

# Monthly report Benelux

## April 2025



Prepared by:



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# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 **12 social media posts**. *Amerika Only* published 8 posts, highlighting **Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina**, and the **Rhythms of the South (ROTS)**. *VisitUSA The Netherlands* shared a post about national parks, featuring the **Great Smoky Mountains**, and also promoted the book “*Oostkust van Amerika*”, which includes **North and South Carolina**. They are giving away three copies of the book in a giveaway campaign.
- Publications:** Over the past month, the Travel South region has received notable media coverage, including **10 online articles, 1 print article, and 2 newsletters** featuring the region. **Kentucky** was highlighted in two online articles: one focused on Louisville, and the other on the Kentucky Derby. **Louisiana** appeared in three online articles—two about TPC Louisiana and another on Blues history featuring Buddy Guy. In addition, Louisiana was featured in a print article in *NRC*, which focused on the cuisine and also mentioned **New Orleans**. **North Carolina** was mentioned in two online articles—on *MovieMeter* and *Elle*—covering two upcoming series filmed in the state. **South Carolina** was featured in *Amerika Only*, which published an article about Hilton Head Island. *Manoeuvre.be* republished a previous newsletter as an article mentioning all states, and *TravEcademy* did the same. We also published **two newsletters this month**, both highlighting all states in the Travel South region.
- Global Week 2025** was another great success, and the Benelux was represented with 5 media. For four media it was the first time attending the media event, and for some it was even the first time visitit the region. All came back with only good things to tell, while we paitently await the publications. Publications and results will all be shared in the final report which is being created and will be sent out by the end of the month.
- In April Rianne visited the office of Doets Reizen to give an in-depth **training on the Travel South region** to 12 of their Product & Sales staff, the training day was concluded with a bourbon-tasting, where Rianne shared additional information on **Kentucky**, after having been there for the first time during Global Week.

## International Metrics FY 24/25

	July	Aug	Sept	Q1 TOTAL	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q2 TOTAL	Jan	Feb	March	Q3 TOTAL	April	May	June	Q4 TOTAL
<b>Benelux</b>																
Trade Meetings/Trainings	5	8	6	19	6	10	7	23	7	4	6	17	13			13
Number of Agents Trained	5	41	149	195	133	87	70	290	86	97	79	262	65			65
<b>PR</b>																
Media Meetings	5	3	4	12	29	3	5	37	5	3	2	10	3			3
Total number of articles published	18	5	5	28	13	20	12	45	8	14	15	37	11			11
Impressions	47,866	5,769	5,676	59,311	196,665	112,006	165,141	473,812	19,117	100,116	449,115	568,348	823,437			823,437
<b>Newsletter</b>																
Open Rate	37%	-	45%	41%	43%	34%	35%	37%	43%	40%	-	42%	37%			37%

## II. Communication & PR

### News Releases

- Coverage book has been updated:

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

[Home](#) » [Harmke's Travel Tips](#) » Dit zijn de nieuwe attracties in Louisville, Kentucky

### Dit zijn de nieuwe attracties in Louisville, Kentucky

📅 april 17, 2025    👤 [Harmke Kraak](#)    📁 [Harmke's Travel Tips, Nieuws](#)

Tijdens een reis door het zuiden van de Verenigde Staten nam Harmke een kijkje in Louisville, Kentucky. Wat is er nieuw & upcoming in deze stad, die bekend is van de paardenraces en Mohammed Ali?



*Downtown Louisville*

### Waarom naar Louisville?

Louisville is weliswaar niet de hoofdstad van Kentucky, dat is Frankfurt, maar wel de bekendste stad. Ga maar na: de Kentucky Derby wordt er al ruim 150 jaar verreden, de uitvinder van de gloeilamp Thomas Edison woonde er, bokser Mohammed Ali kwam ervandaan, de honkbalknuppels van het kwaliteitsmerk Louisville Slugger worden er gemaakt, en ga zo maar door. De bijnaam is Bourbon City. De staat Kentucky is de grootste producent van Bourbon-whiskey ter wereld en Louisville vormde en vormt nog steeds het hart. Overigens heeft Louisville ook de twijfelachtige eer de meeste shotgun houses van de VS te hebben: houten huizen die met één kogel te doorzeven zijn. Charmant zijn ze wel. Historische herenhuizen zijn er ook, die vind

