



**Monday, March 30, 2026**

**12:30 pm**                    **Welcome Orientation for new GACVB members and attendees**  
Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Piper

**1:00 pm**                    **Welcome & Keynote Address**  
Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D  
**Session Partner: Georgia Entertainment**  
**The opportunity in front of us is bigger than the challenges behind us.**  
Al Hutchinson, CEO & Founder of AVH Enterprise LLC, will host a dynamic and thought-provoking leadership session designed exclusively for destination executives. Through candid insights, real-world examples, and interactive discussion, Al will explore how tourism leaders can leverage authenticity, culture, and community to drive growth. Attendees will gain fresh perspective, practical strategies, and renewed confidence to lead their destinations forward, because the opportunity in front of us is bigger than the challenges behind us.

**2:00 pm**                    **General Session**  
Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D  
**From Ballads to Broadcast: Activating Music Culture for Tourism Growth**

Across the country, communities are discovering that music culture isn't just heritage ... It's strategy.

From centuries-old Appalachian ballads preserved across generations, to modern broadcast platforms owned by destination organizations, music has the power to elevate geography, attract visitors, and extend a region's identity far beyond its borders.

In this featured session, leaders from Madison County, NC and Macon, GA share how they are activating music culture in unconventional ways , through community-led revival efforts, touring collaborations, documentary publishing, curated music experiences, and independent radio, to drive tourism growth and civic renewal.

Through storytelling and live performance, this session explores how deeply rooted traditions can become powerful engines for visitation, resilience, and long-term cultural impact.

**Panelists: Donna Ray Norton**, Ambassador, Appalachian Memory Project / Sound Archive Books; **Lisa Love**, Director, Georgia Music Foundation and **Susie Cowan**, General Manager, The Creek 100.9 American Roots Radio  
**Moderator: Marisa Rodgers** |VP & CMO, Visit Macon

**2:45 pm**                    **Afternoon Break**  
Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function  
**Sponsored by: Carrollton CVB**

**3:15 pm**                    **Afternoon Breakout Sessions – Choose one of the following:**  
**Breakout I**  
Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon E  
**Session Partner: Georgia Entertainment**

### **You've Got Filming... Now what?**

Film tourism is growing across Georgia — but how do destinations truly capitalize? Explore how to leverage on-screen exposure and turn production into visitation! A tactical workshop for communities ready to maximize opportunity.

**3:15 pm**

### **Breakout II**

**Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon F**

***Session Partner: Response Marketing Group***

### **Engineering the Ultra-Luxury Visitor Growth Machine with Data & Marketing**

Data isn't optional! It's your secret weapon. What happens when research actually drives your marketing strategy? In this session, discover how Alys Beach built a data-driven marketing ecosystem that connects research, first-party data, advanced adtech, and targeted campaigns to better attract and convert Ultra High Net Worth travelers. Attendees will gain practical insights on how destinations of any size can use data, testing, and smarter analysis to strengthen marketing performance and reach high-value visitors.

**3:15 pm**

### **Breakout III**

**Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon G**

***Session Partner: Throwing Words***

### **Leading Destinations Forward: Aligning Purpose, People, and Progress**

Join Doug Bacon, President, and CEO of Throwing Words, for a high-energy, interactive session designed to help DMOs rethink how they communicate, position, and lead their destinations. Attendees will leave with practical tools, new perspectives, and actionable strategies to help their destination thrive in an increasingly competitive and experience-driven travel landscape.

**5:30 pm**

### **Dine Around | Town Trilith**

Shuttles depart from the Marriott Gateway Lobby

Loop from 5:30 to 8:30 pm

**8:00 pm**

### **After Party at Renaissance Gateway**

***Sponsored by: Accent Creative Group***

### **C.A.R.D.S. Band: Exclusive GACVB House Band!**

Get ready for an unforgettable night with the **C.A.R.D.S. Band** featuring **Jonathan Dorsey** (Carrollton), **Jay Markwalter** (Augusta), **Andy Williams** (Roswell), **Sam McDuffie** (Dahlonega), and **Justin Samples** (Statesboro)!

This one-night-only performance will bring you incredible music, a lively atmosphere, and an unforgettable experience.

