

TravelSouth

All Y'all Are Welcome **USA**

Monthly Report – April - Benelux

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 Rhythms of the South!

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:

The Travel South region was featured in **18 social media posts** throughout April.

Visit USA Netherlands shared two posts, highlighting the **Kentucky** derby. *Tioga Tours* shared two posts about Route 66 through **Missouri**. *Amerika Only* highlighted **Rhythms of the South & Tennessee** in a post. *Visit USA Belgium* shared three posts, mentioning **Tennessee, Rhythms of the South, Missouri** and **Mississippi**. *AmericA Magazine* shared four posts highlighting **Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama** and **Kentucky**. *AmerikaNu* promoted their South discovery trip through **Rhythms of the South, Tennessee, Mississippi** and **Louisiana**.

Publications:

The Travel South Region received media attention through **15 online articles**.

Target Travel Marketing shared an article highlighting their new client, **Kansas City**. *Amerika Only* shared two articles, one highlighting **Nashville, Rhythms of the South**, the other was about 100 year anniversary of Route 66, highlighting **Missouri**. *AmericA Magazine* shared an article about big milestones in 2026, mentioning **Rhythms of the South, Louisiana, Missouri** and **Tennessee**. *TravEcademy* shared two blogs, one about the USA as a destination for space lovers, mentioning **Alabama**. The other about America250, mentioning **Rhythms of the South** and **Louisiana**. *Visit USA Netherlands* shared two articles, highlighting **Rhythms of the South** and **Mississippi**. *Visit USA Belgium* shared two articles, one about Great Smokey Mountains National Park, mentioning **Tennessee** and **North Carolina**, the other about spring in **Tennessee** and **Mississippi**.

Newsletters

This month **4 newsletters** included the Travel South region. *Meridian Travel* shared a newsletter mentioning **Mississippi**. *Visit USA Belgium* shared two newsletters highlighting **Rhythms of the South** and **Tennessee**. *Alamo.nl* mentioned **Missouri** in a newsletter about the World Cup.

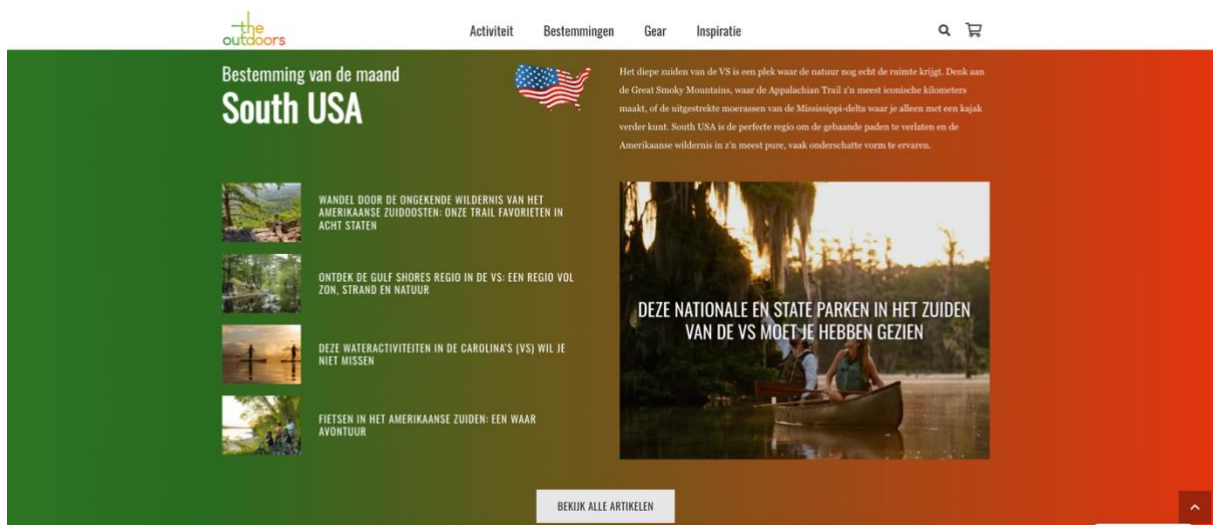


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The Outdoors

As part of our coop, *The Outdoors* (including *The Hike* and *The Bike*) shared 5 articles. The first about the national parks and state parks in **The Travel South region**. One about water activities in **North Carolina** and **South Carolina**, and one about walking trails in **The Travel South region**. Finally, one about biking in **Missouri, Kentucky** and **Tennessee** and one about the Gulf Shores region highlighting **Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama** and **Rhythms of the South**.



Brand USA webinar:

On April 20th Rianne participated in a Brand USA webinar, highlighting the Missouri part of Route 66. In total 119 travel agents were present. This initiative is part of Brand USA's broader effort to highlight destinations along Route 66 in the lead-up to the centennial.



