CANADA REPORT

September 2026

Travel South USA

Prepared By:

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ABOUT TSUSA

Global Partner Programming

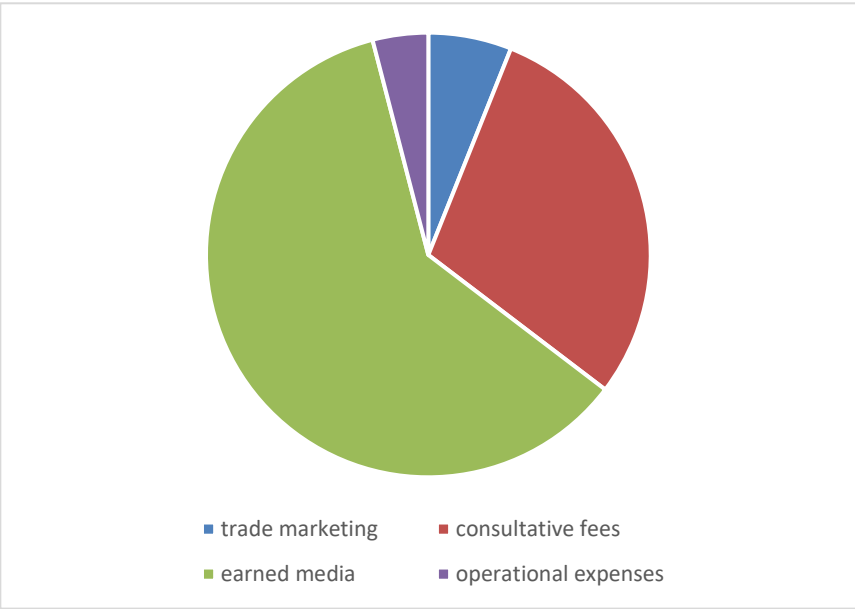
Canada represents one of the most important international source markets for the United States, underpinned by deep socio-cultural ties, aligned values, geographic proximity, and one of the most integrated economic relationships in the world. The efficient movement of people across the border remains essential to prosperity and competitiveness, and travel continues to be a natural extension of these longstanding connections.

Canada has experienced economic headwinds, with affordability concerns and cautious consumer spending influencing travel decisions. However, recent data indicates positive signs of market recovery as travel demand begins to rebound from spring into summer, with Canadians demonstrating renewed confidence and continued interest in U.S. destinations. While consumers remain value-conscious, travel continues to be a priority—particularly among higher-value and experience-driven travelers seeking meaningful leisure experiences.

Strong air connectivity and proximity continue to position Canada as a resilient and strategically important market. As recovery progresses, success will depend on a more targeted approach to marketing, recognizing the distinct behaviors, motivations, and opportunities across Canadian provinces and consumer demographics. Tailored strategies that align messaging with regional travel patterns, household priorities, and audience interests will be essential to maximizing engagement and conversion.

While overall volumes remain below earlier forecasts as households continue to navigate broader socio-economic pressures, Canada continues to deliver a meaningful share of travelers who are active, informed, and willing to visit the United States. Canadian travelers are experienced exploring the U.S., with strong interest in regional diversity, local cuisine, authentic experiences, and itineraries that blend iconic attractions with opportunities for discovery. By delivering relevant, timely, and value-driven messaging, destinations can continue to strengthen their connection with Canadian audiences and capture renewed demand.

FY 27 Canada GPP Resource Allocations



- 6% Trade Marketing
- 29% Consultative Fees
- 60% Earned Media
- 4% Operational Expenses

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- FY27 social content strategy will continue to prioritize short-form video and seasonal storytelling, with Reels serving as a key format for showcasing the Southern USA's fall landscapes, road trips, culinary experiences and authentic destination experiences to Canadian travelers.
- The Local Talent Spotlight series will remain a core content pillar, featuring local experts and personalities who provide an authentic perspective on the Southern USA. The series will continue to complement destination-focused content and build a more personality-driven connection with Canadian audiences.
- Content will continue to leverage timely seasonal themes, including fall foliage, scenic road trips, outdoor experiences and Southern barbecue, creating timely and inspirational content that aligns with Canadian travelers' interests and encourages discovery of the region.
- Newsletters resumed in September.

