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For Immediate Release

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Delaware Launches “First Night Free” Campaign**

*Campaign to help increase state hotel occupancy rates*

**Dover, Del.** (January 28, 2008) – A campaign to bring more overnight visitors to the state of Delaware will launch next month. The campaign offers the “First Night Free” to visitors at participating hotels throughout Delaware. The “First Night Free” campaign is designed to increase current low occupancy rates, in most cases by drawing travelers from within the Mid-Atlantic region.

“This campaign is an excellent opportunity for travelers to explore the First State’s wide variety of historical, cultural, entertainment and natural attractions, while taking advantage of this special offer,” said Dina Reider, director of marketing and communications at the Delaware Economic Development Office. “We expect to see more travelers staying overnight, especially from nearby states as those travelers realize Delaware is just a short drive away.”

Nearly 30 hotels throughout Delaware will participate in the First State “First Night Free” campaign. The booking period will be February 1- 29 and the check- in period will be from February 1 to May 1, 2008. Two-night packages will start at around \$89. A complete list of participating hotels is available at [www.Visit.Delaware.com](http://www.Visit.Delaware.com).

“All of us in the hotel industry are excited about the new campaign, ‘First Night Free,’” said Linda Parkowski, chairperson of the Governor’s Tourism Advisory Board. “We feel it will assist us with our declining occupancies. We are fortunate the Delaware Economic Development Office and the industry came together and created a campaign which will be used statewide.”

On average, the hotel occupancy rates for Delaware hotels started declining in April 2007 by .05 percent, compared to 2006. Rates continued to drop throughout the year and by December 2007 rates fell to 4.6 percent, compared to the same month in 2006, according to Smith Travel Research.

“The ‘First Night Free’ campaign is a direct response to the decline in statewide hotel occupancy,” said William Sullivan, chairman of the Delaware Hotel and Lodging Association. “We hope it will

encourage more visitors to stay overnight and help our hoteliers manage through this difficult period.”

“First Night Free,” is a collaboration between the Governor’s Tourism Advisory Board, the Delaware Tourism Office, the Convention and Visitors Bureaus from New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties, Delaware Hotel Lodging Association and Delaware Tourism Alliance.

Delaware has a host of special events and activities to chase the winter blues away. Visitors to Delaware during the winter and early spring can experience a number of unique attractions. In northern Delaware, take a scenic drive through the rolling hills of the Brandywine Valley or tour distinctive museums that mingle with magnificent du Pont mansions. In the state’s largest city, experience the vibrant Wilmington Riverfront. Or, visit historic New Castle, considered one of the undiscovered jewels of the eastern seaboard.

The central part of the state, Kent County, is home to the state’s capital of Dover. The county offers more than 20 museums, focusing on military history to agriculture. For nature lovers, a number of wildlife areas create the perfect setting for bird-watching, hiking, or just enjoying the great outdoors. Visitors can take part in several festivals during this time, including the Delmarva Birding Weekend, April 23-27. Or, explore the Amish countryside, just outside of Dover. A number of shops specialize in Amish-made goods, offering everything from homemade baked items and quilts to crafts and willow oak furniture.

Or slip quietly through well-preserved historic hamlets and small towns. At Delaware’s beach resorts, find a relaxing escape filled with sightseeing, restaurants, spa treatments and more than 140 tax-free outlet shops.

For more travel ideas, go to [www.VisitDelaware.com](http://www.VisitDelaware.com).

### **About Delaware Tourism Office**

The Delaware Tourism Office, a division of the Delaware Economic Development Office, promotes tourism and economic growth in Delaware. The Office is dedicated to fulfilling the requests and needs of travelers by offering information and resources about Delaware activities, attractions and destinations. For more information, visit the official Delaware Tourism Web site at [www.VisitDelaware.com](http://www.VisitDelaware.com) or call toll-free 866-284-7483.

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