

# Promoting Music Tourism in Alabama



## Alabama is Music

**Celebrating Alabama's Progress**  
**Certified Public Manager® Program CPM**  
**Solutions Alabama 2023**



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## TEAM MEMBERS

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Alabama Department of Finance – Comptroller’s Office

**Rick Thomas**

Alabama Department of Revenue

**Kathy Bowie**

**Michael Martin**

**Albert McDonald**

Alabama Law Enforcement Agency

**Sam Adams**

Alabama Tourism Department

**Patrick Greenia**

Retirement Systems of Alabama

**Courtney Fenn**

**Terry Joye**

*The research, findings, and recommendations presented in this white paper do not represent the views of any agency or organization, but rather the collective educational research and analysis from the above diverse group of participants in the Certified Public Manager® Program.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Promoting Music Tourism in Alabama CPM Solutions Project team would like to acknowledge and thank all the people in the State of Alabama whose efforts help us enjoy the rich history of music created in our state.

We want to give a special acknowledgement and thank you to the following individuals for providing us with their valuable time, assistance, and support:

**Grey Brennan**

*Deputy Director*

Alabama Tourism Department

**Katryna Burns**

*Freelance Graphic Designer*

**Beth Petty**

Hank Williams Museum - Montgomery

Montgomery, AL

<https://www.thehankwilliamsmuseum.net/>

**Allen Sanders**

General Manager, Montgomery Performing Arts Centre (MPAC)

Montgomery, AL

<http://mpaconline.org>

## INTRODUCTION

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“Music is the soundtrack of your life.” – Dick Clark. Everywhere you go, music follows you and makes the day that much sweeter. Whether your music comes to you via Bluetooth or radio or phonograph or any other way, music makes you feel rejuvenated. Alabama has been a center for that music for a long time.

“Sweet Home Alabama”, “Stars Fell on Alabama”, “My Home’s in Alabama”, “The Alabama Waltz”, and thousands of other songs have been written or recorded in the State of Alabama. Our musical heritage is second to none and yet many are unaware of all the famous musicians who call Alabama home or have recorded in our recording studios. Paul Simon, Wilson Pickett, Bob Seger, Etta James, Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Percy Sledge, Rod Stewart, Alabama, Hank Williams, Lionel Richie, and hundreds of other famous artists have spent time perfecting their craft in our wonderful state.

Alabama has a rich history of music and the task for our Solutions Alabama Team is to increase awareness of the vast musical offerings that we have and to advance ideas that increase music tourism in our state. In 2022, travelers are estimated to have spent \$22.4 billion (Sentell, 2022) and music tourism is an important part of that income. From Muscle Shoals to the Hangout Fest in Gulf Shores and everywhere in between, Alabama is a destination for musical tourists.

It is not just the music itself that draws visitors to Alabama; it is also the impact that music has had on the state's culture and history. The Civil Rights Movement, which played a pivotal role in shaping Alabama's history, was intertwined with music. Famous songs such as "We Shall Overcome" and "A Change Is Gonna Come" were written and performed by musicians who were fighting for racial equality. Visitors can learn more about this important history and the role of music in the movement by touring Alabama.

Alabama IS music!!!

## BACKGROUND OF MUSIC TOURISM IN ALABAMA

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In 2022, it is estimated that 28.6 million travelers visited Alabama and spent an estimated \$22.4 billion on tourism in Alabama. (Sentell, 2022) These travelers came to Alabama to visit our Gulf beaches, hike the trails in Cheaha State Park, play golf on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, journey through the Alabama Civil Rights Trail, experience the Sweet Home Alabama Music Trail, and many more activities. The Alabama Tourism Department (ATD) facilitated all these offerings and more.

An area that needs more focus in Alabama is music tourism. Alabama has a rich history of music and musicians. Below is a list of just some of the world-famous musicians who have come from Alabama (via Wikipedia):

Musicians from Alabama

**Alabama** – country superstar band, based in Fort Payne

**Blind Boys of Alabama** – gospel group, based in Talladega

**Nat King Cole** – jazz and R&B musician/songwriter, born in Montgomery (d.1965)

**The Commodores** – soul/funk group formed in Tuskegee, had two number one Hot 100 hits, such as "Three Times a Lady" in 1978

**W.C. Handy** – father of the blues, born in Florence

**Emmylou Harris** – country singer/songwriter, born in Birmingham

**Erskine Hawkins** – big band leader

**Chuck Leavell** – keyboardist, former member of the Allman Brothers Band, sideman for Eric Clapton and the Rolling Stones

