

<p>ADVANCE MATERIAL FOR HERITAGE TOURISM MEETING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BYWAY CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN Advisory Committee Meeting #5 – November 29, 2007</p>
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Trends in Cultural Heritage Travel

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines cultural heritage tourism as *“traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.”*

Heritage tourism has seen tremendous growth in the past two decades and now is recognized as a major travel industry segment. According to the 2003 *The Historic/Cultural Traveler* study by the Travel Industry Association (TIA) and Smithsonian magazine, 81% of the U.S. adults who traveled in 2002 were considered cultural heritage travelers. These travelers included historical or cultural activities on almost 217 million person trips, up 13% from 192 million in 1996.

Recent research indicates that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more than other kinds of travelers. According to the Travel Industry Association, cultural heritage travelers:

- **Stay longer** than other types of travelers—5.2 nights compared to 3.4 nights
- **Spend more** than other types of travelers—\$623 per trip compared to \$457
- **Shop more** than other travelers—44% compared to 33%

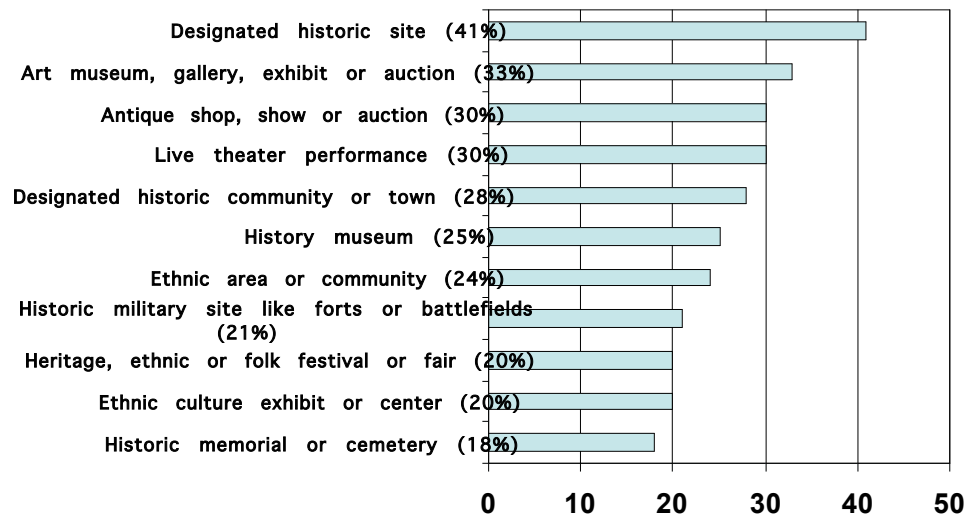
A TIA study of travelers who shop indicates that they are looking for stores they do not have at home (73%), items they cannot get at home (67%), items that represent the destination they are visiting (53%) and a unique shopping atmosphere (52%).

Cultural heritage travelers take frequent trips, with 25% taking three or more trips a year. With a growing interest in more frequent, shorter vacations to destinations closer to home, successful destinations must offer a variety of changing experiences to attract repeat visitation. Travelers to historic and cultural sites are also, in general, slightly older than other travelers and more likely to have a college degree (6 in 10). Four in ten are from baby boomer households. Because cultural heritage tourists tend to be more well-traveled and well-educated than other travelers, they have higher expectations from their travel experiences.

Baby boomers currently make up one of the strongest markets for cultural heritage tourism. Boomers make 241 million household trips each year, and 14% pay \$1,000+ for a vacation. Like all cultural heritage travelers, boomers are more likely to stay in a hotel or motel. In 1998, the National Tour Association completed a study of boomers which predicted *“...because boomers are more experienced travelers, they will expect more from their experiences and terms such as cultural tourism, heritage tourism, sports tourism, active tourism, adventure travel and ecotourism will be commonly used within the next decade.”* A decade later that prediction has come true with a host of niche tourism experiences being marketed to this target audience.

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Participation in historic and/or cultural activities among U.S. Travelers



Like many other sectors of the travel market, cultural heritage travelers are increasingly planning their trips with a shorter lead time. 55% of cultural heritage travelers plan their trips a month or less before traveling. With shorter planning time, the Internet has become an essential marketing tool. At the same time, as busy lifestyles limit the amount of time travelers have for trip planning, an increasing number of decisions are being left until after visitors arrive. Thus, it is still important to have more detailed visitor information and wayfinding tools such as maps easily accessible for visitors after they have arrived at their destination.

