

MEETING LEADERS

LYNSEY SMITH



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BY REBECCA TREON

Lynsey Smith was a frequent visitor to Natchez, Mississippi, in her younger years. She grew up playing sports and coming to Natchez frequently for weekend football games in high school.

“I’m originally from Vicksburg, which is about 70 miles north of Natchez, but I didn’t necessarily think anything about living in Natchez,” said Smith. She left home to study at Mississippi State University, where she earned a degree in biological science. “So, really nothing to do with tourism,” she said laughing. After college, she returned home and pursued a career in medical sales.

It was love that brought her to Natchez as an adult. Her significant other lived in Port Gibson, and Natchez was between her home and his.

“We started coming to Natchez on dates, and dinners turned into weekends here, and I just fell in love — with Natchez,” she said. She loved it so much, she relocated for a nontourism job but became active with the now defunct Natchez Downtown Development Association. It was a colleague there who tipped her off to the job opening at Visit Natchez and recommended she apply since she had such a passion for her new hometown. That was in 2013, and she’s been representing Natchez as the director of sales there ever since.

“I was obsessed with all things Natchez,” she said. “I’ve been with the CVB for seven years, and I just absolutely love it.”

Natchez retains its history and small-town charm in part because it’s not as easy to get to as other would-be conference destinations. With the closest airport in Baton

Rouge, Louisiana, Natchez attracts regional conferences. For example, a congress of mayors of towns along the Mississippi River gathered to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the town, which held special events around the event throughout 2016. Natchez typically gets regional conferences from around Mississippi and Louisiana.

“The good thing about Natchez is that literally everything that you want to see is walkable,” said Smith. “You can walk out of your meeting at the convention center and walk a couple blocks to one of the historic homes Natchez is known for and take a tour there.” Local tour companies also provide an overview of the town using golf carts and horse-drawn carriages. The Natchez Trails provide ample walking options, and the entertainment district is full of local bars and restaurants.

Smith said the local hospitality and town pride are part of what makes Natchez so special.

“We would just go to dinner not knowing a soul, and we would just meet people,” she said.

The town’s locals are always looking to add something new and interesting to what’s already going on, she said. Many will simply strike up conversations and make personal recommendations.

That Southern hospitality is what Smith loves about what she does. She customizes meetings with activities tailored to a group’s needs, like having the local college’s band lead a parade bringing a group from their conference session to dinner.

“I feel like it was just all meant to be,” said Smith. “I fit in so great with the people down here, I mesh so well; our locals are so great and so proud of their town, and they want people to experience it.”

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

NAME

Lynsey Smith

TITLE

Director of Sales

ORGANIZATION

Visit Natchez

LOCATION

Natchez, Mississippi

BIRTHPLACE

Weatherford, Oklahoma

EDUCATION

Bachelor’s degree in biological sciences at Mississippi State University

CAREER HISTORY

Worked in medical sales before joining Visit Natchez in 2013



LYNSEY SMITH (THIRD FROM RIGHT) AND OTHER MISSISSIPPI MEETINGS COLLEAGUES REPRESENT THE STATE AT A RECENT INDUSTRY EVENT.

TIPS FROM LYNSEY SMITH

- Rely on the local DMO for contacts and fun tips. We know who can offer one-of-a-kind experiences for your attendees.

- Inquire about a hospitality table at your event. Local partners are often available to set up with information they are happy to share with your members.

- Include several of our 30-plus bed-and-breakfast properties as accommodation options.

