



## 2025 Story Ideas

**Dollywood:** When she launched it, Dolly Parton envisioned “her” theme park as a venue that would preserve local food, music and crafts; employ the people of the region where she was born and raised; and let families create vacation memories in an incredibly fun environment. In 2025, this award-winning park in Tennessee’s Smoky Mountains will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary season. Next year also marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dolly’s first hotel, Dollywood’s DreamMore Resort and Spa, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season of Dollywood’s Splash Country, the company’s water park.

**Alabama’s Beaches:** Speaking of anniversaries, we’ve got another one coming up that will make you raise a (frosty, frothy) glass. The beach communities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach in Alabama are marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “bushwacker,” the boozy milkshake that has become the region’s signature drink. Though it was invented in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1975 and came to Florida shortly thereafter, we like to think that the drink was truly perfected in coastal Alabama. A Bushwacker Trail has already been established and the entire tourism community is organizing a year-long celebration.



**Bowling Green, Kentucky:** We also have an anniversary of a completely different kind going on in Kentucky’s third-largest city. This winter will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what’s locally known as “the entrapment of Floyd Collins.” He was a 20<sup>th</sup>-century explorer who got his foot stuck while trekking through Sand Cave and ultimately died. The valiant attempts to rescue him became a huge news story in 1925, and some folks even claim that this moment was when some travel journalists truly got to shine. The outcome was that the National Park Service took over neighboring Mammoth

Cave to protect and preserve it and make it a safe place for all visitors to explore. Special tours and activities have been scheduled to honor Floyd's adventurous spirit and to celebrate how much cave exploration has changed for the better over the past century.

**Allegany County, The Mountain Side of Maryland:** On the subject of exploration: Cumberland was once the second largest town in Maryland, a transportation hub that witnessed the arrival and departure of people and products traveling via covered wagons, canal boats and trains. The historic downtown just underwent a \$17.2 million makeover that breathed new life into architecturally significant buildings, which are home to an array of shops and restaurants. By next fall, one long-vacant building will have been transformed into the Wills Hotel, a boutique property that's eager to welcome modern-day travelers.



*Credit: MDMountainside.com*

**Shenandoah County:** We proudly represent an array of mountain communities that really show off in the fall, and this county in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley offers fascinating and innovative ways to leaf-peep. But it's beautiful here all year round, both above ground and below. Yes, we have another cave here ... plus charming small towns and a variety of outdoor adventures to appeal to everyone's tastes, from mild to wild. Winter brings skiing, spring brings wildflowers and summer is a great time to explore the wineries for which this region is justly famous.

**Louisiana's Sweet Spot:** Moving further south, our newest client is Ascension Parish, which is located right between New Orleans and Baton Rouge and whose major crop is sugar cane. You'll find the sweet stuff in everything from iconic pralines to locally distilled spirits to salad dressing, but on our recent trip to the parish, we found that the sweetest thing of all might just be the people. Note that the Super Bowl will be hosted by New Orleans in 2025, and if you're looking for ideas about day trips from the Crescent City, we've got clients in Louisiana that are just a short drive away.

**Louisiana's Cajun Bayou:** Ascension Parish's neighbor to the south is Lafourche Parish. The big news here is that nearly four years after Hurricane Ida blew through and took out the region's visitors center, Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism will finally open its new home next summer. The new visitors center will be a fantastic starting point for an adventure here, in a place that's celebrated for its Cajun Bayou Food Trail and which garnered its 15 minutes of fame recently because Lana Del Rey married one of its swamp boat captains. You can't make this stuff up!



*Credit: Louisiana's Cajun Bayou*

**The Northshore:** Continuing our tour of Louisiana (and our talk of Mother Nature's power) ... next August will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. St. Tammany Parish, which is located across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans, sustained considerable damage. In fact, the small town of Slidell endured tsunami-like waves and flooding, which damaged thousands of homes and destroyed countless businesses. But the region has truly bounced back and today generates the third largest amount of visitor spend in the entire state of Louisiana. Those visitors enjoy a robust dining scene, plenty of outdoor activities (including swamp tours, trails and scenic bike rides), boutique and antique shopping, and charming B&B's.

**The Otesaga:** We love working with small towns, and for more than 100 years, The Otesaga has been THE place to stay in the little village of Cooperstown, New York. Next year could be a big one for this place that's also home to the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum. Last night two inductees were announced from the Classic Baseball Era, but there's a lot of potential for a major announcement at the end of January, after votes are tallied from the Baseball Writers' Association of America. We can't officially say anything about that right now, but we CAN say that the whole town – including its legendary hotel – is ready to welcome everyone who wants to usher in the Class of '25 next July 27.

**Sunset at the Palms:** We started this newsletter by talking about what a rough year 2024 has been, so let's end it by talking about how you can get away from it all. We offer up this solution: an adults-only, all-inclusive resort in Jamaica that takes relaxation to an all-new level. It's home to 85 treehouse-style rooms that are scattered throughout a jungle-like garden, but it also offers a pristine beach just steps away. It's a one-of-a-kind escape from reality ... and that sounds pretty great right about now, doesn't it?



*Credit: Sunset at the Palms*