### III. Sales Calls

#### Media Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Interests / Status	Follow-up
Erik Klap / FCKlap	We have been in contact with Erik Klap, who produces the TV-travel show RonReizen. They were looking for combining an already planned trip with one or two other states. Although participating in this show would be a great opportunity, it requires preparation time, a media fam as well as additional budget, we respectfully had to decline.	
Corno van den Berg / Droomplekken.nl	Following Global week we had an additional meeting with Corno. He was very impressed by what he experienced during Global Week and came back with lots of ideas. As he met with all the States, he will contact them directly if needed and will keep us in the loop.	
Boy Tijbosch / Amerika Only	Boy highlighted during a conversation that they are experimenting a lot with video content on their socials. Especially the video they create with personal made content resonates well with their audience and generates a lot of views. They expect to shift their focus more toward user-generated content in the future, where they social media becomes their primary platform and their website secundair.	

## Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Interests / Status	Follow-up
Anouk Gortzak / Doets Reizen	In April we went to the offices of Doets and gave their team of an extensive Travel South training. The group was split in two, so we gave two presentations to total 12 agents trained. We ended the presentation with a fun bourbon tasting, which was very well received, and everyone went home with a goodiebag with the TS guide and swag items.	
Priscilla Ootes / Little America	Little America is still doing quite well. Bookings are down a bit, but they are not behind schedule. They don't have such low numbers. They have a lot of product managers flying out to the USA to experience and learn about new destinations. She is curious to see about the fall because usually those clients are starting to book by now and in the next couple of weeks.	
Frans Schoon / Indelible Travel	Frans is concerned about the fact that the national media is creating and or featuring stories about the US that scare off readers. There is not much of a counter-narrative so far, so he believes it's up to "us" to ensure everyone knows that traveling to the US is still very easy, fun, and enjoyable. From a numbers perspective, they don't really see a significant drop-off at Indelible Travel because they have a loyal clientele who book for the second, third, and even fourth time.	
Ruben Greyson / Exciting West	The staff of Exciting West has visited our office for a training. We had the opportunity to train 4 people and updated them on all Travel South states. In addition, Ruben was asked to give a presentation on Southern Food for some of his clients. We provided him with information on specific food and drinks for all states in the region.	
Mats Wielhouwer / Exit Reizen	Exit Reizen had some declined bookings in the past couple of months. At Exit Reizen, there is a strong focus on presenting the US in a positive light as a holiday destination. The Southern States continue to attract significant interest, California less so, while the combination of New York and New England has now become very popular.	
Edwin van Delden / Travel2America	Edwin is positive as always. He sees a drop of bookings compared to last year, however he thinks high prices are a big factor. With the weakening US dollar and lowering airfares, he is confident that bookings will pickup.	
Sarah VanderMaessen / Connections	Connections has contacted us for their American Day in October. As their event is planned on the same day as the Joker Reizebeurs, we are talking to them about a different set up and different prices compared to last year.	
Birgitte Bosma / Visit USA the Netherlands	The board of Visit USA the Netherlands had several discussions on the current situation. It is their policy to stick to the facts. They added a page on their website explaining ESTA as well as immigration procedures. Besides they are focusing on the fact that the country and the people have not changed and emphasize the beauty of the USA as a holiday destination.	

Corrina Flink / Style inTravel.	We have visited the office of Style in Travel to update their staff. This training was also closed with a bourbon tasting. Further, they are investing a lot of time in the creation of a new website, which is scheduled to go live in about one or two months.	
Lianne Boersma / Riksja Reizen	Riksja Reizen is seeing a bit of a shift in destinations this year. Nonetheless, they are spending time improving their USA offerings. As they do have a good interest in the South, they are open to all kind of ideas on how to enhance this.	
Christian Jabor / Aeroglobe	Christian is very strong in his opinion that the USA has not changed and that all communication should emphasize that.	
TravelBasket	TravelBasket is a new travel agency with a focus on travel outside of Europe. Co-owners Danilo Milic and Joris van der Schee have been in the travel industry for years, working for Shoestring and Koning Aap. They specialize in custom made trips. They are part of the independent travel agent agency United Travel.	
Peter Vroom / Westbound Travel	The past year Westbound Travel worked hard on updating their portfolio with USA product. They did various campaigns on social media, organized study trips and updated their website. However, the growth is not as they were hoping for. And the recent developments have not been helping. They will continue to offer and sell trips to the United States, they have two itineraries through the Travel South region, but they won't be expanding as fast as they were hoping too.	