**Eddie Levert** – founding member of The O'Jays, born in Bessemer

**Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section** – renowned studio band, consisting of Jimmy Johnson, guitar, Roger Hawkins, drums, David Hood, bass, and Barry Beckett, keyboards

**Jim Nabors** – actor and singer of standards and gospel, born in

**Sam Phillips** – founder of Sun Records, born in Florence

**Wilson Pickett** – R&B star, born in Prattville

**Lionel Richie** – singer/songwriter, see also Commodores, born in Tuskegee, had five number one Hot 100 hits, including "All Night Long (All Night)" in 1983

**Tommy Shaw** – guitarist, singer, songwriter, rock bands Damn Yankees and Styx. Born in Prattville

**Percy Sledge** – 1960s soul star, born in Leighton

**The Temptations** – four members: Eddie Kendricks (Union Springs), Paul Williams (Birmingham), Melvin Franklin (Montgomery), and Dennis Edwards (Fairfield)

**Wet Willie** – Southern rock band from Mobile

**Hank Williams** – country music pioneer, born in Georgiana (d. 1953), buried in Montgomery

**Alabama Shakes** – band from Athens, had a number one Billboard 200 album Sound & Color in 2015

**The Band Perry** – country trio from Mobile

**Bo Bice** – runner-up, American Idol Season 4

**Jimmy Buffett** – popular singer/songwriter, from Mobile, attended Auburn University for a year

**Drive-By Truckers** – alternative rock band of Shoals-area natives

**Taylor Hicks** – winner, American Idol Season 5, had a number one Hot 100 hit with "Do I Make You Proud" in 2006

**Will Kimbrough** – singer/songwriter, producer, guitarist, multi-instrumentalist, lived in Mobile

**Shelby Lynne** – country music artist, singer-songwriter from St Stephens

**Wayne Perkins** – guitarist, singer, songwriter, Muscle Shoals studio musician, played on Rolling Stones album, from Birmingham

**Ruben Studdard** – winner of American Idol, Born in Birmingham

**Toni Tennille** – half of 1970s hitmakers Captain & Tennille, born in Montgomery

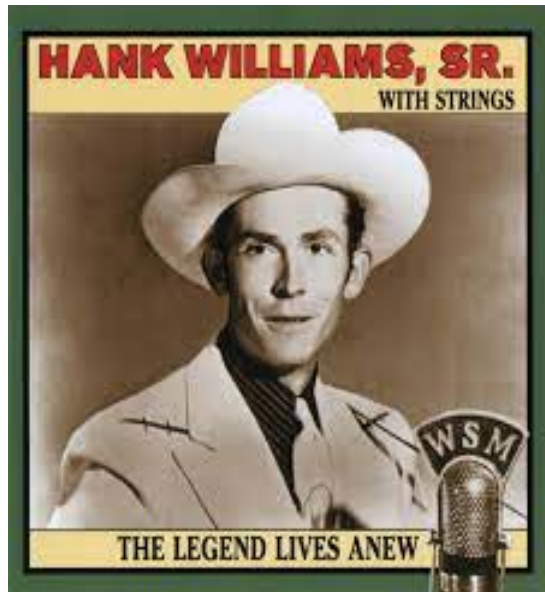
**Hank Williams Jr.** – country music star, lived in Cullman, Alabama

Obviously, the styles of music from Alabama are as diverse as the citizens who call our great state home. Music is a driving force for creativity and commerce in our state.

In 1969, Jimmy Johnson, David Hood, Barry Beckett, and Roger Hawkins established the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. Cher recorded the first ever album there in August of that year and this began an infamous run of famous artists and groups who came to Alabama to record with the best studio musicians in the world. Chart topping albums from The Rolling Stones (Brown Sugar), The Staple Singers (I'll Take You There), Mary McGregor (Torn Between Two Lovers), R.B. Greaves (Take A Letter, Maria), Paul Simon (Kodachrome & Loves Me Like A Rock), Bob Seger (Night Moves), and Julian Lennon (Valotte) were all recorded there.