		July	August	September	Q1 Total	Q2 Total	Q3 Total	FY 26/27 Total
9 Partners AL/AR/KY/ MS/MO/NC SC/TN ROTS	**Canada**							
	Travel Trade							
	Trade Meetings/Trainings	3	7	9	19			
	International Showcase & FAMS	6	1	0	7			
	Communication & PR							
	Media Meetings	11	8	9	28			
	Total number of articles published	3	2	2	7			
	Impressions	504,648	1,003,090	6,677,883	8,185,621			
	Global Media Marketplace & FAMS	0	0	0	0			
	TSUSA PR Newsletters	0	0	1	1			
	Facebook	4	4	4	12			
	Instagram	4	4	4	12			

II. Comms & PR

Meetings with media, coverage opportunities, media releases, contacts, earned media evaluation, clippings, and others.

News Releases & Pitching

- Newsletter distributed: SUNRISE TO SUNDOWN: PHOTO READY ROAD TRIPS IN THE SOUTH
- CoverageBook Link - https://travelsouthusa.coveragebook.com/b/5ffa7b1ee0b64d97


DRIFT

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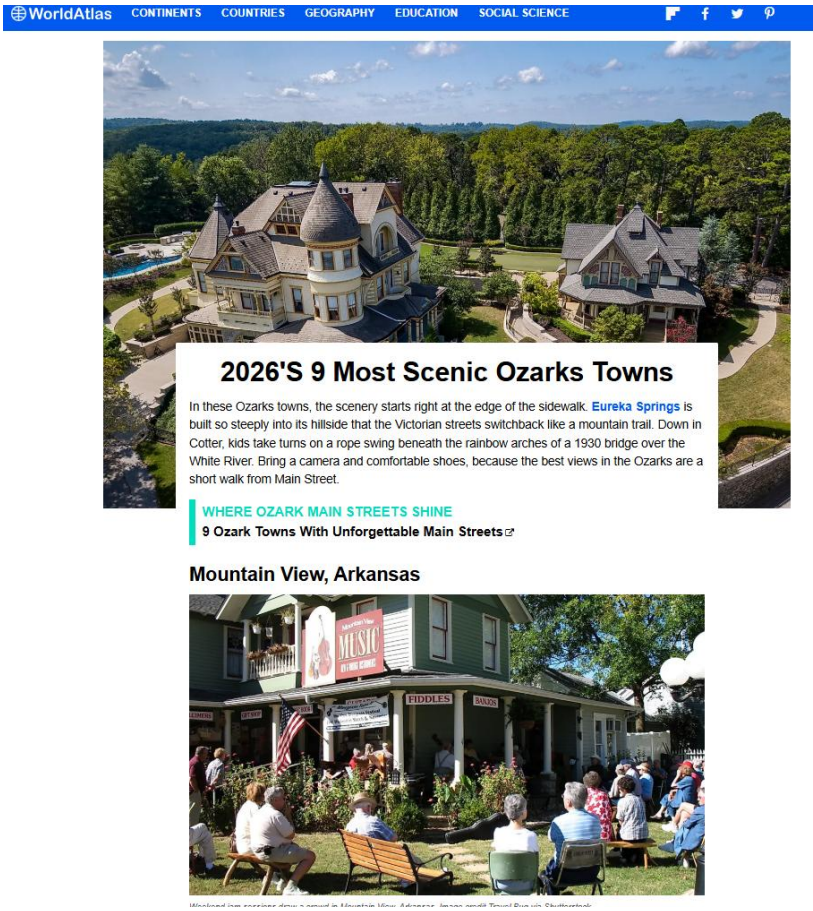
#WHERETONEXT USA

4 Southern Mountain Escapes Worth the Splurge

Pigeon Forge, Asheville, Highlands, and Blue Ridge each offer a different kind of splurge-worthy Southern Mountain escape. Think private theater cabins, hydrotherapy spas, white-tablecloth dining, vineyard views, and guided outdoor adventures.

