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Sent: Wednesday, September 14, 2016 1:59 PM

Subject: Deal: Economic impact of Georgia's tourism industry hits record \$58.9 billion

For immediate release
Sept. 14, 2016

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Deal: Economic impact of Georgia's tourism industry hits record \$58.9 billion

Gov. Nathan Deal today announced that Georgia's tourism industry generated a record \$58.9 billion economic impact in the last year at the 2016 Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference in College Park. Deal recognized several of the state's top tourism professionals at the annual industry event, which was hosted by the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) and the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus.

"Tourism has become one of Georgia's top economic generators, as the industry supports more than 439,000 jobs and surpassed \$58.9 billion in economic impact last year," said Deal. "In 2015 alone, a record 100 million visitors came to Georgia to explore our mountains, beaches, big cities and small towns. With a thriving tourism sector and new attractions coming across the state, I have no doubt that next year will follow the trend of exceeding our expectations."

The 2016 award recipients, nominated by the Georgia tourism industry, include:

- The Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Champion Product Development Award was presented to The Georgia Grown Trail 41 Association.
- The Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Champion Private Sector Award was presented to Xavier Roberts from Babyland General Hospital.
- The Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Champion Partnership Award was presented to Georgia Grown.
- The Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Champion in Government was presented to Commissioner Gary Black from the Georgia Department of Agriculture.
- The Paul Broun Award for Marketing Initiatives was awarded to Booth Western Art Museum for the Ansel Adams: Before & After promotion campaign.
- The Larry Allen Tourism Leadership Award was presented to Leah Poole from the Liberty County Convention & Visitor Bureau.
- The Al Burris Award for Creative Expression was awarded to the Dunwoody Convention & Visitors Bureau.
- The Paul Nelson Award for Outdoor Recreation and Preservation was awarded to the Augusta Canal Authority.
- The Tom Kilgore Lifetime Achievement Award was awarded to Ellen Archer at the Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"A growing, healthy tourism industry is critical to creating a pro-business climate in Georgia by improving our quality of life, accommodations, transportation, arts and entertainment," said GDEcD Commissioner Chris Carr. "Today we celebrate our dedicated tourism partners from across the state for their contributions to the industry and for ensuring our destinations are on the minds of travelers around the world."

The Governor's Tourism Conference provides an opportunity to educate members of the tourism industry about travel-and tourism-related issues on a national and statewide level, focusing on emerging trends, current tourism efforts and future initiatives. The 2017 conference will take place Sept. 10 – Sept. 13 in Jekyll Island.

About GDEcD

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) is the state's sales and marketing arm, the lead agency for attracting new business investment, encouraging the expansion of existing industry and small businesses, align workforce education and training with in-demand jobs, locating new markets for Georgia products, attracting tourists to Georgia, and promoting the state as a destination for arts and location for film, music and digital entertainment projects, as well as planning and mobilizing state resources for economic development. www.georgia.org

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Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Director Ellen Archer, recipient of the 2016 Tom Kilgore Lifetime Achievement Award, pictured with Governor Deal, Georgia Department of Economic Development Commissioner Chris Carr, and Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus President Jay Markwalter, director of sales for the Augusta CVB.