------|-------|
| Benelux | | | | | | | | | |
| Trade Meetings/Trainings | 5 | 8 | 6 | 19 | 6 | 10 | 7 | 23 | 7 |
| Number of Agents Trained | 0 | 0 | 130 | 130 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 16 | 0 |
| PR | | | | | | | | | |
| Media Meetings | 5 | 3 | 4 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 12 | 5 |
| Total number of articles published | 18 | 5 | 5 | 28 | 13 | 20 | 11 | 44 | 8 |
| Impressions | 47,866 | 5,769 | 4,681 | 58,316 | 196,665 | 112,006 | 93,919 | 402,590 | 9,117 |
| Newsletter | | | | | | | | | |
| Open Rate | 37% | - | 45% | 41% | 43% | 34% | 35% | 37% | 43% |




II. Communication & PR


News Releases

- Coverage book has been updated:

<https://app.coveragebook.com/29490/books/f8d792af8750ac9a>


Amerika Only
Bestemmingen ▾ Thema's ▾
Webshop




In het Mardi Gras Museum krijg je een kijkje achter de schermen van het gróóteste feest van New Orleans

Michelle de Vos

**Attracties**
Michelle de Vos
Leestijd: 2 minuten

Mardi Gras: het is misschien wel het eerste waar je aan denkt bij New Orleans. Kleurrijke parades, extravagante kostuums en een feestelijke sfeer die de hele stad in zijn greep houdt. Maar wist je dat je het hele jaar door van deze unieke traditie kunt genieten? In het Mardi Gras Museum of Costumes and Culture duik je in de geschiedenis en pracht van dit iconische festival.

→ Lees ook [Ervaar aangrijpende verhalen van de oorlog in The National WWII Museum van New Orleans](#)



III. Sales Calls

Media Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

| Contacts | Interests / Status | Follow-up |
|--|--|-----------|
| Mark Rammers, Freelance photographer | Mark approached us to express his interest in our states. He is a freelance photographer, working for mostly international publications like the Financial Times. He works together with the British writer Imogen Lepee. Their travel subjects are mostly special interest, local experiences and f.e. food. Since he mostly works for international publications, for now we have added him to our mailing list to keep him updated. | |
| Sebastiaan Bedeaux / Freelance | After ample consideration, Sebastiaan had to decline our invitation. It was too short notice for him to secure a guaranteed publication. He remains however interested and we have agreed to keep him posted on next year's event, allowing him more time to research and prepare. | |
| Bas van Oort / Freelance | During a network event at Vakantiewerk we have caught up with Bas. His book is very well received and he gets good feedback. At this point, no specific planning to travel to the South. | |
| Jaap van Splunter / Amerika magazine | In preparation of next FY marketing proposals Jaap has updated his latest information. He is more and more reluctant to publish anything without a commercial deal. | |
| Anne de Buck / Your Little Black Book | Anne reached out to us for a potential press trip. She is the owner of the popular online platform and travel books Your Little Black Book. She let us know she is interested in a trip to New Orleans or Charleston. They aren't specialized in USA travel on their platforms but are expanding their information. We will stay in contact for potential attendance for next year's Media Summit. | |

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

| Contacts | Interests / Status | Follow-up |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Bart Pomp / Travelnauts | We have had a meeting with Bart Pomp. He reported his doubts on USA bookings, as they remain behind earlier years. They do have issues finding suitable accommodations for their target group: families with children. Especially kitchen equipped apartments are a challenge. Tourism Exchange might be a good option for him. | |
| Bart Verhoeff / Amerikanu.nl | Bart Verhoeff approached us, since he is participating at the Motorbeurs in February. With Hans Tattersall they have been attending this fair for many years, promoting their Motorbike Tours. This always has been very successful, since they usually get a couple of bookings with high value from this. Important destination they sell during this show is the South. | |
| Robert Eelkman / Little America | Robert is very optimistic about booking figures for this year. As they have a specific higher end target group, they see an increase compared to last year. | |
| Melanie Modder / Travel Time | Melanie is very happy with the two products they have; Travel Time is slowly establishing on the market. They serve 442 travel agents and agencies within their corporate group. She reports 30% of their bookings are towards the USA and this percentage is slowly rising. She reports good interest in the Southern States. Their new brand Symphony Travel is slowly starting as they target a higher end audience. | |
| Peter van Veenendaal / Travel Trend | After Roxana left the company, he now has a new assistant that is very eager to learn the business. He reports a slow start of the booking season, but is confident it will pick up. | |
| Irene Dijkstra / Van Verre | We met with Irene Dijkstra, part of the product team for the USA. They have some nice itineraries in the South already. After IPW she will fly to Charleston and will spend some time in Georgia and the Carolinas. We will follow up with her in the summer. | |
| Sarah Vandermaessen / Connections | Their annual Early Bird discount "Book & Pay" will be extended till mid Feb, as it is proven successful. They are also looking into new/more contracts with RV suppliers in the USA. Even though they have brick-and-mortar shops, they are still investing a lot in making the online booking process seamless as most of their customers book online. | |

Last year's American Day was a success, 1,800 consumers attended the fair. However, as the experience component is the main focus, they are having problems with making the event profitable. For this reason, they are looking into organizing smaller events during the year, spread out through Belgium with fewer attendees but more focused travel. The American Day event is also still planned for this year, as it is their signature event. New in their marketing activities is a podcast series of '30 minutes with Belgian host Bent van Looy. He is a famous Belgian musician, singer, composer, artist and presenter who talks about destinations in an authentic way.

