

TravelSouth

All Y'all Are Welcome **USA**

Monthly Report – July - Benelux

Prepared by:



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About the Global Network Program

We appreciate the continued support of Travel South USA and are proud to serve as your Global Consultants. Having worked closely with the region for several years, we have built a strong understanding of what the region has to offer, and how to best represent the region in the Benelux market. Our overall goal remains to grow sales, exposure and awareness of the travel possibilities throughout the Travel South region, which will ultimately increase visitation from the Benelux and visitor spending. Storytelling will be at the heart of this approach, highlighting the key themes like: Food, Music, Culture, History and Outdoors

We look forward to another year of keeping the Travel South region top-of-mind among trade, media and potential travelers in Belgium & The Netherlands, while continuing to strengthen the presence of the GNP partners in-market. Included in this years' Benelux program are: **Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Rhythms of the South.**

What you may expect from us as Global Consultants:

- Management of the destination's in-market reputation, covering both the Travel South region as a whole, while also ensuring equal exposure for all GNP partners.
- Developing and maintaining media and trade relationships, with continued focus on product development.
- Execution of approved marketing activities
- Recommendations for effective marketing investments and identification of new opportunities.
- Monthly analysis and reporting on relevant market trends and developments, but also monitoring market sentiment

Why the Benelux market?

- 81% of the Dutch population (18.5 million) and 74% of the Belgium population (11.9 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 **22 social media posts** throughout the month July. *Amerika Only* shared 10 posts, featuring **Rhythms of the South, Tennessee** and **Missouri**. *Tioga tours* shared four posts highlighting **Rhythms of the South, Tennessee** and **Louisiana**. *Little America* shared a post promoting their itinerary through **Rhythms of the South** and **Louisiana**. *UStravel* shared four posts, two highlighting **Rhythms of the South** and **Louisiana**, the other two mentioning **Kentucky**. *AmericA Magazine* shared three posts, one highlighting the firefly experience in **Tennessee**, one promoting their itinerary through **Kentucky**, finally one about **North Carolina** and **South Carolina**.

Publications:

The Travel South Region received media attention through **8 online articles**. Newsoutlet *De Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf* both published an article about the Luke Combs concert being the biggest country concert in The Netherlands, mentioning **Tennessee, Rhythms of the South** and **North Carolina**. *Visit USA The Netherlands* shared four articles, two highlighting **Missouri**, one about **Mississippi**, and one highlighting **the whole travel South Region** and **Rhythms of the South**. **Missouri** was highlighted by *UStravel* about what to do in Kansas City. *Tioga Tours* shared an article about the World Cup in Kansas City, **Missouri**.

Newsletters

This month **2 newsletters** included the Travel South region. *Tioga Tours* sent out a newsletter about Kansas City, **Missouri**. *Brand USA Benelux* shared a newsletter highlighting **Tennessee**.

4th of July BBQ

Visit USA The Netherlands organized a 4th of July BBQ, welcoming over 60 partners from within the industry. The event was sponsored by **Louisiana** – who also arranged for a Jazz band to play during the get-together. Which in general highlighted the charm of southern music and hospitality.



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International metrics FY26-27

	July
Benelux	
Trade	
Trade Meetings/Trainings	8
Number of Agents Trained	0
Travel Trade Newsletter Receptient	/
Trade Newsletter Open Rate	/
Media	
Media Meetings	4
Total number of articles published	8
Impressions	577,810
PR Newsletter Receptient	/
PR Newsletter Open Rate	/
Social Media	
Facebook	
Followers	66
Likes	66
Facebook Posts	9
Reach	1,826
Views	2,524
Likes	258
Comments	7
Shares	3
Instagram	
Reach	1,980
Views	1,252
Followers	511
Likes	57
Comments	1
Shares	0





II. Communication & PR

Coverage book has been updated:

<https://app.coveragebook.com/29490/books/9aea807d50216ba7>

Home > Meer dan baseball en American football in het Amerikaanse zuiden



MEER DAN BASEBALL EN AMERICAN FOOTBALL IN HET AMERIKAANSE ZUIDEN

door Visit USA | 22 juli 2026 | Blog

Bij sport in de Verenigde Staten denken veel mensen meteen aan een honkbalwedstrijd of een spectaculaire pot American football. Maar wie door de **Travel South regio** reist, ontdekt dat sport hier in veel meer vormen wordt beleefd; van iconische paardenraces en wereldberoemde golfbanen tot NASCAR-circuits en college football wedstrijden waar de hele stad voor uitloopt.

