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American Bus Association Names Top 100 Events in 1998

Mississippi=s Splendors of Versailles Exhibition Recognized As Top Event in the United States

JACKSON, MissXThe American Bus Association (ABA) has named the Splendors of Versailles exhibition as the 1998 Top Event in the United States.

Officials of ABA and Destinations magazine, the association=s travel trade publication, made the announcement during a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., September 3. Mississippi=s First Lady Pat Fordice, E.B. Robinson Jr., Chairman of Deposit Guaranty National Bank, Jack Kyle, Executive Director of the Splendors of Versailles exhibition and representatives of the French Embassy in Washington were among those attending the press conference.

The Top 100 Events include U.S. and Canadian events from each state and province. The events are annually chosen for their appeal to a wide range of audiences.

Mary Beth Wilkerson, Associate Manager Senior for the Mississippi Department of Economic and Community Development, Tourism Development Division said, AWhen the Division nominated the Splendors of Versailles, exhibition we knew it would be a winner. The Palaces of St. Petersburg: Russian Imperial Style Exhibition, also held in Jackson, Mississippi, 1996, was such an overwhelming success for the group travel market, garnering one of the spots in the Top 100 events of 1996. The Versailles exhibition will truly be another great opportunity to showcase the Mississippi tourism product to the group travel market. It is such a tremendous honor to be recognized by the ABA for a project of such quality.≡

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In 1982, the North American Bus Association launched the Top 100 Events in North America program to assist charter motorcoach and tour operators in planning itineraries. Today, the program attracts worldwide attention, and the Top 100 Events publication is distributed each year to tour planners, the general public, and the media.

Jack Kyle, Executive Director of the Splendors of Versailles exhibition said, "The name Versailles conjures up in the imagination of people the world over images of grandeur and beauty associated with the reigns of three of France's most famous rulers, Louis XIV, XV and XVI. Never before has such a large number of art and historical treasures associated with the Chateau of Versailles been assembled in North America or anyplace else in the world outside the Chateau of Versailles. This designation by the ABA clearly attests to the importance of the Splendors of Versailles exhibition which will bring great pleasure to hundreds of thousands of visitors during its five month presentation at the Mississippi Arts Pavilion in Jackson, Mississippi."

Splendors of Versailles, scheduled for April 1 thru August 31, 1998, will be the largest exhibition ever presented from France's most famous chateau, the Chateau of Versailles.

Splendors of Versailles follows on the heels of the highly successful Palaces of St. Petersburg: Russian Imperial Style Exhibition which attracted 553,894 visitors.

"Never before has the span of such an exhibition from the Chateau of Versailles been shown on American soil," said Pierre Arizzoli-Clementel, Director General of the National Museum of the Chateau of Versailles.

The exhibition will be held exclusively in Jackson, Mississippi at the Mississippi Arts Pavilion, and consists of approximately 150 objects drawn from the collections of the National Museum of the Chateau of Versailles.

Among the objects in the exhibition are sculpture, paintings, bronzes, clocks, furniture, carpets, tapestries, musical instruments, jewelry, drawings, and porcelain all associated with the history of France's most famous chateau.

Highlights of the exhibition include the famous "Portrait of Louis XIV" by Hyacinthe Rigaud, a recreation of a royal bedchamber with fabric dating to the end of the 17th century, a gallery of Gobelintapestries from "The History of the King Series," the "Creation of the World Clock," and Versailles' replica of the dazzling necklace of Marie Antoinette.

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A specially commissioned replica of the equestrian statue of Louis XIV by Gian Lorenzo Bernini will serve as the grand centerpiece of the exhibition. Weighing ten tons and rising to a height of twelve and a half feet, two other replicas exists...one at the Chateau of Versailles and another at the Louvre in front of the famous pyramid designed by I.M. Pei.

In addition to objects from the Chateau of Versailles, the exhibition will include objects from the Grand Trianon, the Petit Trianon, and several major U.S. museums whose collections include objects once contained in the Chateau of Versailles.

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