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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR WHITMAN VISITS THE SEASHORE TO WELCOME SUMMER; SAYS BAROMETERS POINT TO ANOTHER STRONG TOURISIM SEASON

Summer's here, New Jersey's beaches are open, and resorts are prepared for what promises to be another strong tourism season, Gov. Christie Whitman said today as she officially kicked off the season during a visit to Seaside Heights. The Governor also welcomed MTV Music Television to Seaside Heights where the channel will be taping its summer-based programming throughout the summer.

"New Jersey beaches are open and ready for sunbathers. With beautiful beaches and a robust economy, the Jersey shore is the ideal summer vacation destination," said Governor Whitman. "But it's also the ideal season for summer job seekers. With beaches now open for swimming and the warmer weather here, shore businesses are busy filling their seasonal job openings with high school students and college age applicants."

The Governor noted that the overall outlook for the summer is excellent, with businesses expecting to equal or better last year's stellar results, providing the weather cooperates. The annual Pre-Memorial Day survey of tourism-related businesses conducted by the New Jersey Department of Commerce's Division of Travel and Tourism found that summer bookings for rental properties, hotels and campgrounds are strong, and in many cases, running ahead of last year. That is especially good news this year, with a longer summer season due to a later Labor Day.

New Jersey's high school and college-age youth once again should find the summer job market to be a good one. According to an informal survey conducted by the Department of Labor in late April, most private sector employers expect to provide at least the same number of summer jobs this year as they did a year ago. As in 1997, teen job hunters will most likely continue to encounter less competition for jobs due to a combination of lower unemployment, a growing economy and an expected strong tourist season.

"The importance of the Jersey Shore to the state's tourism industry is critical," said Commerce Commissioner Gualberto "Gil" Medina. "But the Shore contributes to our state's economy in many positive ways besides generating more than half of all tourism expenditures. As our top attraction -- including Atlantic City -- the Shore enhances our image with residents and visitors, as well as businesses seeking to relocate or expand here."

The Jersey Shore region, which includes Monmouth, Ocean, Cape May, Cumberland and Atlantic counties as well as casino gaming in Atlantic City, generated more than half -- \$14.1 billion of the state's \$25.5 billion in travel and tourism expenditures last year.

"As in 1997, summer job hunters can expect to find an abundance of employment opportunities this vacation season," said Labor Commissioner Mel Gelade. "New Jersey's continued low unemployment, growing economy and an expected strong tourist season will most likely mean at least as many jobs as last year."

New attractions in 1998 include the addition of a fun house at Jenkinson's Pavilion Boardwalk & Amusement Park in Point Pleasant Beach; a baseball stadium to welcome minor league baseball (Atlantic City Surf) and the reopening of the Absecon Lighthouse in Atlantic City; and BatmanT & RobinT: The Chiller, a roller coaster that reaches 70 miles per hour in under four seconds at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, the country's largest regional theme park.

And, added State Tourism Director Linda Mysliwy Conlin "What many visitors love about the annual tradition of a trip to the Jersey Shore -- with its beautiful beaches, boardwalks filled with food and fun, and maritime landmarks is that it is always changing -- there is something new each and every time they visit.

Yet New Jersey offers vacationers many easily accessible outdoor activities ideal for summertime fun. Spending time outside beckons vacationers to enjoy the state whether it's for biking, hiking, walking, fishing, canoeing or birdwatching. Farmland and open spaces, featuring acres of forests, mountains, clear lakes, scenic valleys and miles of meandering brooks and rivers, provide unlimited opportunities for experiencing the great outdoors. In addition, golfers can choose from among more than 240 public and private golf courses.

"It's definitely time to discover -- or rediscover -- our unique piece of nature known as the Garden State. Hike the Pine Barrens, take a canoe down the Delaware River or swim in our beautiful ocean. I personally look forward to it all, especially bike

riding with my new helmet celebrating New Jersey & You...Perfect Together," concluded Gov. Whitman.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRE-MEMORIAL DAY BAROMETER FOR SUMMER 1998 IN NEW JERSEY

The New Jersey Department of Commerce's Division of Travel and Tourism conducted an informal survey of the tourism industry outlook for this summer, from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. Surveyed were realtors, campground, beaches, hotels and New Jersey's highways. Following is an overview of the results:

REALTORS

New Jersey's rental market at the Jersey Shore is very strong with many realtors filling weeks ahead of last summer. (It's also a longer summer season: schools are ending earlier because of no "snow days" as well as a later Labor Day this year.) While many properties are already rented, there is still availability -- but renters have to be more flexible in terms of beach proximity. Also, reported were that summer rentals appeal more to families and don't depend on good weather.

HOTELS

Hotel and motel bookings look very strong for this summer with many sold-out for Memorial Day weekend, such as the Atlantic City casinos. The recent nice weather caused a surge in bookings; there are a steady stream of advance reservations throughout the summer despite the fact that this sector of the travel industry is more dependent on good weather than the rental market. Many tour groups have booked earlier in the season than normal, making for a stronger shoulder season. Overall, the hotels are optimistic about this summer from Cape May to the northern shore towns of Monmouth County.

BEACHES

Beach officials expect a strong summer especially if the weather cooperates. Overall, beaches are in great shape. Beach tag sales were ahead of last summer until the recent rainy period -- but it's now picking up. Local residents and hotels typically secure their badges earlier in the season and the trend this year is consistent with past summers. Beach officials expect beach tag sales to increase with the summer and warmer weather.