To get the most out of your Southern Mountain escape, the trick is knowing which town fits your travel style and when to go for the best experience. This article breaks down four elevated highland getaways, with ideal seasons and signature experiences for each.


WorldAtlas CONTINENTS COUNTRIES GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION SOCIAL SCIENCE

2026'S 9 Most Scenic Ozarks Towns

In these Ozarks towns, the scenery starts right at the edge of the sidewalk. Eureka Springs is built so steeply into its hillside that the Victorian streets switchback like a mountain trail. Down in Cotter, kids take turns on a rope swing beneath the rainbow arches of a 1930 bridge over the White River. Bring a camera and comfortable shoes, because the best views in the Ozarks are a short walk from Main Street.

WHERE OZARK MAIN STREETS SHINE

9 Ozark Towns With Unforgettable Main Streets

Mountain View, Arkansas

Social Media

Title	Date published	Status	Reach	Views	Viewers
 🔥 Barbecue isn't just a meal in the ... Reel • Crossposted • Tra... Boost	Wed Sep 30, 4:56pm		0	9	0
 Fall is calling from the mountains o... Reel • Crossposted • Tra... Boost	Fri Sep 25, 3:46pm		1	110	1
 🍂 Fall road trip, anyone? Chase th... Multi media • Crossposted • Boost	Tue Sep 22, 3:24pm		0	24	0
 🍂 MEET THE LOCAL: LINDSEY BARR ... Carousel • travelsouthusa.ca Boost	Thu Sep 3, 12:46pm		10	28	--
 🍂 MEET THE LOCAL: LINDSEY BARR ... Multi media • Travel South USA - Ca... Boost	Thu Sep 3, 12:46pm		0	0	0

September Insights:

- Instagram continues to demonstrate stronger performance than Facebook, generating the majority of reach and views across the content reviewed. Facebook posts recorded no reach or views during the reporting period.
- Top Performer: The Sept. 25 Reel, *"Fall is calling from the mountains…"*, was the strongest-performing post, generating 110 views and 1 reach.
- Reels continue to be the strongest format for generating views, with the Sept. 25 Reel significantly outperforming the other content published during the period.
- The "MEET THE LOCAL: LINDSEY BARR" Instagram carousel generated 28 views and a reach of 10, indicating that the Local Talent Spotlight format is contributing to audience engagement and providing an additional content format beyond short-form video.

Brand USA Travel Week x Discover America Canada Media Day

- Confirmed participation at the media day event on October 28 in Toronto.
- Waiting on appointment list to identify key messages and pitch topics.

Media Mission & Consumer Show

- Media-only Toronto event will take place March 31-April 1, 2027

Consumer Show: T.O. Food & Drink Fest

- Now in its 5th year, the T.O. Food & Drink Festival attracts 16,2000 attendees (professionals aged 19–49 from Toronto/GTA).
- Culinary tourism is a core festival theme, making it a natural fit for Travel South USA's food identity.
- Dates: April 2–4, 2027
- Goal is to buy-in with a 'Taste the South' Pavillion (minimum 8 partner booths)
- Option includes culinary demos and mixology program.

PR Newsletter to consumer media professionals

Status	Topic	Numbers delivered	Open rate
Travel South USA Newsletter Series #11	Sunrise to Sundown: Photo Ready Road Trips in the South  Featured: Kentucky, North Carolina, New Orleans, South Carolina, and Tennessee	431	39.5%