## IV. Newsletter

### Newsletter to the trade and media

This month we sent out two newsletters. There was a slight delay in sending the March newsletter, themed: “*Instagram-able spots*” in the Travel South region, which was ultimately sent out in the first week of April. Near the end of the month, the second newsletter, with Aprils theme “*Eating your way thru the South*” was sent out. In both editions, we ensured an equal representation of all states and Rhythms of the South. Both newsletters achieved a strong open rate.

The next newsletter, scheduled for May, will focus on “*Luxury Experiences for Under \$100*”.

Status	Topic	Subscribers	Open rate	Click-thru rate
Newsletter sent out on: April 11th	<i>Instagram-able spots</i>	<b>Trade</b>		
		536	35.3%	0.2%
		<b>Media</b>		
		359	45.4%	1.1%

Status	Topic	Subscribers	Open rate	Click-thru rate
Newsletter sent out on: April 28th	<i>Eating your way thru the South</i>	<b>Trade</b>		
		536	33%	0.6%
		<b>Media</b>		
		359	43.9%	0.3%



# V. Market Update

## Update on Dutch and Belgian travellers

According to data from the USTA, nearly 1.1 million tourists from Western Europe visited the US in March of last year. This March, that number fell to just over 900,000 - a decrease of 17%. The most notable declines came from countries such as Denmark, Germany, and Ireland. In fact, tourism fell across nearly the entire region, with only two exceptions: Greece and the Netherlands. The increase in arrival figures from Greece - and particularly from the Netherlands - seems surprising when contrasted with feedback from several Dutch tour operators, who report a noticeable dip in bookings.

According to the Dutch travel industry association ANVR, there are currently no practical issues for travelers entering the United States, as long as they apply for their ESTA in time. In response to recent media reports suggesting increased difficulty in traveling to the U.S., the ANVR consulted a large number of its member travel companies. The outcome is clear: there have been no changes to entry procedures, and travelers can still enter the U.S. for business or leisure as before.

The process of an ESTA has not changed in the past 15 years, nor in the past three months. Certain restrictions apply to those who have recently visited countries labeled as "sensitive" by the U.S., such as Iran, North Korea, and Cuba, but this has also been in place for years. One recent change, however, is that as of January 2025, travelers with an X in their passport must indicate their gender as listed at birth when applying for an ESTA. This follows the U.S. government's decision, effective January 20, 2025, to officially recognize only two genders: male and female.

Although March saw a 30% drop in bookings to the U.S. compared to the same month last year, this appears to be driven by media concerns rather than actual entry issues. Moreover, a 10% drop in the U.S. dollar exchange rate since January makes traveling to the U.S. more affordable and potentially more attractive.

## **Airlift**

The Dutch government has confirmed a reduction in flights at Schiphol Airport. From November 2025, the maximum number of flights will be lowered from 500,000 to 478,000 per year, with a limit of 27,000 night flights. This measure aims to reduce noise pollution and protect residents' quality of life. For the first time, quieter aircraft will count in noise calculations, encouraging airlines to modernize fleets. The goal is a 20% noise reduction, of which 15% has already been achieved; further gains may allow limited growth, as long as noise continues to decrease.

## 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
- Visit USA Belgium Workshop
- Connections AmeriCan Day
- Joker Reisbeurs
- Travel PRESSentation
- 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** 5 editorials will be published, likely there will be a small cross-over into the next fiscal year, due to planning schedules.
  - **Reismedia:** interview editorial publication to boost subscription to the newsletter. The final months of this FY a TSUSA banner will be included in their weekly newsletter, also including a call to action.

### Product Survey

We are continuisly working on this project, en strive to present the results by early May.

### Travel South USA Global Week

Final reporting on this event to be share by the end of May.

### 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 two motor magazinse.

**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, slight delay in publication due to the current situation, expected fall 2025.

**Publication ProMotor/Moto73:** Both publications live.