In **Kentucky** staat iedere eerste zaterdag van mei volledig in het teken van de Kentucky Derby in Louisville. Deze wereldberoemde paardenrace wordt al sinds 1875 georganiseerd en is veel meer dan een sportevenement: bezoekers trekken hun mooiste hoed uit de kast, genieten van livemuziek en proosten met een traditionele Mint Julep.





III. Sales Calls

Media contacts

Contacts	Interests / Status	Follow-up
Dewi Passier - Bart's Boekje	Bart's boekje is a household name blog in the Dutch market. It started out as a hobby, born from scrapbooks, clippings, and notes (the "booklet"), and was initially intended solely as a search tool for friends and family. 15 years later BartsBoekje.com has grown into one of the largest (5.168.000 monthly page views) travel and lifestyle platforms in the Netherlands. The original reason for launching the website has never been forgotten: their team only shares tips that they would actually follow themselves. This authentic benchmark has earned Barts Boekje a reputation as a reliable, original platform in the market. Their readers are loyal, highly educated, above average earning 30+ individuals who seek inspiration in travel, food & drink, sustainability, interiors etc. Stats include: 2,120,000+ monthly users, average of 3,000 reads per article 96.000 Instagram followers 50,000 average Instagram feed post reach 35,000+ Facebook followers 26.000+newsletter subscribers, with a 50% open rate They also think the USA has a lot to offer which they would like to dive deeper into in terms of knowledge and content on the website.	
Erik Zaaier - Roularta	Erik is the sales manager for Roularta, mainly focusing on tourism destinations and cultural partners. Roularta Media Group is the market leader in the Benelux, with over 30 magazine publications, and houses strong brands such as: Libelle, Knack, Flair, Columbus, Plus. Because of its many brands, Roularta offers a hybride partnership model, where during one FAM trip, content is generated for various outlets. At its core, the company is a publisher, but they do much more than just that, to mobilize a wide range of target audiences. E.g. organizing various joined B2C events with their magazine brands, in partnership with for example tourism destinations. Various magazines partner with tour operator SRC cultuurreizen, and Talisman Reizen. While they occasionally are able to provide editorial coverage on a destination, in most cases a minimum advertisement budget of approximately 6,000 USD is expected. An interesting development is the syncing of the Dutch and Belgian Plus magazine. Instead of the previous 12 staff, they currently have 4 people working on the Belgium magazine. As a result, about 80% of the magazine is synced for both countries, with minor distinctions. e.g. a World Cup article is customized for the Dutch team and the Belgian team.	
Mark Mackintosh - Columbus Magazine	Columbus Magazine is a travel-focused magazine and online platform, featuring inspiring photography, exceptional design, and carefully curated content. Their print magazine is distributed with about 17,000 copies, reaching mostly a 50+ audience, their newsletter is sent out to 74,000 contacts. Via their website they reach a younger target group.	



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	For the second half of 2026 they have planned a roadtrip edition, (with the plan to highlight Route 66) and one about hiking (where they want to talk about the National Park Pass). August is when they plan a brainstorm to determine the topics for next year. Based on that we can submit developments/updates, to get featured in the magazine.	
Erik Bogaards - PLUS magazine	The magazine has grown to be the largest monthly magazine in the Benelux with 150.000 print copies, largely attracts an audience aged 70+. Most newsletter readers are 60+ (distributed to 350,000 contacts) and on social media Plus Magazine reaches an 50+ age audience. The themes for each magazine are rather broad, ensuring there is always a match with certain health, money, leisure or cultural topics. This audience has the time and the money to travel. They see a big shift to multi-generation travel inspiration, that is of interest among their readership, e.g. 70+ that want to travel with their grandchildren. They include a 'reiswijzer' in every edition, which often includes travel tips, suggestions or a fun fact. They will potentially use input from a press release in this.	

