

Destination: Charlotte

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grown by 86 percent since 1999.

But will that be enough for black visitors to consider Charlotte to be a major destination city?

The reasons Atlanta ranks so high among black visitors, according to TIAA, is the way the city celebrates and displays African American history.

"Atlanta resonates with African American history, from the negative slavery and Civil War era to the positive modern success of black entrepreneurs, politicians, entertainers, and athletes in the city. Civil rights history and continued political activity is of course a main focus, as Atlanta was the birthplace of Martin Luther King Jr. The King Center offers an educational and inspirational experience for the entire family. The city's hip hop talent, including such nationally acclaimed acts like Outkast and Ludacris, also bring an influx of young African Americans, many of whom end up attending one of Atlanta's black colleges and universities. Sweet Auburn offers tourists a variety of influences in African American culture, including some great soul food. The Atlanta Jazz Festival is also a big draw among African Americans, as was the discontinued Montreaux Music Festival. Religious conferences and family reunions is another major draw for African American tourism in Atlanta," the report stated.

Charlotte, Counts said is becoming that type of city as well (minus the famous rappers and live music events).

"There are endless possibilities in Charlotte," she said. "People think there isn't a lot to do here, but when they get here, they realize we have a



Johnson C. Smith is the only historically black college in Charlotte. Atlanta, a top destination city among blacks, has four HBCUs in the city.

The Afro-American Cultural Center is among on of the few obvious attractions that Charlotte has to offer African American visitors. Unlike Atlanta, Charlotte doesn't draw black visitors based on its historical and cultural attractions.

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Black travel:

- African-Americans are much more likely to travel to destinations throughout the southern census divisions, specifically to the South Atlantic (37% of person-trips), West South Central (15%), and East South Central (13%) divisions.

- About one-tenth (9%) of all African-Americans travel includes a rental car as a primary mode of transportation. One in seven (14 percent)

African-American person-trips include air transportation.

- On one in ten trips (10 percent), African-American households spend \$1,000 or more, excluding transportation to the destination.

- More than half (51 percent) of African-American trips are made by adults traveling alone or with someone outside their household.

- About one in four (26%) trips taken by African-American households include children

under 18 years old

- Aside from shopping (41 percent of person-trips), other popular activities on African-American trips are nightlife or dancing (13 percent), visiting historical places or museums (12 percent), attending cultural events or festivals (12 percent), visiting theme or amusement parks (12 percent), and gambling (12 percent).

- Minority travelers spent about \$90 billion in 2002.

—Travel Industry Association of America.

Macho wine pitch

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grapes from hillside vineyards where the vines have to struggle to survive, producing richer fruit that adds heft to the flavors.

Don't expect any Ray's Station buttery chardonnays or silky sauvignon blancs, though.

"White wines ain't cutting it," Hilliard said with a laugh, referring to the industry axiom that women prefer white wines.

The wines are packaged simply with a label bearing the outline of a galloping stallion. The accompanying tongue-in-stubbed-cheek ad campaign features the winery's namesake, Sonoma County pioneer John G. Ray, and such masculine pursuits as fishing and hunting.

One ad shows a hunter at sunset, dog by his side, with the copy "John G. Ray did not serve pinot noir," a sly dig at the varietal adored by wine sophisticates.

The company does not have sales data yet, but the response from distributors has been good, said Hilliard.

"People react to it in the way they should; they chuckle," he says. "It's a little irreverent and it's meant to be fun. But, at the same time, the wine that's going into the bottle is very serious stuff."

Another Sonoma County winery, Ravenswood, has been getting in touch with its strong side for years, rallying behind the slogan "No Wimpy Wines." The winery, known for its zinfandels, is sponsoring the No. 27 Brewco Motorsports car in the NASCAR Busch Series for 2006.

Although they may seem an

unusual pairing, wine and auto racing have been connected for a while, with a number of wineries founded by the sport's greats, including car racer Mario Andretti, founder of the Andretti Winery in Napa.

NASCAR fan Boyce Brannock of Staunton, Virginia, is watching the trend with some interest. He is someone who already appreciates fine wines and fast cars. He and like-minded enthusiasts of both sexes—they call their group "Rednecks and Red Rhones"—get together every February to kick off the season and sample wines from the Rhone region of France.

Brannock sees the new marketing outreach as dovetailing with a consumer-driven trend of more nontraditional wine drinkers being willing to take an interest in wine, "or at least not turn up their nose when it's offered."

He was not sure men would be won over by marketing aimed at them, but speculated it might be a hit with their wives. "Something like Ray's Station might be an opportunity to say, 'Here's something that's not coming out of a flowery bottle,'" he said.

Leslie Sbrocco, author of "Wine for Women," liked the idea of trying to broaden wine's appeal.

"I'm all for gender marketing," she said. "I'm all for getting wine in more people's hands regardless of how we do it."

On the Net:
<http://www.ravensstation.com>
<http://www.ravenswood-wine.com/>
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