CAMPGROUNDS

While there is still space available at campgrounds around the state, officials have reported strong advance bookings because of a warmer winter than usual. As a result, they expect business to be even better this summer than last year. Many facilities are reserved for Memorial Day, with July 4th already showing strong bookings. An increase in Canadian and German business has also been noted.

BEACH FUN AND BIG BALLOONS BECKON NEW JERSEY'S CROWDED SUMMER CALENDAR

The New Jersey Calendar of Events, available through the New Jersey Department of Commerce's Division of Travel and Tourism, is a collection of something for everybody -- whether their interests are recreational, cultural, historical -- or if they just like to party.

The free calendar, which lists happenings through September, may be received by calling (800) JERSEY-7 or accessing it at www.state.nj.us/travel on the Internet.

In every corner of the Garden State, every day of the week, there is an event or celebration that will appeal to both residents and visitors. Whether it's a hot air balloon spectacular, a seafood festival, or an educational experience for vacationing children, New Jersey has it on the agenda.

Aside from annual and one-time events, New Jersey's summer is also busy with ongoing activities of note like museum exhibitions, concerts and theater, which are also listed in the calendar. Following is a sampling of annual or one-time events:

Down the Shore

This being the warmer time of year, many major events take place along New Jersey's 127 miles of white sandy beaches. One of the biggest of these events held is Atlantic City's BeachFest '98 (June 19-21) and offers no less than four miles of entertainment, events and exhibitions for the whole family. Highlights are a Sand Sculpture Exhibition and Sailboat Regatta. A bit later in the season, OceanFest 98 in Long Branch claims to be the largest Fourth of July celebration on the shore, although there are many others. It features children's activities, food, bands, clowns, and a huge fireworks display. Then on July 8, the Twelfth Annual New Jersey Sandcastle Contest will take place in Belmar for a celebration of sun, sand and surf. On September 19, Point Pleasant Beach hosts a Festival of the Sea with fine art and antique vendors, specialty foods and games.

Up in the Air

New Jersey boasts no fewer than two major balloon festivals this summer. The QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning (July 24- 26) in Readington features many balloons, flight training, airplane and balloon rides, food and entertainment. The Magic of Alexandria Balloon Festival (August 7-9) in Pittstown celebrates its tenth anniversary with 80-plus hot air balloons in exciting shapes, interactive adventure venues, food, crafts, an air show, music and fireworks.

In the Past

New Jersey's rich history is often a reason for celebration. This year also marks a particularly noteworthy anniversary -- the 220th anniversary of the momentous Battle of Monmouth. The celebration in Manalapan (June 27-28) will feature public battles, living history and period merchandise at Monmouth Battlefield State Park.

Meanwhile antique car lovers will delight in the Anakokas Region Grand National Antique Car Show in Cherry Hill (July 11), as they watch superb prize winning automobiles compete in over 50 classes for national recognition by the Antique Automobile Club of America. And the New Jersey Harbor Heritage Festival takes place at Liberty State Park in Jersey City (September 19-20) with waterfront entertainment, arts and crafts, children's activities, fishing contests, boat tours and an international kite flying competition.

Ethnic Festivals

New Jersey has a diverse ethnic heritage, which is part of state's overall appeal to residents and tourists. Indeed, New Jersey's multicultural diversity is demonstrated by the many ethnic festivals taking place. The Heritage Day Festival in Trenton (June 6-7) is the state's largest street festival and features food, crafts and entertainment. In Long Branch, during the weekends of June 20-21 and June 27-28, the Oceans of Rhythm Festival will be featuring African, Cuban and American dance and music. St. Ann's Italian Festival in Hoboken (July 20-26) features live entertainment, rides and the famous zeppole treats.

Contests and Competitions

Competitions play a role in many events. For instance, the Bayer/United States Equestrian Team Festival of Champions in Gladstone (June 18-21) showcases endurance, show jumping and dressing. A very different kind of competition takes place at the Clownfest National Clown Convention in Seaside Heights (September 19-20) -- with interactive clown activities, a daily circus, a parade and clown classes.

Fabulous Fairs

Many counties and localities stage fairs during this season. One of the largest is the Burlington County Farm Fair (July 22-25) in Lumberton with many 4-H exhibits, livestock, demonstrations, clogging, fashion, good and a Queen Pageant. The big fair each summer, however, is the New Jersey State Fair in Cherry Hill (July 30-August 9) with over 50 rides, shows, games, homegrown and homemade exhibits, state exhibits, arts, vendors and food booths.

Stuff to Buy

Some events focus around things that are not only great to look at, but are available for sale. The Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morris Township has its Tenth Annual Harvest/Plant Show and Sales (September 18-20) with houseplants, vegetables and flowers. Ribbons are given out and there is a huge plant sale. Also for sale will be antiques at the Waterloo Antiques Fair in Stanhope (September 19-20), the state's largest outdoor antique show, featuring furniture, jewelry and other collectibles. During the same weekend at Historic Waterloo Village, there's the nearby Fall Wine & Cheese Classic that offers visitors a sampling of the state's best wines.

For information, call (800) JERSEY-7 or access www.state.nj.us/travel, the NJ Division of Travel and Tourism's Internet site