Decisions visitors make after arrival include:	
• Restaurants	(48%)
• Shopping areas	(45%)
• Museum/exhibit	(26%)
• Sightseeing tour	(24%)
• Movie	(16%)
• Theme Park	(15%)
• Religious Service	(14%)
• Live theater or performance	(14%)
• Festival or parade	(13%)
• Other activities or attractions	(24%)

Source: Travel Industry Association of America

Tourism marketing materials need to include both “lure” components with appealing images and compelling text designed to convince travelers to choose the destination as well as user-friendly pieces that provide visitors with the directions and information they need once they have made the decision about where to spend their vacation.

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Cultural heritage travelers are most likely to travel by car (68%). They are twice as likely as other U.S. travelers to take a group tour (7% vs. 3%), although the market for group tours is still a relatively small part of travel overall. The group tour industry has found that to capture today's traveler, it is increasingly important to offer value-added tours that provide exclusive opportunities for behind-the-scenes tours or other benefits that travelers would not be able to get on their own.

Cultural heritage travelers are more likely to take part in many different kinds of activities when they are traveling. 17% participate in four or more activities as compared to 5% of all travelers, with nature based attractions such as state or national parks being a strong draw.

Travel to Southern Maryland

The Maryland Office of Tourism defines the state's consumer (leisure) target audience as adults ages 35-64 with a household income of \$60K+, well educated and working in managerial and professional occupations. They have made a trip of more than one day's duration within the United States in the past 12 months which includes business, vacation, weekend travel and short trips.

The primary market is within a 400-mile radius: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia and part of New York, Ohio, Indiana and North Carolina. A secondary market is identified as Maryland residents traveling within their home state. Additional markets are reached through the travel trade: group travel leaders, meeting planners, association managers, travel agents and sporting event managers.

The target audience also has interest in Maryland's special offerings such as the Civil War, Historic National Road, Star-Spangled Banner, sporting events and multicultural sites and events.

Tourism directors in St. Mary's and Charles counties identify a primary drive market audience similar to the statewide market – Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Maryland. The Southern Maryland region draws a lot of day trippers and weekend travelers. While St. Mary's County identifies an audience similar to the statewide profile – baby boomers and seniors interested in maritime and colonial history, Charles County notes that while attracting a similar audience, they also have significant visitation from men, ages 25-35, who come to the area to fish.

Tourism Marketing in Southern Maryland

For the past 14 years, Southern Maryland has been marketed as a region with each county contributing funding for various activities ranging from producing brochures to attending marketplaces for the group tour industry.

With state designation as a heritage area, the partners worked through the Southern Maryland Heritage Area to develop a brand, "Where Time and Tide Meet" and logo for use on marketing materials. In April 2003, the Southern Maryland Heritage Area produced a "5-Year Schedule of Tourism Marketing Projects and Marketing Outreach Programs." The plan included action steps to reach both the resident market and the non-resident (tourist) market.

SMHA maintains a website, www.southernmdisfun.com, which includes suggested itineraries for day trips and a three-day trip through the region (including Charles, St.

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Mary's and Calvert counties). Visitors can also order special interest guides and a map from the website. In addition, the site has links to each county's tourism website.

A key piece to introducing visitors to the region's heritage is the *Southern Maryland Heritage Driving Tours* brochure. This 12-panel, four-color piece includes information for three thematic tours – Religious Heritage, Agricultural and Maritime Heritage and Wars & Conflicts. Each tour has listings of sites related to the theme along with hours/ days of operation and contact information. A large map marks sites along each route along with other information such as the location of visitor information centers.

The Charles County Office of Tourism and St. Mary's County Division of Tourism each maintain websites (www.visitcharlescounty.com and www.stmarysmd.com) which provide extensive information on attractions, accommodations, events, etc. Additionally, visitors can download or order from a selection of brochures on each site, including brochures on each county's churches.

The Maryland Office of Tourism has recently produced a new publication, *Maryland Byways: Explore the Roads Less Traveled.* The 176-page, four color piece includes 19 thematic byway tours. The Religious Freedom Tour in Southern Maryland includes descriptive narrative of a 189-mile route that begins at Port Tobacco and concludes at Point Lookout. Maps outline the roads and stops along the route. Addresses, phone numbers and websites are given for sites along the route. Hours/ days/ months of operation and admission information is not given.

Southern Maryland is also featured in *Destination Maryland: The Official Guide to Maryland State Travel,* published annually by the Maryland Office of Tourism. In addition to advertisements and site listings, the section includes brief text on settlement, Civil War history, recreational opportunities and other features of the area.

The tourism partners worked together in April 2007 to host a "Historic Church and Religious Sites Familiarization Tour" for travel writers. Two writers participated in the two-day tour which included stops in each county.

