

NORDICS REPORT

May 2026



Prepared By:



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ABOUT TSUSA

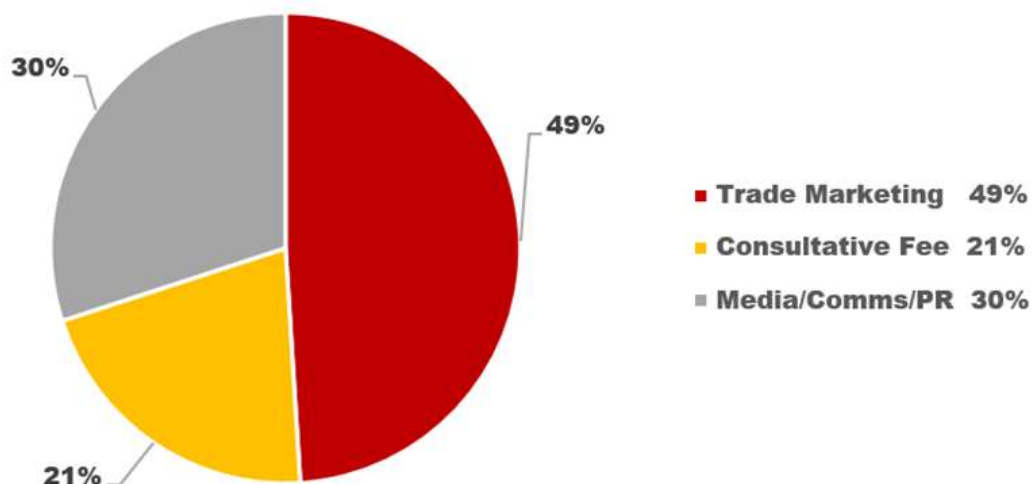
Global Partner Programming

The TSUSA GPP provides a foundational base from which state tourism offices have shared in country representation with international export marketing and sales activities. Managed by Travel South USA, the official regional destination marketing organization for the 12 state tourism offices, these collaborative efforts create leveraged actions, increase reach of travel trade and journalists, and coordinated consumer campaigns which deliver visitors to the South. In 2019, the Travel South USA region welcomed 10.2 million visitors, who spent \$10.3 billion, with 90% of these visitors arriving from 15 markets from around the globe.

The Nordic Region – Denmark, Sweden and Norway have a combined population of approximately 27 million citizens, with have historical high levels of disposable income and extensive vacation days. They rank 10th in visitor volume and often seek off-the-beaten path destinations. They are polite, approachable, and speak English well. They traditionally are willing to adapt to local culture, willing to try local cuisine, tip generously and have prior to the pandemic planned holiday with longer itineraries with more stops than other European visitors. Scandinavians enjoy five to six weeks vacation. There were an impressive range of types of southern tours being sold in the Nordic market prior to the pandemic and booking travel with professional operators for long-haul travel is very common. Therefore, we plan to prioritize travel trade marketing efforts and partnering with operators in consumer efforts for FY22 .

FY 26 Nordic GPP

Resource Allocations



I. Executive Summary

FDM Travel Campaign Update — The paused co-op campaign will remain on hold through the quieter summer booking period, with the Danish market still subdued; a decision on reactivation will be taken in early fall.

IPW 2026 & Showcase Recruitment — Travel South held a strong programme of Nordic meetings at IPW in Fort Lauderdale, including Discover America Norway and Sweden, Sembo Tours and USA Rejser. For Showcase 2026 in Nashville, 11 invitations have been issued to Nordic operators, with 5 delegates registered to date.

Progress with Key Trade Partners — Swanson's Travel has submitted a co-op proposal for fiscal 26/27, with their content creators undertaking a Nashville-to-DC road trip 21-28 June. The Hablo platform's Scandinavian launch, with Travel South as lead destination, was advanced at IPW, with Icelandair creating launch content during a June visit to Nashville.

Active Media Pipeline — Five media meetings were held across Denmark, Sweden and Finland, including a potential Mondo themed magazine with 20 pages of editorial and a confirmed October Nashville press trip with Great Smoky Mountains coverage.