Media Meetings (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Interest/Status	Follow-up/Next Step
Debbie Olsen, Freelance	Connected with Debbie regarding potential U.S. travel content and opportunities relevant to her Alberta audience. She expressed interest in further exploring opportunities within the region with a focus on concerts and outdoor experiences.	Follow up with information and vet for GMM 2027.
Lucas Aykroyd, Freelance	Reconnected with Lucas regarding potential U.S. travel content, with interest in unique and lesser-known experiences. We will continue sharing relevant story opportunities as his U.S. coverage resumes.	Follow up with information and vet for GMM 2027.
Tommy Dion, Le Cuisinomane	Followed up on Tommy's interest in culinary-focused U.S. experiences and any relevant Canadian (QC) chefs working in the region. Shared relevant activities and experiences for consideration.	Follow up with information, confirm timing and vet for GMM 2027
Jaime Damak, Freelance Broadcast	Connected with Jaime regarding potential U.S. broadcast opportunities and future travel coverage. She will provide feedback on upcoming segment opportunities and potential travel timing.	Follow up required on feedback.
Brendan Fitzpatrick, Indie 88	Discussed potential opportunities for U.S.-focused content and audience engagement, including possible client partnerships.	Follow up on proposal for potential FY27/28 partnership opportunities.
Nick Krewen, Toronto Star	Met with Nick to discuss the Canadian event at the Grand Ole Opry and potential coverage opportunities. He expressed interest in developing a broader travel and entertainment story.	Follow up on assignment and confirmation with the Toronto Star.
David Webb, Publisher, Explore Media	David is receptive to U.S. travel opportunities, with a particular interest in destinations and itineraries that incorporate outdoor experiences. We discussed potential opportunities beyond traditional destination coverage, including outdoor	Follow up on potential Travel South USA press visit opportunities for 2027.

	adventure and wellness.	
Isabelle Vauclaire, Curiocity	Based in Vancouver, Isabelle is open to U.S. travel opportunities and events, with plans to increase her travel over the coming year. She is interested in receiving information on relevant destinations, experiences and press opportunities.	Share upcoming Travel South USA opportunities and assess potential fit for 2027 media visits.
Analise Saavedra, Ottawa Life Magazine/Freelance	Analise is temporarily based in Denver and continues to contribute to *Ottawa Life Magazine*, making her well positioned for U.S.-focused travel coverage.	Identify and share relevant Travel South USA opportunities for Q2 2027.

III. Trade

International Showcase 2026

NAME	COMPANY	STATUS
Laurence Despiegel	Toundra Voyages	Confirmed & Registered
Caroline Poulin	Voyages Gendron	Confirmed & Registered
Tanya Fuller	Goway Travel	Confirmed & Registered
Terry Kaszas	CAA Saskatchewan	Confirmed & Registered
Stacey Ludlow	Kensington Tours	Confirmed & Registered
Dan Sombach	Alberta Motorcoach Association	Confirmed & Registered
John Kirk	Travel Market Report (media)	Confirmed & Registered
Kathryn Folliott	Travelweek (media)	Confirmed & Registered

Trade Meetings (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/Next Step
Jean-Michel Gendron, Marc-Olivier Gagné, Voyages Gendron	Noted that travelers are increasingly motivated by experiences, particularly sports, music and major events, when choosing where to travel. Experience-led packages are filling more quickly than packages focused solely on the destination, with South Carolina cited as an example of a destination performing well when paired with a golf-focused package.	Will provide Voyages Gendron with a comprehensive list of upcoming sports events, festivals, concerts, music events and other experience-driven opportunities across the region. This will help them identify opportunities to incorporate Southern destinations into future experience-led packages, with package inclusions and resulting opportunities serving as key KPIs. Discussion of hosting a virtual webinar to advisors in Q2.
Etienne Morissette, Omnitour	Omnitour's focus on customized educational group travel presents an opportunity to introduce more Southern USA destinations and experiences into student itineraries. The company already offers customized U.S. programs built around activities and attractions, creating an opportunity to explore TSUSA experiences that align with educational, cultural and experiential travel.	Will share relevant educational, cultural, music and sports experiences that could be incorporated into future Omnitour programs, with the goal of identifying new Southern USA itinerary opportunities and increasing group travel to the region.

