



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2018

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HUDSON VALLEY TOURISM BUSINESSES INVITED TO TRENDS CONFERENCE

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY– Dutchess Tourism, Inc. (DTI) announced it will be hosting a Tourism Trends Conference, Wednesday, April 4 at the Villa Borghese in Wappingers Falls. The day will begin at 9:30 a.m. with a tourism partner meeting just for Dutchess County tourism-related businesses and then open up to include tourism entities throughout the entire Hudson Valley region from 11:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The partner meeting will include a presentation from DTI President & CEO Mary Kay Vrba, who will discuss the state of tourism in Dutchess County, including how Dutchess Tourism works to support businesses and their innovative efforts planned for the coming year. One of these is access to the new extranet on DTI's website, which will allow partners to log into their accounts and update their contacts, listings, events, images, and more. DTI Vice President Melaine Rottkamp will conduct this extranet training at the meeting. DTI website listings are an important tool Dutchess' tourism businesses can use to reach potential visitors to the county. Almost 1.5 million visits to the website were logged in 2017 from all over the world.

The partner meeting will also include a kick-off to DTI's upcoming visitor profile study and strategic planning efforts, led by Berkeley Young, of Young Strategies, Inc. based in Charlotte, NC. Young Strategies specializes in research and strategic planning for the travel industry and has worked with more than 100 destinations in 26 states.

The afternoon Tourism Trends Conference will feature a luncheon with keynote speaker Ross Levi, executive director of tourism for Empire State Development. Levi leads the iconic I LOVE NY tourism promotion program and has helped to oversee the Governor's annual Tourism Summit, the Adirondack and Catskill Challenges, and the Path Through History heritage tourism initiative. His efforts spurred the creation and development of the I LOVE NEW YORK LGBT campaign.

The rest of the afternoon will be filled with breakout sessions. Young, who is also a popular and insightful speaker at travel industry and related conferences nationwide, will conduct two presentations. The first, "Innovators Lead the Way," will dispel some myths and reveal ways to take a fresh look at what businesses are doing to be more innovative. Smart marketers have to sort through the vast array of options available to get their message out, and find innovative ways to grab the travel planners' attention. His other presentation, "Destination Management for Sustainability," will share methods to define the purpose and end-goal of destination management for the sustainability of the destination and how to manage potential "over-tourism".

Sally Berry, known as The Attractions Coach, will give a presentation on "Becoming China Ready" and conduct hands-on WeChat training sessions. According to a 2017 US Department of Commerce report, 2.97 million Chinese tourists traveled to the US in 2016, spending a total of \$33 billion, exceeding that of tourists from other countries. Berry is a seasoned tourism professional with extensive expertise working with the Chinese travel market. A top presenter at meetings & conferences, her hands-on presentations give attendees tools to immediately implement.

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Vrba said, “We’re excited to invite the Hudson Valley’s tourism businesses to Dutchess County to share in this information-packed conference.” She added, “Working together to strengthen the Hudson Valley brand will help us all continue to be successful, and allow us to capitalize on the extensive opportunities available for collaboration, which are so important for the growth of our economy.”

Tourism is New York’s fourth largest industry and is responsible for 6.7% of all employment in the Hudson Valley. The Hudson Valley region generated the third most tourism dollars in the state, behind New York City and Long Island. Visitor spending on lodging, food, shopping, and area attractions in the region in 2016 exceeded \$3.5 billion with \$568 million of that in Dutchess County.

Tickets for the Tourism Trends Conference are \$50 per person and include lunch. Sponsorship information and tickets are available online at <https://dutchesstourism.com/tourism-trends-conference>. For questions, please email mrottkamp@dutchesstourism.com or call (845) 463-5432.

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About Dutchess Tourism

Dutchess Tourism, Inc. is the officially designated destination marketing organization for Dutchess County and is accredited by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) of Destinations International. It is an independent 501c6 non-profit organization that works to bring tourism dollars to area businesses by marketing and promoting the assets of Dutchess County to the nation and the world. The office is located at 3 Neptune Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie with 18 Tourist Information Centers located around Dutchess County. The website is www.DutchessTourism.com and they can be reached at 845-463-4000. Dutchess County Tourism was founded in 1984 under the umbrella of the Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation, became incorporated as Dutchess Tourism, Inc. in 2014 and is partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.

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