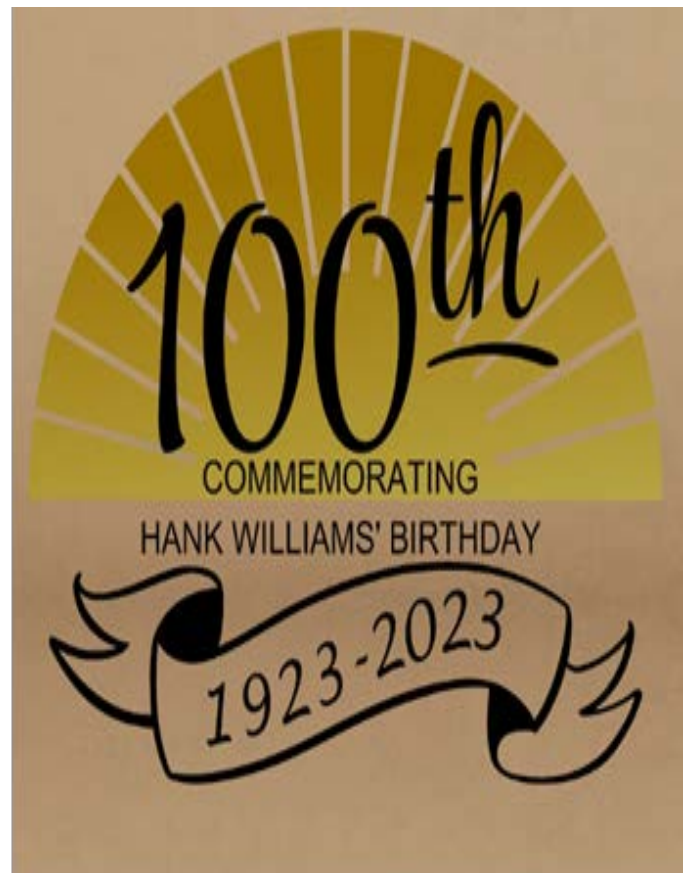


Tours are available Tuesday thru Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm taking place every hour on the half hour (10:30 to 3:30). (Muscle Shoals Sound Studio)



In 1993, the Hank Williams Boyhood Home and Museum was opened in Georgiana, AL. “The museum preserves and interprets the life of country music star Hank Williams Sr., who lived in the home from 1931 until 1934. It is the only surviving childhood home of Williams and is owned by the city of Georgiana and managed by the non-profit Hank Williams Museum and Festival Inc.” (Encyclopedia of Alabama – Hank Williams Sr. Boyhood Home & Museum)

On February 8, 1999, the Hank Williams Museum - Montgomery was opened in downtown Montgomery. “The Museum houses the most complete collection of Hank Williams' Memorabilia. A visit to the Hank Williams Museum in Montgomery is a visit into the past, a past that continues today, the life and times of Hank Williams. The 6,000 square foot museum houses the most complete collection of Hank Williams’ memorabilia which includes Hank’s 1952 baby blue Cadillac.” (The Hank Williams Museum – Montgomery, AL) In an interview with Beth Petty with the Hank Williams Museum – Montgomery, AL there are approximately 30,000 travelers who visit the museum annually.



In 2010, the Hangout Music Festival began in Gulf Shores, AL and typically takes place over three days with over 40 bands and artists performing in front of 40,000+ attendees. (via Wikipedia) Headliners have included Widespread Panic, the Foo Fighters, Paul Simon, Michael Franti & Spearhead, The Black Keys, Jack White, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, the Dave Matthews Band, Stevie Wonder, The Black Crowes, Ellie Goulding, OutKast, the Zac Brown Band, the Drive-By Truckers, Beck, the Weeknd, Panic! at the Disco, Portugal the Man, X Ambassadors, Lenny Kravitz, Charli XCX, Mumford & Sons, The Killers, Halsey, Kendrick Lamar, SZA, Travis Scott, Khalid, The Lumineers, Post Malone, Zedd, Maren Morris, and countless others. The event always sells out as soon as tickets go on sale.



In 2015, the Commodores Museum was opened in Tuskegee, AL and “is housed in the building that served as both the rehearsal and recording studio for the Commodores for much of their career until the 1980s. The Commodores was founded in Tuskegee in 1968 by six freshmen and the original members included Lionel Richie, Thomas McClary, William King, Andre Callahan, Michael Gilbert, and Milan Williams.” (Encyclopedia of Alabama – Commodores Museum) The museum is open for tours Sunday and Monday by appointment only and Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.



These are just a few of the MANY musical sites that tourists can enjoy while traveling through Alabama. The goal of our research is to improve the awareness of all the exciting musical museums, festivals, events, and amphitheaters throughout our great state while having a positive economic impact.