IV. Newsletter

Newsletter to the trade and media

This month, we distributed two newsletters, each featuring all states within the Travel South region. The first newsletter, titled *"From Blues to Bluegrass: Swinging Through the South,"* focused on the region's rich musical heritage. We ensured equal representation of all states, including ROTS.

| Status | Topic | Subscribers | Open rate | Click-thru rate |
|---|---|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Newsletter sent out on: January 16 th | From Blues to Bluegrass: Swinging Through the South | Trade | | |
| | | 535 | 27.8% | 0.2% |
| | | Media | | |
| | | 366 | 40.5% | 0.3% |

The second newsletter highlighted summer activities across the Travel South region, showcasing a diverse range of seasonal experiences. Similar to the first, it provided balanced coverage of all states and ROTS.

| Status | Topic | Subscribers | Open rate | Click-thru rate |
|---|--|-------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Newsletter sent out on: January 30 th | Summer activities in the Travel South region | Trade | | |
| | | 535 | 36.8% | 0.4% |
| | | Media | | |
| | | 367 | 50.3% | 0.6% |

Upcoming month, the theme of the newsletter is *"Avoid the crowds – Savvy Traveler Tips"* which focuses on exploring the states while avoiding crowded places.

V. Market Update

Trends in tourism

“Young People Under 30 Are Flying More Often for Vacations”. This is the conclusion of the ANWB in its annual vacation survey. About 62% of this group (Generation Z, young people between 19 and 30 years old) expect to take a long-haul flight for their vacation this year. Among people aged 30 and older, this figure is “only” 46%.

Among all Dutch people, Europe remains the most popular continent. Domestic vacations are the most booked option, with 41% of vacationers staying in the Netherlands. The Spanish sun is also very popular this year, with 33% of Dutch travelers choosing Spain, followed by Germany at 28%.

Nevertheless, Dutch people are also traveling to farther continents this year. In previous years, North and Central America were the most popular, but Asia is now gaining some ground. The United States and Brazil remain popular destinations, as does South Africa. Recently, travel agency TUI reported that “affordable” Balkan countries, such as Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Albania, are also in demand.

85% of Dutch people plan to go on vacation this year, and a quarter have already booked. A third of Dutch travelers are considering adjusting their vacation plans due to rising prices. They might travel later in the year, go on vacation less often, or avoid expensive destinations. Additionally, one in eight people report that extreme weather conditions, such as heat waves, storms, and floods, are influencing their vacation choices. Due to climate change, they are opting for destinations with more stable climates.

Salon de Vacances

At the end of 2024 it was announced that the Salon de Vacances in Brussels (also known as Brussels Holiday Fair), would not be taking place in 2025. The cancellation of the event was mainly due to larger travel companies like TUI and Corendon withdrawing their participation at the fair. However, as a result, many Belgian travel professionals travelled to Utrecht in January to participate in the Dutch Travel Trade Day at the Dutch Holiday Fair, **Vakantiebeurs**.

Also, different from previous years, we had some Belgium companies/tour operators interested in participating at the Dutch Holiday Fair as a result. Connections had last-minute requested information and Joker Reizen made the decision to participate the whole fair. And interesting shift.

New Government Belgium

Bart De Wever Prime Minister of Belgium - A coalition agreement has been reached in Belgium. Nearly eight months after the elections, the negotiators have come to an agreement. The Flemish nationalist Bart De Wever is on his way to becoming the next Prime Minister of Belgium. Five very diverse parties will form a new government: Francophone liberals, the Flemish social democrats, a Francophone centrist party, the Flemish Christian democrats, and the N-VA will form what they call an “Arizona coalition.” The name refers to the colors of the flag of the U.S. state of Arizona and is a reference to the colors of the political families: blue, red, orange, and yellow.

United Airlines

In 2024, United Airlines posted a net profit of \$3.1 billion and carried a record 173 million passengers. CEO Scott Kirby attributes this success to effective post-pandemic strategies. The airline also announced plans for further growth, expanding routes and improved results in 2025. In the Netherlands, United operates flights from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport to New York (Newark), Washington, Houston, and Chicago, and connects Brussels Airport with Chicago, New York (Newark), and Washington.

VI. Actions

The proposals for the coming year have been confirmed and in this chapter we will be updating what is currently being done or what the upcoming actions points are.

Coops that have been concluded

- Visit USA The Netherlands Roadshow
- Connections AmeriCan Day
- Travel PRESSentation
- Visit USA Belgium Workshop
- Joker Reisbeurs
- Travel South International Showcase

Benelux Trade & Media newsletter

- A monthly newsletter gets send to the Benelux Trade and Media database. Each month focusing on a different theme, and highlighting all GPP states.
- With the media partners we have agreed on a package to share not only the content of the newsletter, but also promote the newsletter to aquire more subscribers.
 - For TravelPro the first of five editorials will go live in February.
 - Reismedia is pending.

Product Survey

This project will again be executed in spring 2025, reporting all touroperator data from 2024.

WideOyster

It's great to be working on this 2-year project with Hans Avontuur. And even more exciting that we can combine the opportunity with WideOyster, together with a great publication in AD magazine and an article in the motor magazine. Hans has finished his press trip and confirmed his participation to the Media Summit.

Publications WideOyster: first publications based on press trip in May 2025, other publications in FY 25-26. Total publications: 1 editorial and 5 longreads.

Publicaiton AD magazine: Civil Rights story, publication spring 2025

Publication ProMotor/Moto73: first publication in ProMotore is live and included in this months' coverage. Second publication to follow in spring 2025.

Travel South USA Global Week

The media marketplace will take place in Louisville, Kentucky in spring 2025. All five spots have been filled

| Name | Outlet | FAM tour |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Iris van den broek | Wander-lust | Missouri |
| Peter van Oyen | Evolution.be / de Zondag | Mississippi |
| Hans Avontuur | WideOyster | Louisiana |
| Corno van den Berg | Droomplekken.nl | West Virginia |
| Harmke Kraak | Freelancer | Alabama |