



NEWS RELEASE | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Visit SoSi publishes two new guides: African American Life and SoSi Safari

The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism (DOEDT) has released two new Visit SoSi guides designed to deepen engagement with the region’s history, arts, and architecture. The new pieces, African American Life: Self-Guided Tour of Holbrook-Ross & Almagro and the SoSi Safari, highlight the cultural richness and creative spirit of Southside Virginia.

Produced in collaboration with local historian Joyce Wilburn and Nancy Marion of Blackwell Press, the African American Life guide leads participants through a self-guided walking tour of the Holbrook-Ross Historic District and a self-driving tour of Almagro, the largest incorporated African American community in America dating back to 1883. The guide also features recommended dining and lodging, museums, and nearby sites of interest.

Wilburn remarked, “Every time I led a Millionaires Row walking tour starting in 2009, we’d stop at the entrance to the Holbrook Ross Historic District, and I’d tell visitors that this is where the professional African American community lived from the late 1800s until the late 1960s. It was a very short summary of decades of history. I felt bad about that. My friend, Paula Martin Smith, volunteered to help me learn about the people who lived, worshiped, and worked on Holbrook Street. Although she lived in another part of town, she spent after-school hours with friends in the neighborhood and knew it well. After years of gathering information and interviewing residents, the Holbrook Ross Tour was born in 2011. Almagro was added to the updated Holbrook Ross booklet this year to tell a more complete history of African Americans in Danville. The booklet is not a complete history. It’s a starting point for more exploration and study.”

To view the African American Life guide, visit: <https://online.fliphtml5.com/vrwwy/arar/#p=1>

The SoSi Safari, also created in partnership with Wilburn, offers an interactive exploration of Danville’s River District. The guide features photos of local art, statues, and architectural details, encouraging visitors and residents to snap pictures at designated stops for a chance to win prizes from nearby attractions, including Crema & Vine and the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History.

Wilburn reflected on the origin of the SoSi Safari guide, “I was touring downtown Greenville, South Carolina, when “The Mice on Main” scavenger hunt caught my attention. Nine life-size, tiny, bronze mice were scattered along Main Street, and I tried to find them all. While doing that, I thought Danville should have something like this. Thinking about the elk on Danville’s Main Street and the orange elephant on Craghead, I counted seven other animal statues, two humans, a painting of birds, and the word *Bee* and the *SoSi Safari* was created.”

Printed copies of the SoSi Safari are available at the Danville Visitor Center, 645 River Park Drive, or online at: [https://online.fliphtml5.com/vrwwy/SoSi Safari Booklet Ready/#p=1](https://online.fliphtml5.com/vrwwy/SoSi_Safari_Booklet_Ready/#p=1)

Regarding the excitement surrounding the new materials. Lisa Meriwether, DOEDT Tourism Manager, stated, “These guides are another avenue for our community to tell its rich story for years to come. By partnering with local historians, we ensure these stories are preserved and shared in meaningful ways.”

The DOEDT originally announced the new guides during the Visit SoSi Tourism Celebration on May 14, recognizing National Travel and Tourism Week and the third year of the regional tourism program.

Additional Visit SoSi guides, including the redesigned Visitor Guide, the Outdoor Adventure Guide, and the Old West End Historic District Walking Tour Guide, are available at: <https://www.visitsosi.com/visitor-guide/>

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About the Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism

Visit SoSi is the fastest-growing tourism destination in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism, which serves as the official Destination Marketing Organization for the region, leads the City of Danville's tourism promotions under the Visit SoSi brand. The office promotes tourism assets and attractions across the City of Danville and Pittsylvania County and leverages advertising, earned media, promotions, trade events, and visitor experience initiatives to stimulate economic growth for the region. Learn more at www.VisitSoSi.com