



Virginia Tourism Corporation Announces Virginia's Artisan Industry Topped \$572 Million in Economic Impact

RICHMOND (August 4, 2016) - Virginia Tourism Corporation announced today that the total economic impact of the artisan industry in Virginia in 2014 was \$572.2 million, providing \$15.6 million in state tax revenue for the Commonwealth. In 2014, nearly 12,000 full-time jobs were supported by artisan visitor spending.

Artisan visitor spending totaled more than \$250 million, with the average visitor spending \$260 per person, per trip. According to the first statewide benchmark study, nearly 700,000 travelers visit Virginia's artisan attractions and business. Visitors love the artisan products and experiences in Virginia because they are authentic, unique, and local. Many Virginia artisans work independently, operating their own studios, and selling their products through local vendors. These artisans contribute to their local economy and elevate the Virginia tourism experience with their level of craftsmanship and knowledge. Virginia artisan and associated businesses purchase 47% of their supplies in Virginia.

"Virginia is a true destination for artisan culture and trails," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation. "Travelers are coming from all over the country to experience our vineyards, farms, lodging, cultural points of interests, and local artisans. Our artisan trails provide many opportunities for visitors to connect with artisan businesses. This helps make Virginia a premier travel destination with a diverse array of tourism product."

"This benchmark study validates what we have known for some time; that artisan entrepreneurship exists in abundance across the Commonwealth and as a hard-working, talent-based industry made up of creative and agricultural businesses, is of growing significance on Virginia's economic landscape," said Sherri Smith, Executive Director of the Artisans Center of Virginia. "The Artisans Center of Virginia is deliberately coordinating efforts to leverage this talent into a recognized and established industry that is connected, branded, promoted and celebrated. Now, more than ever, diversifying economic development initiatives statewide to elevate artisan enterprises is critical to sustaining the authentic work, cultural and economic contributions that these entrepreneurs make daily as they uniquely contribute to the vitality and character of Virginia communities."

"This is an important study that helps substantiate the work we are doing with the artisan community in Southwest Virginia. Most 'Round the Mountain' artisan members work quietly in their home studio and sell their work there or at a local venue," said Diana Blackburn, Executive Director of 'Round the Mountain. "Those individuals combined with the wineries, craft venues, agritourism businesses and creative points of interest that make up the Artisan Trails are collectively making a significant impact to the economy of the region and the state."

One out of seven Virginia visitors plan their trips around artisan trails. Artisan trail locations accounted for 59% of sales in 2014, and created a direct economic impact of \$415,600 sales per day.

The economic impact study is a combined effort from the Artisans Center of Virginia (ACV) and 'Round Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network in partnership with the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), performed by Chmura Economics & Analytics.

Incorporated in 1997, The Artisans Center of Virginia, designated the "official state artisans center", strives to improve economic outcomes and promote local artisan by focusing on heritage, education, jobs, research, community, and networking. 'Round the Mountain: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Network was created in 2005 to provide a network of support for the artisan community of Southwest Virginia.

The Virginia Tourism Corporation is the state agency responsible for marketing Virginia to visitors and promoting the Virginia is for Lovers brand. Virginia is for Lovers is the longest-running state tourism slogan in the country. Tourism is an instant revenue generator in Virginia. Last year, visitors to Virginia spent \$23 billion, which supported \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes and 222,600 jobs. Plan your next vacation in Virginia at virginia.org.

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