Harold Ho, Royal Scenic	Royal Scenic currently sells New Orleans as a standalone four-day U.S. city package. The meeting created an opportunity to look at how New Orleans can serve as an entry point to a broader Southern USA itinerary, particularly by adding music, culinary and cultural experiences that give travelers a stronger reason to extend their stay or visit additional Southern destinations.	Will share specific New Orleans and surrounding Southern USA experiences, events and destination combinations that Royal Scenic can evaluate for future packages. The objective is to move beyond a standalone New Orleans product and identify opportunities for multi-destination Southern packages that can be marketed to Canadian travellers.
Lise Seprus, Senior Discovery Tours	Highlighted an opportunity to tailor Southern USA travel specifically to mature Canadian travelers, with a focus on the region's heritage, nostalgia and traditions. Classic Southern music, including country, blues and gospel, along with historic towns, culinary traditions, scenic rail journeys and iconic Southern experiences could provide strong themes for group itineraries that appeal to travelers looking for culture and a deeper connection to the destination.	Explore developing a "Classic South" group-travel concept for Senior Discovery Tours, tailored towards mature travelers bringing together destinations and experiences centered on Southern music heritage, history, food and traditions. The goal will be to identify a compelling itinerary concept that Senior Discovery Tours could consider for a future Canadian group departure.
Julie Hare, Trafalgar	Trafalgar already has a substantial Southern USA offering through its Tastes & Sounds of the South itinerary, which travels from Nashville through Memphis and Natchez to New Orleans and is specifically built around music, food and cultural experiences. The itinerary currently includes experiences such as the Grand Ole Opry, RCA Studio B, Graceland, Sun Studios and the New Orleans School of Cooking. This demonstrates a clear opportunity to build on an existing successful product model by identifying additional Southern experiences and destinations that could strengthen future Canadian programming.	Provide Trafalgar with a focused list of new Southern USA experiences, events and destination developments that complement its existing music and culinary programming. The goal is to identify opportunities for future itinerary enhancements, new inclusions and potential additional product marketed to Canadian travellers.
Nana Akua Ampere, Brightspark	Brightspark's student travel model is particularly aligned with the experience-led trend discussed in the meeting, as its programming is built around educational experiences rather than simply visiting a destination. This presents	Provide Brightspark with a curated list of Southern USA experiences specifically suited to student groups, including music venues, sporting experiences, educational attractions, festivals and cultural programming. The goal is to

	opportunities across the South in areas such as music, performing arts, sports, civil rights history and STEM which are core pillars in the region.	identify several bookable experiences that can be developed into future Brightspark itineraries and increase student travel from Canada to the South when sentiment gets better.
Shaukath Fattah, CAA Niagara	The conversation with CAA Niagara focused on the opportunity to build Southern USA group travel around specific events and experiences that give customers a clear reason to travel, rather than relying on destination awareness alone. With CAA Niagara already operating a group travel program, there is an opportunity to explore Southern itineraries tied to major music, sports, culinary and cultural events that can create a stronger booking hook for its members.	Work with CAA Niagara to identify one or two experience-led trip concepts that could be considered for a future Journeys program. Will also explore opportunities to coordinate destination partner support, with the goal of moving the conversation from general interest toward a tangible group departure opportunity.
Simone James, TravelBrands	The meeting focused on the opportunity to reach a much broader network of Canadian travel advisors by positioning the South around specific, packageable travel experiences. Rather than focusing solely on destination education, the opportunity is to give advisors compelling reasons to sell the region, particularly around major sporting events, music, festivals, food and seasonal travel.	Explore hosting a dedicated advisor webinar with TravelBrands focused on selling the region through experience-led travel. The session could highlight key bookable experiences, destination combinations and timely travel hooks, with the goal of generating increased advisor awareness and package inquiries.
Dianna Lo, Kensington Tours	Focused on the opportunity to position the South as a more customized and experiential luxury option, particularly for travelers looking for distinctive experiences rather than traditional sightseeing. There is potential to build itineraries around private culinary experiences, music and cultural access, outdoor adventures and lesser-known Southern destinations that can be tailored to individual interests.	Explore arranging a destination-focused training or inspiration session for Kensington's product team, showcasing unique Southern experiences and itinerary combinations that could be adapted for FIT and luxury travelers at their Toronto office. The objective is to identify specific experiences that Kensington could incorporate into future customized itineraries and create new product opportunities.