Trade contacts

Contacts	Interests / Status	Follow-up
Dirk de Bruijne & Christian Jabor - Aeroglobe	Aeroglobe announced an expansion of its portfolio, effective September 1, with the addition of AustraliaPlus and NewZealandPlus. The company also introduced Rotu25, a new brand dedicated exclusively to the travel trade. Developed in response to demand from travel advisors, Rotu25 provides industry professionals with access to the same destination knowledge and expertise that has supported Aeroglobe's consumer brands for many years.	
Paul Backer - Tioga Tours	Paul let us know that he has merged his businesses with Perry from Travelhome. They now collectively own 20% of the company, the majority was bought by investor 819 Capital Partners in 2025. They won't send out an official press release, as they don't want to confuse their clients. The two brands (Tioga Tours and Travelhome) will still continue under these names. Paul says about 70-80% of their bookings are B2C. The other part is through their B2B brand Fly to the West. He would prefer to keep this balance, as selling to consumers is "way more fun"!	
Danielle Goedkoop - Brand USA	In August (19-28) Brand USA is hosting a FAM, in partnership with United Airlines, to showcase a more unexplored section of Route 66. They will be recruiting 7 key Senior Product Managers from the Netherlands, targeting top-selling companies such as Tioga Tours, Travel Trend, Travelhome, Exit Reizen and Style in Travel. upon arrival in Chicago, they will drive to Missouri, stopping in St. Louis and Springfield.	
Olivier Dewit - NAAR bespoke	It was interesting to get a trade perspective from Olivier, working for NAAR Bespoke Travel, a fully B2B focused operator. He reported that they see a drop in sales across all operators in Europe, but in France sales have really collapsed. Further, North America is their expertise, but they don't offer this destination exclusively. Currently the increase in booking for Europe is not compensating for the lacking numbers of America bookings.	
Alexander van Ryckeghem - United Airlines	United has seen a last-minute boost in bookings, making the summer results look rather good, while also saying that autumn and winter will become more difficult.	



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Olivier van den broucke - USA travel	He positively looks ahead to 2027. In his view, many clients are using the current political situation as a reason to postpone travel, while the weaker economy remains the more significant factor. He believes that travelers who are not choosing the U.S. right now are not necessarily choosing alternative destinations such as Europe either. Instead, many are staying home and saving up for next year.	
Sonia Groot - DiscoverAble	Sonia is the founder of DiscoverAble and works as a travel agent focussing on accessible travel. Their platform further functions as a travel blog. Sonia is driven by countless of personal challenges her family faced why traveling, since her mother is wheelchair-bound. All bookings are made through Buitengewoon Reizen, the largest accessible travel specialist touroperator.	
Gerda van 't Land - freelytravel.com	With Gerda van 't Land retiring from her job at Buitengewoon Reizen she is continuing her mission, through her new brand Freely Travel. While the official release is set to happen later this year, the focus will be on training and education of both touroperators, same as tourism destiantions/hotel etc.	





IV. Newsletter

Newsletter to the trade & media

We will resume with the newsletters in September based on the input from the GNP partners. Each newsletter will feature all 9 partners and is based on the following topics.

Month	Topic
September	Sunrise to Sundown: Photo Ready Road Trips in the South
October	Hidden Jukebox Joints & Honky-Tonk Nights Across the South
November	Local Flavor Trails: Markets, Makers & Culinary Experiences
December	Southern Stars & Storylines
January	Blues, BBQ & Backroads: Following the Soundtrack of the South
February	Historic Main Streets: Southern Towns Worth the Detour
March	Water Adventures of the South: Rivers, Springs & Coastal Escapes
April	The Southern Sandwich Trail: Po'boys, BBQ & Biscuits
May	The South's Most Scenic National & State Parks
June	Authentic Southern Experiences Travelers Can't Get Anywhere Else





V. Social media

Social media posts are shared continuously throughout the year. Every month 9 posts are shared, both on Facebook and Instagram, highlighting each of the GNP partners in each post. For the Rhythms of the South posts, we rotate between the three cities each month. The contents of the posts are based on each month's newsletter theme, but is carefully adapted for the Benelux audience. We focus on creating an inspiring and varied content mix that highlights the unique character of each state and showcases the diversity of the Travel South region.

Although no newsletters are published during the summer months, we will remain active on social media by repurposing content from previous newsletter themes to keep the region top of mind.

Social media strategy

Last fiscal we noticed that no new Facebook followers were being registered for the Benelux page, despite all our efforts. It was later determined that the issue with the tracking is caused by all international pages linking to larger, overarching Travel South USA page. It was then decided to start the new fiscal year, with a new Facebook page. This fresh start also led to an adjustment in our social media strategy, placing a strong emphasis on growing our Facebook followers. Once we have established a consistent growth in Facebook followers, we will shift more focus back to Instagram. The new strategy will be closely monitored, with adjustments made when necessary.

Budget allocation

75% of our monthly budget is allocated to growing our Facebook following through advertisements. The remaining 25% is used to promote individual feed posts, increasing engagement, and generating additional reach and views, across both social media platforms. This will be the approach for at least the first and second quarter.