Positive Newsletter Performance — The May newsletter, themed around the Southern States' gastronomic roots, reached 442 recipients with a 35.3% open rate, maintaining strong engagement across the region.

		APR	MAY	JUN	Q1 TTL	Q2 TTL	Q3 TTL	FY 25/26 Total
AL/KY /LA/M O/NC/ SC/TN /ROTS	Nordics							
	Travel Trade							
	Meetings/Trainings	8	10		20	25	30	93
	# Agents Trained	10	10		8	256	151	435
	Media							
	Media Meetings	5	4		7	9	12	33
	Total articles published	1	9		16	24	12	52
	Impressions	6,500	1,476,230		4m	6.9m	635k	13,034,010

II. Travel Trade

Contact	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/Next Steps
FDM Travel – Frederik Øhrgaard	We had a meeting to discuss the ‘paused’ co-op campaign. The market is still suffering and we are about to enter the much quieter summer booking period. Given this, we have agreed to continue the ‘hold’ the campaign until the early fall and decide at that point.	
Swanson’s Travel – Magnus Hermansson/Johan Rudolf	Johan has also sent a co-op proposal through, and we are setting up a meeting to discuss, adjust and agree. This will be campaign that will run across the fiscal 26/27 with preparatory work happening in the current year. We also ran through the OOS project with their two content creators, who are taking a road trip (following Sweden’s first WC match) running through from Nashville, East TN, NC and Virginia (and on to DC). Johan has been liaising with Jill at TN Tourism. This will take place from the 21st to 28th June 2026.	Ongoing
Russell Meara - Hablo	Along with Russell Meara at Hablo we met at IPW with Widar Jensen and Johnny Gardsater at Discover America Norway and Sweden respectively. This was to discuss the launch of the Hablo platform in Scandinavia with Travel South as the lead destination. We discussed the distribution and communications as well as content and post schedules. We will follow up immediately following IPW to agree a firm schedule.	Ongoing
Discover America Nordics – Johnny Gardsater/Widar Jensen	We attended the Nordic reception at IPW in Fort Lauderdale. This was a smaller affair than in previous years and Travel South was one of a few suppliers that was invited to participate. There is expected to be greater interest from the Nordics in 2027 when IPW moves to New Orleans.	
American Trails – Jonas Larson	Jonas visited Nashville between the 14-19 April with hotels and flights sponsored. Travel South in conjunction with Tennessee Tourism hosted	

	an extended trip that took in Franklin and East Tennessee. The outline was as follows: April 21 – Franklin/Leiper’s Fork April 22/23 – Sevierville/ Gt Smoky Mtn Nat Park April 24 – Sevierville and Flight home. Feedback from the trip, Jonas commented he had a great and busy time in Nashville, while fekt Franklin was ‘a treat’ and ‘such a calm, beautiful place’ (They also have the best coffee shop – ‘Coffee House’!) with Kimbo's Pickin Parlor a real highlight. Leapes Fork, Sevierville were other top spots and he has some great photos to share. He is writing the article now. Nashville and Franklin will be published in their 19th edition due to go out later this summer. He will advise exact dates as soon as he has them. Further content publication to be advised.	
Sembo Tours – Marie Javerud	Met with Marie again at IPW. She had some great southern state/city meetings at the show and was impressed by the variety of what was offer. She has signed up for showcase in Nashville and we will meet again in Stockholm during the roadshow in September.	
USA Rejser – Christian Walker Willumsen	Met with Christian again at IPW and discussed the Danish market and current trading conditions. Sentiment is still down but Christian is also citing costs as a factor when speaking to clients. We appreciated his attendance as the sole Danish tour operator at IPW.	
Icelandair – Rebecca Taernstroem	Rebecca and Marina (Sweden) are visiting Nashville in June to attend CMA Fest. They are keen to create content to use on Hablo in both the Norwegian and Danish markets. Finalising launch details that Rebecca will take the lead on Hablo.	
Plus Reiser - Aud Kindervåg Halsne	Aud is firming up her staff fam trip to Tennessee, and will be taking Icelandair service. We will discuss the possibility of attending showcase dependent upon the outcome of the trip.	
Discover America Finland – Pekka Makinen	Pekka held a Discover America Finland webinar to update members and showcase selected destinations. This quarter he focused on Travel South and we provided a deck for him to use. This was done in local language, and he received good feedback and interest.	