Ideas for Heritage Tourism Marketing:
From Tourism Offices, Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

As plans have progressed, many ideas have been suggested for interpreting and marketing the byway. Marketing suggestions gathered at advisory committee and public meetings include the following:

- Promote the byway through *Going on Faith*. The bi-monthly publication is produced through Group Travel Leader publications and is targeted to church and religious travel planners. A trade conference and marketplace is also offered to promote destinations directly to tour buyers. (www.goingonfaith.com)
- Add a section to the regional website (www.southermdisfun.com) for travelers to post blogs about their visit and to offer suggested itineraries for other travelers.
- Establish a separate byway website linked to the state tourism, SMHA and county websites.
- Develop a guide specifically for the Religious Freedom Byway.
- Link byway marketing to other special tours and promotions in the region.

Recommendations to Position the Byway for Heritage Tourism Marketing

As interpretive plans for the byway are implemented, the byway will be an appealing destination for visitors who will come to learn about the area's history and also to enjoy the scenery, recreational activities and other activities. Reaching the targeted audience is an ongoing effort that builds on the successful marketing partnerships that have already been developed through the Southern Maryland Heritage Area.

Following are recommendations for promoting the byway. In some cases the activities will be a part of already established promotions while in other instances new activities are suggested to increase the opportunity to reach the desired audiences. Recommended activities were selected to achieve impact – visibility for the byway – while keeping budget constraints in mind.

Marketing partners can develop a work plan and timeline for implementing promotions in coordination with the byway's development. The introduction of new interpretive elements will provide great opportunities for promotion of the byway. For example, the development of an audio guide to the region or a special event such as a cemetery tour provide occasions for promotions such as media tours or advertising.

- 1) **Develop byway driving tour brochure** – The *Southern Maryland Heritage Driving Tours* brochure already includes a religious freedom route with an introductory paragraph and listings for 15 sites. The byway needs to replace this as the religious heritage travel route, with the non-byway related sites incorporated as side trips or spurs off the byway.

In addition, a new byway specific brochure should be developed. A new byway brochure should include:

- An introduction that provides an overview of Southern Maryland's history in the defined time period, summarizes the major historical themes and explains the role of religion and religious freedom in the state's and nation's history.
 - Listings of each site should include a brief description, address, phone number, website, hours / days / months of operation, site open or locked (churches), type of tour (guided or self-guided), and coordinates for locating the site on the map. Historic and / or current pictures of each site should also be included.
 - A map with the route clearly marking each site. Visitor services – public restrooms, lodging, information centers, gas stations, etc. – should also be identified on the map.
 - Sidebars can highlight stories such as the people who lived here during the defined time period, changing styles of cemetery headstones, religious beliefs of various groups, how the manor system evolved, etc.
 - A timeline can trace important milestones in Southern Maryland's settlement and development during the time period.
 - Events related to the byway's sites – special tours, festivals, performances, etc. – that occur annually can be listed.
- 2) **Produce byway map pads** – Map pads are a cost effective way to promote the byway and to encourage visitors to explore the region. The map pads can use the same map that is developed for the byway brochure. Brief listings of the sites

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- and locations of information centers can be included. Cost estimates are \$700 for 10,000 maps (100 per pad). The cost can be defrayed with a sponsorship or advertising. Map pads can be distributed through information centers, hotels, byway attractions and other locations because of the low production cost.
- 3) **Add a section to www.southernmdisfun.com** – The SMHA website is already established, therefore, rather than creating a separate website for the byway, a section can be added to this website. The byway section would include a downloadable Religious Freedom Byway brochure and map as well as suggested tour itineraries and information to help travelers plan their visit. If an audiotour is developed, this could also be included in a downloadable format on the web site.
 - 4) **Redesign www.southernmdisfun.com to reflect themes.** The overarching theme for the byway (Maryland's founding and the reflection of national events in the state's history) and sub-themes (Drawn by the water and the land, Struggling to Establish a Colony, and Tobacco – Commerce and Conflict) are reflected throughout Southern Maryland, not just along the byway route. Instead of its current format of presenting the three counties in the region, the website could be redesigned to reflect these themes. Visitors could choose a time period or storyline that interests them and plan their visit accordingly. The byway would be the primary route through the region to showcase its resources and direct visitors to sites off of the byway as spurs or side trips. (See <http://www.lyhr.org> for an example of this format.) The site could also include a place for travelers to write about their visit and to post pictures.
 - 5) **Develop suggested itineraries** – Because the byway is lengthy – approximately 125 miles – tourists may not have time to travel the entire length in one visit. Offering itineraries for shorter distances may encourage more travel along the byway, particularly by day trippers or weekend visitors. Itineraries can include routes that take one-half day, one day, two days or three days. Include information on each itinerary about the travel time between sites to allow visitors to adequately plan their trip.
 - 6) **Develop a byway press kit** – The SMHA 5-year marketing plan includes development of a press kit as an action step. Information on the byway could be added to this press kit, or a separate press kit could be developed specifically for the byway. Information would include: An overview of the byway and its attractions, fact sheet, brochure and contact information for media assistance.
 - 7) **Plan a media familiarization tour to announce the byway** – Work with the Maryland Office of Tourism to identify writers with a particular interest in history. When the interpretive components are in place, host a two to three-day familiarization (fam) tour to showcase the byway to travel writers. Coordinate the tour to have a knowledgeable guide accompany the writers, but as much as possible allow them to experience the byway as a visitor would. As articles are written, request permission to post favorable stories on the website to further promote the byway.
 - 8) **Promote the byway to group tours** – Consideration should be given to how the route can be traveled in a motorcoach. A receptive operator could be recruited to