## WHAT WORKS IN MUSIC TOURISM

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The focus of our team research was limited to Alabama (specifically Birmingham, Cullman, Gulf Shores, Huntsville, Montgomery, and Muscle Shoals), Mississippi (Delta Region), Tennessee (Memphis and Nashville), and Texas (Austin). The Alabama Tourism Department (ATD) partners with these states in offering travel itineraries to tour groups and travelers alike. Having tourists visit the many musical destinations helps all the states.

### *Alabama*

ATD has a multi-pronged approach to “selling” Alabama to tourists. According to Mr. Grey Brennan, Deputy Director of Alabama Tourism, international tourists spend up to three times the amount of money as do domestic tourists. ATD focuses a great deal of resources on selling travel to tourists in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom through tour companies that can use local travel services (buses, hotels, sites, etc.). Key cities for these tours include Atlanta, Austin, Dallas, Gulf Shores, Houston, Memphis, Nashville, Mobile, Montgomery, Muscle Shoals, New

Orleans, and Tupelo. ATD also promotes Alabama travel through partnerships with Brand USA, Travel South USA, and other means. (Alabama Tourism – Frequently Asked Questions)



These tours last six to twenty days and can be customized for the tour directors based on the needs of their customers. Partnering with the other Southeastern states, ATD can reach a greater number of customers and provide a better experience to those travelers. The greater the number of visitors in Alabama who stay in hotels, the greater the budget ATD receives. The Department receives 25% of the 4% Lodgings Tax revenue that the Alabama Department of Revenue collects from hotel/motel stays. It would make sense to have these international travelers stay as many nights in Alabama as is possible to maximize revenue.



Another approach for ATD is to market Alabama to domestic travelers. “Snowbirds” that come to the South to escape the cold during the winter months, travelers who want to visit locations they can drive to, and adventurers who want to “see the country” are all welcomed to Alabama for fun. Many of the tourist attractions in the state are grouped into All-in-One e-tickets that tourists can purchase at discount rates compared to paying for each attraction separately. Most tickets give the travelers one to five days to visit all the attractions in the grouping, inducing those travelers to stay in an area (and more importantly in a hotel) for more than one night.

<b>Estimated Annual Visitors</b>	<b>Venue</b>
17,000	Muscle Shoals Sound Studio
30,000	Hank Williams Museum
60,000	Rock the South Music Festival (x3 days)
40,000	Hangout Festival, Gulf Shores
20,000	Alabama (the Band) Museum
10,000	June Jam
15,000	Alabama Music Hall of Fame
1,700	W.C. Handy Museum

### *Mobile Device Applications*

ATD offers the Alabama Road Trips app which is available for Apple and Android devices. There are two mobile phone apps currently being offered by ATD, the Alabama Road Trips app and the Civil Rights Trail app. The Alabama Road Trips app has 81 pre-determined road trips and can be filtered by interest (including music) and location. The Alabama Road Trips app has had 46,194 installs (ATD February 2023 Analytics Report) making it a useful tool for tourism. When travelers download the app and travel through the state, they are alerted to items of interest around them. For those travelers who want to schedule their own tour, it is a great resource to plan so that they will not miss the things they really want to see, but also find out about things they did not even know existed.

### *Brochures and Catalogs*

Travel brochures and catalogs are available at the eight Alabama Welcome Centers and are distributed at ATD sponsored events and at trade shows. From an interview with Patrick Greenia, Tourism Department, there were 1,614,847 visitors recorded entering Alabama's eight Welcome Centers between July 2022 and June 2023 exposing tourists to the many things Alabama has to offer. Alabama cities and counties do an excellent job of hosting festivals and concerts in various venues throughout the state.

## *Festivals*

The Hangout Fest is an annual three-day music festival held every May right on the beaches of Gulf Shores. The festival is a privately operated event that the Gulf Shores/Orange Beach Visitors corporation helps to advertise throughout the world. Every year since its inception in 2010, the festival has sold out inviting 40,000+ visitors to the Alabama beaches. Studies have shown that the Hangout Fest generates nearly \$45 million annually in direct and indirect economic benefit for the state. (Tomberlin)

The Rock the South Festival is also an annual three-day music festival held in Cullman and hosts over 60,000+ visitors in the summer (July 20 – 22, 2023) and brings in over \$30 million dollars to the area. (Rock the South) Again, every year the tickets are sold out and the hotels are full. People from everywhere flock to the area to hear famous (and not so famous) country musicians.

## *Amphitheaters*

Birmingham is host to the Oak Mountain Amphitheatre and hosts famous concerts of the likes of the Foo Fighters, James Taylor, Matchbox Twenty, Big Time Rush, and The Outlaw Music Festival – headlined by Willie Nelson, Avett Brothers, and many more artists. The Amphitheatre seats over 12,000 guests and has a huge economic benefit to the area.

