

International Spotlight Shines on Mississippi as King & Queen of Spain Visit

Over four hundred years ago in 1540, Spanish explorer, Hernando Desoto, came to Mississippi in search of gold. Two hundred years later in 1781, the Spanish returned to Mississippi and set up their government at Natchez. This weekend, the King and Queen of Spain visited Mississippi's state capitol, but this time they were here to honor our shared cultural history and showcase their royal treasures to the world.

Their Majesties visit to Mississippi is the first visit by reigning monarchs to our state. This historic visit by the royal family further brightens the international spotlight as the world focuses on Mississippi and our premier art and cultural exhibitions and diversity. The royal family's visit is evidence of the high caliber Majesty of Spain exhibition currently underway at the Mississippi Arts Pavilion.

This, like previous exhibitions at the Mississippi Arts Pavilion – The Palaces of St. Petersburg, the Splendors of Versailles – along with the USA International Ballet Competition and numerous other world-class art exhibitions at the Mississippi Museum of Art, continue to gain positive national and international attention and reinforce Mississippi's prominence on the world cultural state.

Melanie and I were privileged to host Their Royal Majesties, King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia, the United States Ambassador to Spain, and other members of this international delegation. As Mississippi's guests, they met with the leaders of our state and toured the Majesty of Spain exhibition.

Just as the exhibit showcases the treasures of the Royal Collections from the Museo del Prado and Patrimonio Nacional Exhibition, we had the opportunity to discuss and showcase Mississippi's cultural diversity and historical links to Spain. With this grand exhibition, once again, our histories become intertwined as Spain and Mississippi meet.

The King and Queens' visit is evidence that Mississippi has arrived in the international arena. This meeting meant more to Mississippi than simply media attention for the Majesty of Spain – it provided an opportunity to highlight the programs, initiatives, advantages and quality of life that positions Mississippi as “America's State of Promise.”

Let me encourage every Mississippian to visit The Majesty of Spain exhibition – it is an outstanding sight to behold. We have many opportunities to participate and visit our local museums and cultural centers and to fully experience the diversity that Mississippi has to offer in the performing and visual arts. From symphonies to ballet; historical collections to contemporary art galleries, Mississippi offers a colorful and enriching cultural palette.

Mississippi is working and competing in the global market place. Whether we are building alliances for future business opportunities, promoting tourism or marketing our people and products to the world, Mississippi is gaining positive exposure. This can only further improve our state's economic prospects.