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International metrics FY25-26

	July	Aug	Sep	Q1 TOTAL L	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q2 TOTAL L	Jan	Feb	March	Q3 TOTAL L	April
Benelux													
Trade													
Trade Meetings/Trainings	4	11	8	23	8	4	3	15	7	6	11	24	6
Number of Agents Trained	0	0	150	150	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	119
Travel Trade Newsletter Receipt	0	0	531	531	658	659	659	1,976	656	656	652	1,964	647
Trade Newsletter Open Rate	0	0	41	41	47	46	46	139	30	28	30	88	30
Managed Media													
Media Meetings	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	6	2	2	4	8	2
Total number of articles published	4	11	10	25	13	8	7	28	13	7	18	38	15
Impressions	11,100	15,739	57,225	84,064	24,724	28,226	23,384	76,334	1,804,576	507,076	339,525	2,651,177	58,315
PR Newsletter Receipt	0	0	354	354	350	345	344	1,039	342	339	336	1,017	335
PR Newsletter Open Rate	0.00%	0.00%	44.00%	44.00%	43.00%	42.00%	40.00%	41.67%	18.00%	21.00%	21.00%	20.00%	18.00%
Social Posts													
Facebook Page													
Followers	1,760	1,780	1,780	1,780	1,780	1,781	1,780	5,341	1,775	1,774	1,773	5,322	1,771
Likes	1,760	1,780	1,780	5,320	1,780	1,781	1,780	5,341	1,775	1,774	1,773	5,322	1,771
Facebook Posts													
Reach	0	291	906	1,197	466	4,555	7,107	12,128	4,269	4,124	9,356	17,749	6,134
Views	0	1,390	1,122	2,512	662	6,007	8,105	14,774	7,034	7,022	13,829	27,885	8,103
Likes	0	23	22	45	14	554	43	611	622	490	145	1,257	258
Comments	0	5	1	6	0	0	1	1	19	12	3	34	4
Shares	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	8	7	2	2	11	1
Instagram													
Reach	0	61	236	297	245	3,865	7,228	11,338	8,215	9,166	12,300	29,681	6,941
Views	0	2,058	1,581	3,639	1,956	5,806	3,277	11,039	1,869	4,636	2,946	9,451	3,031
Followers	0	83	122	122	192	248	271	711	298	381	405	1,084	428
Likes	0	65	73	138	77	72	58	207	50	77	71	198	59
Comments	0	5	4	9	3	3	4	10	12	5	4	21	11
Shares	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	3	0






II. Communication & PR

Coverage book has been updated:

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

NAAR THE OUTDOORS

JE BENT OP THE HIKE



Activiteit Bestemmingen Gear Inspiratie

WANDEL DOOR DE ONGEKENDE WILDERNIS VAN HET AMERIKAANSE ZUIDOOSTEN: ONZE TRAIL FAVORIETEN IN ACHT STATEN

24 april 2026 door Kaz

Wanneer mensen denken aan wandelen in de Verenigde Staten, dwalen de gedachten vaak direct af naar de canyons in het westen of de besneeuwde pieken van de Rockies. Maar wie op zoek is naar een echt totaal andere beleving, moet naar een van de meest biodiverse en historische regio's van het land. Het zuidoosten van de Verenigde Staten.

Het zuidoosten wordt gezien als de bakermat van de Amerikaanse outdoorcultuur. Het is een landschap van uitersten, van de Blue Ridge bergen, tot de uitgestrekte kustvlaktes met moerassen en prachtige culturele steden. Je wandelt hier door bossen die tot de oudste ter wereld behoren en over paden die ooit werden gebaan door inheemse volkeren en vroege ontdekkingsreizigers. Bovendien biedt de regio een unieke gastvrijheid (de beroemde *Southern Hospitality*) die je terugvindt in de karakteristieke *trail-towns* langs de route.




Foto: Travel South USA





III. Sales Calls

Media contacts

Contacts	Interests / Status	Follow-up
Bas Erkens - Foodies.nl	<p>Within the travel section of their magazine and website, they provide inspiration on destinations worldwide. While the USA has not traditionally been a key focus, they partnered last year with U.S. specialist tour operator Little America on a series of articles about Utah. Following this collaboration, they are interested in further expanding their U.S. coverage, which was one of the reasons for participating in Global Week.</p> <p>Bas was very positive about his FAM trip and indicated it was a strong fit for his platform and audience. The trip is expected to result in several high-quality articles</p>	
Sebastiaan Klijnen - Hey!USA	<p>Hey!USA specializes in producing travel guides. While the company originally focused primarily on city guides, it has recently expanded into state-focused editions as well. A Texas guide is set to launch soon, while a Utah guide is currently in development.</p> <p>During Global Week, Sebastiaan mentioned there was strong interest among partners in the potential development of a regional Travel South guide. As he is currently working on several other publications, the most realistic timeline would be content development in 2027, followed by publication of the guide in 2028</p>	Will propose for FY 27-28