Travel South ShowCase 2026 – Nordic recruitment	We have sent out 11 invitations to Nordic operators for showcase in Nashville. We have 5 delegate registered so far. Amerikaspesialisten – June Lundebj Sembo – Marie Javerud Polyresor – Kimmo Asikainen Albatros – Karina Nuemann Siefert Swanson's – Michael Svensson	
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IPW 2026



III. Communications & PR

Contact	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/Next Steps
Monthly Travel South Newsletter	May newsletter – The Southern States' gastronomic roots Newsletter links: DK: https://presscloud.com/csp/vocast/message.csp?KEY=783714020310306&format=web NO: https://presscloud.com/csp/vocast/message.csp?KEY=791980743055287&format=web SE: https://presscloud.com/csp/vocast/message.csp?KEY=770724461639693&format=web FI: https://presscloud.com/csp/vocast/message.csp?KEY=329600213990914&format=web Newsletter stats: Delivered: 442 Open rate: 156 (35.3%) Click rate: 2 (1.3%)	
Media Meetings	- Jens Henrik Nybo, Freelance for several tier 1 media (DK) – Discussing press trip opportunities. Jens Henrik will be visiting Nashville in October and do a press trip to Great Smoky Mountains after. TN Tourism are actively involved - Pekka Hiltunen, Editor-in-Chief for Mondo (FI) – Discussing the possibility for a Mondo themed magazine including a marketing deal and 20 pages of editorial coverage. - Per Ingdal, Editor-in-Chief for Luxury Aficionados (DK) – Discussing press trip opportunities and story angles. - Lars Bang, Freelance for Ritzau (DK) and Gourmet (SE) - Discussing press trip opportunities and story angles. Lars is writing many articles related to gastronomy. - Christian Muda, Freelance for Premium Magazine and travel blogger (SE) – Discussing press trip opportunities. After having participated in GMM the past two years, he is very interested in joining again.	

Newsletters

Travel South All Y'all Are Welcome USA

Photo: iStockphoto

The Southern States' gastronomic roots

The American South is home to a diverse food culture, where local ingredients and historical traditions form the basis for a strong culinary identity. From the regional variations of barbecue and the role of whiskey in the kitchen to the seafood of the coast and iconic signature dishes, the food in the states tells the story of the identity of the South.



Grilled oysters in Louisiana from local invention to national classic: One of Louisiana's most popular seafood dishes is charbroiled oysters. The dish was created by the son of the owner of Drago's Seafood Restaurant in Metairie. He used a fish recipe to transform oysters into delicacies on the half shell, topped with a sauce of butter, garlic and herbs, sprinkled with Pecorino Romano cheese and cooked on the grill. It became such a hit that restaurants across the country have since added the dish to their menus.

[Read more](#)



Comeback Sauce as Mississippi's signature dip

In Mississippi's capital, Jackson, Southern traditions meet global inspirations. This is evident in the iconic Comeback Sauce, which has roots in the restaurant culture of Greek immigrants. The sauce combines mayonnaise, chili sauce and spices into a signature tangy dip that is now found all over the state. In Jackson, the sauce is synonymous with the Mayflower Cafe, as the creation of the sauce is often attributed to the cafe's original owners, who immigrated to the state from Greece and opened the place in 1935.

[Read more](#)



Barbecue traditions celebrated at new museum in Missouri

In Missouri, American barbecue traditions are celebrated at the recently opened Museum of Barbecue in Kansas City. Here, a series of interactive exhibits provide insight into how flavor is built up, for example, through spices, wood, fire and smoke, but also exhibits that tell more about how the American barbecue regions of Texas, Memphis, Carolina and Kansas City differ from each other in style.

