

RALEIGH, N.C. (June 1, 2023) — To elevate North Carolina to the top as an East Coast destination, [Visit North Carolina](#) has launched a new marketing campaign with a straightforward message: “For Real, Visit NC.” The campaign draws on research that shows an alignment of traveler preferences with the state’s wealth of natural wonder, authentic attractions, creative culture, colorful history and genuine character.

“The concept of ‘For Real’ extends beyond North Carolina’s signature scenic beauty to cover just about everything travelers experience,” said Wit Tuttell, executive director of Visit NC. “Authenticity flows from the spirit of a place, whether through food and drink, nightlife and festivals, immersion in nature, or just enjoying the moment in a memorable setting. It’s an invitation for visitors to come and discover, then return for more.”

Research from [SMARInsights](#) and Charlotte-based [Luquire](#), Visit NC’s agency of record and the creative force behind the campaign, shows a clear preference among travelers for trips that connect with local culture and character over attractions that feel contrived. Grounded by the data, the central marketing campaign leans into humor with a series of ads and video shorts that contrast North Carolina travel experiences with less authentic alternatives.

“Elsewhere, travelers are getting a taste of Southern hospitality in a state where they don’t say ‘y’all,’ “ reads one that’s set at SupperLand restaurant in Charlotte. “Elsewhere, travelers are only watching a live stream,” says another showing an aerial view of paddlers at Croatan National Forest. Tubing in Bryson City, music at The Ramkat in Winston-Salem, hang-gliding on the Outer Banks and a hair-raising ride on Banner Elk’s Wilderness Run Alpine Coaster are also featured.

“Thanks to the breadth and depth of ‘real’ experiences across the state, the campaign’s message allows Visit NC to invite discovery of a variety of places,” Tuttell said. Photos and video from 40 locations, attractions and business in 20 counties have been captured with the campaign’s rollout paced to reflect the distinct appeal of each season. Additional settings will be captured as the campaign advances.

Using the data that informs the campaign, Visit NC will target users based on their location, demographic information and known travel interests. This hypertargeting means that not every potential traveler will see the same ads. Visit NC will reach its audiences through a variety of platforms, including broadcast and streaming video, digital, custom audio content, social media, newsletters and print.

The approach is evident on the VisitNC.com homepage, which invites travelers to “tell us what type of traveler you are, and we’ll make suggestions” with links to ideas for “Uncharted enthusiasts,” “Refined relaxers,” “outdoorsy types” and “family of fun.” With research identifying a rising number of sustainability-minded travelers, summer content will highlight eco-friendly practices at attractions and businesses across the state.

The campaign launches with a total ad buy of \$4.7 million in target markets including Atlanta, Nashville, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Orlando, Fla., and Columbus, Ohio. The total annual media spend for the campaign is projected at \$7 million.

Tuttell sees the campaign as an effective way to increase the value of the state’s tourism industry, which contributed \$2.5 billion in state and local tax revenue and saw \$33.3 billion in visitor spending in 2022. He expects immediate and longer-term payoffs from the “For Real” messaging.

“We want tourism to grow in a balanced and responsible way,” he said. “The campaign is designed to reach visitors who are more likely to stay longer, spend more while they’re here, and return more frequently. With a message that’s grounded in the state’s natural appeal, we look forward to a significant return on investment as well as the satisfaction of sharing what we love most about North Carolina.”

About Visit North Carolina:

Visit North Carolina is part of the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#). Established in 2014, the EDPNC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that oversees the state's efforts in business and job recruitment and retention, international trade, and tourism, film and sports development. The mission of Visit North Carolina is to unify and lead the state in developing North Carolina as a major destination for leisure travel, group tours, meetings and conventions, sports events and film production. For more information on North Carolina’s destinations and travel assets, go to [VisitNC.com](#).

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