Trade contacts

Contacts	Interests / Status	Follow-up
Gerda van 't land - Buitengewoon Reizen	<p>Per May 1st Gerda will stop at Buitengewoon Reizen. Gerda began her career in the travel industry in 1981, at NBBS, marking her 45th anniversary in the field. In 2004, she launched her travel agency for people with limited mobility and/or special care needs, under the name Buitengewoon Reizen. For more than 20 years, she has been dedicated to serving this target group and has built an extensive global network.</p> <p>Gerda will continue promoting the USA and accessibility travel on freelance basis. She will continue to give trainings and is also in the process of developing an App (Freely). The App will provide information about accessible travel worldwide, this will include detailed information about hotels, attractions etc. A farewell reception, organized by the travel industry, will be held on May 26.</p>	
Wessel Hendrix - USTravel	<p>USTravel, specializing in both USA and Canada, reported a decline in interest in USA travel, with existing bookings continuing as planned but fewer new bookings being made. At the same time, Wessel noted growing interest in Canada as an alternative destination.</p>	



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<p>Norbert Kets - Travel Time</p>	<p>Norbert reported that interest in USA travel products remains relatively high, despite a decline in bookings. He noted that consumers continue to seek inspiration for travel to the USA, but many are postponing their plans to the longer term rather than the near future.</p>	
<p>Natasja Eshuis - Travel Trend</p>	<p>Natasja Eshuis of Travel Trend indicated that negative feedback around the National Park pass increase is mainly related to timing and planning. She emphasized that, despite the higher price, the new pass remains more cost-effective compared to individual entrance fees.</p> <p>She added that demand for USA national park itineraries remains strong, as these trips continue to be seen as bucket-list experiences. The impact per traveler is limited, as the pass is valid per vehicle and often encourages visits to multiple parks within one trip.</p>	
<p>Birgitte Bosma - GoAmerika</p>	<p>Somewhat unexpectedly, they are currently seeing stronger demand and bookings for long-haul destinations – particularly Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa – compared to European travel. They did notice a temporary increase in interest in the USA when the conflict in the Middle East became major world news, but demand has since stabilized again.</p>	
<p>Chris Freitag - Van Verre</p>	<p>We had an open conversation with Chris, who shared that the company has operated at a loss over the past few months due to rebooking clients' trips to Asia. However, instead of passing the additional costs on to the clients, they covered the difference themselves. This generated a great deal of understanding and goodwill among their customers and resulted in very positive PR.</p> <p>Despite these losses, they are currently only a few percentage points below their projected targets, significantly better than what they are hearing from competitors in the market. Chris mentioned they are actually quite satisfied with these results and believe they may even have gained some market share over the past few months compared to competitors.</p>	





IV. Newsletter

Newsletter to the trade & media

The newsletter sent in April focused on the theme of **gardens and grilling** and achieved a strong open rate.

Status	Topic	Subscribers	Open rate	Click-thru rate
Newsletter sent out on: April 2nd	Gardens and grilling	Trade		
		647	30.4%	0.63 %
		Media		
		335	17.8%	0.0%

View the newsletter here: <https://mailchi.mp/625b2f83fa2a/nieuwsbrief-travel-south-usa-tuinen-grillen>





V. Social media

We have been posting all throughout April on our social media platforms. A total of **9 posts** were published on Facebook and **9** on Instagram. Each state being highlighted once, and the Rhythms of the South cities rotating every month. This month, New Orleans was featured. The content for the posts is based on the matching month's newsletter theme. Good to note, in April there were 124 link clicks on Facebook. Meaning even though people might not react to the post, they are clicking on the links to read more.

The best performing Facebook post highlighted Mount Olive in North Carolina, generated **753 impressions** and **56 interactions**. On Instagram, the strongest performance came from the post featuring New Orleans, reaching **980 people** and securing **16 interactions**. See posts below:



Among our regular Travel South posts, we also share the **Michelin articles** on social media as they are published. These are posted once a week on Sunday, on Facebook (as we can include a link to the article) there and will continue as long as the articles are getting published. The article is then also shared on Instagram in the stories (as can be seen above), which are put into a highlight on our profile – so it can always be viewed.