III. Newsletters

Trade Newsletter to tour operators and travel agent professionals

Status	Topic	Numbers delivered	Open rate	Click-thru rate
Travel South USA Newsletter Series #11	Sunrise to Sundown: Photo Ready Road Trips in the South  Featured: Kentucky, North Carolina, New Orleans, South Carolina, and Tennessee	4.865	31.74%	64.67%

IV. Market Update

Economic Landscape

- Canada's economy stalled in July with 0% growth, StatCan says (Global News)
- Deloitte Canada cuts GDP growth forecast by 20% as tariffs grip economy amid Trump's trade war (CBC News)
- Canada's GDP growth paused in July but still on track for Q3 gain (RBC)
- 'They were very bad': Trump says Canada is being 'taught a little lesson' as trade war continues (CTV News)

Airlift

- Flair CEO says budget airlines are feelings the effects of sky-high jet fuel costs (CBC News)
- Incoming Air Canada CEO's current airline engaged in 'anti-labour' behaviour, says Canadian union head (CBC News)
- Air Canada targets global growth with new routes, while U.S. travel demand still sags (BNN Bloomberg)
- Air Canada, Air Transat, Sunwing, WestJet named in Quebec class-action lawsuit over vacation packages (CTV News)
- Flair Airlines secures $76M bailout from Ottawa as fuel costs soar (CBC.ca)

Market Insights and data

- Canadian travel demand remains strong, with 67% of Canadians planning or having taken a leisure trip this summer (May-Oct).
- This share is consistent with expectations at the start of the season and above 2025 levels.
- Travellers are increasingly seeking value, unique experiences, and time with family and friends when choosing destinations.
- Financial pressures continue to influence behaviour, with cost remaining the leading barrier for non-travellers and driving increased use of cost-saving measures among travellers.
- Outbound travel remains steady at approximately 28% of Canadians, though destination preferences continue to shift.
- The US remains the top outbound destination (33%), but its share is below previous years, while demand for Europe/UK (30%) and Asia-Pacific (13%) has grown.
- Jan-July 2026 saw a little more than 18 million Canadians return home from an overnight outbound trip - a 1.5 per cent decline compared to 2025.
- The volume of overnight transborder trips fell 6.9 per cent compared to 2025, while activity to non-U.S. (overseas) destinations grew 4.1 per cent.
- Activity to non-U.S. destinations accounted for half of all overnight trips during the period, compared to 47 per cent in 2025.
- The first half of the 2026 summer travel season (May-July) saw 3.9 million Canadians return home from an overnight transborder trip, a 3.9 per cent increase compared to last summer, but a 23.6% drop compared to 2024.
- Canadians also took over 3 million overseas trips during the period, a 0.9 per cent increase compared to 2025, and an 11.1 per cent increase over 2024.

V. Actions

1. International Showcase

- Secured buyers and two trade journalists for the 2026 show in Nashville. Obtained media sheets and distributed insurance forms to attendees. **Next steps:** share airfare spreadsheet for approval and book airfare.

2. Social Media

- Request that state partners share information on local talent (chefs, musicians, tour guides, etc.) for bi-weekly “local talent” spotlight

3. Ongoing media meetings and pitching to obtain coverage

- Newsletters resumed in September. October newsletter “Hidden Jukebox Joints & Honky-Tonk Nights Across the South” in progress

4. Brand USA Travel Week

- Registered and completed online profile. Prepare pitch notes for media day on Oct 28.

5. Media Mission & Consumer Show

- Vetting partner interest to confirm buy-in for the T.O. Food & Drink Fest
- Sourcing venue options

6. Global Media Marketplace & Summit

- Identified target media for 2027