

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

**Website Enhancements
for Wineries and
Bed and Breakfast Marketing**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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Virginia Tourism Authority
dba Virginia Tourism Corporation

Report to the General Assembly

**Website Enhancements For
Wineries and Bed & Breakfast Marketing**

November 15, 2004

The General Assembly through the 2004 Appropriations Act required the Virginia Tourism Authority to enhance its Website with respect to the Commonwealth's winery and bed and breakfast products. The language as written in the Appropriations Act, Chapter 4, Item 134.K is as follows:

The Virginia Tourism Authority, in cooperation with the Virginia Wineries Association, the Virginia Wine Board and such other groups as necessary, shall enhance its "Virginia.org" tourism website to include comprehensive hyperlinked listings of wineries, "bed and breakfast" establishments, and historic attractions by geographic area of the Commonwealth. The web site shall include photographs of wineries and other attractions, which the Virginia Tourism Authority shall request from the respective Virginia wineries. Such hyperlinked directory shall be designed to assist potential travelers to the Commonwealth in the development of travel itineraries, and shall be organized such that the information is searchable by geographic vicinity. The Virginia Tourism Authority shall report on revisions made to its web site to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by November 15, 2004.

In the past two years, the Authority has enhanced its electronic marketing program to make the Virginia.org Website more user friendly, rich in content and easy to search. These enhancements included an initiative to market Virginia's wine and bed and breakfasts tourism industry more effectively. To accomplish this, the Authority has met and continues to work with the Virginia Wine Board and Virginia Wineries Association, including its newly appointed Marketing Director, to further develop and integrate our efforts. Both the Bed and Breakfast Association, and Virginia Wineries Association maintain their own Websites, which are linked by the Authority on the www.Virginia.org Website. We work closely with these organizations to assure these marketing efforts are consistent and continuous.

The Virginia Tourism Authority garnered top honors at the August 2004 annual Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) in Boston, hosted annually by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA). For wine marketing, the Authority also earned the Cooperative Marketing award for the *Gourmet Magazine* promotion that featured industry partnerships with the magazine, the Virginia wine industry and Virginia resorts. A record 14,000 leads were generated from the online promotion including a contest called the "Cure for the Culinary Challenged" which generated more than 6,200 leads alone.

Website development

As a result, a new web page (www.Virginia.org/wine) was developed to market Virginia's wineries and vineyards, wine country-related driving tours, events and discount travel packages. The backend of the site was constructed to allow the wineries to update the information presented on the Website. The winery itself can choose from a menu of advertising options, such as listings including images, descriptions, directions, weather, accessibility for persons with disabilities, and Website and email links. The site and its listings are accessible and free to all wineries and vineyards accommodating tourism. From this Website, those tourism businesses that partner with Wine Country, such as bed and breakfasts, dining and shopping, are also included in the program and Website options.

The same is true for Virginia's bed and breakfast establishments. A Web page was developed within the Virginia Website homepage entitled 'Bed & Breakfast / Inns' under the accommodations tab. From the www.Virginia.org site, before any clicking or searching is necessary, a site visitor can guide his mouse over the words 'Accommodations' and then immediately click on the 'Bed & Breakfast / Inns' list. There, one can find bed and breakfasts alphabetically, or by locality or region. Again, the site and its listings are accessible and free to all bed and breakfasts in Virginia. As with the winery site, any bed and breakfast establishment can choose from a menu of advertising options, such as; listings including images, descriptions, directions, weather, accessibility for persons with disabilities, and Website and email links. Included in the site are links to the Bed and Breakfast Association of Virginia, Virginia's Eastern Shore Bed and Breakfast Association and other regional associations to further enhance a Website user's ability to find what he or she is looking for in bed and breakfast accommodations.

eMail Marketing

VTC has also begun a new email marketing program focused on Virginia's wine country and epicurean travel, including bed and breakfasts, fine dining, spa and luxury vacations and the sporting life. In conjunction with a fully integrated, multi-media campaign (including advertising, public relations and trade) wine and epicurean Virginia are advertised on several different Websites. For those interested consumers, VTC collects contact information (in compliance with new anti-spam laws), reaffirms their interest and eMails the potential traveler with wine country-related driving tours, events and discount travel package information.

Educating the Industry

The Authority conducts training sessions for the travel and tourism industry to educate them on the opportunities available to market themselves with the Virginia Tourism Authority. With emphasis on Website marketing opportunities, the Electronic Marketing staff travel around the state to train Destination Marketing Organizations, Convention and Visitor Bureaus, tourism business owners, tourism membership organizations, and tourism destinations on how to use the internet to market and manage their tourism business. This effort includes the winery associations, bed and breakfast associations, etc. These sessions include, but are not limited to, quarterly orientation sessions held in the Authority's office, monthly orientation sessions statewide and Electronic Marketing training sessions. Because of these efforts, the Website has

seen a tremendous increase in the number of page views for wineries and bed and breakfasts reported below.

Results:

Since the new Website enhancements were launched in September 2004, the program has proved to be very effective. Through these efforts, the Authority has established a database of 20,000 new potential travelers interested in receiving regular information on Virginia's vineyards, wineries and bed and breakfast establishments. The table below summarizes the wine Website visitation from September 16 through November 14, 2004 when compared to the same period of 2003.

Wine Website Visitation

October Wine Home Page:	10,752 page views (new)
Wine Related Pages:	61,718 page views (173% increase)
Wine Related Listings:	16,377 page views (180% increase)