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Instagram stories

In addition to feed posts, we share daily stories featuring all GPP partners on a rotating basis. This approach increases overall visibility and helps keep the Travel South region top of mind among our audience. The stories are also saved in highlights on our profile for continued exposure. During Global Week, as well as the pre- and post-FAM trips, we shared content from Rianne's travels through the region and stories created by the Benelux media delegation.

Followers

We have been boosting social media posts since November, which has led to consistent growth on Instagram. The Facebook following, however, has a slight decline. A potential issue with the connection to the main Travel South Facebook page is currently being investigated by Ivonne.

	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Facebook												
Followers	1,760	1,780	1,780	1,780	1,781	1,780	1,775	1,774	1,773	1,771		
Instagram												
Followers	-	83	122	192	248	271	298	381	405	428		





VI. Market Update

Rising Air Travel Taxes in the Netherlands

Recent policy changes in the Netherlands will significantly increase air travel taxes from January 1, 2027. The new system introduces differentiated rates based on distance, with long-haul flights seeing increases of up to 140%. This means that taxes on long-haul tickets, including routes to the United States, will rise to approximately €70 per passenger, positioning the Netherlands among the highest in Europe.

This development is expected to impact traveler behavior. Research indicates that up to 74% of Dutch travelers are willing to depart from airports in neighboring countries to avoid higher costs. As a result, a shift in outbound travel flows toward countries such as Germany and Belgium is likely. While overall travel demand remains strong, the increase in taxation may affect price sensitivity, departure airport choice, and potentially long-haul booking patterns in the Dutch market.

Gen Z Driving Travel Demand with Cost-Conscious and Experience-Led Behavior

Recent insights from Transavia show that Generation Z is becoming an important driver of travel demand, combining high travel frequency with strong price sensitivity. This group increasingly favors experience-led travel, with trips centered around specific activities such as events, wellness, and active holidays. Additionally, despite being highly digital, Gen Z shows a strong preference for social and community-based travel experiences, including group travel and shared activities.

Their digital behavior is also reshaping the booking funnel. Gen Z primarily finds inspiration through visual platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, alongside the growing use of AI tools. This shift emphasizes the importance of relevant, inspirational content over traditional search visibility.



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Update arrival numbers Q1 2026

The arrival numbers for Q1 2026 are now complete, based on data from the NTTTO (National Travel and Tourism Office), which manages the International Visitor Arrivals Program. Arrivals from the Benelux to the United States show a decline of 11% compared to the same period in 2025 (142,905 vs. 161,026). This development aligns with ongoing conversations with tour operators, who report a slowdown in new bookings.

A key nuance is that the overall decline is largely driven by first-time visitors, who appear more hesitant in the current market. Repeat travelers, on the other hand, continue to show a higher willingness to return. As a result, regions such as the Travel South, which traditionally attract a larger share of repeat visitors, are expected to perform more resiliently compared to the national average.





VII. Activities overview

This chapter provides updates when activities have been executed, when there is an update on the progress, or any action points.

WideOyster

The 2-year cooperation has been completed, and a separate report has been shared with the full results.

The Outdoors

The Travel South region is being featured on the homepage of theoutdoors.nl as a 'destination of the month', starting May. A total of 5 articles have been published, highlighting all GPP partners:

National Parks & State Parks – alle 8 GPP states

The Gulf Shores – LA, MI & AL

Water activities in the Carolina's – NC & SC

Trails in Southeastern USA – alle 8 GPP states

Cycling in the American South – MO, TN & KY

Publications are pushed by a dedicated newsletter, social media and advertising. The combined activities are expected to generate a reach of approximately 1 million.

Visit USA Associations

Trough the continued membership that Travel South has with Visit USA The Netherlands and Visit USA Belgium, they continue to generate frequent exposure through the newsletters, on social media and the various events that we attend.

Benelux Trade & Media newsletter

Every month, a newsletter is sent out to the Benelux Trade and Media database. Each month focusing on a different theme, highlighting all GPP states. Please view chapter IV for the monthly analyses.



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Benelux social media

Content on Facebook & Instagram will be published throughout the month, using the newsletter as a source of inspiration. Please view chapter V for the monthly analyses.

Product Survey

This project has been completed, and the final Benelux results have been shared.

Out of Scope

Global Week: The media marketplace took place in Mobile, Alabama in April 2025. The following five journalists were a part of this years' Benelux delegation. A first initial report will be provided June 2026, followed by an updated report (November 2026) and final report (June 2027).

Amerika Magazine – Edwin Vrielink | FAM: West Virginia

Amerika Only – Michelle de Vos | FAM: Missouri

Foodies – Bas Erkens | FAM: North Carolina

Hey!USA – Sebastiaan Klijnen | FAM: Tennessee

Your Travel Reporter – Mila Jaipal | FAM: Kentucky

