

**2025 TENTATIVE AGENDA
ALABAMA GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM
August 23-26**

#25AGCTTheLodge

Celebrating Local Heroes - Everyone Plays a Role in Tourism's Success

Saturday, August 23

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Silent Auction Set-Up Wine Pull Set-Up	Ballroom III & IV The Burrow
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Sunday, August 24

9:00 AM	Set-Up for Trade Show/Silent Auction/ Wine Pull Ballroom III & IV and The Burrow
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9:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration	The Burrow
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Coffee, Tea, and Soft Drinks	Ballroom Foyer
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**Sponsored by Coca-Cola Bottling Company and
Royal Cup Coffee and Tea**

10:00 – 11:30 AM	Alabama Travel Council Annual Meeting & Alabama Tourism Partnership Update (open to all registrants) Ballroom I & II
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11:45 AM - 12:15 PM	Grab and Go Boxed Light Lunch Sponsored by Huntsville/Madison County CVB Ballroom Foyer and Ballroom II
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**Grab and Go will close at 12:20. The Opening
General Session begins at 12:30**

12:30 PM	Opening General Session	Ballroom I & II
	Welcome by Beth Gendler, President & CEO	
	Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism	
	Gulf Shores Mayor Robert Craft	
	Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon	
	Bill Bennett, General Manager, The Lodge at Gulf State Park	

Alabama Tourism Department's Update

Grab and Go Break Ballroom Foyer
Beverages Sponsored by Coca-Cola Bottling
Company and Royal Cup Coffee and Tea

General Session **Ballroom I & II**
Welcome to LuLu's! The Story Behind the

This is the story of our nationally famous local hero Lucy Buffett. LuLu's began as a "local dive" at the mouth of Fish River and has grown to be one of the largest and most successful restaurants in Alabama. LuLu's also now has locations in Florida and South Carolina. In each location, LuLu's offers an experience beyond dining. The atmosphere, from the friendly, well-trained staff, to the carefully executed allergy-aware menus, to the children's activities and live music venues, is designed to make guests welcome, comfortable and happy! Hear the LuLu's story and the magic behind the success.

**America250AL: Celebrating America's
Semiquincentennial Across Alabama
Presenter: Col. Alan B. Miller, USMCR**

**Opening Reception in the Trade Show/Silent
Auction Ballroom III & IV
Sponsored by Advance Travel & Tourism**

6:30-10:00 PM	Cash Bars will open on the Dunes Terrace and Ballroom Foyer at 6:30 PM. The bars will be closed during Awards and Miss America presentation- you may buy additional wine by the bottle at the bars Dunes Terrace and Ballroom Foyer
7:00 PM	Alabama Tourism Department Awards Banquet Master of Ceremonies, Lee Sentell Special Guest, Abbie Stockard, Miss America Ballroom I & II
9:15 PM	Miss America Meet and Greet and Dessert and Cordials Sponsored by Visit Florence and Renaissance Shoals Hotel and Spa Ballroom Foyer
	Viewing of the Silent Auction in the Trade Show Ballroom III & IV

Monday, August 25

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration The Burrow
	Refreshments Sponsored by Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Royal Cup Coffee and Tea
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Breakfast in the Trade Show and Silent Auction Sponsored by Poarch Band of Creek Indians Ballroom III & IV
9:15 – 10:30 AM	General Session Ballroom I & II AI's Biggest Questions, Myths and Mysteries Beth Z, Your Nerdy Best Friend
	<p>Artificial Intelligence often feels like a blend of buzzwords and bewilderment. Will robots take our jobs? Does Chat GPT steal our data? Are AI tools big fat liars? Join Beth Z, Your Best Friend, in a lively exploration of AI's most puzzling questions and common myths.</p> <p>With nerdy humor mixed with practical tips, Beth Z makes the enigmatic world of AI a tad less intimidating and a lot more intriguing. The session will give participants a</p>

framework for a commonsense approach to creating the guardrails needed to make the most of AI.