Additional efforts

In addition to advertisements and feed posts, we actively work to grow our following. We invite everyone who interacts with our Facebook posts to follow our Facebook page and engage with every comment received on both platforms. We also share daily Instagram Stories featuring GNP partners on a rotating basis. All Stories are saved in Highlights to extend their visibility.

Our social media pages will be promoted more prominently in our upcoming newsletters. During the upcoming Joker Reisbeurs we are likely organizing a giveaway to further encourage people to follow our page.



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Current results

If we compare the “old” and “new” Facebook page, we see the following results. To ensure a fair comparison, the results for the old Facebook page are based on June, the last full month in which paid post promotions were active. The results for the new Facebook page are based on July, the first full month with paid post promotions.

	Average views*	Average organic views	Average engagement*
Old page	588	67	57
New page	315	112	34

It's important to note that the overall budget has not changed, but the way it is allocated has. On the new page, we currently use around a quarter of the previous boosting budget for individual posts, with the majority now being invested in follower campaigns. It is promising to see the strong results of the new page, while considering the lower lower budget, and smaller follower base to begin with.

Most notably, the new page generates significantly more organic views (112 vs. 67), indicating that the content is reaching more people without paid promotion. This provides a strong foundation for future growth. As the page continues to gain followers and advertising efforts increase, we expect both overall reach and engagement to continue improving.

With the new page performing well, we recommend ending the double posting on the old page and fully transitioning our efforts and activities to the new Facebook page.

Followers and looking forward

We closely monitor follower growth across both social media platforms, with particular attention given to our new Facebook page. Our KPIs for the upcoming fiscal year are:

- **Facebook:** reach 300 followers by the end of June.
- **Instagram:** reach 700 followers by the end of June.

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Facebook	66											
Instagram	511											

* Follower count is noted at the end of the month.





VI. Market Update

Changing booking behavior driven by geopolitical uncertainty

According to the TUI Group, holidays continue to be a high priority for consumers despite ongoing geopolitical challenges and dynamic market conditions. During the first six months of its financial year, the company welcomed 12.8 million travelers, an increase of 200,000 compared to the same period last year.

TUI notes that broader geopolitical developments, including the conflict in the Middle East, continue to create uncertainty in the market. Combined with concerns related to fuel and aviation, this is influencing consumer behavior. In this environment, the company emphasizes that package holidays continue to be the preferred choice for many travelers, offering reassurance amid ongoing uncertainty.

Arrival numbers first half of 2026

Preliminary visitor arrival figures for the first half of 2026 show a year-over-year decline compared to the same period in 2025. Visitor arrivals decreased from 161,026 to 142,905 in Q1 (-11.3%), while Q2 recorded a larger decline, from 237,617 to 201,635 (-15.1%). Overall, visitor arrivals from the Benelux, for the first half of the year totaled 344,540, representing a 13.6% decrease compared to 398,643 during the same period in 2025.

Solo travel continues to gain popularity

Solo travel is becoming an increasingly important segment within the Dutch travel market. Recent booking data from Transavia shows that bookings made by solo travelers increased by 30% between 2024 and 2026, pointing to a clear structural trend rather than a temporary shift.

According to the airline, nearly half of all bookings made during the first quarter of 2026 were for solo travelers, despite this traditionally being a quieter booking period. Freedom and flexibility are cited as the primary motivations, allowing travelers to choose their own pace, itinerary, and experiences. At the same time, solo travel does not necessarily mean traveling alone throughout the journey, as many travelers connect with others through guided excursions, workshops, and shared accommodations.

Millennials and Zillennials are driving this trend, particularly travelers between the ages of 25 and 34. However, solo travel continues to appeal to a broad demographic, with strong participation among women in both younger and older age groups, highlighting the growing appeal of independent travel across the Dutch market.





VII. Activities overview

This chapter provides updates when activities have been executed, what the status is, and whether there are any action points.

Travel Diaries

The confirmed activity with Travel Diaries consists of 2 parts

1. Dedicated Travel South E-book + dedicated Travel South landingpage

Destination landing page

A dedicated page about the Travel South region, in the form of travel guide, to inspire excited travelers with tips, activities and places to stay to plan their next trip. This page will also link to the E-book.

Includes: introduction of the destination, practical information, logo, top activities, 9 SEO-optimized blog posts (one per GNP partner), overnight stay tips and mention of Ambassador tour operators.

Dedicated E-book

Approx. 45 pages, designed by their professional content team, to inspire travelers. Their users and readers can download it free of charge, and we can offer it on our own website and social media as well.