In Huntsville, with the opening of the Orion Amphitheater, concerts and festivals will be held bringing in even more visitors to Alabama. Opening in May 2022, the Orion has hosted concerts by Jack White, The Black Keys, Styx, REO Speedwagon, Earth Wind & Fire, and Luke Bryan. Upcoming concerts include Ja Rule, Ashanti, Widespread Panic, and Train. Again, more concert goers coming to Alabama means more money going into the state's coffers.

## Mississippi

Mississippi advertises music tourism in many of the same ways as does Alabama. They have partnered with all the Southeastern states to market the entire area. Mississippi focuses on the Mississippi Blues Trail. “The Mississippi Blues Trail markers tell stories through words and images of bluesmen and women and how the places where they lived and the times in which they existed—and continue to exist—influenced their music. The sites run the gamut from city streets to cotton fields, train depots to cemeteries, and clubs to churches.” Mississippi uses a unique branding tool by naming Steve Azar the Music & Culture Ambassador of Mississippi in 2017. Steve Azar wrote the official Bi-centennial song for the state and tours the world celebrating music in Mississippi.



Today, the Mississippi Delta remains an important destination for music lovers from around the world. The region is home to several blues festivals and events, such as the Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival in Greenville, and the Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival in Clarksdale. These events celebrate the Delta's musical heritage and attract thousands of visitors each year.

In addition, Mississippi has invested in its music industry through initiatives like the Mississippi Blues Trail, which is a series of markers and attractions that celebrate the state's contributions to the blues genre. The trail has helped to promote Mississippi's music scene and attract visitors from around the world. The Delta is also home to a few museums, historical sites, and other attractions that highlight the region's musical history. These include the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center in Indianola, and the Robert Johnson Blues Trail Marker in Greenwood.

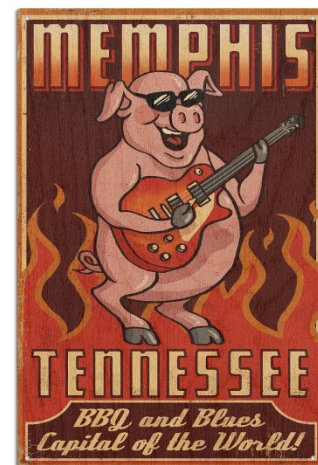
## *Tennessee*

“The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development reported tourism in Tennessee brought in \$24 billion in travel-related spending in 2021, with every county in the state seeing an increase in visitor spending over 2020. Tourism brought in \$2 billion in state and local taxes. The report equates this \$2 billion in tax income as a \$755 tax saving for every household. In East Tennessee, the total business sales reached over \$10 billion, according to combined data within the report. Overall visitor spending rose 44% from the \$16.8 billion of income in 2020 according to the report. Following on the heels of the 2020 pandemic, 2021 income was only \$300 million short of the revenue brought in in 2019.” (McAlee)

Memphis and Nashville are entertainment meccas throughout the nation. Memphis is the birthplace of the blues and home of Elvis Presley's famous Graceland. The city has a thriving music scene that includes blues, soul, and rock. Beale Street, a famous music district, is known for its live music venues, bars, and restaurants. Music tourism in Memphis is estimated to pump \$3.2 billion into the Tennessee economy.

Memphis has a visually appealing tourism website that is engaging and offers a lot of information about the city's music offerings. The website has a dedicated music page called “Memphis Music Hub” that lists music attractions, where to find live music, and

music festivals. The Memphis Music Hub also has several interactive music videos and playlists as well as a current calendar of music related events. The website also provides detailed information of Memphis music history and Memphis musicians.



Nashville is known as the "Music City" of the United States. It is the home of country music and houses famous venues such as the Grand Ole Opry, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and the Bluebird Cafe. The city is also home to the music industry, with many record labels, publishing houses, and recording studios bringing in \$8.8 billion in 2022. (Nashville Music City) Music tourism in Tennessee is a major economic industry and the state invests in it heavily. The Nashville Convention and Visitors Corp was created to brand and promote Nashville to the world as a premier entertainment destination, and they are the administrator of the Metropolitan Nashville Major Event Fund which provides revenue to support major events that stimulate spending in the area. (Nashville Music City)

Nashville also has a creative and engaging tourism website. Visitors to the website can read about Nashville's music history and listen to a Nashville Music City Picks Playlist. The Music and Entertainment section of the website allows visitors to explore Nashville's nightlife and music shows. This includes guides to free live music, dinner theatre, musical attractions, music venues, and nightlife spots that cater to music lovers. The website offers an in-depth list of venues and clubs that offer free and paid musical performances. The Memphis and Nashville tourism websites have information that is easily accessible for tourists and industry professionals.