**Tuesday, March 31, 2026**

- 8:00 -9:00 am**      **Networking Breakfast**  
 Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function  
*Sponsored by: Dart Staffing & Transportation*
- 8:00 am**            **Registration Open** | Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function
- 9:00 am**            **General Session**  
 Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D
- Driving Georgia’s Tourism Economy Through Partnership: An Explore Georgia Update**
- Join us for the latest updates from Georgia’s destination marketing organization, presented by Jay Markwalter, Deputy Commissioner of Tourism for the Georgia Department of Economic Development. This state presentation will highlight Explore Georgia’s 2026 marketing initiatives and collaboration with partners to inspire travel to and within Georgia. From front-line Visitor Information Center opportunities to digital marketing campaigns, earned media efforts, meetings and conventions, and international sales, attendees will learn how Explore Georgia’s strategic focus and industry engagement are driving visitation across all regions of the state.
- 9:45 am**            **General Session**  
 Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D  
*Session Partner: Atlanta Magazine Custom Media*
- CEO Roundtable: Georgia Leadership in Action**  
 The most anticipated conversation of the GACVB Annual Meeting. No scripts, no slide decks. No polished talking points. Just real Georgia destination leaders having an honest, behind-the-scenes conversation about what’s happening in our industry. Think of it as the “corner office group chat” live
- 10:30 am**            **Mid-Morning Break**  
 Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function
- Morning Breakout Sessions – Choose one of the following:**
- 11:00 am**            **Breakout I**  
 Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon E
- Marketing Ideas You Can Steal! Secret Weapons Edition**  
 A lively, insider conversation moderated by Georgia Tourism marketing pros, sharing their cleverest campaigns, social strategies, and can’t-miss initiatives.
- 11:00 am**            **Breakout II**  
 Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon F
- CRM Technology Workshop**  
 Bring your laptop, roll up your sleeves, and dive in! Learn how to harness the latest CRM tools to manage contacts, engage visitors, and drive repeat business—hands-on, practical, and designed so you leave with strategies you can implement immediately.

**Tuesday, March 31, 2026**

**11:00 am**

**Breakout III**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon G

**Make Your Destination Newsworthy: A PR Playbook for Modern Travel Storytelling**

This session gives destination marketers a practical, story-first approach to public relations, showing how to uncover compelling narratives, pitch them effectively, host high-impact media visits, and measure meaningful PR results. Through case studies, pitch templates, and free tools, attendees learn how journalists choose stories, how to build pitches that stand out, and how to turn everyday local experiences into national travel coverage.

**12:00 pm**

**Leadership Luncheon**

Special Membership Presentation+ *Travelblazers*

**Luncheon Sponsor: Destination Augusta**

**Travelblazer Partner: Georgia Trend**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon A-D

**Afternoon Breakout Sessions – Choose one of the following:**

**1:45 pm**

**Breakout I**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon E

**FIFA Is Coming: What Destinations Are Doing (and What You Can Steal!)**

With the global spotlight turning toward the FIFA World Cup, destinations across Georgia are finding creative ways to engage visitors and capture the excitement. In this session, hear how communities like Decatur and Savannah are activating around the tournament through innovative Discover Hubs and strategic partnerships with Green Media Works. Learn what's working, what's coming next, and walk away with ideas you can adapt for your own destination.

**1:45 pm**

**Breakout II**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon F

**Beyond Bookings: Working with Expedia Group Advertising as a DMO**

Most DMOs know Expedia Group as a booking platform—but focusing only on that view means missing the full potential of Expedia Group Advertising as a travel media network. In this session, you'll learn how to leverage Expedia Group's first-party data to uncover traveler insights, better understand demand, and reach travelers earlier in their journey through data-driven marketing strategies. We'll also share Georgia-specific insights, co-op opportunities, and best practices to build campaigns that drive visibility and bookings. In addition, we'll introduce two exclusive opportunities available for sign-up: the Georgia Road Trip Initiative | Expedia Group Big Soccer Tournament Co-Op and a 1:1 Media Match for new partners launching campaigns in Q2.

