



OTD Attends Fleet Week Kick-Off Event

OTD's Managing Director Liz Fitzsimmons was on hand for the official kick-off event for Maryland Fleet Week & Flyover Baltimore on January 24. Maryland Fleet Week & Flyover Baltimore, presented by Northrop Grumman, returns to Baltimore City and Baltimore County with an exciting line-up of ship tours, festivals, flyovers, and educational activities, taking place June 12-18, 2024, at the Inner Harbor, Fells Point, North Locust Point, and Martin State Airport. Click [here](#) for more information about the event.

Pictured from left to right: Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski; Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott; OTD Managing Director Liz Fitzsimmons; Rear Admiral Nancy Lacore, Commandant, Naval District Washington; Living Classrooms President & CEO James Bond; Northrop Grumman Vice President of Naval and Oceanic Systems Todd Leavitt; Fleet Week 2024 Director Chris Rowsom.



OTD Reports Reveal Impressive Statistics

Tourism means business for Maryland. Referrals to local partners from VisitMaryland's website topped 45,000 for December and a recently released end-of-year report for 2023 revealed visitors to Maryland's official tourism website grew nearly 10 percent to more than 2.8 million views during the past 12 months. In addition, VisitMaryland.org's user visitation and engagement rate increased by an impressive 6 percent with a 12 percent increase in engaged sessions year-over-year. A review of visitation at Maryland's welcome centers detailed an impressive 2.4 percent increase. Click [here](#) for more information and to access the reports. Contact [Lisa Hansen Terhune](#) to learn more about how you can take advantage of ways to work with OTD.



OTD's 2023 "Pathways to Freedom" Campaign Yields Powerful Results

A 2023 end-of-campaign report detailing the results of the "Pathways to Freedom" initiative that celebrated International Underground Railroad Month has been released. The designated month in September celebrates Maryland's role as The Most Powerful Underground Railroad Storytelling Destination in the World.

The campaign revealed that targeted digital advertising generated \$333,310 in hotel revenue with an ROI of \$7.45 to \$1. In addition, organic social media posts about the program reached more than 3,300 people and paid social media campaign efforts reached 457,268 potential visitors with 6,352 link clicks. During the month of September alone, Maryland's Underground Railroad web page received 8,256 page views and the new "Pathways to Freedom" web page received 8,493 views. A web page with International Underground Railroad Month events

garnered 5,032 views and included 18 events. And, this just in-- copywriting for the International Underground Railroad Month digital campaign has received an ADDY award from the American Advertising Federation/Baltimore Region.

In addition to a September kick-off event and the unveiling of two new waysides adjacent to Pier 4 in Baltimore at the National Aquarium, OTD released a new printed brochure, "Pathways to Freedom" and debuted new web content, which includes a driving tour of Central Maryland sites, a walking tour of Baltimore's Inner Harbor and a walking tour of Historic Ellicott City. Visit visitmaryland.org/pathways-to-freedom for more information.



Add Your Civil Rights Sites, Programming and Events to VisitMaryland.org

In celebration of Governor Wes Moore's declaration of 2024 as the "Year of Civil Rights in Maryland" and in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Maryland Office of Tourism Development in partnership with the Banneker-Douglass Museum invites historic sites, organizations and partners to share their story of Maryland's role in the Civil Rights movement, with a particular focus on 1939-1968 (to fit within the scope of the National Park Service's African American Civil Rights Network timeframe). Do you or your partners have visitor-ready sites that pertain to the timeframe to add to OTD's web article, [A Maryland Civil Rights Sojourn](#)? Please use this [Google form](#) to submit your sites and activities. Also, please be sure to upload your civil rights events into the VisitMaryland.org events calendar [here](#) to reach millions of travelers.

Photo Credit: St. Mary's County Museum Division.



OTD Joins CRUSA on Media Mission

OTD Social Media and Digital Products Coordinator Ana Hall-Defoor participated in a Capital Region USA (CRUSA) media mission to Switzerland and Germany last week with other CRUSA partners. The German market is one of the top travel markets for international visitation to our region. The media team met with more than 20 media outlets throughout the week-long mission which covered appointments in Zurich, Munich, Dusseldorf, and Bonn. The goal of the media appointments was to sustain and build new relationships in hopes of bringing more international travelers to the Capital Region by pitching story ideas to travel editors and writers to inspire more travel to the region and to Maryland.

Pictured: Ana Hall-Defoor (second row, far right) with CRUSA partners in Zurich.



Allegheny County Well Represented in the "Best Of Awards" from *Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine*

Eleven local Allegheny County businesses, attractions, and experiences took home awards at the 14th annual *Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine*'s 'Best of Awards,' including a first place for Wheelzup Adventures in Cumberland. The awards were announced in the February 2024 issue of the magazine. "We are so proud of this year's award winners, especially Wheelzup Adventures, who took home 'Best Bike Shop' in the Blue Ridge," said Ashli Workman, Director of Tourism for Allegheny County. "We know how hard our entrepreneurs work to deliver service, goods, and experiences to our community and visitors, and we're proud to see them recognized on a national level." Visit

[Blue Ridge Outdoors](#) for more information and a full list of the winners.

*Pictured: Mandela and Jamie Echefu, Owners of Wheelzup Adventures.
Photo credit: Allegany County Tourism - MdMountainside.com*



Maryland State Arts Council Announces New Grant Program

The Maryland State Arts Council has announced a new Arts Capital grant program. The program supports Maryland-based nonprofit organizations delivering arts and cultural education or experiences as a core part of its mission or vision with \$3 million or less in annual operating costs. This grant program will support capital projects and purchases of equipment that will improve or produce a complete, usable and accessible arts facility; projects or programs that integrate energy-efficient technologies; and programs that improve the effective delivery of, or access to, an organization's arts and cultural programming. For more information and to apply click [here](#).



Promote Your Events on VisitMaryland.org

Do your partners know how easy it is to add events to [VisitMaryland.org's events calendar](#)? If you or an organization or attraction in your region is hosting an event, it's easy to get the word out through VisitMaryland.org's events calendar. With tens of thousands of regular visitors, it's a great tool, and with our self-entry portal, it's never been easier to use! If you're wondering if an event has the right stuff for the VisitMaryland.org calendar, you'll find the inclusion criteria here, [follow this link](#) for a step-by-step guide for self entry,

or if it's not your first rodeo, jump straight to the entry portal [here](#).

Photo credit: Karmen Osei

IN THE NEWS



Tourism Legislation Seeks to Provide Benefits to Businesses

Pikesville Armory Historic Site Set to Transform into Regional Hub

Discount Airline Adds Three New Nonstop Routes from BWI

Parade, Performances to Mark Frederick Douglass Day

8 Things to Know: Fleet Week Adds New Fells Point Event to Lineup

BWI Airport Adds New Airline with Flights to This Island Destination

BWI Revives Plan to Build In-terminal Hotel After Pandemic Pause

Frederick County Vineyard To Be Featured On 'Maryland Farm and Harvest'

Cal Ripken Jr., Grant Hill Among Group Agreeing to Buy Orioles

Budget Airline Launches No-cost Iceland Stopover for BWI Passengers

Maryland Minute

Each week, the *Maryland Minute* provides highlights and insights on this weekend's events around the state. [Maryland Minute](#) is featured on Audacy radio stations in Baltimore and Washington, D.C., WERQ on Baltimore's WBAL-AM 1090.

Maryland Travel Tips

For the latest on events and everything going all around Maryland, view the latest edition of [Visit Maryland Now!](#)