## *Texas*

Austin's emergence as a successful music destination can be attributed to several factors. The city's rise as the "Live Music Capital of the World" can be traced back to its vibrant music scene, supportive infrastructure, and community-driven initiatives. Here are some key points:



Austin has developed into a musical destination due to a combination of factors, including its vibrant local music scene, supportive community, and a range of policies and initiatives aimed at promoting and nurturing its music industry. One key factor behind Austin's success as a musical destination is its long-standing reputation as a creative and innovative city. The city has a rich history of supporting artistic expression and cultural diversity, which has helped to foster a thriving local music scene. Austin has also been home to several influential musicians and music venues, which have helped to shape the city's musical identity.

Another key factor in Austin's success as a musical destination is the support it has received from the local community. Austin residents have long been passionate about their city's music scene and have worked to promote and support local musicians and venues. This support has helped to create a powerful sense of community around the music scene, which has in turn attracted visitors from around the world. Austin has implemented a range of policies and initiatives aimed at supporting its music industry. For example, the city has established a Music and Entertainment Division to help musicians and venues navigate local regulations, as well as a Music Venue Assistance Program to provide financial and technical support to venues. Austin has also become home to several high-profile music festivals, such as South by Southwest (SXSW), which have helped to raise the city's profile as a musical destination. "Austin music tourism generates about \$1.8 billion per year, according to the Austin Music Movement nonprofit." (Girtman)

All the research suggests that music tourism is an up-and-coming source of revenue for all the Southeastern states. Alabama has a rich musical history and should use as many resources as are available to increase the number of visitors who come to the state for vacation. A little money spent now can be a long-term investment in the future of music tourism.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The research has suggested the following solutions to strengthen Alabama's ability to become a musical destination for tourists:

1. **Music Ambassador:** Mississippi has partnered with Steve Azar as their Music & Culture Ambassador of Mississippi in 2017. He advertises the state by traveling the country and showcasing the music of the Delta and even wrote a Bi-centennial song. Singer/Songwriter Darius Rucker serves as South Carolina's Tourism Ambassador. Stephen Brackett serves as Colorado's Music Ambassador. Even Taylor Swift has joined a partnership with New York City as its Tourism Ambassador.

With the number of talented artists that Alabama produces, our team recommends that ATD sponsor a Music and Heritage Ambassador. Ruben Studdard (American Idol Season 2 winner), Bo Bice, Taylor Hicks (American Idol Season 5 winner), Dexter Roberts, C.J. Harris, Jessica Meuse, Walker Burroughs, Tristen Gressett, Lady K, Cam Spinks, Colton Smith, Jerome Godwin, Kirk Jay, D. Smooth, Jessie Pitts, Levi Watkins, Sarah Simmons, Cary Laine, Shelby Brown, Jordy Searcy, Dexter Roberts, Justin Chain, Josie Jones, Johnny Hayes, JB Somers, Ryley Tate Wilson, Toia Jones, Shawna P, Berritt Haynes, Jackson Marlow, Savannah Leighton, and Emma Caroline have all competed on national television shows and would be excellent choices to represent the state in the music world. The Ambassador could travel to trade shows with ATD and "sell" all the great music in Alabama.

Music ambassadors can have significant economic benefits for states in various ways:

### *Tourism and Cultural Exchanges*

Music ambassadors often perform in international festivals, concerts, and events. These performances attract tourists from around the world who are interested in experiencing the unique music and cultural heritage of a particular state. This influx of tourists boosts the local economy by increasing spending on accommodation, dining, transportation, and other tourism-related services.

### *Trade and Export*

Music has the power to transcend borders and cultural barriers. By showcasing the musical talent of a state, music ambassadors can help promote local music industries and artists. This exposure can lead to increased international recognition, opportunities for collaborations, and ultimately, growth in music exports. Increased music exports contribute to the state's economy through revenue generated from the sales of music recordings, merchandise, licensing deals, and performances abroad.

### *Job Creation*

The presence of successful music ambassadors can foster a thriving local music industry. This industry encompasses not only musicians but also various supporting professions such as concert promoters, producers, sound engineers, stage technicians, tour managers, and more. These careers offer employment opportunities, generating income and contributing to the overall economic development of the state.