**1:45 pm**

**Breakout III**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon G | **Session Partner: Zartico**

**The Georgia Advantage: Data That Defines Your Competitive Edge**

See how Georgia tourism truly stacks up. This fast-paced session dives into powerful geolocation and spends data to reveal our competitive position, key

audiences, seasonal trends, international impact, and regional opportunities. Walk away with actionable insights you can immediately use to strengthen marketing, advocacy, and strategic planning across your destination.

**2:30 pm**

**Mid-Afternoon Break**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function

*Sponsored by: Sojern*

**Afternoon Breakout Sessions – Choose one of the following:**

**3:00 pm**

**Breakout I**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon E

**(Encore) FIFA Is Coming: What Destinations Are Doing (and What You Can Steal!)**

With the global spotlight turning toward the FIFA World Cup, destinations across Georgia are finding creative ways to engage visitors and capture the excitement. In this session, hear how communities like Decatur and Savannah are activating around the tournament through innovative Discover Hubs and strategic partnerships with Green Media Works. Learn what's working, what's coming next, and walk away with ideas you can adapt for your own destination.

**3:00 pm**

**Breakout II**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon F

*Session Partner: MediaOne*

**Performing in the Age of AI.**

Trying to perform in the age of AI but not sure where to start? This session is for you. Learn how emerging AI tools are changing marketing, storytelling, and destination promotion—and how you can use them to work smarter, stay competitive, and enhance your organization's performance. Discover practical ideas and real-world examples to help you navigate and succeed in the evolving digital landscape.

**3:00 pm**

**Breakout III**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salon G

*Session Partner: Pineapple PR*

**Ready, Set, Pitch! Media Marketplace Prep Session  
Georgia Media Marketplace | May 6–7, 2026**

A dynamic, travel media-focused event in partnership with Pineapple Public Relations, connecting Georgia destinations with 20+ travel writers, editors, and producers seeking fresh stories. Through one-on-one “speed dating” pitch sessions, you'll build relationships, share story ideas, and showcase what makes your destination stand out. Don't miss the “Everything You Need to Know Before You Go” workshop—your insider guide to pitching with confidence and making the most of every meeting. Even if you're not attending the Media Marketplace, this is the perfect session to learn the tricks of crafting a winning PR pitch.

**3:45 pm**

**General Session**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D

*Sponsored by: Advance Travel and Tourism*

**AI & Destination Organizations: Not Your Typical AI Talk**

Everyone's tired of generic AI presentations... This one is different. This session cuts through the hype and focuses on what DMOs need to know. Learn how to set clear internal guardrails so your team can innovate safely, protect your brand in a rapidly changing digital landscape, empower staff to use AI responsibly without losing creativity, and strategically plan for what's next in AI for tourism.

**6:00 pm** **Evening Reception & Georgia Tourism Excellence Awards**

*Attire: Business Elegance*

**7:00 pm** **Georgia Tourism Excellence Awards Program**

**Awards Dinner Sponsor: AJC/Access Atlanta**

**Wednesday, April 1, 2026**

**8:30-9:30 am** **Networking Breakfast**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function

**Sponsored by: Cartersville Museum City &**

**9:30 am** **GACVB General Membership Report & Annual Business Meeting**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D

**10:00 am** **General Session**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D

**Session Partner: ATL Airport District**

**Teamwork Makes the Dream Work: General Session**

Get ready for a high-energy general session that will explore the power of collaboration, innovation, and collective impact! Walk away motivated, energized, and ready to turn teamwork into real results for your destination

**10:45 am** **Mid-Morning Break**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Pre-Function

**11:15 am** **General Session**

Atlanta Marriott Gateway | Salons A-D

**Advocacy: Under the Gold Dome**

Investing in Georgia tourism is big business, and it takes action at the statehouse! Over the summer, four Senate Study Committee meetings explored ways to make tourism #1 in Georgia. Join us for an insider look at what's happening under the Gold Dome, where things stand now, and what's next for Georgia's tourism industry. Don't miss this chance to see how advocacy drives real impact for your destination!

**12:00 pm** **Closing Remarks & Adjournment**

GEORGIA



ASSOCIATION OF  
CONVENTION &  
VISITORS BUREAUS