[Read more](#)



Whiskey and gastronomy meet on new route in Tennessee

In March, the Tennessee Whiskey Trail launched its new "Cask to Fork Culinary Trail," which features local restaurants that use products from Tennessee distilleries to create spirit-inspired dishes like maple bread pudding and smoked old-fashioned pork chops on the bone. Through a digital travel guide, specific restaurant recommendations and signature dishes are recommended to guests can plan their literary and dining experiences across Tennessee's regions.

[Read more](#)



Alabama and the Gulf Coast Seafood Culture

Along Alabama's Gulf Coast, fresh seafood is a central part of the culinary story. Here, you can munch on shrimp, oysters, crab cakes and fish, which are usually served either deep-fried, grilled or steamed. Coastal towns also bring Creole influences to the cuisine with hearty dishes like gumbo and seafood stew. Jesse's On The Bay serves oysters harvested just a few miles from the restaurant, while Zena's Restaurant offers a seafood boil that offers a plate full of shrimp, crab, oysters and more.

[Read more](#)



South Carolina's culinary identity

In South Carolina, the dish "Shrimp & Grits" is considered a symbol of South Carolina's culinary identity, where coastal seafood meets agriculture with its corn production. The dish consists of creamy corn porridge topped with sautéed shrimp. Traditionally, the dish was served for breakfast, but today it is eaten at any time of the day. The dish can be enjoyed in an exclusive Michelin format at the restaurant Husk in the city of Charleston.

[Read more](#)

About Travel South USA

Travel South USA is the tourism board for 12 states in the southern United States. Here you will find a wonderful mix of beaches, mountains, music, culture and culinary experiences. With short distances between cities and experiences, the area is perfect for a USA road trip.

Here you can drive along green fields or along winding roads in the Great Smoky Mountains - or enjoy the lush landscape along the 1,200-mile Coast Highway, which runs from the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the ocean and beaches. Along the way, you can enjoy the hospitality of small towns, delve into the region's unique musical history, visit local bourbon distilleries or explore the diverse food culture.

www.travelsouth.visittheusa.com

See press rooms for all states here: www.industry.travelsouthusa.com/media

Attachments

[Alabama_Food - Oysters - Halfshell - Abraham Rowe 2 edit.jpg](#)

[Louisiana_Oysters_ChargrilledDragos.jpg](#)

[Mississippi.jpg](#)

[Missouri_Museum of BBQ 1.jpg](#)

[Missouri_Museum of BBQ 2.jpg](#)

[South Carolina_Charleston_ShrimpGrits.jpg](#)

[Tennessee_Glass Hollow Table & Tavern Whiskey Triangles Sliced Steak, Whiskey Cream Sauce made with Jack Daniels Tennessee Honey.jpeg](#)

[Tennessee_NGBD Exterior \(Credit NGBD\).jpeg](#)

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IV. Market Updates

Denmark: Cycling races as a tourism lever

Denmark, one of the world's most bike-enthusiastic nations, is converting its everyday cycling culture into a deliberate tourism strategy. The Copenhagen Sprint — a World Tour race drawing ~250,000 spectators — serves as the anchor, with VisitDenmark running a three-year campaign around it under the "Danish Wheelness" concept, selling cycling holidays as lifestyle experiences spanning nature, food and wellbeing rather than sport alone.

With 2.7 million bicycle tourists in 2025 (up 4% on 2022), the strategic takeaway is clear: marquee events open the door, but sustained lifestyle-led campaigns convert attention into visitors. Denmark's cycling-mad population also represents a natural outbound audience for destinations building credible two-wheeled offerings.

SAS Close to Giant order for 20 long haul aircraft

SAS is reportedly close to placing a large order for between 15 and 20 new long-haul aircraft from Airbus. The deal, which has not yet been officially confirmed, is said to include a combination of Airbus A330neo and A350 and could be completed within the next few weeks.

British Weloveholidays expands to the Nordics

British online travel agency loveholidays has expanded into the Nordic market with the launch of weloveholidays in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, increasing its European footprint to eight countries. The platform offers Scandinavian travelers access to over 50,000 hotels, 50+ airlines, and flexible payment options, including Klarna and PayPal.