### *Cultural Diplomacy*

Music ambassadors act as cultural diplomats, using their music and performances to foster positive relationships and build bridges between nations. This cultural diplomacy can lead to favorable trade agreements, increased investments, and enhanced diplomatic ties. The positive image projected by musical ambassadors can attract foreign businesses, investors, and tourists, all of which contribute to the state's economy.

### *Local Music Education and Infrastructure*

Successful music ambassadors often become role models for aspiring musicians within their state. Their achievements inspire and encourage local talent to pursue careers in music. This, in turn, drives the demand for music education and training programs, leading to the growth of music schools, academies, and other educational institutions. The development of such infrastructure provides employment opportunities and boosts the local economy.

### *Event Hosting and Sponsorships*

Music ambassadors can also have a direct impact on the economy by hosting events such as music festivals, concerts, and cultural showcases. These events attract large audiences, create demand for services like venue rentals, catering, security, and generate revenue through ticket sales. Additionally, local businesses often sponsor these events, benefiting from brand exposure and increased customer engagement.

Overall, music ambassadors play a crucial role in promoting a state's music and cultural heritage, attracting tourism, fostering economic growth in the music industry, and enhancing diplomatic and trade relations. Their impact goes beyond the realm of music, positively contributing to the overall economic development of the state.

2. **Utilize Geofencing:** “Geofencing is when businesses or other organizations create virtual boundaries around specific zones or locations. Using GPS, radio frequency identification (RFID), Wi-Fi or cellular data, organizations can drop points on a map to form a shape — usually a square, polygon or circle — to designate a virtual zone for a variety of purposes. When people enter or exit the zone, an action can be triggered, such as sending a notification or a location-based ad with a coupon. Geofencing is a technology that combines device-level internet protocol (IP) address interaction with GPS data and cellular network data.” (D’Angelo)



Our team recommends that ATD utilize this technology around events like Hangout Fest, Rock the South, all concerts at venues in the state, Broadway in Nashville, Beale Street in Memphis, South by Southwest in Austin, JazzFest in New Orleans, and all tour sites advertised on the website. Since the people attending these events are already interested in music, it makes perfect sense to advertise other musical interests that are close to them and/or might invite them back to Alabama to visit the attractions advertised.

3. **Social Media Presence:** Social media platforms allow organizations to reach a large audience with little or no monetary cost. According to Emmanuel et al. (2022), social media is an effective platform for organizations to target and connect with users, share information, increase online visibility, and drive traffic to their websites.

The Alabama Tourism Department has profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram. Posts are made to the Facebook and Instagram accounts daily however they are not always specific to one area of tourism.

Creating a social media plan can help the department increase music tourism by consistently highlighting Alabama's music destinations and events. The agency can create a posting schedule so that music tourism has consistent and dedicated posts. The posting schedule will outline what attraction or event will be posted, what platforms it will be posted on, and when it will be posted. To grab the attention of users, social media posts must be entertaining and informative. The posts should provide information such as dates, prices, and locations of music related events and attractions. The various social media platforms currently used are designed to share different forms of content.

- Facebook is designed to share pictures, information, updates, and live video streaming.
- Instagram is best for sharing visually appealing pictures and short videos.
- YouTube supports long video content.
- Twitter offers users real-time conversations, news updates, and alerts.
- Pinterest only supports visuals and is not necessarily used to share information.

Depending on what information is being shared, we recommend for the agency to tailor the posts for each platform to gain the attention of users. For example, live streaming of an event should be done on Facebook. Additionally, we recommend the agency to consider the age of the target audience for the posts. If the music event or attraction that is being featured is for a younger demographic, Instagram would be a better platform to use. Social media platforms have free analytics tools that will provide insight about followers such as their age group, location, interests, and the times when they are most active online. Analytics also give insight on the best times to post content and how much engagement posts receive.

Successfully promoting music tourism on social media is dependent on consistently posting compelling and engaging content. The content can be batch created and then posted on the scheduled days. Social media monitoring software is a free and helpful technology that can be used to post

content to multiple social media platforms at one time. The software also allows users to upload content and schedule posting so that it is automated. Additionally, the social media platforms have features that allow you to select your target audience as well as target specific geographical locations. Social media is a free and easy method to reach users of all ages in multiple locations.