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travel the byway and give advice on the best route for buses and to point out stops where buses may have difficulty parking or turning around. An alternative plan can be developed to accommodate any identified difficulties. In addition, special extras should be developed – behind-the-scenes tours, living history presentations, musical performances, etc. – to enhance the sales potential of the tour to groups. Once these decisions have been made, a promotional piece can be created to promote the byway to tour operators and group leaders. The piece can be distributed through travel trade shows which the region's tourism directors already attend (ABA, PBA Going on Faith) and electronic versions can be emailed to tour operators and group leaders.

9) **Develop radio trade-out promotions** – Tourism partners should work together to create give-away packages including lodging, attraction admissions and meals in local restaurants. Negotiate with the radio stations in target markets to give away these packages and to enhance the promotion by interviews with attraction representatives and by scheduling on-site broadcasts in Southern Maryland.

10) **Develop strategies for cross promotion** – As previously noted, travelers make many decisions about what to see and do *after* arriving at a destination. This may be due in part of unfamiliarity with an area, but also to enjoying the discovery aspect of a vacation experience and being open to finding unexpected activities and attractions. National research also shows that cultural heritage travelers are more likely to be willing to extend their stay. Four in 10 surveyed extended their stay specifically because of cultural and heritage attractions. (Source: *Travel Industry Association*). Strategies for cross promotion throughout the region should be developed and can include:

- **Frontline event** – Choose a central location to host an event for frontline tourism staff in both counties. Make the event festive with music, local food and give-aways. Information stations should be set up with brochures and displays on the byway and attractions throughout the region.
- **Create Byway Cards** - Distribute free admission passes for those attractions that charge admission or to special events to frontline employees. (This can be monitored by giving the cards to managers for distribution to their employees.)
- **Information notebooks** – Make notebooks with sections on attractions, restaurants, lodging and shopping in the region. Include descriptions, contact information and directions.

Case Study: Fun and Games with Hospitality Training - Colorado's scenic byways program has developed a Grassroots Training Program that includes a board game called the Byway Road Trip. As players move their cars around the board, they have to correctly answer questions that visitors might ask about Colorado's scenic byways in order to move forward. The game was designed to be given to front line employees to be played (with the blessing of the boss!) on breaks and during slow shifts.

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Marketing Messages

Marketing messages have two purposes:

- Convey the experience – To provide a succinct image of the byway that travelers will discover when they explore Southern Maryland.
- Call to action – To motivate travelers to seek information about the byway and Southern Maryland and to encourage a trip to the region.

Advisory Committee members agreed at the October meeting that the name “Religious Freedom Byway” does not convey all of the themes to be interpreted or the complete visitor experience. It was also noted that the name is not exciting from a marketing perspective. However, it was also recognized that at least for the next few years, this name will be in use as it has already been included in the state’s byway publication and is the name given to the byway in the Corridor Management Plan.

For marketing purposes, this can be addressed through the addition of descriptive taglines to accompany the byway’s name. Ideas that could be developed include:

- Pioneers, Parishioners, and Patriots – to convey the different roles that the early residents of Maryland played.
- Founded in Belief - The word “belief,” relates to all of the identified themes which connect in some way to belief systems – whether it be religion, slavery, the opportunity to prosper in the new world or the belief in a government system that guarantees freedom.
- Beginning of a New Nation – Connecting what happened in Maryland during these centuries with the influence it had on shaping the ideals of the new nation.