

Heritage Tourism Is a Peach in Georgia

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"I had driven for hours and hours and was completely out of my environment. My greeting was warm Southern hospitality at its best." So wrote a visitor about her trip to the Georgia Archives in Morrow, just south of Atlanta.

She went on to describe the work she had done, the discoveries made. It was well worth the trip, she concluded. "An experience like that you can't get by mail." High gasoline prices and economic downturn may have pushed more researchers to conduct their archival research by mail, but archives remain at the very heart of heritage tourism.

In 2003, and again in 2005, the Georgia Archives used a simple survey of out-of-state visitors to demonstrate the value of archives as a tourist destination. Twelve simple questions told us when they visited, why they came, how long they stayed, and how much they spent while in Georgia (see box below). The snapshot provided evidence that the archives brings tourists into the state in numbers that are significant enough to warrant the attention of tourism officials. The survey produced at least three tangible results:

PRESS COVERAGE. So far as we know, only one journalist picked up our press information about the survey, but his article was republished in newspapers statewide. The reporter discussed the unique advantages of in-person research and emphasized the out-of-state dollars that accrue to the state when tourists visit archives.

STATE TOURISM ATTENTION. Our simple survey helped to capture the attention of the state's

tourism agency. Tourism officials were aware that people will travel great distances to visit historic sites, but more than one said she had never thought of archives as a tourist destination. Our figures suggested that out-of-state visitors to the Georgia Archives alone add some \$1 million to Georgia's economy each year, enough to intrigue the tourism agency and prompt them to offer assistance in our efforts to attract others.

LOCAL ATTENTION. The tourism agency of the county in which the state archives is located was already enthusiastic about having both a state archives and a branch of the National Archives within their borders; our survey encouraged them to expend even more effort to attract visitors. The tourism agency became involved in the Friends of the Georgia Archives and began placing the archives on its itinerary when tour operators visited the county.

Our survey took very little time—a simple Zoomerang setup made it easy for the user to complete and easy for us to compile results—but paid tangible dividends.

Archives can be part of a rewarding tourist experience. One survey respondent researched her great-grandfather at the state archives and then wrote about the highlight of her trip, on her last day in Georgia: "Fourth day—Sunday—we attended Primitive Baptist Church in Zebulon where my great-grandfather preached over a 100 years ago."

Now that's an experience you can't get online! ❖

Twelve Simple Survey Questions

1. What was your home zip code at the time you visited the Georgia Archives?
2. In what month did you visit the Georgia Archives?
3. Including yourself, how many people traveled with you to Georgia?
4. While you visited the Georgia Archives, where did you stay?
5. If you stayed in a motel/hotel, how did you learn about the specific motel/hotel you selected?
6. Which BEST describes the reason you visited Georgia? (Archives, Archives & Other Activities, Unrelated Activities)
7. How did you learn about the Georgia Archives? (Please list the name of the website, publication or organization.)
8. What was the purpose of your visit to the Georgia Archives?
9. How many days and nights did you stay in Georgia?
10. While you were in Georgia, did you visit other areas and sites or take part in other activities?
11. Please use this space to comment on your visit to the Georgia Archives, the service you received, or other information you would like us to know.
12. OPTIONAL: Please estimate your total expenditures during your entire stay in Georgia. (This data helps us determine the economic impact of out-of-state visitors.)

Welcome
We're glad
Georgia's
on your mind

