



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Tourism Industry Developments In West Virginia

I have long believed that West Virginia is a prime site for the development of a viable and productive tourism industry.

In that conviction, I have worked consistently to lay foundations for a growth-oriented tourism industry in West Virginia by adding funds toward completing the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) corridor highway system, for the development of the New River Gorge National River and the Harpers Ferry Historical Park, for tourism-related improvements in the Monogahela National Forest, and for purchase of the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

According to recent statistics published by the West Virginia Division of Tourism and Parks, these efforts are paying dividends, and increasing numbers of American vacationers are taking advantage of West Virginia as a tourism mecca.

In March, the Division's hotline registered nearly 106,000 telephone calls from people inquiring about tourism and vacation opportunities in West Virginia, up 139 percent compared to last year.

Incidentally, in 1991, 57 percent of those who called the hotline eventually made reservations at one or more of our state's tourist facilities.

These statistics are encouraging endorsements of West Virginia's tourism-industry potential.

But to take fuller advantage of that potential, and to expand the tourism industry in West Virginia, I added funds to appropriation bills to establish and operate the Appalachian Tourism Research and Development Center (ATRDC) at Concord College in Mercer County, in cooperation with West Virginia University.

Since success in the tourism and hospitality industries is not automatic, ATRDC offers a range of services to communities and entrepreneurs interested in developing area or individual tourism facilities throughout West Virginia and the other Appalachian states. These services include training workshops for those hoping to launch tourism in their own communities. Persons seeking more information on the scope of ATRDC's services can contact the Center at telephone number (304) 384-6032.

West Virginia is a sleeping tourism industry giant. I shall continue promoting our state's tourism potential as a means of creating new job opportunities and greater prosperity throughout West Virginia.

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