

## **Atlanta Launches a Learning-Based Tourism Program in Latin America**

ATLANTA – In March 2002, the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) began offering a new tourism product in Latin America to market Atlanta as a premier destination for Latin business executives to continue their professional development and executive education, creating short-term visitors that turn into long-term business partners. Learning-based tourism is a unique travel product that focuses on Atlanta's resources that appeal to the Latin markets – a mix of universities, technology and a thriving business environment.

The ACVB is bringing together local corporations, universities, airlines and other tourism components to create a travel product that markets Atlanta as an educational experience with long-term economic development opportunity, and, in turn, help brand Atlanta as the mecca for business success and professional development. Local universities involved in the program are Emory University, Georgia State University and Kennesaw State University. Local corporate partners include Delta Air Lines, CNN, and The Coca-Cola Company, among others. The program positions Atlanta and Georgia as emerging business partners with Latin countries while promoting Latin visitor growth through education and professional development, while encouraging an active interface with Atlanta's global corporations.

The catalyst for the program is Atlanta's accessibility via increased airline service to Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport – service that did not exist four years ago.

“The ACVB began researching the Latin American markets in 1998 and 1999 when it became apparent that major airlines, primarily Delta Air Lines, were making significant investments in new airline service from South American, Central American and Mexico,” said Bill Howard, ACVB vice president of marketing, communications and tourism. “Our research directed us toward a more unconventional approach to marketing the city to this new market. The Latin markets know Atlanta more for our business success and opportunity to prosper than for our history, culture and arts, entertainment, sports, shopping and dining, which are the conventional components of tourism-related marketing.”

Research from the United States Department of Commerce shows that the Latin American market is the fastest growing international passenger arrivals market for Atlanta. Since 1995, non-citizen arrivals from Latin America have grown by 183%. The key to this growth has been in increase in flights to the Latin America market.

**Origin of International Flights**  
(Provided by Hartsfield International Airport)

# Weekly Flights to ATL from:	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Europe	79%	79%	55%	48%	46%	32%
Latin America/ Caribbean	17%	17%	43%	49%	50%	64%
Asia	4%	4%	2%	3%	2%	2%
Africa	0	0	0	0	2%	2%

ACVB research also showed that many Atlanta universities enjoyed a significant undergraduate student population from Latin countries, and the number of post-graduate and continuing education courses being marketed by the universities is growing rapidly. The research also spotlighted the aggressive and successful efforts of major Atlanta corporations investing in new business ventures throughout South America, Central America and Mexico.

The ACVB has joined with two of the largest tour operators in the Latin American market to package and distribute the program to tour wholesalers in Latin countries. Bancor Leaders in Travel will be responsible for distribution in Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, Columbia, Chile, Venezuela and Peru. Delta Vacations will handle Mexico. The Learning-Based Tourism packages include airfare, accommodations, transportation, university programs, corporate visits and cultural and tourism attractions.

Established in 1913, the ACVB is a private, nonprofit organization created exclusively to market metro Atlanta and Georgia as the premier conventions, meetings and leisure destination in the regional, national and international marketplace and to favorably impact the Atlanta economy through conventions and tourism.

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