2. E-book Chapter inclusion in E-book 'Unique Destinations'

All input for the dedicated E-book will be repurposed for a 6-10 page chapter in 'Unique Destinations' E-book.

- Focus on key themes: outdoor, food, music, history & culture
- Highlighting all GNP partners

July 26	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July 27
	Collecting input	Writing content	Publishing digital content & indexing		Creation of dedicated E-book + Release of Unique Destinations E-book	Release E-book & meta campaign	Distributing E-book via Benelux newsletter, social media and via Tour operators					



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Joker Reizen

Travel South will be main sponsor at the Joker Reisbeurs. The upcoming edition will take place on September 27th 2026 and they are expecting to welcome approximately 1,300 visitors. The main sponsorship includes:

- Booth + big backdrop
- Destination presentation during the show
- Agent training the night before
- Dedicated social media post (reel or carousel)
- Logo on reisbeurs webpage
- Signature roadtrip on reisbeurs webpage
- Film loop between presentations
- Dedicated newsletter item
- Poster or banner campaign
- Brochure distribution during the Joker Reisbeurs, as well as at regional roadshows and the Vakantiebeurs holiday fair (January/February 2027; approximately 150,000 visitors)

Product Survey

The collection of all data will take place in spring 2027, the final results will be shared before IPW.

Objectives

- Increase the number of tour operators that offer TSUSA product.
- Expand the number of overnight stays offered by tour operators.
- Encourage greater diversity in the cities featured within itineraries.

Visit USA Associations

Frequent and consistent exposure is generated through newsletter inclusions, which are a part of the continued membership that Travel South USA has with Visit USA The Netherlands and Visit USA Belgium.

Visit USA Belgium offers members the opportunity to give a webinar, as part of the membership. Travel South will again be making use of that opportunity this year.

Benelux Trade & Media newsletter

Every month, starting in September, a newsletter is sent out to the Benelux Trade and Media database. Each month focusing on a different theme, highlighting all GNP partners. 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.

Out of Scope

Global Week 2026:

The initial progress report has been shared. An interim updated report will be shared in November 2026, with a final report to follow June 2027.

Global Week 2027:

The upcoming edition will take place from April 21 - 29 in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Travel South International Showcase 2026:

The Benelux delegation consists of 10 tour operators and 1 trade media. Both Rianne & Marjolein will be attending this years' edition.

	Company Name	Country	First Name	Last Name	Title	Post-FAM
1	Travel Trend	NL	Peter	van Veenendaal	Product Manager	Kentucky
2	Travel2America	NL	Edwin	van Delden	Managing Director	Georgia's Legacy
3	Go Amerika / Style in Travel	NL	Corrina	Flink	USA Specialist	Alabama
4	Ustravel	NL	Jose	Kraan	Product & Sales Manager	Georgia's Legacy
5	Exciting West	BE	Annaik	Temmerman	Sales manager	Tennessee Ties
6	Indelible Travel	NL	Paul	Van Harten	Managing Director	<i>tbd</i>
7	van Verre	NL	Irene	Dijkstra	Senior Product Manager	Mississippi
8	Travelhome	NL	Helmi	Ruigrok	Management Team	Arkansas
9	Aeroglobe International	NL	Thjis	Boogaard	Product manager	Arkansas
10	USA Travel	BE	Alyson	Kersten	Travel Consultant	Mississippi

11	Reismedia	NL	Rob	Somsen	Editor	Tennessee Ties
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12	Target Travel Marketing	NL	Rianne	van der Linden	Account manager	Alabama
13	Target Travel Marketing	NL	Marjolein	Fraanje	General manager	Kentucky



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Partner opt-ins

This year, we would like to introduce additional partner opt-in opportunities alongside the confirmed activities. Optional activities allow partners (e.g. cities or attractions) to further increase their visibility within the Benelux market. By offering these opt-ins as part of a larger proposed activity, we can ensure they are implemented in a strategic and effective way, rather than as a standalone or uncoordinated project.

Partner opt-in Joker Reizen

- Newsletter feature (75,000 subscribers)
- Inclusion partner slide in online travel presentation
- Part of content to win a travelvoucher of 2,500 EUR
- Paid & organic social media campaigns (1,000,000 targeted impressions)
- Extended length of stay in Joker itineraries for participating partners
- Brochure distribution at Joker Reisbeurs

Costs: 3,100 USD per partner

Partner opt-in Travel Diaries

- Dedicated partner blog
- Mention of tip/suggestion in dedicated Travel South E-book

Costs: 2,100 USD per partner