4. **Improve Websites:** Currently, the Alabama Tourism Department has two separate and distinct websites for advertising tourism in Alabama. Having two websites can be confusing for those who are researching travel in our state. Effective website design is vital to user engagement and experiences. Websites that are difficult to navigate will result in users not spending a lot of time on the site. Users should be able to find information quickly and with ease. Garrett et al. (2016) reviewed how website design elements such as navigation, graphical representation, organization, content utility, purpose simplicity, and readability affect user engagement. The study found that proper design and implementing those specific elements may allow website designers to optimize user engagement.

The Department's website, <http://tourism.alabama.gov>, is for the tour group industry to provide information of attractions, travel partners (including motorcoach operators, lodging accommodations, guides, airlines, etc.). Currently, the highlighted area below represents the link to the Sweet Home Alabama website which isn't obvious to the user when they access this site. We recommend making it clear when you open this page that this is the tour industry site, and to click 'here' for the average vacationer.

Welcome to the Alabama Tourism Department website, the industry professional's source for the latest news and resources surrounding Alabama travel.

2022 Economic  
Impact Report

Read

Our Tourism  
Partners

Connect

Legislative  
Grants

Apply

### Our Websites



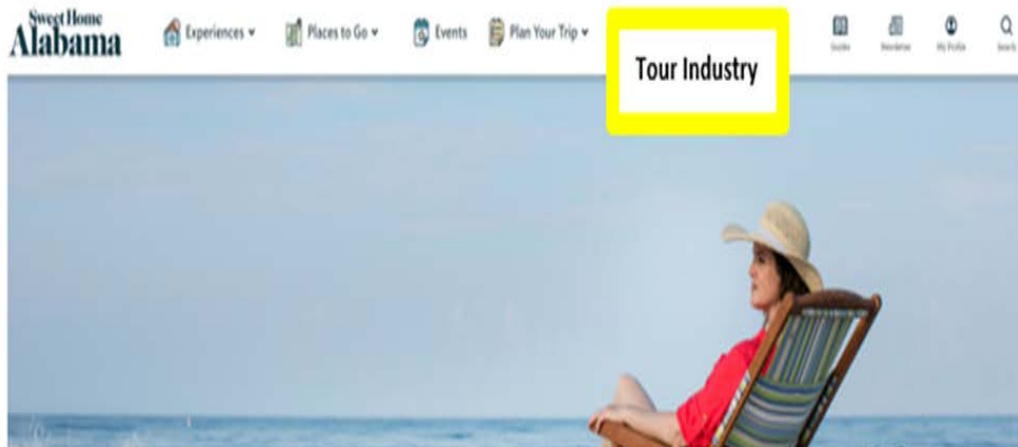
Alabama Tourism  
Partners Sign-in

[Login and manage your account](#)

Official Alabama Store

[Shop here for unique merchandise.](#)

The Department's website for consumers, <http://alabama.travel>, provides a more "hands on" information to plan their Alabama vacation on their own. It provides direct travel ideas of many of the experiences all through Alabama. Like the suggestion above, we recommend making it clear to the user there is another site for tour industry professionals and news releases by clicking 'here.' In summary, we believe it should be clear to the user accessing both sites that there are two sites and make it clear how to toggle between the two sites.



**5. Create the Alabama Music Trail:** The Alabama Tourism Department has established 81 pre-determined road trips that are available on the Sweet Home Alabama website and the Alabama Road Trips app. It is possible to choose a road trip by interest, and music is one of the categories, but when

this is selected the results are 14 road trips that are not directly related to music. The reader must scroll through the content of each road trip to find something related to music. This is time consuming, and the reader may lose interest. We recommend creating an Alabama Music Trail Road Trip and adding it to the Alabama Road Trips app and the Alabama Road Trips link on the consumer website. In addition, we recommend the creation of an Alabama Music Trail brochure that will be available for distribution in print and included in the Alabama Trails link on the consumer website.

## CONCLUSION

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The increasing popularity of music tourism in Alabama is a testament to the state's vibrant music scene and cultural heritage. Through investment in promoting and developing its music industry, Alabama has established itself as an attractive destination for musicians and enthusiasts alike. The economic benefits of music tourism have also proved to be significant, contributing to the growth of local businesses and employment opportunities. Overall, the future of music tourism in Alabama looks promising, with opportunities for further expansion and growth in the coming years.

From Muscle Shoals to Gulf Shores, music is a part of the Alabama way of life. The Alabama Tourism Department does a fantastic job of “selling” our musical heritage to tourists throughout the world. Hopefully the recommendations suggested during this research project can increase the awareness of all that we have to offer.

Alabama IS Music and should be shared with everyone!!

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