10:30 – 11:30 AM

“Local Heroes” Panel **Ballroom I & II**
How Local Heroes Create Tourism Success

Moderator: Colette Boehm, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism

Panel: Michelle Russ, Gulf Shores/Orange Beach Tourism
Steve Jones, Coastal Alabama Business Chamber

From volunteers to sponsors to employees, tourism takes a village! Sports tourism initiatives, annual events, special programs, and even daily operations depend on support from a wide range of people from a variety of local sectors.

Hear how local involvement builds successful events, attractions and businesses and what impact those tourism products have on local and regional economies.

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Trade Show Viewing **Ballroom III & IV**
Wine Pull

12:15 – 1:30 PM

Scholarship Luncheon **Ballroom I & II**
Special Guest, The Honorable Governor Kay Ivey

Sponsored by: Alabama Association of Destination Marketing Organizations (AADMO) and Compass Media

Master of Ceremonies, David Clark, President AADMO, and Dustin Gontarski, President, Compass Media

Presentation of 2025 Tourism Industry Scholarships by 2025 Chairwomen of the Scholarship Committee, Christy Baranovics and Pam Swanner

2:00 – 4:00 PM

AGCT Beach Games ‘25 **Dunes Terrace**
Sponsored by

Friendly competition is the theme during this afternoon of fun and rivalry on the beach. Whether you want to be in the heart of the competition or cheering on your team from the sidelines, there’s a place for you here. This afternoon of beach fun is the perfect complement to our excellent slate of educational sessions, offering a chance to enjoy Alabama’s number one tourism attraction while networking – and

fighting for bragging rights – with peers from around the state.

6:00 – 7:00 PM **Reception in the Trade Show/Silent Auction (Cash Bar)** **Ballroom III & IV**
Sponsored by Wind Creek Hospitality

7:00 PM ***Celebrating the Luaus of the Past!*** **Dunes Terrace**

In this throw-back celebration, the Gulf State Park luaus of old will be made new again. Back in the day, The Lodge was home to weekly luaus enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. **Gulf Shores/Orange Beach Tourism and The Lodge at Gulf State Park** are partnering to bring this special local event back with a new flair. Seafood, entertainment, and beautiful views will highlight this magical night on the coast

Tuesday, August 26

8:00 - 9:00 AM **Breakfast in the Trade Show and Final Bidding for the Silent Auction** **Ballroom III & IV**
Sponsored by

9:00 – 11:00 AM **Beverages Sponsored by Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Royal Cup Coffee and Tea**
Ballroom Foyer

9:15 – 9:45 AM **General Session** **Ballroom I & II**
Understanding the TID – Tourism Improvement Districts

9:45 – 10:15 AM **HOTEL CHECK OUT and Silent Auction Payment!**
The Burrow

10:15 – 11:30 AM **Education Finale** **Ballroom I & II**
Kristy Durso “Why Accessibility”

Kristy’s ultimate goal is to inspire change in the travel industry to make a more inclusive atmosphere, so that travel is accessible to all.

Kristy works directly with DMOs, tourist boards, resorts, etc. to increase awareness of disability travel, and to help them improve their accessibility

Her work aims to improve accessibility options for travelers with disabilities, and to also help travel advisors better

communicate with potential clients and destinations so that the travelers' needs are met, and expectations of the level of accessibility are accurate. As a member of the advisory board for Travelability,

Kristy is the owner of Incredible Memories Travel. As a full time, wheelchair user and mom to three kids with disabilities and food allergies, she understands the complexities of accessible travel on a personal level. She is passionate about helping others with disabilities travel. Over the last several years, Kristy has noticed a disconnect between what is labeled as accessible, and what is truly disability friendly. Accommodations are often labeled as accessible when, in fact, they meet the needs of very few people with disabilities.

11:00 AM

**Silent Auction Payment at Convention Registration
Desk**
The Burrow

Revised 5/15/2025